



International
Press
Institute



**Reporter's
Guide**
to the
**Millennium
Development Goals**

Covering Development Commitments
for 2015 and Beyond

COVER: Children belonging to the Waodani indigenous group learn mathematics as part of a bilingual education program in Toñampari, Ecuador. *EFE/Martí Quintana*



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Reporter's Guide to the Millennium Development Goals

Covering Development Commitments for 2015 and Beyond

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Preface

Throughout its more than 60-year history, the International Press Institute (IPI) has consistently promoted the view that journalism has the power to change lives. So the decision to commission this book was critical given the urgency with which the media must re-engage with social aspects of development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent the greatest global commitment in history to the material betterment of the human condition. Yet with less than three years to go before the original target deadline of 2015, many of the promises contained in the MDGs remain unfulfilled.

IPI's Reporter's Guide to the Millennium Development Goals is the first publication of its kind, directly addressing journalists and editors writing about human development and arming them with the tools to further change. While we believe the guide comes at just the right time to inspire stories with the 2015 date in mind, it will also prove invaluable for the post-2015 MDG agenda as well.

This book is the result of an abiding dedication to socially inspired journalism and the fruit of an exciting, international collaboration between award-winning journalists, UN agencies responsible for monitoring the MDGs, and IPI's experienced staff.

In Part One, journalists will find an overview of the history and structure of the MDGs, in addition to a comprehensive list of the MDGs. Part Two contains contributions from all five UN Regional Commissions, describing the current state of the MDGs in their respective region and offering advice as to how the press can improve coverage.

Concrete advice for covering a range of MDG-related topics—among them corruption, gender issues, poverty, and education—can be found in Part Three, written by journalists with deep and diverse experience covering stories that impact communities across the globe.

In Part Four, the OPEC Fund for International Development explains why the organisation considers “energy poverty” to be the missing MDG, and the United Nations Development Programme discusses the future of the MDG agenda.

Journalists will find in Part Five examples of strong, award-winning development coverage to serve as inspiration when crafting their own stories. Finally, in Part Six, four journalists from developing countries narrate their personal experiences and challenges in reporting on the MDGs and express why such work is critical to societal progress. Altogether, this guide is intended to inspire and encourage reporters and their editors to dig deeper and to give development stories higher priority on newspaper pages, airwaves, and the World Wide Web.

On behalf of IPI's Executive Board, and its members in more than 120 countries, I am proud to present the Reporters Guide to the MDGs. We hope that it will be tremendously useful as the global community considers the work to be done before 2015—and that will certainly await beyond.

Alison Bethel McKenzie

IPI Executive Director

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(Part 1)

Foundations

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Students at José Trinidad Cabaña school in Honduras participate in a reforestation project to combat the effects of climate change and the illegal wood trade.
EFE/Gustavo Amador



(1)

Introduction: No Time to Lose

Scott F. Griffen

Thirteen years ago, in a celebration uniting every corner of the Earth, humanity welcomed the start of a new millennium, a singularly momentous occasion that harboured the promise of a better future for all.

In September of that year, the year 2000, an unprecedented number of world leaders gathered for the Millennium Summit in New York City and affirmed their commitment to helping the billions of individuals who lacked life’s most basic needs.

‘We recognise that, in addition to our separate responsibility to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level’, leaders and representatives of 189 UN member states acknowledged in the summit’s crowning document: the Millennium Declaration.

The Declaration took advantage of a rare temporal turning point to establish a set of development priorities for the coming years, including eradicating poverty, safeguarding the natural environment, and protecting society’s most vulnerable members, especially children.

These priorities were, in turn, expanded and transformed into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), at once a set of specific, statistically verifiable development objectives and a powerful symbolic commitment to human well-being.

But who was to be responsible for turning these lofty promises into reality, for implementing these well-meant if highly ambitious goals by the target year of 2015?

Then-UN-Secretary-General Kofi Annan made clear the answer: all of us. ‘The issues we are dealing with—from the elimination of poverty to the fight against AIDS and the protection of the environment—are issues that require all hands on deck.

Indeed, it would be a grave error to think that only governments have the power to further the MDGs. Such a conclusion is an invitation to scepticism if we reflect that, left to their own devices, government bodies at both

By highlighting the stories of the incalculable many who still suffer from the aching realities of poverty, disease, and discrimination, journalists sensitise public opinion and remind those who signed their name to the Millennium Declaration how much work there is left to be done.

the national and international levels may decline to prioritise human and social development—or lose interest in the MDGs altogether.

If we consider the complexity and breadth of the goals themselves, it is clear that governments are but one factor in the success of the MDGs. Civil society groups compile statistics and defend the rights of the neglected. Private donors and philanthropists bring critical funds to where they are needed most. Scientists and universities lead research to identify innovative solutions.

And as for the journalists to whom this book is addressed? One could argue—as we do—that they are the most important element of all.

After all, the press has the unique power to bring information, once hidden or ignored, into the public sphere. By highlighting the stories of the incalculable many who still suffer from the aching realities of poverty, disease, and discrimination, journalists sensitise public opinion and remind those who signed their name to the Millennium Declaration how much work there is left to be done.

‘In a media environment of increasing competition and shortened attention spans, pieces on the MDGs don’t

Undoubtedly, fulfilling the role of development watchdog is not easy. Journalists must be prepared to fight for MDG coverage in the editorial room.

always sell the most papers or attract the biggest audiences’, noted former New Zealand prime minister and current administrator of the United Nations Development Programme Helen Clark upon awarding a prize for development reporting in Latin America in 2009. ‘But they do help those who are most in need of a voice—the poor and the vulnerable.’

So while reporting on social issues, compared to political revolutions and financial crises, may not grab reader attention—a point Journalists for Human Rights Director Rachel Pulfer disputes in this book—it does make a difference in working to ensure that no-one is excluded from the Millennium Declaration’s stirring pledge.

When journalists are silent about the MDGs, the impetus for honest action on development withers. Valuable aid falls into the wrong hands, misdirected by corruption. Women and girls remain tethered to and endangered by sexist yet culturally entrenched practices. Researchers develop weapons instead of vaccines. Globally, food production soars while millions of children die from malnourishment. Once-trumpeted deadlines pass by, unnoticed.

A vigilant and socially engaged press helps to hold governments and non-governmental agencies alike accountable to their MDG commitments. Undoubtedly, however, fulfilling the role of development watchdog is not easy. Journalists must be prepared to fight for MDG coverage in the editorial room. They must be willing to travel to the poorest regions to speak with the victims of

incomplete promises. They must be ready to take on the corruption and special interests that are stubbornly hindering progress.

But there are some important tools to assist this effort. This handbook is meant to serve as a comprehensive guide for journalists covering human development. There is also a concrete deadline: December 31, 2015, the target for the fulfilment of the MDGs. Having a specific date on the calendar can help convince editors that now is the time to mobilise coverage.

This handbook also seeks to make journalists who already cover social issues or investigate corruption conscious of the rhetorical power of the MDGs. Indeed, by linking their stories to these internationally recognisable goals, journalists raise the possibility that their stories will catch the attention of those in power—and, just maybe, make a difference.

But this book is also addressed to those reporters who have never thought about covering development before, but who wish for their words to have a lasting impact. With a deadline that the entire planet will be watching, what better time than now to write about something new? Perhaps your media or your country lacks coverage on key development themes such as education, hunger, or climate change. No matter the topic, the personal accounts and expert advice contained here can help the enterprising journalist get started.

We also know that, despite our best efforts, work on the MDGs will not end in three years. Plans are already underway to renew the MDGs for a post-2015 agenda, one that will maintain a focus on the core concerns of the Millennium Declaration while adding new priorities, such as energy access, which are also addressed throughout this book.

The 2012 MDG Progress Report, prepared by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, delivered some encouraging news. Worldwide, extreme poverty—defined as living on less than \$1.25 a day—has fallen from 47% in 1990 to 24% in 2008, meeting the first MDG target. Tuberculosis and malaria are on the retreat, and educational parity between girls and boys has been achieved.



Filipino children run through plastic bags that have been washed and dried after being recovered from garbage dumps in Manila, the Philippines, Sept. 2010. EPA/Rolox dela Pena

Nevertheless, the report emphasised significant shortcomings. The maternal death rate has decreased only slightly. 2.5 billion individuals lack access to proper sanitation facilities. 15.5 % of the global population is undernourished. The number of people living in slums has risen from 650 million to 863 million.

These findings leave no doubt of the challenge ahead. And with 2015 just around the corner, there is little time to wait. So, journalists, grab this book and get started—there’s a deadline to meet.



Originally from Arizona, **Scott F. Griffen** is Press Freedom Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Press Institute.

(2)

The History of the Millennium Development Goals

Nadia Sanders Vázquez

At the dawn of the 21st century, life for most human beings on the planet was not going well. In the poorest countries of the world, people were suffering from starvation and poverty, illnesses like malaria were killing children, and only a few had access to education. By the year 2000, at the birth of a new century and a new millennium, the planet was facing huge challenges. So, after 40 years of trying, world leaders took this unique opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since the 1960s, the world had battled to make life more tolerable for the majority. The United Nations summits held in the 1960s and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ were a significant beginning. In 1990, the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank mentioned the need for social policies as part of economic reforms to end world poverty.

We saw the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994². And one of the most important summits prior to the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals was the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, when 117 heads of state subscribed to a compromise to eradicate income poverty by 2015.

The most significant effort in the run-up to the MDGs, and a part of their origin, was made in 1996 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD), with a report entitled "Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation". The document contained measurable development objectives that could be monitored and achieved with a global partnership effort. It proposed:

1. Reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty
2. Universal primary education in all countries
3. Demonstrated progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education (by 2005)
4. Reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under five, and a reduction by three-quarters in maternal mortality
5. Access through the primary healthcare system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages, as soon as possible
6. In terms of environment, the implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015³

In the year 2000, the OECD, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and the World Bank launched a publication named *A Better World for All: Progress Towards the International Development Goals*, urging industrialised countries to work for sustainable growth by providing more resources for health, education, gender equality, and environmentally sustainable development based on 'the agreements and resolutions of the world



Rosa Otunbaeva, then-president of the Kyrgyz Republic, addresses the Millennium Development Goals Summit at United Nations headquarters in New York City on Sept. 22, 2010. EPA/Justin Lane

¹ Hulme, David. The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results-based Management in an Imperfect World. *Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK, December 2007.*

² Ibid

³ Development Assistance Committee, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, OCDE, Paris, May, 1996.

conferences organized by the United Nations in the first half of the 1990s⁴. Preludes to the MDGs, these goals were very similar to the ones the OECD had designed four years before, but were now more specific:

1. Reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015
2. Enrol all children in primary school by 2015
3. Make progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women, by eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005
4. Reduce infant and child mortality rates by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015
5. Reduce maternal mortality ratios by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015
6. Provide access for all who need reproductive health services by 2015
7. Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005, to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015

New times, new role

When the UN was founded, Earth had 2.5 billion inhabitants; two-thirds of the current UN members did not exist as sovereign states, and their people were still living under colonial rule. We lived in the grip of the Cold War, but in the last decade of the last century, many things changed.

The role of the UN had been successful in many areas but was still facing challenges in others. By the year 2000, the United Nations was 55 years old; Earth had 6 billion inhabitants, now, thirteen years later (2013), 7 billion.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi A. Annan, used the birth of the new millennium as an occasion to reaffirm the role of the UN and to act on making the world a better place. Even though the UN had participated in producing *A Better World for All*, it needed to have its own publication to take to the Assembly. So, Annan launched, in April 2000, his Millennium Report, entitled “We, the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”, in which he described the situation of the population of the world.

‘Let’s imagine that the world’s population is one thousand people living in a village in which some 150 of the

inhabitants live in an affluent area of it and about 780 in poorer districts’⁵, Annan wrote.

The Secretary-General also explained that a fifth of the population owned 86% of all the wealth, and almost half of the villagers had less than US \$2 per day. The majority of the poor were women, and some 220 were illiterate. Many of them were looking desperately for jobs that did not exist. Less than 60 of them had a computer and just 24 had access to the Internet. This village, he said, was our planet, and it was urgent to take steps to ensure that all its inhabitants could live free from hunger, and in the knowledge that their children would have real chances in life.

He also included information about the results of the world’s largest ever public opinion poll. The Millennium Survey, led by the Gallup International Association, a Zurich-based research institute, interviewed 57,000 adults in 60 countries (representing 1.5 billion people worldwide), spread across all six continents. The results showed that for people everywhere what mattered most in life, what was more highly valued than anything else, was to have good health and a happy family.

For the United Nations, most people who were involved in the poll considered the key tasks to be peace-making, the protection of human rights, and provision of humanitarian assistance. While in most countries the majority said their elections were free and fair, two-thirds of all respondents considered their country not governed by the will of the people, and believed their government had done too little to address environmental problems in their country. Many felt globalisation was a positive force that offered an opportunity to make an inclusive and equitable world.

Annan added, ‘We have many success stories to tell and positive trends to report—and I shall do both throughout this report. (...)The world’s people are nevertheless telling us that our past achievements are not enough, given the scale of the challenges we face. We must do more, and we must do it better’.

The Millennium Summit

It took the Assembly three sessions, held between June 1999 and May 2000, to decide that The Millennium



A passenger on the Japanese ship “Boat of Peace”, which sailed around the world to promote the MDGs, walks in front of a sign promoting the UN’s campaign to end poverty in Sans Souci, Dominican Republic. EFE/Orlando Barria.

to serve the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable, and, in particular, the children.

The heads of state resolved to make the UN more effective in maintaining peace and security, by giving it the resources and tools it needed in conflict prevention and peacemaking. World leaders resolved to strengthen the rule of law and ensure compliance with decisions of the International Court of Justice, and to take action against terrorism, and the interna-

tional drug problem. They also made commitments to minimise the adverse effects of economic sanctions on innocent populations.

The Declaration also called for adoption of a policy of duty-free and quota-free access for, essentially, all exports from the least-developed countries, and for a programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries.

They knew that the declaration itself would not stop wars and erase poverty. They all had to undertake real steps to truly help people and help themselves. Translating commitment into action was a pre-requisite. It was time to act.

Summit would be held from September 6 to 8, 2000 in New York, focusing on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. During these sessions, the members also approved The Millennium Declaration draft, which stated that the values and principles of the 21st century should be freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility.

Paving the way for the MDGs as we know them now, the Declaration was approved in September 2000 by the General Assembly of the United Nations at the first and only time all 189 heads of state have gathered in a UN assembly.

When the member states subscribed to The Millennium Declaration, they accepted collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality, and equity at a global level, and have a duty, therefore,



Nadia Sanders Vázquez was born in Mexico City and studied journalism and politics with the Mexican writer René Avilés Fabila at Metropolitan Autonomous University, Xochimilco campus. After receiving her degree, she covered local news for the newspaper *Reforma* from 2000 to 2007, and later reported on the legalisation of abortion in Mexico City for the newspaper *El Centro*.

In 2009, Nadia was selected to take part in the Balboa Program for Iberoamerican Journalists and worked for *Tiempo* magazine in Madrid. Upon returning to Mexico, she covered the first same-sex marriages in Mexico City for CNNMexico Online, where she now serves as editor of national news, coordinating stringers and correspondents in the covering of the security strategy against drugs of the Mexican government and politics.

⁴ IMF, OCDE, UN, WBG, 2000, A Better World for All: Progress Toward the International Development Goals, p. 4, Washington, DC, 2000.
⁵ Annan, Kofi A., We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century, United Nations, Department of Public Information, New York, 2000.



Afghan children participate in a lesson at their school near a refugee camp on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan. Reports indicate that about 4.5 million Afghan children of school age remain deprived of education, and illiteracy remains widespread. *EPA/S. Sabawoon*

(3)

What Are the MDGs and Who is Involved?

Ernestina Álvarez Guillén

To Hermilio, a working day is no less than 12 hours. In return, he receives a wage that does not guarantee that his two children, who are six and seven years old, have food three times a day, nor does it prevent them having to walk miles to reach the nearest school.

This is the reality in the Cusarare community in Chihuahua, northern Mexico, and in many other parts of the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—which underpin an alliance between governments and society geared at eradicating marginalisation—were created in response to the suffering of Hermilio and the billions of others like him around the world.

Drawn up in 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which contained the MDGs, was originally signed by 189 heads of state and now encompasses all 193 UN member countries. Significantly, signatory nations with greater purchasing power pledged more development assistance to all peoples, through external debt cancellation and the establishment of fairer trade rules, allowing for more equitable economic growth among nations.

In 2010, at the UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, the process of MDG achievement was analysed. With an eye toward 2015, countries were urged to develop action plans and high-impact solutions for areas where the statistics still fell (far) short of the ideal.

The commitment to achieve the Goals by 2015 is a matter not just for those in power, or for underdeveloped governments, but for society as a whole: NGOs, corpora-

tions, educational institutions, and the media should co-operate in a bid to meet the MDG deadline.

Overview of the MDGs (and of the actors working to meet them)

The first goal is to **eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**. According to the most recent UN MDG Report (2012)¹, poverty is on the decline in all regions of the world, and the percentage of individuals living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day has been halved since 1990. But overall progress has been slowed by the global financial crisis that began in 2007, and current projections estimate that 1 billion people (16% of the world's population) will still be living in extreme poverty in 2015.

To respond to the continued challenge of hunger, many governments and organisations have set up food banks and have increased the availability of staple crops to ensure food independence. In some places, in Latin America for example, community cooperatives have been created in order to deal with food shortages during extreme weather conditions, such as drought.

To achieve **universal primary education** is the second goal. Figures in 2010 indicated that 90 percent of primary-age children now attend school, but, here as well, progress is slow. The 2012 UN Report indicated that improvements have dropped considerably since 2004.

While companies and foundations have started building schools, granting scholarships, and offering more in-

¹ <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2012/English2012.pdf>

centives to teachers to work in rural areas, improvement in the quality of instruction is still needed. Governments, meanwhile, have made efforts to increase enrolment at the basic level. Here, it is important to note that assessments of MDG Goal Two by local and international NGOs are more rigorous than governmental ones, as the former measure not only how many children go to school, but also what and how they are taught, and whether knowledge is retained.

The third goal is to **promote gender equality and empower women**. To this end, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) provide advice and support to projects designed to increase gender equity. In several countries, civil-society organisations have been trained to promote legislation to ensure gender equality, and to build community centres for women. As with all the MDGs, civil society and the media are critical to the success of furthering gender equality because they champion and evaluate specific

policies, and also report unacceptable delays in achievement. For example, there are laws that, in certain cases, exonerate the killers of women if the perpetrator is perceived to have acted “in defence of honour”. Journalists can expose such cases while NGOs can lobby legislators to modify the relevant legal statutes.

The fourth goal is to **reduce child mortality**, specifically, to cut the rate of under-five deaths by two-thirds. Urgent measures are still needed here. While several regions, including northern Africa and eastern Asia have seen improvements of more than 50%, sub-Saharan Africa, for example, has seen a reduction of just 30%, according to the most recent UN figures. In addition, statistics indicate that despite general gains in under-five mortality, 23 out of every 1,000 children worldwide still do not survive their first month.

Meeting this target requires global involvement. Anyone and everyone can play a role: even football clubs have joined together to create humanitarian aid programmes

both to deliver food to the world’s poorest households—children born into poverty are far more likely to die early—and to promote sustainable living.

Measurement of the fifth goal, to **reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters**, is difficult, but international agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Bank estimate that 290 maternal deaths occur per 100,000 live births worldwide. In an attempt to reduce this figure, health agencies are working together to encourage expectant mothers to have at least three check-ups during pregnancy. In addition, governments and health-care manufacturers have led joint initiatives to improve maternal health during pregnancy by distributing vitamins and folic acid.

The sixth goal is to **combat HIV, malaria and other diseases**. Although HIV/AIDS infections have declined in sub-Saharan Africa, the changes are minimal in East Asia, Central Asia, and the Caribbean, and in all regions the highest rates of infection are among young people. As a result, governments, civil-society organisations, and entrepreneurs have implemented information campaigns, as well as prevention and detection programmes, including free testing, so that new cases are detected and treated early.

The seventh goal is to **ensure environmental sustainability**. Although deforestation levels continue to be alarming, the number of protected areas is increasing. Meanwhile, to improve environmental sustainability in high-population, low-income areas, the UN has asked countries to conduct censuses among populations living in slums, and to establish realistic goals at the national, regional, and local levels to improve the lives of slum-dwellers. Priority is being given to housing and basic services, such as water and sanitation infrastructure, transport and energy, and health and education, in a bid to halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe water and sanitation. Governments and businesses

are promoting green-home building, the redesign of urban areas, and the promotion of better local jobs to avoid internal migration. The fewer opportunities people have in their community of birth, the greater the potential increase in urban poverty.

Educational institutions have also participated in the design of risk atlases, which chart a variety of risks in local communities and, thereby, encourage relocation in the face of potential natural disasters, and the avoidance of construction in areas where the environment is threatened.

The reduction of debt and the promotion of humanitarian aid are central to the eighth goal, which is to **develop a global partnership for development**. Strong economies are essential to accomplishing this goal but because recent recessions have placed government finances under strain, private initiatives and resource management have become all the more critical.

Achievement of the MDGs requires constant evaluation. Their achievement depends on cooperation and interaction among governments, businesses, civil society and, of course, the media. It is essential to publicise both progress and delays, because when citizens are informed they can exert more powerful demands on government to live up to their development commitments.

Indigenous women laugh during a march to commemorate International Women's Day in Guatemala City, Guatemala in March 2013. The sign reads, “Stop attacks against women.” *EFE/Saúl Martínez*



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MDGs: The Full List of Targets and Indicators

The framework of eight goals approved by the UN General Assembly included 21 targets that could be used as a road map towards implementing the Millennium Declaration. In addition, 60 quantifiable indicators were adopted by a consensus of experts from the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Bank.

The official UN site for the MDGs indicators recommends disaggregating all indicators by sex and geographic location (i.e. urban vs. rural) as far as possible.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1a: Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day

- 1.1 Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP)* per day
- 1.2 Poverty gap ratio
- 1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption

Target 1b: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people

- 1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed
- 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio
- 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day
- 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment

Target 1c: Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

- 1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age
- 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

Editor’s Tip: Be on the lookout for the list of updated MDGs that is currently being developed by a high-level UN Committee. Check out the UNDP section of the book for information on what these new goals might be, keeping in mind that many of the expected themes—sustainable development and good governance—are already covered in this book. And, above all, don’t forget that fulfilling the goals listed here remains as important as ever.

A woman removes small stones from sand through a net near Dhaka, Bangladesh. Thousands of women workers work in different formal and non-formal sectors in Dhaka and many face discrimination and exploitation. EPA/Abir Abdullah

**Purchasing Power Parity: A conversion rate that uses the price of comparable goods and services in different countries*

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Target 2a: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

- 2.1** Net enrolment ratio in primary education
- 2.2** Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary
- 2.3** Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds, women and men

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3a: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

- 3.1** Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- 3.2** Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3** Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Target 4a: Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five

- 4.1** Under-five mortality rate
- 4.2** Infant mortality rate
- 4.3** Proportion of one-year-old children immunised against measles

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Target 5a: Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio

- 5.1** Maternal mortality ratio
- 5.2** Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Target 5b: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

- 5.3** Contraceptive prevalence rate
- 5.4** Adolescent birth rate
- 5.5** Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)
- 5.6** Unmet need for family planning

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Target 6a: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

- 6.1** HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years
- 6.2** Condom use at last high-risk sex
- 6.3** Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive, correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS
- 6.4** Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years

Target 6b: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it

- 6.5** Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to anti-retroviral drugs

Target 6c: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria, and other major diseases

- 6.6** Incidence and death rates associated with malaria
- 6.7** Proportion of children under five sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets
- 6.8** Proportion of children under five with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs
- 6.9** Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
- 6.10** Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 7a: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources

Target 7b: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss

Target 7a and 7b indicators:

- 7.1** Proportion of land area covered by forest
- 7.2** CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP)
- 7.3** Consumption of ozone-depleting substances
- 7.4** Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits
- 7.5** Proportion of total water resources used
- 7.6** Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected
- 7.7** Proportion of species threatened with extinction

Target 7c: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

- 7.8** Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source
- 7.9** Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility

Target 7d: Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

- 7.10** Proportion of urban population living in slums

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 8a: Further develop an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction, both nationally and internationally

Target 8b: Address the special needs of the least-developed countries. Includes tariff- and quota-free access for the least-developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction

Target 8c: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small-island developing states through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly

Target 8d: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures, in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

Targets 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d indicators:

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least-developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small-island developing states

Official development assistance (ODA)

- 8.1** Net ODA, total and to the least-developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors; gross national income

- 8.2** Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)

- 8.3** Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied

- 8.4** ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national income

- 8.5** ODA received in small-island developing states as a proportion of their gross national incomes

Market access

- 8.6** Proportion of total developed-country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least-developed countries, admitted free of duty

- 8.7** Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products, textiles and clothing from developing countries

- 8.8** Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product

- 8.9** Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

Debt sustainability

- 8.10** Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)

- 8.11** Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI initiatives

- 8.12** Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

Target 8e: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

- 8.13** Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

Target 8f: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

- 8.14** Telephone lines per 100 population
- 8.15** Cellular subscribers per 100 population
- 8.16** Internet users per 100 population

(Part 2)

MDG Achievement and the Media— Regional Perspectives presented by the **United Nations (UN) Regional Commissions**

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Men walk up a hill in Paradise Parish, Caracas, Venezuela, one of the city's poorest districts. EFE/Chico Sánchez.

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The MDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Not Pessimistic, but Not Optimistic Either

UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)

A certain cultural similarity based on the experience of European colonisation unites the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Nearly five centuries ago, the Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and Dutch settled in what they called the New World. Today, the region extends from the Rio Grande, at the southern border of the United States, to Antarctica, and unites indigenous and European cultures as well as, in a number of countries, African influences. Naturally, the expanse contains great climatic, economic, linguistic, ethnic, social, and political differences.

This diverse region falls under the mandate of the UN Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which was created to contribute to regional integration, and to economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Regional monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been carefully carried out by ECLAC, working in collaboration with other agencies inside the UN system. In 2005 and 2010, respectively, ECLAC published reports on the advances and difficulties related to the achievement of the MDGs; in addition, ECLAC prepares annual thematic reports on poverty, health, gender, and environmental sustainability.

As a general conclusion, it can be stated that the MDGs succeeded in awakening the global conscience on questions of development and the need to eradicate extreme poverty. They also influenced the development agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, as evi-

denced by the acceleration of progress since 2000. This is particularly relevant in a region in which inequality and poverty remain major challenges.

Two-and-a-half years ahead of the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, there are three important points of progress in Latin America and the Caribbean: a reduction in extreme poverty, malnutrition, and infant mortal-

*In Latin America and the Caribbean—where regional progress overshadows intranational differences—covering **development heterogeneity** is key.*

ity; advances in universal access to primary education; and improvements in access to potable water and basic sanitation. These targets will be met.

Insufficient progress has been noted in alleviating hunger, promoting gender equality in employment and national legislatures, and reducing maternal mortality rates. These targets will likely not be met.

The region is still far from guaranteeing environmental sustainability, and significant challenges to fulfilling Goal Seven (environmental sustainability) remain. Although the consumption of substances that damage the ozone layer has decreased, the Latin America and the Caribbean region registers high levels of deforestation, and carbon dioxide emissions in the region continue to grow. The goal of halting the processes of environmental destruction and protecting biodiversity has not been achieved.

Furthermore, the “partnership for development” specified by MDG Goal Eight has not been established due to a lack of commitment from developed countries regarding the creation of an international trade and financial system that would allow for a fairer development process.

As a whole, the Latin America and the Caribbean region appears to have a more advantageous position in comparison with other developing areas of the world. However, the disaggregated analysis (between and within individual countries) reveals large disparities. These include inequalities in the distribution of income.

On one hand, in the past two decades, the number of people living in poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean has decreased from 48.4% in 1990 to 30.4% in 2011. Extreme

growth and generate jobs, but the region faces two important challenges: high informality and low productivity.

There are differences in terms of the existing financial situations in the region’s countries, but some, particularly in the Caribbean, face severe restrictions that will make funding social policies difficult. In addition, it is expected that there will be a decrease in official development assistance, which will affect the poorest countries in particular.

It is clear that efforts must continue in order to meet the MDGs.

ECLAC has sought to identify best practices and successful experiences that have been used to achieve the MDGs in the region. Among them are the conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes in operation in 18 countries, covering 19.3% of the region’s total population and benefiting more than 25 million families (113 million persons). These programmes required an average investment of just 0.4% of each country’s gross domestic product, according to 2009 figures. It

is clear that the transfers are insufficient to overcome poverty in a sustainable way. To do so requires implementing new public policies and instituting structural change. But they represent a step forward.

In any case, there is great uncertainty surrounding the economic situation of the next two-and-a-half years (until 2015), which has made the task of accelerating the advance toward the achievement of the MDGs more complicated.

MDGs and the media in Latin America and the Caribbean

In media coverage of the MDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a tendency to treat topics related to the MDGs with depth and frequency but without necessarily referring to the acronym itself or to the commitment declared by world leaders in 2000.

The media reproduces a large amount of information originating from various actors, such as the UN, national

*Articles reflecting the **everyday struggles** of the region’s people ... will help encourage societies and decision-makers in Latin America and the Caribbean to prioritise the MDG agenda.*

poverty, or destitution, decreased by nearly ten percentage points, from 22.6% in 1990 to 12.8%, respectively. Employment increased in quantity and improved in quality.

On the other, however, it must be noted that progress of countries with lower per-capita incomes has been slower than that of the more developed states in the region. In countries where poverty is highest (Plurinational State of Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Paraguay), advances between 2008 and 2011 were limited, and difficulties are anticipated in achieving MDG Goal One.

Overall, the past twenty years have been good to the region. So much so that there has been an unprecedented improvement in income distribution, thanks to redistributive policies and a better sharing of earnings. For the first time in history, inequality is down and the Gini coefficient (a statistical measure of income distribution) is up in 18 countries.

The global economic crisis that exploded in 2008 applied a brake to the rhythm of advancement toward the MDGs. Palliative measures introduced in 2009 helped encourage



A young man works among trees recently planted as part of a reforestation project near Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Every hour, 48 hectares of forest are lost in Central America to deforestation. *EFE/Gustavo Amador*

governments, and civil society. Often, this information is gathered via informative reports, the celebration of international advocacy days, or declarations made by specialists.

Community media, independent media, and even international news agencies have given more and more mention in their coverage to development themes such as poverty, gender inequality, and environmental sustainability, associating them with the achievement of the MDGs.

However, few journalists make the effort to provide specialised coverage of the MDGs or delve into the reality that is hidden, for example, behind statistics of national averages. In Latin America and the Caribbean—where regional progress overshadows intranational differences—covering development heterogeneity is key.

In the past few years, there has been a regional effort to strengthen the capacity of local governments to address the MDGs, but there has been only fledgling coverage of this programme's results in the media.

It is important to sensitise media professionals about the need to improve the quantity and quality of coverage of the MDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean, which should include articles reflecting the everyday struggles of the region's people. Doing so will help encourage societies and decision-makers in Latin America and the Caribbean to prioritise the MDG agenda.

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A woman leans on her broom in front of her hut in a shantytown inhabited by Roma or Gypsy people in Baia Mare, Romania. EPA/Zsolt Czegledi

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The MDGs in Europe and Central Asia: Journalists, Apply Within

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) membership consists of 56 states in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and North America. The region as a whole is characterised by high levels of economic and human development. However, the regional averages on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) progress mask considerable disparities between countries and within countries. Therefore, making economic growth more inclusive and sustainable, and adopting social protection systems and policies that reduce social and economic gaps is an imperative for all countries of the region.

The number of UNECE countries expanded considerably during the post-1990 period, which saw the break-up of three federations in the region (Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia) followed by the formation of new nation states. These newly independent states, as well as other former communist countries and Turkey, are considered to be UNECE emerging market economies. They gather 10 post-communist EU member states (NMS), 12 post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), and 7 states of South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Some 472 million people live in the 3 sub-regions, including 102 million in the NMS (including 38 million in Poland), 276 million in the EECCA (of which 142 million live in Russia), and about 94 million in the SEE (including 72 million in Turkey).

¹ More information on the MDGs in Europe and Central Asia, including access to the UNECE MDG reports and online MDG database, can be found at www.unece.org/mdg/welcome/mdgs-in-the-unece-region.html. A number of national MDG reports can be found on various UNDP websites, including http://hdr.undp.org/xmlsearch/reportSearch?&k=&t=MDGs_and_international_cooperation:MDGs&orderby=year&lang=en&y=*&c=n&p=1

The UNECE 2011 report on the Millennium Development Goals¹ finds that despite having achieved relatively low levels of extreme poverty and nearly universal access to primary education, a number of emerging economies of the region are still faced with the challenge of improving outcomes in the following areas: gender

*Key obstacles to more rapid MDG progress in the region include **slow growth of employment and productivity, uneven distribution of income, and social exclusion of vulnerable population groups, such as the Roma in Europe and indigenous populations in Europe, Central Asia, and North America.***

equality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, and environmental sustainability. In addition, some of these economies have to improve significantly the quality of education in order to increase potential growth of national income. Advanced economies of the region need to intensify their efforts to contribute to a global partnership for development. Key obstacles to more rapid MDG progress in the region include slow growth of employment and productivity, uneven distribution of income, and social exclusion of vulnerable population groups, such as the Roma in Europe and indigenous populations in Europe, Central Asia, and North America. The 2011 report includes a special chapter on the situation of the Roma, one of the largest ethnic minorities (10-12 million people) in Europe. On most of the MDG indicators for poverty, health, gender, housing, and education, the Roma are substantially worse off than the rest of the population. The special chapter addresses key challenges and opportunities associated with the social inclusion of Roma. The report provides a comprehensive statistical annex with detailed information about the evolution of MDG-relevant indicators.

Initial conditions and national circumstances must be taken into account as countries adapt the global goals and targets to their specific situation (i.e. that not all goals and targets are to be realised in exactly the same form by all countries). Nearly all UNECE emerging economies have

² Gender equality and environmental sustainability have also not been achieved by advanced economies of the region.



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Albanian women blow whistles during demonstrations for women's rights and female quotas in Parliament on International Women's Day in Tirana, Albania, on March 8, 2013. EPA/Armando Babani

published at least one official national MDG report. Reporting is less frequent for countries that have joined the European Union in the 2000s and are now considered developed. Most countries have produced two or more reports, and 15 countries have published reports as recently as 2009 or 2010. In most cases these official national reports were made in close cooperation with agencies of the United Nations in the country. There are, however, cases where UN agencies could not support the national report due to the unreliability of its content, and in order to distance themselves from any controversial data and/or statements that may have been included in the document.

In general, national statistical agencies provided the bulk of data for national MDG reports. Unfortunately,

in most cases the national statistical agencies were not directly involved in the production of the reports. Only a few countries have a dedicated and freely accessible MDG website. For some of the official international MDG indicators, more data is available than shown in these reports. The status of such additional indicators in national monitoring is unclear.

The Great Recession of 2007-2009 and the following period of financial turmoil in the Eurozone have set back the achievement of the MDGs throughout the region. Marginalised groups have been hit harder by unemployment, income losses, and reduced accessibility of health services than the majority population. MDG progress could be accelerated at minimal cost if the social and eco-

nomic policies of governments would focus on improving the living standards of these disadvantaged groups.

The press and the MDGs in the UNECE region

The press coverage of MDGs in Western Europe is far from satisfactory. So-called “progressive” or “left-leaning” newspapers tend to focus almost exclusively on MDG issues in remote developing countries while ignoring, to a large extent, the poverty, social exclusion, and health issues closer to home, i.e. in post-communist EU member states, and transition economies in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In contrast, the “reactionary” or “right-wing” press contributes significantly to the creation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes of socially excluded groups such as the Roma, poor migrants, and displaced persons. Such stereotypes undermine the MDG progress achieved to date and prevent disadvantaged groups from accessing good jobs, decent education, and adequate health services. Last but not least, the coverage of MDGs in “mainstream” media usually consists of short reports on achieving various MDG targets at the global level. The reporting of MDG-related issues in Europe (e.g. the plight of the Roma) in the “mainstream” press is balanced but not frequent.

As far as the emerging economies of Europe and Central Asia are concerned, there is hardly any objective press coverage of MDG issues. Similarly, as in the Western boulevard press, marginalised groups are usually portrayed negatively as criminals or social parasites without any attempt to analyse their problems or search for equitable solutions. Moreover, the media in a number of emerging economies in Europe and Central Asia are subjected to various restrictions that make meaningful reporting on MDG issues practically impossible (e.g. in some of these countries governments regard any information about social problems of disadvantaged minorities as subversive because it could, allegedly, threaten national unity, etc.). Generally, the freedom of the press in the region seems to correlate with the success of transition from central planning and one-party rule to markets and representative democracy.

In conclusion, the press coverage of MDG issues in Europe and Central Asia should become more comprehensive in the sense that it would accurately describe relevant facts and trends, provide an analysis of underlying factors, and contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed targets.

Free press, or more generally independent media, provides society with the access to uncensored information

Free press, or more generally independent media, provides society with the access to uncensored information that enables it to hold governments accountable for their actions.

that enables it to hold governments accountable for their actions. It is also considered to be a universal human right that should be respected by all UN members. The path-breaking Human Development Report of 1990 began with a definition of human development as a process of ‘enlarging people’s choices’. Such choices should be informed.

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The MDGs in Africa: Reporting on the MDGs— It's in Our Own Best Interest

UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Less than three years before the 2015 target deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is common to note that Africa might not achieve most of them.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) MDG Report 2012 states that while Africa's progress toward the MDGs is 'gaining momentum', the continent remains off-track on more than half of the goals. In

On the other hand, emerging issues, such as sustainable development, human development and security, climate change, and food security have become central to current development thinking.

In this light, UNECA, together with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Development Programme–Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP–RBA) have indicated consensus for an “MDG plus” agenda.

Writing about specific MDG targets helps to keep stakeholders accountable for their commitments and can help give journalists critical experience in writing good economic and development stories.

sub-Saharan Africa, \$1.25-a-day poverty declined from 56.5% to 47.5% between 1990 and 2008, but child malnutrition and maternal mortality rates are not improving quickly enough. In areas where partial successes can be claimed—such as gender equality and universal primary education—significant challenges remain.

What comes next is anyone's guess, but what we can expect is that the post-2015 agenda will revisit the MDGs and recast them in view of present-day development realities.

On the one hand, the MDGs remain some of the most comprehensive global commitments ever to focus on improving the social condition of the human race, especially the condition of those living in resource-poor settings.

Within this context, it is essential that information and communication goals, such as freedom of expression, access to new information and communication technologies, and the promotion of democratic values, assume their rightful place. These aspects, although they were not

taken into account when the MDGs were agreed upon in 2000, are central to creating the environment necessary to meeting MDG targets.

MDGs as sources of news ideas

From the point of view of a newsroom reporter, the list of MDGs offers an inexhaustible news agenda for all who want to engage in detailed and sustainable coverage of Africa's development agenda.

More importantly, writing about specific MDG targets helps to keep stakeholders accountable for their commitments and can help give journalists critical experience in writing good economic and development stories.

Women and children take shelter inside a school near Maputo, Mozambique after heavy flooding. EPA/Antonio Silva



Journalists and development-agency communication officers alike need to do four things in order to strategically and effectively cover the MDGs in Africa:

- **Attain** a clear understanding of the MDGs and their targets
- **Find out** what it would take for the government, the donors, and the international community, respectively, to achieve each one of the goals
- **Cultivate** the desire and ability to assess progress in a constructive manner
- **Develop** the ability to identify challenges

Development planners have often faulted African editors for not doing enough to support development initiatives on the continent. During a recent media workshop organised by The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an official challenged the media on its believed lack of development stories:

'How do you in the media explain the fact that your newspaper columns are slew with sports and political rallies, when nothing is written about the hundreds of rural women in our countries who die each month while giving birth? Why is it that you reporters are not interested in the thousands of girls who drop out of primary school each year?'

Holistic approach

The official raised some serious and legitimate concerns. Take, for example, the continued tragedy of rural women who die during childbirth. News reports about the topic, especially in resource-poor countries, such as Niger or Burkina Faso,¹ would unfortunately hardly ever make it to the front page of the national newspapers.

Even if a story did manage to raise awareness, however, in order to have a chance of contributing towards addressing the issue of high maternal mortality within the respective community, it would have to address factors influencing fertility rates, as well as an array of other development problems, ranging from the lack of timely medical attention for women in labour to transportation from their homes to an equipped health facility. The 2012 MDG Report notes, for instance, that 'almost one in four women in Africa who wish to space or delay their next pregnancy cannot do so because of lack of access to contraceptives'.

Additionally, there is the issue of availability of trained medical personnel to proceed with a Caesarean section, if needed, to save the life of the woman and possibly that of her baby.

If a news story touches on all or most of these problems and the government is responsive to public opinion, then the story could have an impact on maternal mortality after the necessary investments are made.

While there are plenty of other examples related to different MDG targets, what is important is that the media realise that it has a substantive role to play in the implementation of the MDG commitments that goes beyond the simple reproduction of press releases on different development projects.

A combination of news reports, graphics, and outdoor and modern multimedia initiatives is much more likely to elicit positive reaction and commitment to work towards achieving the MDGs than a basic news transmission.

Seeking the right story angle

The rest is about how to get the right angle on a particular story. Capturing the right perspective is important for ensuring that development reporting helps to keep governments accountable and contributes to meeting the MDGs.

Journalists should always bear in mind that the ultimate purpose of a good news story on the MDGs is, as much as possible, to elicit a response—positive or negative—from the different audiences and constituencies with a stake in the MDGs, including local communities, the primary beneficiaries of development.



¹ The Maternal Mortality Ratio in these countries is 590 and 300 per 100,000 live births, respectively (Source: www.data.worldbank.org)

For example, developed countries often place conditions on development assistance designed to foster achievement of the MDGs. On the occasion of the signing of such loan agreements, it would make sense for reporters to go beyond the actual event and undertake an investigative report or write a series of stories on the impact of the loans on the locals. Of course, it is also a good idea for journalists to cover in depth the negotiating phase of such loan agreements rather than just coming in to report on the signing ceremony.

Also among the objectives of the MDGs is empowering women. Though there has been notable progress in the primary education rates of girls and representation of women in national parliaments, levels of domestic abuse and sexual violence remain high, and are even on the rise in some countries. Unfortunately, these latter issues get treated in the local media as simple misdeeds, rather than as obstacles to development.

Similarly, journalists can focus on honest governmental efforts to stem HIV transmission, even when infection rates in a particular country remain high. Positive publicity can

Global links and pressures play an important role in the MDGs. Following the adoption of the MDGs, many international organisations began to judge the seriousness of African governments with regards to the attention the latter paid to their AIDS-fighting programmes. In fact, some organisations made debt cancellation “conditional” on progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the promotion of universal primary education.

Each year, \$50 billion² is believed to be illegally taken out of Africa and stashed away in developed countries. That figure is higher than the average total Official Development Assistance (ODA) that Africa receives annually from the international community, including China. That money would be enough pave roads, build health centres, train nurses and midwives, and provide free primary education to millions of children across the continent.

At a media workshop ahead of the Eighth African Development Forum (ADF VIII) in October 2012, representatives of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, using the tagline “Track it. Stop it. Get it”, urged journalists to investigate the flow of illicit funds from Africa, emphasising the link between media and citizen empowerment.

News from annual economic reports

The news media mostly covers the MDGs when a new report is launched or when there is a meeting or visit by development officials. However, even this coverage tends to be just

a summary of the event, focusing on the speeches, with just a few lines on the actual report findings. In any case, there are plenty of other sources for reporters to find information on the MDGs.

UNECA, together with development partners such as the AUC and the African Development Bank (AfDP), publishes a yearly report that assesses performances by African countries relative to different MGD targets.

There are other sectoral reports also published by other UN agencies. Similarly, UNECA produces several reports each year on different development themes; some of the most recent ones are highly relevant to the MDGs³.

These sources all provide a wealth of information and take relevant MDG targets as a starting point. These reports contain facts and figures that are often easily forgotten after the launch ceremony, but that could inspire dozens of effective news stories.

Another important place to look is the *African Statistical Yearbook*, a joint publication of UNECA, the AUC, and the AfDP. Pick up any edition of the Yearbook, and be surprised by the number of new story ideas that could be developed from the numerous figures!

Ultimately, whatever the challenges the media might face in its effort to report on the MDGs, the trouble is worthwhile. After all, the development of newspapers and broadcasters is invariably a function of the social and economic conditions of the people they serve.

In covering the MDG goals, African reporters and editors have the chance to motivate, guide, inspire, and hold-accountable governments, donors, and international organisations who committed to the MDGs. But writing about the MDGs is not a just a chance for journalists to promote development initiatives—it is also in their own best interest.

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Ultimately, whatever the challenges the media might face in its effort to report on the MDGs, the trouble is worthwhile. After all, the development of newspapers and broadcasters is invariably a function of the social and economic conditions of the people they serve.

help bring critical development assistance in what the MDG Report 2012 called an ‘uncertain funding environment’, despite progress in key HIV indicators across Africa.

MDGs and diplomacy

Focused reporting on international relations related to the achievements of the MDGs is a valuable niche that the African media has yet to explore.



Nigerian farmer Eric Dooh holds up his hand, covered with oil from a creek near Goi Ogoniland, Nigeria. According to a UN report, leaks in oil pipelines in Nigeria occur regularly, causing harm to communities in the Niger Delta region. EPA/Marten van Dijk

² Jannet Abdoulie, presenting the 2012 Report of the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness (MRDE) to the 27th Meeting of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) in Addis Ababa on 14 July 2012.

³ They include: Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20; Progress towards Sustainable Development in Africa; New and Emerging Challenges in Africa. Summary Report; A Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication; Institutional and Strategic Frameworks for Sustainable Development. Full report; The African Social Development Review 2011; African Youth Report 2011; The African Gender and Development Index 2011; Africa Governance Report II; Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IV; Economic Report on Africa 2012; MDG Report 2012; Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness 2011 Interim Report; Framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa; and Land policy in Africa: framework to strengthen land rights, enhance productivity and secure livelihoods. They are all available on www.uneca.org

A photograph of a young man with dark skin and short hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a reddish-brown shirt. The background is a light-colored, textured wall with some dark, abstract markings or graffiti. The lighting is soft, coming from the side, highlighting his face.

(8)

The MDGs in the Arab States: A Region at a Crossroads

*UN Economic Commission and Social Commission
for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)*

I. MDG achievement in the Arab States

Review of progress of Arab States needs to be undertaken within the understanding and context of a region that is at a crossroads in a period of unheralded transition.

The Arab Millennium Goals Report 2011¹ is the most recent and comprehensive assessment of progress to date for the region.

The report states that due to different levels of human development (and income) and diversity in the region, an assessment of progress using specialised criteria is necessary. It is for this reason that the report assesses the current status of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) attainment in four major subgroups, with countries living under special and difficult conditions related to occupation, war, and conflict added in a separate subgroup:

1. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
2. The Mashreq
3. The Maghreb
4. The Arab Least-Developed Countries (LDCs)
5. Countries living under special and difficult conditions related to occupation, war, and conflict

In addition, the report aligns MDGs with on-going transition in the Arab region, researches the correlation between development goals and the political transition, and outlines a subjective correlation between both.

It states that although the MDGs did not inspire demonstrations and protests across the region, they are reflected in the issues and slogans central to them, quoting Freedom, Justice and Dignity as recurring calls by protesters in these countries.

In assessing progress to date, the report outlines priority action areas ahead of 2014.

GCC countries

The priority for higher-income countries, such as the GCC, includes the need to adapt MDGs at the national level and to set development goals, achievement levels, and indicators compliant with national characteristics and agendas. This is especially applicable for MDGs One, Two, Four, Five, and Six, where there are advanced levels of achievement almost comparable to advanced industrial countries. In terms of existing gaps and problems, priority should be given to the third goal, related to the empowerment of women, and to the seventh goal, related

A man from the marginalised and impoverished Akhdam community sits in a slum in Sana'a, Yemen. EPA/Yahya Arhab

² <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/pubaction.asp?PubID=1226>

to environment and sustainability. Also, the eighth goal is of importance regarding the establishment of a regional cooperation strategy for development, the achievement of the MDGs in Arab countries, and for the GCC countries to play a regional role in this field. In addition, GCC countries need to address the issue of economic diversification, labour market problems, and economic and social sustainability from a strategic and long-term perspective.

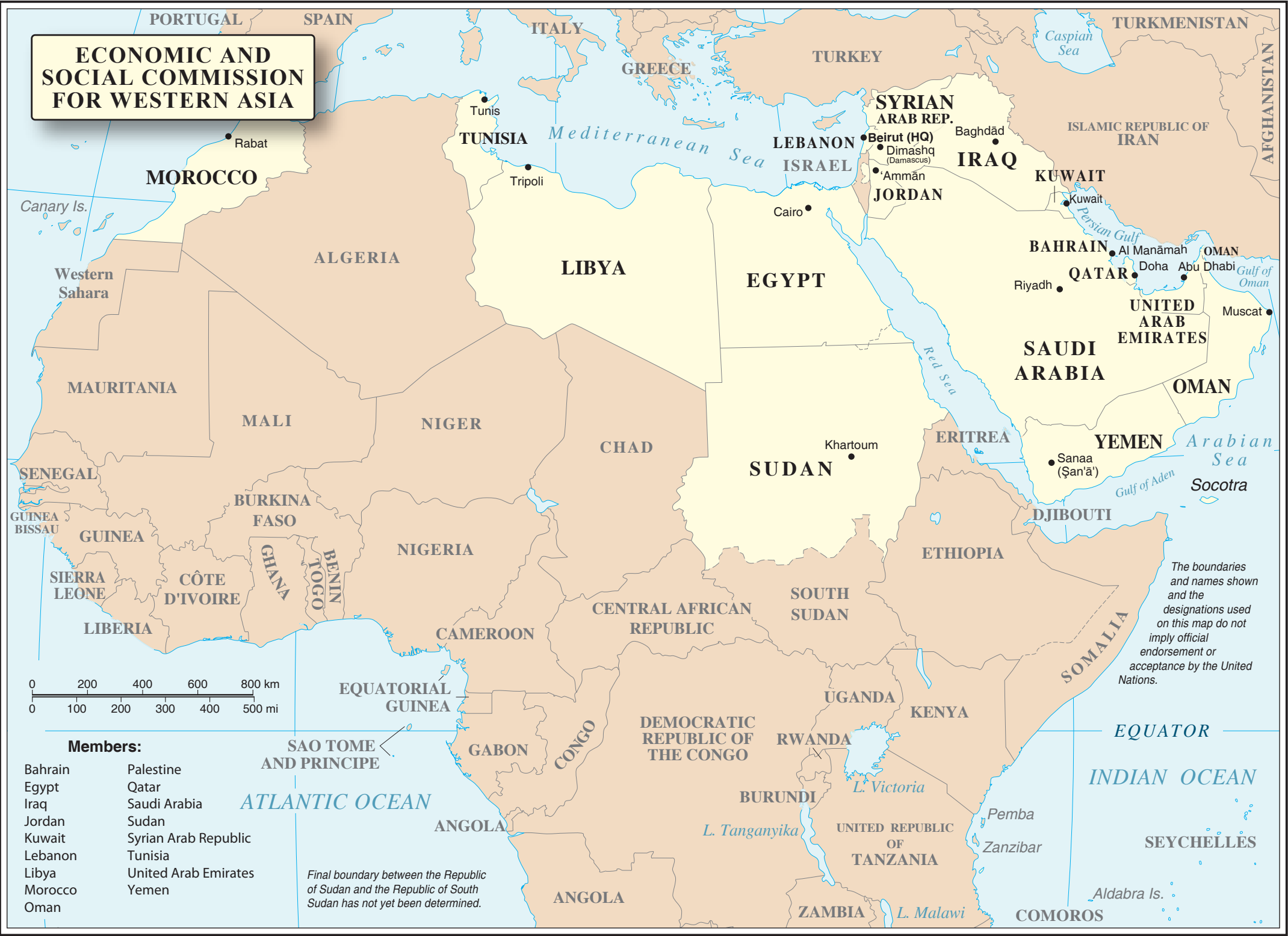
Mashreq and Maghreb countries

The report outlines priorities for middle-income countries of the Mashreq and Maghreb, which include the need to adapt the MDGs at the national level, and set achievement goals and levels, as well as indicators, that are consistent with national characteristics and priorities. Adaptation should include qualitative aspects and specify higher levels of achievement, particularly where education—a focus issue for the group—is concerned. Within education, (and in Morocco in particular) there are diverse problems related to quantitative gaps in enrolment and to poor internal performance.

The priorities of adaptation regarding other goals vary according to each country. In terms of existing gaps and problems, priority should be given to the first goal, ideally by targeting unemployment, the right to decent work and poverty alleviation (which is strongly linked to problems of regional and social disparities). The third goal, related to empowerment, and the seventh goal, related to environment and sustainability should also take precedence. Regarding health and education, the priority is health coverage and the cost of education, in addition to the issue of non-contagious diseases.

Countries living under special and difficult conditions related to occupation, war, and conflict

The report notes that countries living under special and difficult conditions related to occupation, war, and conflict generally suffer from problems including (i) human and physical losses resulting from war or military acts, (ii) resource scarcity, (iii) glaring disparities in priorities set globally based on the MDGs framework, and the priorities of the region under conditions of conflict of occupation, (iv) weakness or instability of institutions hampering planning and executive aspects of the development process, (v) severe internal polarisation between the social classes or between regions, rendering building



alliances for development difficult, and (vi) suffering from weakness, fragmentation, or even an absence of the government capacity to control national resources.

Revisiting the current development framework

In the medium to long term, the report proposes to revisit the current development framework and set in motion the much needed political and governance reforms in the region by:

1. Including governance reform as a key driver and manifestation of development success based on participation, accountability, and institutional effectiveness, as demanded by the Arab popular uprisings;
2. Including sub-national inequality as a key driver and manifestation of development failures by disaggregating data on the development goals according to gender, geography, minorities, and income groups, among others;
3. Including measures to monitor quality of services on health and education as opposed to merely using quantitative aspects;
4. Rethinking poverty monitoring by redefining poverty measurements to truly reflect the national contexts based on national multi-dimensional poverty measures and on national poverty lines;
5. And adopting a nationally tailored approach to setting the global goals, so that they are context specific.

The report argues that a new, nationally driven development framework will better provide the critical means through which policy coherence across targets can be achieved, by identifying and enhancing how different policies contribute to different objectives; by dealing with equity concerns (including gender equality concerns); and by focusing and providing assistance to the most vulnerable populations. This new framework will be the outcome of a broad-based consultation and participation, voluntary civic engagement, and ownership across all major stakeholders in the Arab countries.

Critiquing the MDGs

There is also the need to undertake a critique of the MDGs themselves. Firstly, the process through which the MDGs were created resulted in their being disassociated with the Millennium Declaration, of which the MDGs were originally an annex with primary focus on the implementation of the roadmap outlined in the declaration.

This disassociation resulted in the lack of focus on governance and human rights, and peace and disarmament in MDGs, all of which cover major fault lines in the Arab region. Secondly, the MDGs were designed and are being implemented and monitored using a fragmented, sectorial approach. Thirdly, the pursuit of the MDGs has been hampered by lack of tailoring, adaptation, and integration to national development plans. And fourthly, the regional dimensions of the MDGs continue to be weak. It has been the practice for countries in the region to have national MDG plans that are then elevated to be in line with global MDG implementation without a regional context.

II. How the press is covering the MDGs in the region

UN-ESCWA is tackling the issue of how the media handles the MDGs from two angles: the first is the way the media has tended to cover MDGs, and the second is how the media has been involved in the MDG process in Arab countries.

Media coverage of the MDGs

Initially, the media's approach to the MDGs differed by country and was characterised by certain gaps that mirrored those in the MDG process itself. Main development partners in Arab countries dealt with the MDGs in a partial and fragmented way, both at a country and regional level. In general, emphasis was placed on isolated goals (mainly education, maternal health, CO2 emissions, etc.), whereas the MDGs ought to have been treated as one integrated package, incorporated as a whole into national development plans. This approach is among the main weaknesses that have characterised the worldwide approach to the MDGs, and that were subject to criticism during the United Nations High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Summit) held in New York in 2010, and in the UN Secretary-General Report at the 2012 Rio Summit.

This was reflected in the media's coverage of MDGs progress. National reporters in each country followed up on individual issues, and published articles and reportages on issues linked to separate goals or targets, without necessarily mentioning the MDG framework or the Millennium Declaration. The coverage of MDGs per se was mostly done through the launch of national MDG

reports, and research was presented in news stories that may publish some part of the official report, with special focus on the most sensational figures. Occasionally, some interviews might be conducted with officials or those who drafted the report. Governments, being mostly concerned with illustrating achievements, affected the coverage itself, while, on the other hand, media outlets siding with the opposition highlighted shocking figures for the public (such as high poverty rates and discrimination against women, the two most promoted issues in this regard).

On a regional level, the media covered the MDG reports issued by international institutions (especially ESCWA): three reports issued by the United Nations (2005, 2007-2008, and 2010), one report issued by UNDP (2003-2004) and one report by ESCWA (2011). In this case, the media covered the launch and the conferences that revealed the main results. Arab media followed with some interest the three Arab Social and Economic Summits (Kuwait 2009, Egypt 2011, and Saudi Arabia 2013), all of which included MDG achievement on their agendas, forming the most comprehensive official Arab platform that addressed the MDGs. Coverage in these cases was greater than usual, given the high-level official political representation at the meetings. However, the approach to the MDGs remained limited, which affected the media coverage, focusing on certain economic resolutions adopted at the summits, consigning the social aspect—MDGs included—to a secondary position, both at the summits and in the media.

Involving media in the MDG process

The media coverage of the MDGs, then, mostly focused on news and activities. However, the Arab region was characterised by several initiatives that encouraged the involvement of media institutions and journalists as partners and full participants in the activities of the MDG process in the Arab region. By contributing to advocacy and monitoring efforts, and by promoting awareness of the goals and a public demand for their adoption, the media could be pivotal in enabling MDG achievement in the region. This partnership also aimed at bridging the gap between media figures, civil-society organisations, and international and official parties.

There is a regional initiative that illustrates best the cooperation between international organisations, journalists, and CSOs. An on-going common regional project was launched at the end of 2005, and in this context a relatively large number of training workshops was held with the participation of media and journalists as partners and participants. The project produced MDG training material that targeted journalists and media officers in CSOs (and others). The first part of these activities (between the end of 2005 and 2008) included 12 training workshops that gathered 255 participants from 20 out of 22 Arab countries. Media representatives accounted for 12 percent of these participants. Out of these 12 workshops, three used the media and MDG training unit.

This figure represents only one aspect of the work, since the project is still underway (ESCWA is leading in partnership with the Arab NGO Network for Development and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)). Additional training, promotion,

By contributing to advocacy and monitoring efforts, and by promoting awareness of the goals and a public demand for their adoption, the media could be pivotal in enabling MDG achievement in the region.

and assessment activities for the MDGs were implemented with strong links with media. It is noteworthy to mention that throughout these activities, the interaction between media figures and other partners was very helpful and welcome. All participating media figures produced either written, radio, or TV reportages on the MDGs in their respective media outlets, honouring a vow they made during their training.

III. Closing remarks

The experience noted in the previous paragraph draws attention to the imperative of dealing with the media and its development role differently than the traditional approach. Culture is an essential component of sustainable human development, and a key aspect of any development strategy. Achieving the MDGs in a harmonised and stable fashion cannot be fathomed in the absence of a cultural turn on the levels of knowledge, values, and attitudes, nor in the absence of a strong drive of the public, and of large


A malnourished child looks on as she waits for treatment at a therapeutic feeding centre in Sana'a, Yemen in Aug. 2012.
EPA/Yahya Arhab

communities in this direction. None of this can be achieved without the media. It also goes without saying that media plays a big role in monitoring, follow-up, critical examination, accountability, and transparency.

Media outlets and figures must, therefore, be regarded as partners with full rights and duties, alongside their role of traditional journalistic coverage. This also means finding a new balance between the role of journalists in the coverage of a given event, their role in examining the background, the underlying reasons behind each event and the problems it mirrors, their commitment as citizens to human rights and development goals, and their efforts as individuals, through the institutions they work in, to promote their part in building a development culture and effective citizen awareness of development achievement.

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Media outlets and figures must, therefore, be regarded as partners (in MDG achievement) with full rights and duties, alongside their role of traditional journalistic coverage.

A young boy with dark hair and a yellow and patterned shirt is sitting in front of a wall made of woven bamboo strips. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The wall behind him is made of many thin, vertical bamboo strips woven together in a complex pattern. The lighting is natural, coming from the side, casting soft shadows.

A young boy sits outside the door of his makeshift house in a cemetery that is home to approximately 40 families of squatters in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. EPA/Stephen Morrison

(9)

The MDGs in Asia and the Pacific: Help Wanted in Fast-Tracking Progress

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

The Asia and Pacific region has taken big steps in reducing poverty and is moving fast towards other development goals. But it still has high levels of hunger, as well as child and maternal mortality, according to the latest assessment of regional progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The region has already met the first target included in MDG Goal One—to halve the incidence of poverty, reducing between 1990 and 2009 the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 per day from 50 to 22 per cent.

It is also on-track to meet some other MDG indicators ahead of the target year of 2015—including promoting gender equality in education, reducing HIV prevalence, stopping the spread of tuberculosis, increasing forest cover, reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.

While dynamic economic growth has driven the region’s success in poverty reduction, even the fast-growing Asia-Pacific countries continue to have high levels of mortality for children under five years old. Across the region, over three million children died before their fifth birthday in 2012 alone. Moreover, thousands of mothers continue to die annually from causes related to childbirth.

Though the number of people without access to potable water in the region fell from 856 million to 466 million between 1990 and 2008, the Asia-Pacific region still accounts for more than half of the world's population lacking safe drinking water.

The ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Asia-Pacific MDG Report 2011/12, entitled “Accelerating Equitable Achievement of the MDGs: Closing the Gaps in Health and Nutrition in Asia and the Pacific”, warns that at the present rate of progress, the region as a whole is unlikely to meet MDG targets related to eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, among others.

Half of the region's countries found to be off-track in terms of child mortality can reach the MDG target by preventing just two under-five deaths per 1,000 children annually.

Sharp disparities by geographic location and social group

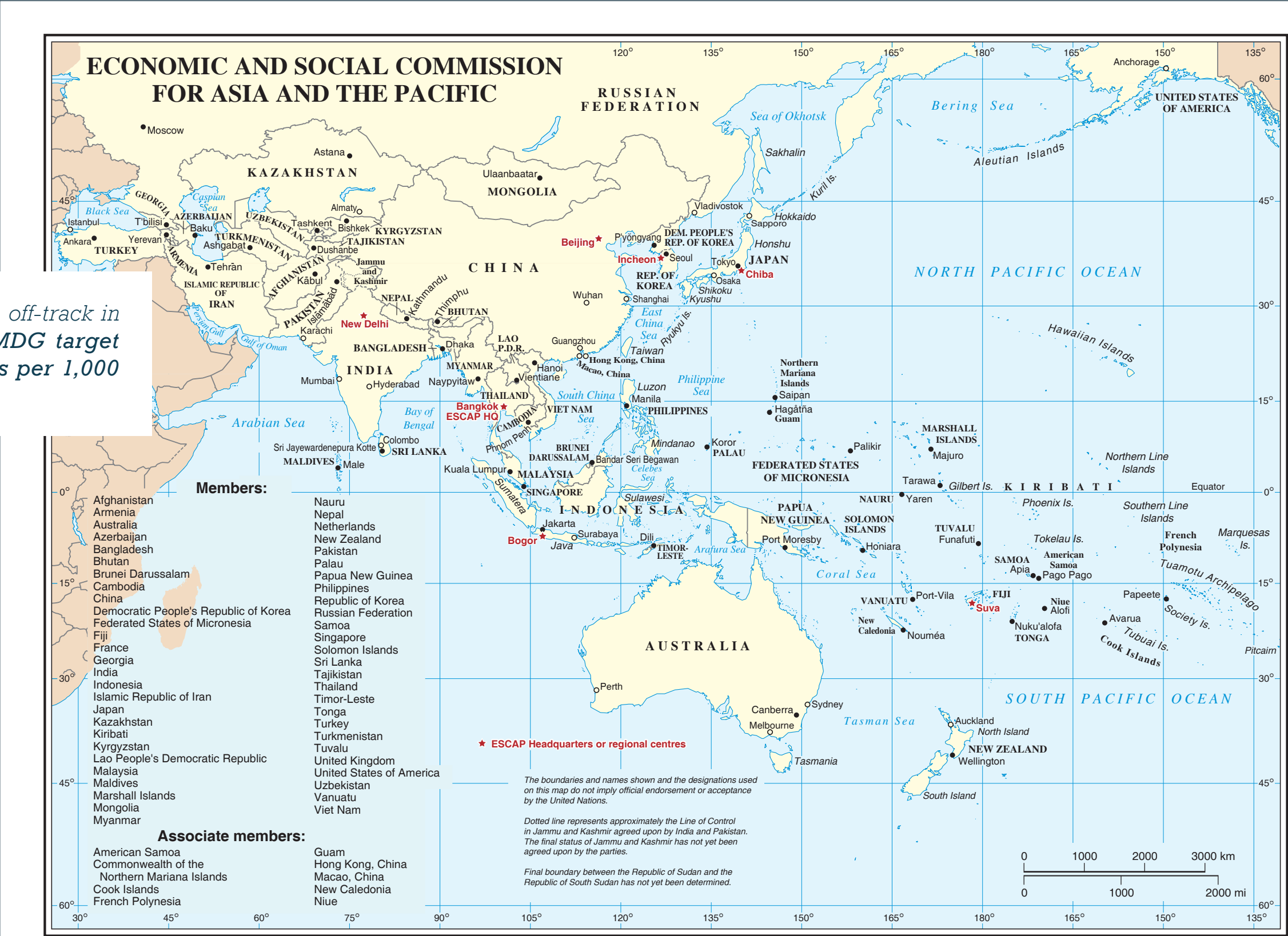
The report reveals striking disparities between and within sub-regions, countries and even social groups in their progress towards the MDGs. While South Asia as a whole is on track for just nine MDG indicators, Sri Lanka is on track for 15 indicators and outperforms the rest of the sub-region.

Within individual countries, disparities in MDG target achievement among genders, ethnicities, and regions mean that large sections of the population are falling short of development goals.

Why some countries do better

While the report confirms that health spending is important, it also indicates that the quality of health-related services and good governance are just as significant in terms of attaining better health outcomes. For instance, research shows that countries with greater success in curbing corruption achieve better health-related progress.

Other factors, such as women’s literacy and education levels, access to clean water, improved sanitation, and





While there is mainstream media reporting on development issues—including hunger, poverty, health, and social empowerment—the term MDG is rarely mentioned.

An Afghan woman who was allegedly burnt by her male relatives receives medical treatment at a local hospital in Herat, Afghanistan on March 29, 2011. *EPA/Jalil Rezayee*

better roads and other infrastructure also play a crucial role in improving public health.

If governments are to raise health standards, they will have to focus much more sharply on the needs of the poor and vulnerable, the report indicates. Gains in healthcare quality will require interventions not only in the health-care sector, but also, and more importantly, in related domains, such as water quality, nutrition, education, and gender empowerment.

Fast-tracking progress

However, the good news is that many of these goals can still be reached by 2015 with a redoubling of effort. For example, the goal of reducing child malnutrition can be met with a less-than-two-per-cent annual improvement in the 14 regional countries currently considered to be off-track.

Half of the region's countries found to be off-track in terms of child mortality can reach the MDG target by preventing just two under-five deaths per 1,000 children annually. A number of countries lagging behind in maternal mortality can meet the respective target by preventing two-to-three deaths per 100,000 live births each year.

The report outlines an eight-point agenda to fast-track progress towards the health-related MDGs: the agenda calls for addressing the social determinants of health inequities and vulnerabilities, establishing an equitable, accessible, responsive and integrated primary healthcare system, and ensuring preventive, promotive, and curative mother-and-child health services.

Asia-Pacific media coverage of MDGs

In general, there is too little coverage of the MDGs as such in the mainstream media. While there is mainstream media reporting on development issues—including hunger, poverty, health, and social empowerment—the term MDG is rarely mentioned.

During a recent UN media workshop in Bangkok encouraging coverage of the MDGs, participants noted that many journalists tended to view the MDGs as UN jargon and not able to be easily linked to their news coverage.

Journalists taking part in the workshop, which was held on the eve of the 2012 Asia Media Summit, highlighted the need for access to key stakeholders, including government and institutional actors.

They also indicated that the use of illustrations and statistics, using both localised data and official UN information, were important for producing good stories that would be more likely to reverberate. The journalists noted that “unusual” statistics were particularly useful.

Participating reporters pointed to cost and time in gaining access to subjects, as well as a long interview-approval process at the UN, as specific obstacles to increased MDG coverage.

UN outreach to the media has been effective in raising the visibility of the MDGs in media coverage, as witnessed by the relatively improved coverage in South Asia and in some southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines and Indonesia.

Media interest has been generated through the hosting of special media events, such as the Bangkok workshop; granting one-on-one interviews; and encouraging individual and group media trips to observe UN-supported and government- or civil-society—run MDG initiatives on the ground.

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(Part 3)

A Practical Guide to Reporting on the MDGs

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The Big Story from a Global Perspective: The International Impact of MDG Coverage

Rachel Pulfer

With two-and-a-half years to go until 2015, the deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), progress has been mixed. The spread of some diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, is being brought under control. In China, the proportion of people living on under a dollar a day has been halved. At the same time, though, the number of those living on under a dollar a day in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped by a measly one percent.

Why such uneven progress? One reason is trade barriers, poorly understood by those in the global north, that prevent businesspeople in southern regions from competing globally. Another is endemic corruption in developing countries that diverts development aid from its goals.

Both these issues make covering development issues and developing world themes all the more crucial. Northern audiences need to be aware of the impacts of their actions on the south. Southern officials need to know they are likely to be held publicly accountable for their actions. It is only then that the rights and aspirations of poor people will stand a chance against such barriers and corruption.

Many reporters and editors from mainstream media outlets in North America labour under the misperception that southern issues are of little interest to northern audiences. Why, according to this view, should northern reporters care about the MDGs? Yet according to extensive reader surveys carried out by the *Toronto Star*, Canada's largest broadsheet newspaper by circulation, the lack of audience for news from the south is a myth.

According to current *Star* editor Michael Cooke, readers want more world news. As such, the paper launched

(10)

Northern audiences need to be aware of the impacts of their actions on the south. Southern officials need to know they are likely to be held publicly accountable for their actions. It is only then that the rights and aspirations of poor people will stand a chance against such barriers and corruption.

A mother and child sit on top of a tombstone outside their home in a cemetery that is home to approximately 40 families of squatters in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. EPA/Stephen Morrison



Queen Sofia of Spain arrives in El Alto, Bolivia in Oct. 2012 to learn about various development aid projects funded by the Spanish development agency in Bolivia. EPA/Martin Alipaz

a new 12-page weekly supplement in October 2011 to meet this demand. This additional section, he explains, includes stories partially geared toward the large ethnic

Foreign news coverage in Canada or other developed countries can provoke changes in foreign policy that, in turn, might even affect the [local] journalist's life.

population in Canada that clamours for news from home. It also includes stories that simply explain what is happening in developing countries, and why.

Mary Vallis is one of the editors working on the new section at the *Star*. In her view, reporters should care about covering stories from Africa in particular because it is simply good business. That is because news, for her, is

all about perspective. By writing about how a woman in Africa gives birth at home, she explains, readers can form an immediate contrast to their own experiences in North America's hospitals and clinics. 'Immediate contrast,' she says, 'has impact.' And impact generates audience.

The *Toronto Star* is published in one of North America's most competitive news markets: Toronto. Nowhere in Canada is the competition stiffer than between the *Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper. Yet reporters and editors at the *Globe* broadly echo Vallis and Cooke's sentiments.

According to veteran reporter Paul Koring, covering development or human rights is a simple matter of getting the best story. 'In authoritarian places, almost everything

can be expressed in the powerlessness of the individual,' he says. 'Stories about individual rights—or the lack thereof—are what life is all about.'

Business and technology writer Iain Marlow has a slightly more macro analysis. In Marlow's view, business and politics are truly global nowadays. Supply chains, human rights, and trade all have global angles and global roots. These things matter, Marlow argues, both to Canada's politics and to its corporations, as well as to Canada's material well-being and the structural well-being of others in other countries.

Isolated, impoverished countries do not only suffer in their own right; they also fuel domestic, regional and global instability. Moreover, certain stories defy borders. And in some cases, for example when reporting on local corruption in India's telecom industry, Marlow's editors judged the story to be of interest to *Globe and Mail* readers simply on its own merits—as a gripping narrative lending insight into the digital development of the world's second most populous country.

'All readers now are global,' Marlow concludes. 'The Web gives good stories a life of their own. And in a city like Toronto, we have tons of readers who do business in these countries, and tons of readers who come from these countries. It is of value to all of them for us to report on these countries accurately and thoroughly.'

One point that another Canadian journalist, award-winning freelance writer Christopher Watt, is at pains to stress, however, is that stories on development themes from the global south are often far more expertly reported on by southern journalists writing for northern markets, than by northern correspondents on short visits. 'A

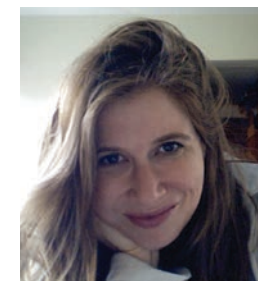
great deal of foreign reporting generated by Canadian reporters overseas is actually generated by fixers,' Watt says. 'They do the real work.'

Not only is the southern journalist at an advantage because of his or her local knowledge, Watt argues, he or she also can more frequently and more expertly provide appropriate local context for a story. This helps prevent embarrassing mistakes. 'A recent item in one Canadian paper described a "drinking dispute" in a certain neighbourhood in Istanbul,' Watt says. 'I called this neighbourhood home for several years and therefore knew that the dispute has existed for at least a decade. It was of dubious news value, and had nothing to do with "drinking"!'

What local journalists need to bring to the fore, Watt concludes, are things foreign editors themselves do not know. He or she then needs to identify stories that are likely to appeal to that editor's audience.

Despite the views of those reporters and editors queried above, astounding gaps in foreign coverage still remain, thanks in part to shrinking advertising dollars and smaller budgets. It is these gaps that local reporters in the south are well poised to exploit.

The consequences of a local journalist in the south being able to do just that are significant. Foreign news coverage in Canada or other developed countries can provoke changes in foreign policy that, in turn, might even affect the journalist's life. That is the kind of power journalists writing for northern audiences should seek to leverage. After all, the capacity to wield it is often but an e-mail address away.



Rachel Pulfer is the executive director of Journalists for Human Rights (www.jhr.ca). A print journalist of 10 years' standing, her last position was as the U.S. correspondent, editorial board member, and columnist for *Canadian Business*—Canada's national business newsmagazine. In 2009-2010 she was a Canadian Journalism Fellow at Massey College, University of Toronto.

In addition to her work at JHR, Rachel also works as a contributing editor for *Corporate Knights*, a Toronto-based magazine focused on corporate social responsibility. She has freelanced for publications ranging from *The Walrus* to *Toronto Life*, and has been nominated for three National Magazine Awards for feature writing and the editing of editorial packages.



Burmese weekly newspapers are prepared for distribution at a printing house in Yangon, Burma in March 2012. Burma lifted a law on media censorship in 2012. EPA/Thet Htoo

(11)

Investigative Journalism: It's All About Cross-Border Cooperation

Paul Christian Radu

Investigative journalists and other citizens interested in uncovering the organised crime and corruption that affect the lives of billions of people worldwide gain, with each passing day, unprecedented access to information.

Huge volumes of information are being made available online by governments and other organisations, and it seems that the much-needed information is in everyone's grasp. However, corrupt officials in governments and organised crime groups are doing their best to conceal information and to hide their wrongdoings. They are making efforts to keep people in the dark, while they continue to commit crimes that may have huge impact on society, causing disruptions such as conflict, famine or various types of humanitarian crisis. It is the duty of investigative journalists to uncover such wrongdoings and to play an active role in deterring corrupt officials and criminals in their criminal acts.

There are three main principles that, if followed, can lead to good, thorough, journalism when investigating major acts of corruption and crime, even in the most austere of environments:

1. Think outside your country

In many instances, it is much easier to get information from abroad than from within the country where the investigative journalist lives. Information gathered from abroad via foreign information databases or by using other countries' access to information laws might be just what is needed to put the investigative puzzle together. On top of that, criminals and corrupt officials do not keep their money in the place they stole it from. They would rather deposit it in foreign banks, or they would rather invest in other countries. Crime is global.

Databases that assist the investigative journalist in tracking money worldwide can be found in a myriad of places on the Internet such as:

www.investigativedashboard.org/category/wwd
www.opencorporates.com
www.ckan.net

2. Make use of existing investigative journalism networks

Investigative journalists all over the world are grouped in organisations such as:

- Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: www.reportingproject.net
- African Forum for Investigative Reporting: www.fairreporters.org
- Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism: www.arj.net
- Global Investigative Journalism Network: www.gijn.org

And these are just a few of such organisations. Many of the reporters in such networks work on similar issues and confront similar situations, so it makes a lot of sense to exchange information and methods. E-mail lists are attached to these networks, so it is quite easy to get in touch with fellow journalists and to ask for information or advice. Investigative story ideas can also be gathered from such forums and e-mailing lists.

3. Make use of technology

Software can help investigative journalists cut through the noise and through the large volumes of what seems

The Case of the President's Daughters and the Telecom Firm

The use of the investigative tools mentioned in this chapter is highlighted by the following example

Khadija Ismayilova is an Azeri investigative reporter working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Baku-based office. She works in a very austere environment when it comes to accessing information and has had to overcome lots of obstacles in order to offer the public good and reliable information. In June 2011, Ismayilova revealed that the daughters of Azeri President Ilham Aliyev secretly run, through Panama-based offshore companies, a fast-rising telecom company called Azerfon.¹ The company boasts nearly 1.7 million subscribers, covers 80 percent of the country's territory and was, at the time, Azerbaijan's only provider of 3G services.

The RFE/RL reporter spent three years trying to find out who were the beneficial owners of the telecom company, but the government refused to disclose shareholder information and claimed that the company was owned by German-based Siemens AG, an assertion that has been flatly denied by Siemens. They even claimed that the company was owned by German-based Siemens AG, a claim that has been flatly denied by Siemens. Ismayilova managed to find out that Azerfon was owned by a few Panama-based private companies, and this seemed to be a dead-end to her reporting until help from outside was employed. In early 2011, she learned through the Investigative Dashboard—a free-of-charge initiative to assist journalists in investigating organised crime and corruption—that companies in Panama can be tracked down through a software programmer-generated application developed by Scottish programmer and activist Dan O'Huiginn. It was then that she finally managed to uncover the fact that the president's daughters were involved with the telecom company through Panama-based entities.

Panama, a well-known offshore haven, has been allegedly used by corrupt officials from all over as a place to hide stolen money—from cronies of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to dirty officials in the Balkans and Latin America.

In fact, O'Huiginn created a tool that helped journalists from all over the world to report on corruption. What the programmer-activist has done is called web scraping, a method that allows the extraction and reshaping of information, so it can be used by investigators. O'Huiginn scraped the Panama registry of companies, because this registry, although open, only allowed searches if the investigative reporter knew the name of the commercial company he or she was looking for. This limited the possibility to investigate as usually reporters look for names of persons in order to track down their assets. The programmer extracted the data and created a new website on which name-based searches are also possible. The new website has allowed investigative reporters in many countries to fish for information, to run names of government officials and parliamentarians, and to check if they secretly owned corporations in Panama just as the family of the Azerbaijan president did.

¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (27 June 2011): "Azerbaijani President's Daughters Tied To Fast-Rising Telecoms Firm" www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijani_president_aliyev_daughters_tied_to_telecoms_firm/24248340.html



Spain's King Juan Carlos presents Mexican investigative journalists Dalia Martínez Delgado and Humberto Padgett with the Press Prize at the 2011 "Rey de España" International Journalism Awards, sponsored by EFE and the Spanish Development Agency (AECID). EFE/Juanjo Martín

be found here: www.investigativedashboard.org/2011/02/software-resources/

There are other advantages to using the principles highlighted above, besides better access to information. One of them has to do with minimising harm and insuring better protection for investigative reporters who work in hostile environments. This is because, when working in a network, the journalist is not alone; the investigative reporter works with colleagues in other countries, so it is harder for criminals to pinpoint who exposed their wrongdoings. As a result, retaliation from governments and corrupt officials is much harder to achieve.

Another thing to keep in mind is that information that does not seem very valuable in one geographical area might be crucially important in another. The exchange of information over investigative networks can lead to breaking very important stories. For example, the information that a Romanian was caught in Colombia with a kilogram of cocaine is most probably not front page news in Bogotá, but could be very important to the Romanian public if a local reporter learns that the person who was caught with the narcotics works for the government in Bucharest.

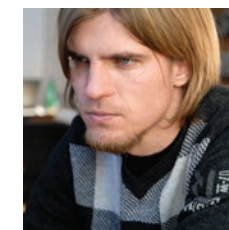
Efficient investigative reporting is, in the end, the result of cooperation between investigative journalists, programmers and other social categories that are willing to crowd source information and to contribute in building a cleaner global society.

like useless information to find the documents needed to break the story. Besides being able to use ready-made software for analysing, gathering, or interpreting information, investigative journalists need to be aware that there are scores of computer programmers ready to help if asked.

These programmers know how to get and to handle information, and they can assist if the journalist requires help. These programmers, some of them members of global open-data movements, can become invaluable allies in the fight against crime and corruption. They can assist journalists in gathering and in analysing information.

A good example of an interface between these programmers and citizens can be found at www.scrapewiki.com

Scrapewiki is a site where investigative journalists can ask programmers for help with extracting data from online websites and databases. Ready-made tools that can help journalists gather, shape and analyse data can



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Paul began his career as an investigator for Romania's then-best-selling newspaper, *Evenimentul Zilei*, in 1998. In 2003, he co-founded the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism. He is the recipient of numerous awards including in 2004, the Knight International Journalism Award and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, in 2007, the Global Shining Light Award, the Tom Renner Investigative Reporters and Editors Award and in 2011 the Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting. Paul was also an advisor with the World Economic Forum.

Palestinian children play outside their family's tent in a poverty-stricken quarter of the town of Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, June 2013. *EPA/Ali Ali*

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One Problem, Many Dimensions: Tips on Covering Poverty

Jean Claude Louis

There are many different concepts and definitions of poverty. According to the Oxford University Poverty and Human Development Initiative, ‘Poverty is often defined by one-dimensional measures, such as income. But no one indicator alone can capture the multiple aspects that constitute poverty. Multidimensional poverty is made up of several factors that constitute poor people’s experience of deprivation—such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard, lack of income (as one of several factors considered), disempowerment, poor quality of work and threat from violence.’¹

Experts have set up “poverty lines” to measure the minimum level of poverty, which may differ according to the local context. The World Bank notes: ‘What is necessary to satisfy basic needs varies across time and societies. Therefore, poverty lines vary in time and place, and each country uses lines which are appropriate to its level of development, societal norms and values’².

But regardless of which definition one chooses to use, it is clear that eradicating extreme poverty remains one of the modern world’s greatest challenges. Even in developed countries, amidst incredible wealth, millions of people—especially youth, immigrants, and people of colour—struggle to have their basic needs met.

¹ www.ophi.org.uk/policy/multidimensional-poverty-index/
² *World Bank*: web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,,contentMDK:22397595~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:430367,00.html

Elderly women beg for money on a sidewalk in Kolkata, India. India's official poverty rate stands at 29.8 per cent or 350 million people, according to 2010 population figures. *EPA/Piyal Adhikary*



The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have given the media an opportunity to expand their coverage and to hold governments and stakeholders accountable. Development work aimed at alleviating poverty is also a fertile area around which to create newspaper reports that highlight the enrichment of people's lives through success stories. Nonetheless, in poverty-stricken countries that lack a freedom of information act—which compels governments to release certain information upon request—it will not always be easy for journalists to cover development aid or access accurate data on poverty.

Often, however, the first barriers are newsrooms and media owners. Covering poverty requires dedication to and interest in the human dimension, as well as lots of follow-up stories, so both the journalist and the editor must be committed. They have to remind themselves that coverage of any poverty-related topic, be it infant mortality or lack of access to education, needs discerning, multi-faceted stories that reveal the deeper causes of poverty.

Some practical tips on covering poverty:

Find out who attends school: How does poverty affect children's health and ability to learn? Find out what their parents do for a living and what correlations this may have. Consider whether parents have the time and skills to help children with their homework. What about the teachers? Are they trained? Can they live off their salaries? Remember that the basics—such as having enough food to eat or clothes to wear—can greatly affect a child's education. Children who come from poor families are more likely to abandon school early and are less likely to be prepared when they do.

Give voices to the children: Children are good message carriers and can mobilise on issues that affect them and their community. They can communicate well without any judgment and reserve.

Pay attention to people released from prison: Former inmates are often among the poorest of the poor. Think about what is being done to help them return to society. Are they getting help to find a job? Were there education opportunities in prison? What type of health-care is provided while behind bars? Due to poor conditions, prisoners may contract HIV, TB, or hepatitis and, without proper counselling, may pose a risk to society when released.

Follow the money: Think about informal sectors of the economy. Where do street merchants, for example, find loans? From banks? From loan sharks with predatory interest rates? Take a look at the relationship between commercial banks—which normally cater to people that already have some degree of wealth—and poor people. Do these banks make themselves accessible? Do they have initiatives to help poor people build financial stability? Look into the possibilities related to micro-credit institutions.

Find out the goals and limitations of non-profits: Remember that they can help but cannot solve all the problems. Find out exactly what their mission is, and then investigate their action. Do they work closely with the government? Do they include members of the community when putting together strategies?

Be aware of people who try to take advantage of poverty: Pay close attention to those elements—whether government or private—who disregard the benefit to society of poverty-reduction programmes, who exaggerate the costs involved, or who promote stereotypes of the poor or minorities. Journalists should carefully investigate accusations against aid programmes for their credibility. Keep a sharp eye on where development money is flowing.

Cultivate official sources: Find dependable sources inside the government to get the most accurate

information possible on development aid money and poverty statistics.

Develop real-life stories: Development groups can often provide you with the names and contact information of individuals who are benefiting from a given solution for poverty. Spend time building relationships with these people, who can give you a side to the story you will not get from the government or the non-profits. Remember that their opinion matters, too—what do they think about the programmes supposed to be helping them?

Look for training opportunities: Learn tips on how to present often complex and technical information on health care, HIV prevention, the economics of poverty, budgets, and good governance in ways that the average person can understand and value.

Build good relationships with beneficiaries: Talk to community groups and NGOs regularly to find out about not only ongoing problems, but also new problems that arise from economic, political, or institutional changes that affect the poor.

Look abroad: Donor countries that have freedom of information acts may be able to provide information on funding and aid that one's own government may refuse. Make contacts with foreign journalists and international organisations that can provide networking and support.

Be proactive in the newsroom: While you might be knowledgeable about development issues, your editor might not. Be your own advocate, explaining why these stories are important and enlisting their support in conducting follow-up reports.



Jean Claude Louis was the Haiti country director for Panos Caribbean from September 2001 to July 2009. He now works as a freelance consultant while continuing his collaboration with Panos. With a background in journalism and sociology, he has worked for several non-governmental organisations as a development worker in Haiti. Jean Claude has extensive experience in developing and implementing training courses for journalists. He is a founding member of the Centre of Communication on HIV/AIDS in Haiti and the Haiti Club Press, two journalist networks.

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Food for Thought: Tips on Covering Hunger

Marwaan Macan-Markar

When stories of a food crisis emerge, it is tempting to ask if the problem stems from the lack of grain. I followed this lead during my early years as a reporter until I read about an event that took place in 1970. That year, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Norman Borlaug. The American agronomist was recognised for his work that combined science and new agriculture techniques to help save millions from hunger. His research—heralding the Green Revolution—paved the way for agriculture built on high-yield outputs.

Borlaug's efforts to increase cereal production, beginning in Mexico and then, during the 1960s, taking root in India and Pakistan, came at a time of global fear. The media was running stories of the “population bomb”, of agriculture being unable to feed the millions of growing mouths in the developing world, of global instability triggered by the Malthusian nightmare. A near famine in India in 1966 served as a stark warning of bleak times that could lie ahead.

Fortunately, the stories that appeared in the media have moved on from such dire predictions. The foundation that the Green Revolution laid in the agriculture belts across Asia, which has seen rice output triple, paved the way for this shift in the narrative. It was a major milestone in the Asian and the global journey towards food security: agricultural scientists had the answers to boost grain supplies to meet the expanding population. Yuan Longping, China's leading agricultural scientist, is among the current crop of innovators. The 80-year-old's new strain of hybrid rice yielded a harvest of 13.9 tons of grain per hectare in 2011, a world record.

Yet why is Asia home to 62 percent of the world's hungry? Why, in 2011, were a further 64 million people in Asia expected to join the existing 600 million people living in absolute poverty on this continent? Why does one still occasionally hear the word “famine” here? Why are 14,000 children dying of hunger every day?

The list of questions for journalists covering the story of hunger in the developing world should not stop there. We should be prepared to look for new leads and new links to expose one of the greatest paradoxes of our time: **Why in this age of sufficient food supply does there continue to be food scarcity?** Reporters are challenged to shed more light on the food distribution system and the related network of factors—including market mechanisms—that have deprived basic meals to millions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. **And what about tariff barriers imposed by governments to manipulate the price of food?**

Each country gives rise to its own set of questions that a curious and enterprising reporter should be drawn to. **What are the choke points? Who or what is behind it? Why?** The reasons—ranging from land-grabbing, corruption, or political interference—will reveal just how complex reporting about hunger is.

Shifting population trends, with more people moving from rural areas to cities, cannot be ignored either. Researchers have pointed out that a spike in food prices makes those dependent on the cash economy in urban settings more vulnerable than their kin in the hinterlands, who can always tap nature.

*We should be prepared to look for new leads and new links to expose one of the greatest paradoxes of our time: **Why in this age of sufficient food supply does there continue to be food scarcity?***



A mother sits with her seriously malnourished child at a feeding centre run by German Agro Action (GAA) in the village of Nosy Varika on the eastern coast of Madagascar. EPA/Kim Ludbrook



A small boy watches as elders pick the few corn husks that developed on their smallholding on the outskirts of Nakuru, Kenya EPA/Stephen Morrison

In Cambodia, for instance, an inquiry to uncover the reasons behind hunger may confirm that the problem has a rural face. And the quest for an explanation may point to a disturbing trend in this Southeast Asian nation still struggling to get on its feet after two decades of conflict: the rampant spread of land-grabbing by powerful companies to convert agricultural land into cash crops, such as sugar plantations. What has made such acquisitions easy, journalists in Cambodia found out, was the lack of land-title deeds, all of which were destroyed during the years of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

In neighbouring Burma, once the world's leading rice exporter, chronic hunger stems from **political obstacles** placed in the way of grain being transported from the fields and mills to markets and consumers. Choking the domestic rice-supply root in this country, also known as Myanmar, has been a way for the military dictatorships who have ruled for nearly 50 years to deprive the country's ethnic minorities of basic foods. Consequently, over 30 percent of children under five years are malnourished and underweight, a number as bad as Cambodia.

The World Food Programme (WFP, www.wfp.org) offers resources that reporters chasing a hunger story in times of conflict will find useful. The global "hunger hotspots" chart it reveals annually raises the alarm about communities lacking in the basic nutrition requirements of 2,100 calories a day. In addition, it raises the question of whether communities in countries experiencing strife are denied food aid by combatants. This happens when humanitarian assistance in the form of grain is siphoned out through a corrupt mechanism, as investigators found out in Afghanistan.

Research findings by UN agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are useful when factors such as high oil prices—which affect the price of fertiliser, pesticides, and the food-transport chain—push food prices up. An enterprising reporter will naturally use this data to dig up more, adding local colour, by sniffing around on the streets. Following the buying habits of people in a local market—how much meat over how much grain, for instance—to establish the extent of the crisis is one route. These micro-moments unfold in other settings too, such as roadside food stalls or restaurants. Interviewing food vendors is helpful to paint a more comprehensive picture of hunger caused by inflation. There, the question that should be asked is: What have people stopped buying?

Some may turn to **NGOs and grassroots groups who have chronicled the story of hunger in the communities they work in**. Such sources become invaluable when investigating stories in countries where political oppression is palpable. They are the only witnesses

a reporter has to depend on to confirm a story of deprivation, as some have done when exposing discrimination faced by ethnic minorities in Laos.

The significance of such reportage has broader political ramifications. It serves as a benchmark to measure how open and democratic a country is. It is an index that combines two freedoms: freedom of the press and freedom from hunger. After all, Amartya Sen, another Nobel Prize laureate, drew a parallel when reflecting on the Bengal famine, in which between 1.5 million to four million people died of starvation, malnutrition, or disease.

‘No substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press’, the renowned Indian economist wrote. ‘The Bengal famine of 1943, which I witnessed as a child, was made viable not only by the lack of democracy in colonial India, but also by severe restrictions on reporting and criticism imposed on the Indian press.’



Marwaan Macan-Markar is a Sri Lankan journalist who covered the South Asian nation's ethnic conflict for local newspapers before joining the Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency as a correspondent in 1999. He was first assigned to the agency's World Desk in Mexico City and has since been based in Bangkok, covering Southeast Asia. He has reported from over 15 countries, writing from the frontlines of insurgencies, political upheavals, human rights violations, peace talks, natural disasters, climate change, economic development, hunger and poverty, new diseases like bird flu, and emerging trends in Islam, among other current issues.



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A Right, Not a Privilege: Tips on Covering Education

Louisa Reynolds

Education is the path to development. It creates choices and opportunities for people in terms of access to employment, reduces the twin burdens of poverty and disease, and empowers people. For nations as a whole, education produces a more skilled and competitive workforce that can attract better quality foreign investment, thus opening the doors to economic and social prosperity for society as a whole.

However, people often do not see how these global goals can be translated to local realities. The media plays a key role in forming opinion, helping to ensure that citizens and politicians alike recognise that there is no room for complacency in tackling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education (hereafter, MDGs on Education). The media also evaluates progress and highlights areas for improvement.

Here are a number of important tips for journalists who cover education issues, based on interviews with education and media experts.

1. Construct positive and negative scenarios that reflect the impact of meeting/not meeting the MDGs on education

What would happen in your country if all boys and girls completed a full course of primary schooling? How would their lives change? What new opportunities would open up for them? How would society as a whole benefit from this? On the other hand, what would happen if by 2015, the MDGs were not met?

A Bruneian girl in class at Pengiran Anak Puteri Besar primary school, in Kampung Ayer, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, June 2013. *EPA/Luong Thai Ling*

2. Link the MDGs on education to other targets, such as nutrition, health and gender equality

The MDGs should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a series of targets that are inter-related. For example, healthier and better nourished children will be able to perform better in school, and better-educated children will have better employment opportunities, a better income and better chances of breaking the poverty cycle as it will be easier for their children to have access to education. Given that studies have shown a clear link between malnutrition and poor performance in school, it is important to consider whether schools offer free food to children from low-income backgrounds; many countries offer primary school children a glass of milk, cereal, or some sort of nutritional supplement.

Also, increasing the number of girls who are able to complete primary school education will produce better-educated mothers who will be positive role models for their children and will help them to succeed in life. Again, articles on education must be linked to other issues such as health, nutrition, and gender equality.

3. Emphasise the link between the MDGs and ensuring basic human rights for all citizens

Education is a right, not a privilege. It is important for readers to understand that access to education is a basic human right, enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16, 1966 and in force since 1976. The right to free education is also guaranteed by most countries' legal and constitutional frameworks.

‘People often blame the poor for their situation and demand that they should pay for primary school education, ignoring the fact that many people do not have the means to pay,’ explains Guatemala’s former education minister, Bienvenido Argueta.

It is, thus, important for journalists to emphasise the fact that education is a basic right for all citizens regardless of their social status, which means that if the government is not meeting this basic target, it should be held accountable.

When writing about these issues, it is important to put a human face on the story. An article that just quotes facts and figures can be dry and boring for an average reader while telling a story usually creates empathy. This is very

important given that the average newspaper reader is urban and middle class and often takes many things (such as having three meals a day, access to education, and healthcare) for granted.

A good article begins with a personal story, like a camera lens that zooms in on one child in particular, and then provides contextual information on the village where the child and his or her family lives, interviews with parents, teachers, and local authorities as well as statistical information that shows how this story reflects a trend or a common situation.

4. Link the MDGs on education to issues such as public spending and accountability

How is taxpayers’ money invested in terms of meeting the MDGs on education? Is it necessary to increase public spending on education in order to meet the targets? Are resources being spent effectively? How can this be improved?

Citizens often complain about poor education standards but are reluctant to pay more taxes in order to increase public spending in this area. Journalists’ coverage of education issues must make all citizens (including the private sector) aware of the importance of meeting their fiscal responsibilities if they want to live in a better-educated and more-developed nation.

5. Targets should be approached qualitatively as well as quantitatively

Progress achieved should not only be measured in terms of how many more children are enrolled in primary school. If the number of children enrolled increases, but the education services are of poor quality and the country’s educational infrastructure has not expanded in order to meet the increasing demand, the gap will remain. ‘More Guatemalan children are attending school, but the quality of the education they receive is deficient. To what extent are children and young people really learning?’ asks Verónica Spross, director of Businessmen for Education (*Empresarios por la Educación*), a Guatemalan non-profit whose aim is to promote better standards in education.

6. Beware of distorted statistics

Official statistics are often presented in a way that seeks to mask reality. Government institutions sometimes present statistics in a way that inflates achievements or underestimates failings.

Here are some **important indicators** that must be taken into account when evaluating progress made in terms of meeting the **Millennium Development Goals on education**. All of them must be broken down in terms of gender and urban/rural areas, as global statistics can mask gender disparities or exclusion in certain geographical areas.

- **Net enrollment ratio (NER):** the number of children at primary/secondary school age that attend primary or secondary school. This will vary from one country to another, as primary school in some countries is for 6- to 12-year-olds and is for 7- to 12-year-olds in other countries.
- **Gross enrollment ratio (GER):** the total number of pupils attending primary or secondary school (unlike the NER, this includes mature students who are attending primary or secondary schools at a later age).
- **School repetition rate by gender and grade:** this reflects failings in the standard of education provided or external factors, such as malnutrition, that have a negative impact on a child’s academic performance.
- **School desertion rate:** how many children leave school before completing primary or secondary school?
- **Learning continuity:** compare the number of children enrolled in the first year of primary school with the number enrolled in subsequent years. Disparities must be explained - Is there a high repetition rate and is this grossly increasing enrollment in certain years? Do many students leave after completing primary school and fail to go on to secondary school? How many reach higher education?
- **The results of standardised, basic numeric and literacy tests performed at a certain age in most countries.** Most countries, by law, have to publish this on their websites. These figures are very revealing as shockingly poor results often illustrate the bad quality of education that students are receiving and disparities between public and private schools.

7. Who teaches your country’s children? What incentives do they receive?

In many countries, teachers are badly trained, and few have reached higher education themselves.

How many teachers have reached higher education? How does the training they receive compare with that of

other countries? Does your country’s government offer teachers refresher courses to update their knowledge on specific aspects? Teachers who are badly paid and/or not paid on time are unlikely to perform well. If your country’s teachers barely earn the minimum wage, it says a lot about the government’s priorities in terms of education.

*In some Latin American countries, governments have introduced **conditional cash transfer programmes** that give families living below the poverty line a monthly cash allowance provided that their children attend school and regular medical check-ups. The idea behind these programmes is to break the poverty cycle and encourage school attendance; the cash received by these families is supposed to compensate them for the fact that their children are not working, but attending school. Examples of these programmes include **Bolsa Família in Brazil** (impact studies show that this is one of the most successful examples), **Oportunidades in Mexico**, and **Mi Familia Progresá in Guatemala**. However, in many countries, such as Guatemala, school enrolment rates have increased, but school facilities have not expanded in order to accommodate the new students. As a result, overpopulated classrooms with up to 60 children or children from different grades taught by a single teacher in one classroom are often seen.*

8. If your country has an indigenous population and/or different ethnic and linguistic groups, is bilingual education provided?

Many studies have proven that in countries with large indigenous populations, such as Guatemala and Bolivia, educating children in their own language, in a manner that is culturally appropriate, is an important factor in terms of guaranteeing academic success. The availability and quality of bilingual education can help to explain disparities between urban and rural areas and between indigenous and non-indigenous students.

9. Are school facilities adequate?

Adequate school facilities will have a crucial impact on the quality of education provided.

Overpopulated schools are also forced to run several shifts in the morning and the afternoon, which obviously has an impact on the quality of the learning experience. This is especially common in rural schools.

It is also important to consider the availability of basic materials such as desks, chairs, textbooks, notebooks, pens, and pencils. Many rural schools lack the most basic facilities such as electricity and running water.

10. Coverage should not only focus on shortcomings and failings. It is also important to highlight success stories, and the lessons that can be learned from them.

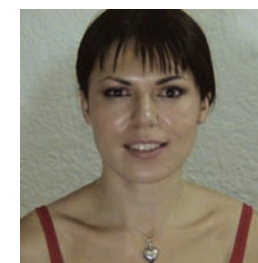
11. Journalists should consult experts from a wide range of sources and institutions to ensure that their coverage is balanced.

‘Reporters usually quote the same experts from the same conservative and right-wing think-tanks, ignoring sources who represent those who are worst affected by the country’s shortcomings in terms of broadening access to education, such as the indigenous population’, says Argueta.

Sources should include experts and academics from a wide range of sources—governmental bodies, public and private universities, think-tanks from across the political spectrum, and NGOs and civil-society organisations that represent the most vulnerable groups in society, such as women and the indigenous population. Often these latter groups are the worst affected by exclusion and the lack of access to education.



Liberian students sit the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) exams at the G.W. Gibson High School in Monrovia, Liberia, June 2013. EPA/Ahmed Jallanzo



Louisa Reynolds is a British journalist who decided to work in Guatemala after earning a master's degree in Latin American Studies at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. After working for regional magazine *Inforpress Centroamericana* and daily newspaper *el Periódico* for five years, she decided to become a freelance reporter for different media including *el Periódico*, *Siglo 21*, *Estrategia y Negocios* as well as foreign publications such as *Proceso* (Mexico), *Noticen* (United States) and *Noticias Aliadas* (Peru).

Her interests include poverty reduction and the impact of conditional cash transfer programmes, security and drug trafficking as well as culture and creative journalism. In 2011, she was chosen to participate in a chronicle workshop organised by the Foundation for a New Iberoamerican Journalism (Fundación para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano, FNPI), in Cartagena, Colombia, which produced a series of chronicles related to the bicentenary of Colombian independence.



Indian women and girls form a human chain as they take part in a rally to protest against violence towards women in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata (Calcutta) in March 2012. EPA/Piyal Adhikary

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For Whom Does the Flag Wave? Tips on Covering Gender Equality

Guenet Ayele Gruenberg

Although egalitarian societies with a pattern of matriarchy still exist in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania, the decline of matriarchal societies in the world has made way for patriarchal domination. Gender discrimination has become rampant. World history is, indeed, “his-story” and not “her-story”.

The way we live today is influenced by, and based on, male-derived principles, which bring about male dominance and universal patriarchy. No matter where women live, they do not share equal rights with men. Sensitive and justice-seeking journalists should expose this social malady at every opportunity, so that the lives of women can improve.

Since most societies are unwilling to change the status quo, it is not easy to expose gender inequality without ruffling some feathers or provoking outrage. In order, then, to devise the best approach to report on it, we offer a definition and identify related problems:

What is gender inequality?

It is the unequal treatment of a person based solely on that person’s sex. Gender equality does not, however, mean that men and women are the same. Nor does it mean that only women should be protected. It means that both men and women should have equal opportunities, lest reverse discrimination be committed.

Where do we identify gender inequality?

The problem is real in every society, though the degree may vary. In many countries, substantial gender disparity exists in political power, economics, and many aspects of everyday life. Even in technologically advanced societies that champion democracy and human rights, women are discriminated against and abused.

In many Islamic countries whose legal systems derive from Koranic precepts, women are denied equal status when it comes to divorce, inheritance, child custody, and even in transmitting citizenship rights to their children. In Asia, particularly in India and China, new technologies are used to promote the birth of boys, which exacerbates discrimination. In addition, mortality inequality has been observed extensively in North Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Gender inequality is reflected even in journalism. With the exception of some countries where women enjoy equal privileges with their male counterparts, female journalists elsewhere are oppressed. They are not allowed to practise their profession to the full and are paid less than men for the same position and performance. When female journalists fight for their own rights, besides being inspirational to others, they will increase their own number. In doing so, they will take more journalists on board for the unified fight against gender inequality.

Problems in brief

1. Equal pay

In many countries, situations where women are paid less than men for doing similar jobs, simply because they are women, are common. Even in countries like the United States, where laws have been passed to amend wage discrepancies, the difference in salaries stubbornly remains. Discrimination in hiring, firing, and promotion persists. The wage gap, due to the undervaluation of jobs typically thought of as “women’s work”, is still there.

2. Inequality in healthcare

Statistics shows that women in sub-Africa are more than 1.5 times as likely as men to contract HIV. Women have less access to healthcare facilities compared to men. High mortality rates for women in some parts of the world could be the result of gender bias in health-

care and nutrition. Various studies show that women consume fewer calories per day than men, and this nutritional deprivation impacts growth and has consequences for women with risk factors in pregnancy. This condition complicates childbearing and results in elevated numbers of women and infant deaths. In some traditions, women eat last and least, even when pregnant and breastfeeding.

3. The right to vote and political empowerment

Although limited voting rights were gained by women in Sweden, Britain, and some U.S. states in the 19th century, the right to vote for women is not yet widely achieved. In general, women are defined by deeply rooted cultural values only as mothers, wives, and daughters. Another stereotype is the gender-gap theory, which contends that men are more interested in politics than women. The absence of women in political, social, and economic life has created imbalances in decision-making structures.

4. The right to equal education

Educating women as a key to development and the reduction of poverty is widely accepted. But there are many reasons to be concerned about existing gender inequalities in education where girls are less likely to have access to school. While there are extreme cases, like in Afghanistan, where girls were excluded from schooling altogether, in many countries girls’ education is far from being a priority. Gender-based discrimination against women and girls remains prevalent in many societies. Education, therefore, must be an integral part of any strategy to address gender inequality.

5. Economic rights

Discrimination against women by granting credits or personal loans on the basis of gender is another reality which hampers participation in economic growth. In many countries, creditors can ask a woman to apply in her husband’s name or deny her altogether. In rural areas where land is a basic necessity for economic survival, ownership of land through inheritance is denied to women.

6. Equality for development

Women’s participation is central to development, and the exclusion of women in key posts hampers progress. A society that excludes half of its talent pool and work

force hurts itself; the extent of a society’s development is most clearly reflected in the freedom women enjoy, and the extent to which they are able to express their creativity. That is why gender equality is universally recognised as a fundamental human right and is included as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

How to report on gender equality

Reporters willing to expose gender inequality have to find a smooth way of doing it, yet without being fearful, confrontational, or graphic. The practice of this aspect of journalism needs wisdom, particularly in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, where men who consider the place of women to be in the house become furious whenever gender inequality is discussed.

It is obvious that good journalists should challenge the status quo in existing social political systems and institutions. This they have to do to enlighten and educate those who are willing to learn and advance the cause of women. They have to promote women’s rights, and combat discrimination and domestic violence against women. Good journalists should not only expose gender inequality, they should also provoke a public discussion about it, and continue making it an issue until equality is enshrined in the constitution or bill of rights and in manifestos of both public and government institutions. Indeed, journalists, besides merely covering gender inequality, should promote it as part and parcel of the fight for human rights and insist that change take place.

1. Promote new heroes

A reporter may find female heroes of the past in each conservative society that oppresses women, portray those heroic women as role models of excellence, and state how all women could achieve highly if they were given an opportunity and the liberty to act like those exemplary women. In extreme cases of fundamental religious societies, where men dominate women absolutely, a reporter should also depict in a positive light the achievements of females in culturally similar yet relatively more progressive countries.

For example, the modernising measures of former Turkish president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who granted women equal status with men, should be portrayed as a positive example when dealing with the Muslim world.

Indeed for those who are sceptical, demonstrating the fact that marriage and motherhood can go along with the economic participation of women can be an asset.

2. Join hands to fight inequality

Both male and female journalists have to apply cleverness to keep alive the question of gender inequality. The socially and politically conscious journalist can always report on the state of women by choosing particular themes such as medicine, law, education, government, and business administration, or any profession for that matter, and throw some light on the status of women in them by provoking discussions that can raise awareness of women, men, and government officials, including members of parliaments or senates.

In addition to moving their pens and lips, far-sighted journalists should cite good examples by finding role-model societies where the indiscriminate and full participation of women have contributed immensely to the betterment of their nations. Successful female stateswomen, scientists, educators, business leaders, writers, poets, musicians, artists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and journalists should be presented repetitively to inspire and motivate others to follow in their footsteps.

3. Challenge gender-based stereotypes

The gender-gap theory is one such stereotype. It perpetuates the (incorrect) idea that men are inherently more interested in politics than women. Thus, one good example of poor reporting would be describing participation on election days as affirming the “gender gap” between men and women, which is now proven wrong. By educating the public, journalists can help in dissolving cultural stereotypes of this kind.

4. Use every opportunity

National holidays are ideal opportunities for the smart journalist to voice his/her opinion about gender inequality.

On Mother’s Day, for instance, one can write anything about the status of women, for example, domestic problems, income disparity, socio-political discrepancies, as well as inequalities in education, healthcare, and professional positions. Father’s Day could be used as an excuse to raise women’s issues in light of the advantages men have.

Regarding New Year, a journalist should question what the following year has in store for women. Does it bring new jobs, social justice, and better opportunities?

On May Day or Labour Day, a journalist may scrutinise whether all working women have a reason to be a part of the festivities. Do women really have a reason to celebrate, considering that they continue to get paid less for doing the same work as men? Do women who are discriminated against in work places because of their gender have anything to do with such days? What have women who retire without any medical and retirement benefits got to do with these holidays?

Independence Day is an ideal moment to make noise about gender inequality. A journalist should undertake a critical review of the notion of independence, liberation, and freedom versus the situation of women. Does this day really stand for women as well? Are women as independent and as free as men? Or are they still abused, dehumanised, oppressed, and exploited? Indeed, genuine journalists should question the national flag itself: Does that proudly waving flag really represent women, or does it wave only for men?



A native of Harar, Ethiopia, **Guenet Ayele Gruenberg** completed her studies in Harar and Addis Abeba before working as a journalist for Ethiopian Television Network for 10 years. After the fall of the Ethiopian military regime in 1991, she became the publisher of several newspapers in Ethiopia and served as the

editor-in-chief of the country's first monthly magazine focusing on women's issues.

Guenet is also the author of two best-selling books on former dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, now in exile in Zimbabwe. Guenet has four children and currently lives in France.

A girl and women of the Uighur ethnic group look on in Yopurga village of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China, May 2013. *EPA/How Hwee Young*



Indonesian students draw a poster during a drawing contest to mark World Aids Day in Bali, Indonesia in Dec. 2012. According to UN reports, HIV infections in Indonesia increased by more than 25% between 2001 and 2011. *EPA/Made Nagi*



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Reviving a “Tired” Story: Tips on Covering HIV/AIDS

Isaiah Esipisu

When a story on a particular topic is told over and over again, it leads to what is known as media fatigue—a situation where journalists and editors find the topic no longer newsworthy.

However, the worst is when audiences become fatigued—when general readers are fed up with the subject as well. This problem is one that bedevils HIV/AIDS reporting despite the fact that many people—especially the affected and the infected—still want to learn more. Unlike what happened in the 1990s, when most editors wanted to have emotion-laden articles on HIV/AIDS, the 20th century is different. Editors are reluctant to approve such stories on HIV/AIDS unless they are convinced that there is something completely new in the article.

So, does this mean that HIV/AIDS is a tired story? It certainly should not be: in the year 2013 alone, close to 2 million people will lose their lives from the disease worldwide. Another 33 million will have to face the difficulties of living with AIDS. This story is one that must be told at all costs.

What follows are some ways journalists can ensure that this important issue does not go unreported.

Give your story a human face—the 2013 version

The most boring way of telling a story about HIV/AIDS is when journalists peg their reports on statistics without breathing life into the numbers. Indeed, perhaps the lack of real-life is one of the reasons why editors are getting fatigued with the subject.

That is not to say that numbers are not important—in AIDS reporting, numbers can still help to impress upon the

reader the seriousness and scale of the situation; however, to make them more immediate, these figures should be reported alongside the human faces of HIV/AIDS patients. Allowing people to tell their stories through the journalist is critical to supplement or explain the lifeless figures.

That said, it is clear that the human dimension of this particular story has changed over time. In the 1990s, a good HIV story would be told through a picture of a skeletal patient gasping for a last breath. This picture worked wonders as an emotional appeal to donors and as a fear-based strategy for behavioural change.

In 2013, such a photograph cannot tell the whole story anymore. With the development of anti-retroviral drugs, and the supplementation of correct nutritional foods, a person living with AIDS may appear healthier than many people living without the virus. The fear-based strategy no longer applies, which has completely changed the way we report on the disease.

Perhaps the abrupt change of the ‘HIV image’ from ‘bad’ to ‘good’ might have influenced a number of journalists who no longer see the virus as newsworthy. According to experience, bad things easily make news. But if something looks good, then a journalist must work extra hard to convince the editor that it is important to cover.

Stay up-to-date on the latest scientific developments

Journalists who report on HIV/AIDS should pay close attention to new research findings, resistance to anti-retroviral drugs, drug stock-outs, proliferation of counterfeit and substandard drugs, and most importantly, the figures. These aspects, while always important, can be made more

An AIDS patient lies in bed at the Hillcrest Aids Centre in Durban, South Africa. *EPA/Nic Bothma*



interesting for the reader if they are told from a first-hand source or from someone with real-life experience.

Root out the truth—don’t accept the official version on its face

No matter what the approach, journalists must maintain a careful and analytical approach to reporting. Following the emotional appeal that was used in the advent of HIV/AIDS, hundreds if not thousands of organisations were formed with the aim of scaling down infections, reducing stigma, and providing care to patients. While most of these are genuine, some are out to make money and may try to take advantage of journalists in order to generate increased funds for themselves.

Many cases have apparently been stage-managed in order to trick unsuspecting journalists into write appealing stories. Some years ago, there was a scenario in Kenya in which inaccurate figures of HIV prevalence were circulated following a study, and then used as a point of refer-

ence for a long period of time afterward. But after a 2006 review, the figures were determined to be much lower than had been reported in the earlier findings. At that point, some officials told the media that the government and its partners had ‘worked hard’ to reduce the prevalence.

This agitated one of Kenya’s senior science writers, who published an article in the *Daily Nation* headlined “Numbers Don’t Lie...Do They?”. In the piece, he gave a scenario of a road accident in which it is first erroneously announced that more than 20 people had died. After some time, the figure is revised, and the actual number of confirmed deaths becomes five. The writer asked: Should the minister for transport take pride and convene a press conference to announce that the government has worked hard to reduce the accident death toll on that day from 20 to five?

Before his article came out, several other journalists had already reported on the government’s “success” in reducing HIV prevalence. Without using a finer lens to

read between the lines, those journalists simply repeated information given by a source.

Do your homework

This means that despite the fact that every journalist needs to have faith in his sources, each assertion by a source given must be treated cautiously before it should be considered a fact. The best way of doing this is by researching the topic before meeting the interviewee. This background information is critical because it can guide a journalist’s questions and clarify complex issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Journalists should also be sure to get the contact information—especially mobile telephone numbers—of the source, as this makes it easier to go back to the interviewee with clarifications and follow-up questions. Additionally, journalists should seek to talk to people with divergent views on the subject in order to balance the article.

If the subject is heavily scientific, the journalist can seek to send a draft to an expert or trusted source before submitting it to an editor. The journalist, though, must ensure that the expert or source checks only for the accuracy of scientific information; the review should not involve the changing of facts or the story line, or the addition of further viewpoints.

Keep your audience in mind

Remember that you are writing for the general public, not medical experts. Simplicity and accuracy can both help make an HIV/AIDS story more interesting and appealing. This means that the writer must explain all jargon—however simple certain words might appear. Ac-

ronyms should be explained in full the first time they appear in a story, regardless of how obvious they may seem.

Follow the basic rules of journalism

Above all, it is important to keep in mind basic journalistic skills. Determine what content is more or less important to the story, and keep track of events, so that information flows chronologically. Do not keep readers in suspense for too long as many may not be willing to wait to read to the end. Think about the audience and find out their preferences. Determine what is interesting to them—not just what is interesting to you. Keep things simple and accurate. In the case of a HIV/AIDS story, avoid incriminating phrases. Make the right choice of photographs to avoid stigmatising both the audience and the people in the image (and be sure to seek permission before taking such photographs).

Be judicious: not every story needs to be told

And, even before considering all of these tips, the journalist needs to gauge the potential impact of the story on society. Certain stories may be better left untold. To given an example from another subject matter, a story about a drug trafficker can be powerful depending on the angle. But profiling the success story of a trafficker who earned millions through the trade might not be in the best interest of society. Rags to riches stories are easy ways to sell to consumers, but journalists should always follow fundamental ethical principles.

All of these tips taken together can help to combat reader and editor fatigue surrounding HIV/AIDS stories, and, critically, to ensure that the virus and its victims remain in the spotlight.



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Isaiah has published articles in various local and international publications including Reuters AlertNet, Inter Press Service, *SPORE (CTA) Magazine*, the UK-based *New Internationalist*, the Kenya-based *Daily Nation* newspaper, *The East African*, *The Standard*, the *Kenya News Agency*, *People Daily*, and *AgroLink*.

Together with five other journalists, Esipisu published a photography book entitled *The Kindest Cut*, which highlighted male circumcision as a major preventative measure against HIV infection.

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Global is Local, Local is Global: Tips on Covering the Environment

Stephen Leahy

The environment is the overarching issue of the 21st century for two reasons:

1. The environment includes and touches everything: air, water, food, health, climate, energy, development, poverty, economics—the list could go on without end.
2. Nearly every major environmental indicator is in decline.

We are pushing up against the limits of the Earth’s ability to support us. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and nitrogen pollution are moving toward crisis levels, according to recent studies. There is little public awareness of this reality, which means journalists covering the environment have a plethora of important stories to cover. It is not all doom and gloom pieces, though. There are many, many good news stories to be written about the diversity of efforts on both local and national scales that attempt to address these problems. At the same time, it is important to investigate whether proposed solutions, projects or ‘green’ policies actually solve problems, and whether or not there are actual or potential unintended consequences. The world is littered with well-intended projects gone bad for one reason or another.

The seventh Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is to ensure environmental sustainability by 2015. Sustainability is a much misused and misunderstood concept. In

View of a collapsing chunk of ice near Canal de los Témpanos in Glacier National Park, Patagonia, Argentina. *EFE/Ariel Molina*

general, it means an action or activity can be continued indefinitely with little, or manageable, impact on the environment. Earth is a closed system—wastes and pollution end up somewhere: pesticides sprayed in Chile could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia and vice versa.

Claims are often made that a business, policy, or action is sustainable. But is it really? Are there indirect impacts on other regions or resources? What about future generations? Many sustainable projects fail to be truly sustainable due to poor implementation or poor understanding of the situation in the local region or community.

Journalists should ask for proof or demonstrations of true sustainability. They should not accept assurances. And when using the term in a story, explain what it means.

Fortunately, Goal Seven, ensuring environmental sustainability, has specific indicators to measure a nation's or region's progress. Let's look at just one because the same general approach would apply to all.

MDG indicator: reduce biodiversity loss

Biodiversity is the term used for the estimated 8.7 million species (give or take 1.3 million) that form our life support system by producing the planet's air, water, food, and much more. Species of plants, animals and others are becoming extinct at a rate of 5,000 to 30,000 per year. And the speed of this biodiversity loss is increasing, as members of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) acknowledged in 2010. They have set new targets for 2020.

As in any environmental story, journalists covering the decline of species in their region need to not only show how people and the environment are being affected, but also try to determine the root causes. Biodiversity loss on land results primarily from the alteration of natural habitats due to agriculture, deforestation, and resource exploitation. In the oceans, it is mainly the result of overfishing. However, the root cause of land conversion and overfishing are often specific policies (rules and regulations) and current economic circumstances.



*Journalists should ask for **proof or demonstrations of true sustainability**. They should not accept assurances. And when using the term in a story, explain what it means.*

Coping with Complexity: Science and environmental issues can be challenging for the public to understand due to the technical language and complexity, so journalists should act as translators by using clear, concise language and relevant examples to explain the science and the issues. Here are some tips:

- **Start by doing background research on the subject.** Science has its own language and uses some common words differently. For example the word ‘theory’, as in theory of gravity or theory of climate change.
- **During interviews ask sources how they would explain their findings** if they were speaking to a neighbour. (If that is still too complicated, ask how they would explain it to a ten-year-old child.)
- **Never be embarrassed to say ‘I don’t understand’.** It is the expert’s role to help journalists do their job of making the research or findings understandable to the public.
- **The story should answer these four questions:** Why is the study or report important? How does it affect the public? What are implications for people, region, etc.? What should be done?
- **Write so your grandmother will understand.**

What do sustainable government policies look like?

‘The right rules and legal frameworks help millions of people to do the right thing’, according to The World Future Council (www.worldfuturecouncil.org), a German charity that gives awards to countries with the best environmental and development policies. Rwanda’s National Forest Policy won the 2011 award for its comprehensive “total landscape” approach that has led to a 37-percent increase in forest cover. It also resulted in reduced erosion and improved local water supplies and livelihoods, all while helping to ensure peace.

The Costa Rican Biodiversity Law was the 2010 winner for its success in making the Central American country the first developing nation to succeed in halting and reversing deforestation. Even small policy changes can make a difference. Niger, for instance, adopted a rule al-

lowing local people in the Sahel without land titles (formal property rights) to own naturally regenerating trees if they protected and cared for them. Now millions of hectares of desert landscape are green.

Perverse incentives or bad policies for the environment

Many policies, such as certain types of subsidies, were created many years ago and without awareness of their negative impacts on the environment. Even when such policies have clear negative impacts on the environment, powerful vested interests resist and often prevent any changes to those policies. Here are two of the biggest perverse incentives:

Fisheries: Governments give away an estimated US\$ 27 billion worth of subsidies to support fishing fleets at a time when fishing pressure must be reduced because most ocean fish stocks are overexploited.

Fossil Fuels: Keeping climate change to a minimum will require sharp reductions in use of fossil fuels, since their carbon emissions are the primary cause of climate change. However, the fossil fuel sector receives US\$ 300 billion in annual subsidies. Price and production are the two main types of subsidies. Many governments in the developing world use price subsidies to keep the costs of fuel low. Developed countries mainly use production subsidies to reduce the industry’s exploration costs. Various analyses show that both forms of subsidies increase consumption.

General tips for the savvy environmental journalist:

1. **Learn the science really well**, in as much detail as possible. It is the only way you can write plainly and keep yourself from being deceived.
2. Because you cannot know everything, make sure you **use sources that are reliable and who do not have a hidden agenda**. Some scientists or experts have vested interests or are paid by corporations and lobby groups. This includes NGOs and governments.
3. **Check the content of news studies, reports, or press releases with trusted sources**. There are organisations paid to confuse reporters on technical issues or to promote certain agendas.
4. **Question and challenge all information and arguments**, no matter where or which side they come from. Credibility is everything.



Stephen Leahy has been an independent, environmental journalist for nearly 20 years. His writing has been published in dozens of publications around the world, including *New Scientist*, *The London Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, *Maclean’s Magazine*, *Earth Island Journal*, *The Toronto Star*, *Wired News*, *Audubon*, *BBC Wildlife*, and *Canadian Geographic*.

Based outside of Toronto, Canada, Stephen is currently the International Science and Environment correspondent for the Rome-headquartered Inter Press Service News Agency (IPSI), the sixth-largest global news agency. His articles appear in over 500 newspapers and magazines around the world, reaching an estimated 200 million readers in up to 20 languages.

5. Avoid ‘he said—she said’ stories that just trade accusations. Find out what is really going on. For example, nearly every climate scientist in the world has been saying for years that climate change is happening now, and yet some media still quote sources saying ‘no, it isn’t’. There will always be contrary viewpoints—someone who says the Earth is flat—but why quote them in a story?

When it is not obvious, be able to make an accurate assessment of each argument, and then decide which merits attention, or point out flaws and lies.

6. Get out and meet people involved in environmental issues, including those directly impacted.

One final thought: Global is Local and Local is Global

Virtually all aspects of environmental stories are local. Climate change, water, food, pollution, sustainable development, biodiversity, etc. have local angles. But these stories are also unfailingly global—a local environmental issue is almost certainly replicated in many other places around the world.

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A Dose of Advice: Tips on Covering Healthcare

G. Ananthakrishnan

In his 1999 book *Development as Freedom*, renowned economist and Noble laureate Amartya Sen stated that investment in healthcare can lead to success in meeting a wide range of development targets, such as those identified by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Indeed, good healthcare improves quality of life, reduces morbidity and mortality, and raises economic productivity. As such, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recognised the importance of universal health coverage (UHC) and urged its member states to adopt programmes providing essential health packages.

In general, UHC has the following components: appropriate levels of financing; access to medicines, vaccines and technology; adequate trained personnel; and emphasis on social determinants of health, including income and gender. Critically, media coverage of healthcare topics can help drive support for UHC in all development contexts.

However, in order to advance key development goals, journalists covering healthcare must address not just the symptoms resulting from a lack of adequate health programmes and facilities—that is, the problems that emerge when medical treatment is needed—but also the fundamental causes of disease.

Reporting on health: What to look for

Good reporting on healthcare means staying constantly aware of events or findings that could have significant health-related consequences, and, thus, that could serve as a starting point for a story. Look out for occasions such as Diabetes Day, Heart Health Day, and so on, as these can be useful opportunities to devote attention to lifestyle diseases, in particular. By staying alert, journalists should be able to spot a range of incidents. Some examples include:

- **The reported outbreak of disease**, such as cholera or dengue fever, or any collection of unidentifiable symptoms affecting a large number of people;
- **A major scientific finding or research development**, for example, new knowledge about the effects of climate change on disease, or the challenges of drug resistance. Only recently, for instance, international media has covered extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) in India;
- **The release of detailed health indicators** for a particular region or country from a credible source, such as a census, intergovernmental body, or international fact-finding team;
- **A major industrial or natural disaster**, such as the earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima nuclear crisis, is bound to have health consequences.



Thai students wash their hands during a hand, foot and mouth disease control campaign at a primary school in Bangkok, Thailand in July 2012. EPA/Rungroj Yongrit

How to frame your story

Important top-level objectives, such as the MDGs, can appear distant and complicated to citizens and national policymakers; therefore, journalists covering healthcare must work to properly frame their stories within the reality of a particular country or society.

In order to provide the right context for their readers, journalists need to begin their investigation on a particular health issue by asking some basic questions. Imagine, for example, that the plan is to cover the challenge of under-five mortality, which refers to children who do not survive until their fifth birthday. Here are some elements that should be included in such a report:

- **Statistics:** mention the current under-five mortality rate in the specified area
- **Changes:** analyse the pattern of under-five mortality over the past decade, or earlier
- **Policy efforts:** refer to any significant government-initiated initiatives aimed at reducing the mortality rate, whether successful or not
- **Transparency and reliability:** evaluate the reliability of the data on mortality (consider the type of health information system the country has in place, or the lack of such a system).

From here, there are many angles that journalists could explore in a story on under-five mortality. Maybe, one good place to begin is with any **potential asymmetries in healthcare** related to geography, economic status, gender, or other social determinants. Do certain regions—ranging from states and provinces to individual cities and villages—have higher death rates for children under five? Are poor children or girls at a greater risk of death? If yes, why?

Journalists working in countries with unique, long-established social traditions, such as those in South Asia and Africa, should keep in mind that health-related goals often depend on **reporting across cultural barriers**. Consider, for example, a rural village that the medical community has identified as exhibiting a high rate of child mortality. An investigation should look at which cultural factors, including community and family hierarchies, affect children's chances of survival.

Working backwards, a journalist could also examine the effect of **existing policy interventions**. There is research data, for example, demonstrating a positive

correlation between public spending on skilled delivery assistance and immunisation for the poor, and reduced child mortality. Compare and contrast, also, policy initiatives among various countries as an example of what has worked and what has not.

For economies that rely heavily on donor aid to fund health system initiatives, **tracking the flow of aid** is a key coverage point. Journalists should analytically evaluate implementation data and the credibility of reporting mechanisms to investigate whether aid is reaching its intended target.

In the context of developing countries, covering the flow of aid also includes **monitoring the efficacy of specific initiatives**, such as the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets to protect against malaria in young children. Look into the outcome and ask the basic but powerful question: Is the initiative working? Talk to parties on both sides: Do the expectations of donors match the experiences of the recipient communities?

Remember that while the above suggestions and categories refer specifically to under-five mortality, they are applicable to writing stories on any health-related topic.

Where to find information and sources

No matter the tack you choose to take, it will be critical to identify key sources, cross-check information with public health authorities wherever warranted, and obtain views from all those involved before drawing any inferences or note any caveats.

However, while authentic data is needed to arrive at an informed conclusion, it is certainly not always easy find. Below are some key suggestions of places where investigative journalists can seek information on healthcare.

The WHO is the primary source of data used in most international policy discussions. Vital indicators relevant to the MDGs, including poverty, life expectancy, fertility, mortality, prevalence and incidence of communicable diseases, and access to pharmaceuticals are reported periodically by the WHO, which often synthesises data from multiple reliable channels, such as UNICEF, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Bank.

There are also many peer-reviewed journals dealing with public health issues, MDGs, and clinical research.

Don't forget that the credibility of health data can itself be the subject of news coverage. If the public health system of a region or country does not have reliable, publicly available data on the health of children, women, and persons diagnosed with infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, that, in itself, is a story worth telling.

These include *The Lancet*, the *British Medical Journal*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Science*. In addition to “open access” journals, which provide scholarly material free of charge, a number of subscription-based scientific publications grant free access to journalists who make a formal request. If not, note that authors are usually happy to provide reporters with the full text of a specific article in question if contacted directly.

Some governments, including those in emerging economies, may seek to obscure healthcare data in order to avoid political opposition and electoral losses. But, in countries where national Freedom of Information (FOI) laws exist, journalists are within their rights to make public certain information and data not proactively published by authorities.

Answers given by ministers during legislative hearings also often provide valuable information. Look for parliamentary committee reports, which some countries, occasionally, make public on the Internet. In many cases, research groups and activists analyse such reports and share them with journalists.

NGOs and private foundations without commercial interests and not affiliated with a political party provide valuable information to journalists. One example is that of the Commonwealth Fund in the United States, which compared the likely impact of health policies of the two major contenders in the 2012 presidential elections.

Getting the big picture: Healthcare infrastructure

Any story on healthcare will have to examine and take into account the healthcare system currently in place.

Consider these questions:

- How do individuals pay for healthcare? Is there financial support from official agencies?
- Is there a cashless provision at the point of care?
- Is there a national list of “essential medicines” that matches or builds on the recommendations of the WHO? Are these medicines subject to price control?
- Is there infrastructure in place to test the quality of medicines both produced in the country or imported?

Remember that the inability to pay for medicines, diagnostic testing, and/or hospital admissions is a major cause of distress and impoverishment in many countries. If available, health expenditure data can indicate the level of out-of-pocket spending by citizens, in the absence of government support of insurance schemes.

Lifestyle diseases

Finally, a growing area of concern is the emergence of lifestyle diseases. These ailments are linked to social factors that influence individual behaviour—such as promo-

A doctor (L) checks patients at a malaria and dengue clinic in Calcutta, India, Sept. 2012. EPA/Piyal Adhikary

tion of tobacco and alcohol, poor awareness of unhealthful food, and high levels of stress.

Interestingly, even some emerging economies face health consequences due to a nutrition paradox: excess nutrition and lack of physical exercise in one sector of the population, and lack of nutrition and food security in another. This requires sensitive coverage of both dimensions, which may indicate further problems, such as poor income redistribution, and the influence of special interests.

The media can help correct such an imbalance by asking the right questions:

- Is subsidised food in public distribution systems unhealthful?
- Are food stamps, vouchers, or cash transfers encouraging poor habits?
- Is there adequate visibility for campaigns on the ill-effects of lifestyle choices?

As the window to the world for most of the public, the media has a responsibility to ask and answer questions like these that will enlighten the public and further enable the success of national and international healthcare initiatives such as the MDGs—which, in turn, increase quality of life and economic productivity.



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Pakistani newspapers report on a Supreme Court decision in Jan. 2013 ordering the arrest the Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf for alleged involvement in corruption. *EPA/Omer Saleem*



Holding the Big Fish Accountable: How to Uncover Corruption

Umar Cheema

In a 2011 Transparency International survey, more than 3,000 business executives from around the world were asked to assess the effectiveness of various approaches to weeding out corruption. The result: nearly half (49%) indicated that investigative journalism played a critical role. Respondents from Pakistan (73%) and Brazil (79%), countries where the press reports fiercely on suspected acts of corruption, placed particular faith in the media's ability to uncover wrongdoing.¹

Why did the participants feel so strongly that journalists can help? To answer this question, it is important to remember that rampant corruption in less-developed regions of the world is largely due to a lack of transparency and accountability. Power is concentrated in just a few hands, and statutes promoting the work of watchdog institutions are often toothless. The elite consider themselves above the law—which otherwise exists to empower common citizens—and oppressed classes come to accept this evil as a societal norm. In such doom-and-gloom realities, it is journalists who are left with the manifold task of guarding the public good.

Corruption in the developing world is, in a word, endemic. Corruption harms economic fairness: in the same Transparency International survey, 27% of respondents said they had lost business contracts to competitors who

¹ www.transparency.org/research/bps2011

Supporters of veteran social and anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare wave the Indian national flag and shouts slogans during a protest in Mumbai, India in Dec. 2011. *EPA/Divyakant Solanki*



had engaged in bribery. Executives from developing countries—Malaysia (50%), Indonesia (47%), Mexico (48%), Pakistan (42%) and Egypt (41%)—reported such bribery as particularly detrimental. Chunks of money that should or could be used to benefit society—from foreign aid and loans, to the revenue raised by burdening the poor with indirect taxes—flow, instead, into the pockets of the decision-makers and their business allies.

This alarming situation calls for journalists to play an extraordinary role in highlighting corrupt practices. To be sure, this task is a challenging one, particularly in developing countries, where Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation may be non-existent or highly ineffective. Moreover, in many cases, those who work to expose wrongdoing may put their lives at risk.

But where there is a will there is a way. Indeed, there are various tools that journalists can use to help stamp out corruption.

Spotting corruption

Despite efforts by those involved to cover their tracks, corruption “speaks” whenever and wherever it is committed. Journalists need to be aware of this language. If a contract is awarded in undue haste or with significant delay, there is something wrong. If a license is issued without due procedure, money must have changed hands. When someone gets rich overnight, there has to be a reason. If development work is accelerated, there are likely some big businesses trying to invest in decision-makers in order to win favour. Journalists should read the signs and dig for answers.

There are several techniques journalists can use to spot potential wrongdoing; these include checking budget books and official documents, collecting court records, analysing paper trails, and conducting investigative interviews. However, for journalists in the developing world, making use of these tools is sometimes difficult, given resource constraints, and pressing deadlines imposed by understaffed editors who often demand that reporters produce copy on a frequent basis. Nevertheless, there are ways to overcome most challenges.

By looking around carefully, [sources] can be found within the bureaucracy, and often the best sources are government officials who witness every step of corrupt acts. Some officials, in fact, may have even tried in vain to intervene, and once they are won over, these officials can aid in the struggle to bring the truth to light.

Cultivating sources

Initially, journalists must learn the art of cultivating good sources. By looking around carefully, such individuals can be found within the bureaucracy, and often the best sources are government officials who witness every step of corrupt acts. Some officials, in fact, may have even tried in vain to intervene, and once they are won over, these officials can aid in the struggle to bring the truth to light.

Reporters need to know the right people in the right places, so it is important to form working relationships with lawmakers and get acquainted with organisations promoting transparency and accountability in different sectors. By making the right connections, getting official documents quickly is much easier. And a journalist with a good reputation will have whistleblowers running to him or her, rather than the other way around.

Getting the information required

Skill is required to obtain the information needed. By learning to read people's expressions and actions, a journalist can identify the best sources more quickly. For

example, sources who speak more during a given interaction generally have less to reveal, so approaching the quieter ones first tends to be more fruitful. Avoid officials who are often frequented by journalists: the most valuable sources shy away from meeting reporters and require people to win their trust.

Winning trust is not easy, though. Being prepared before any interview with a potential source is vital. Knowledge of the source's career, character, and current position gives the journalist an advantage, and showing an interest in the person, sharing a cup of tea and a chat along with a little bit of flattery—maybe briefly complimenting the official's good work—can make them feel more comfortable in eventually opening up.

A potential source may be uncomfortable in sharing important information during the initial meeting, but with gentle encouragement, over time, small pieces of information will start to appear. Explicitly asking for news and overtly taking notes may alarm a potential source, so the journalist should let the source lead conversation without interrupting with questions, and simply try to remember what is said. A patient listener will reap the rewards.

With the passage of time, the official will become the journalist's eyes and ears in a department or institution, and protecting that source's identity is critical. One effective way to do this is by throwing observers off the track. For example, in most cases of corruption, more than one government department is involved. To divert the attention of those investigating, it should be suggested, when referring to a source, that the obtained information was disclosed anonymously by another department.

Looking for alternative sources

As there are no effective FOI laws in many developing countries, lawmakers can also help to acquire desired information. Often, these individuals are authorised to seek information from any department unless it is classified. A journalist should seek out like-minded legislators, who can access official records denied to reporters. And,

while some information is public, the journalist hunting down an exclusive story may want to cultivate a source that liaises between departments and is privy to details before other departments are.

In addition to working with government officials, journalists can also approach those whose interests are hurt by means of a corrupt deal. In many cases, the latter may even approach the media for help in bringing down their competitor. A journalist should listen to these individuals patiently—even when the claims seem exaggerated—and should request complete documentation of the claim. If they truly want to highlight the case in public, they will provide whatever is needed.

Here, it is critical to employ analytical skills. Sifting the fact from the fiction and filtering out any propaganda material is at the heart of a good story. By approaching all the parties involved in an alleged scam, the journalist will ensure objective reporting and perhaps gain sources for future stories on corruption.

Holding the big fish accountable, though, is not without personal and professional risk, and it is important to continually assess these risks. For example, waiting a day to get one version from a low-risk individual is fair, waiting a week to hear back from more dangerous individuals is prudent. Remaining courteous and respectful with all the subjects of a story will reduce risk, but even explaining objectively to them that this is a news story—not a war waged against them personally—might not placate a particularly irate subject. In this case, a reference to the portions of the respective law they have allegedly violated

and a responsible attitude in the reporting goes a long way to lessen personal danger, even if it cannot guarantee complete security.

Until FOI legislation is implemented worldwide, and until transparency is accepted as a basic democratic right, there will always be an element of threat to personal and professional safety for both journalists and sources involved in exposing corruption. However, these tips can help the driven journalist to minimise risk and more effectively do his or her job: holding the big fish accountable.



Umar Cheema is an investigative reporter with *The News* (Pakistan) and the founder of the Centre for Investigative Reporting in Pakistan (<http://cirp.pk/>). He writes on corruption, politics, national security and unaccountable intelligence agencies, bold work that has resulted in his being abducted and abused. Umar's unwillingness to stay silent about the ill treatment he has suffered has drawn wide attention to the nationwide issue of anti-press violence in Pakistan.

For his brave journalism and willingness to publicly speak about the attacks against him, the University of Missouri conferred on him the 2012 Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Services in Journalism. In 2008, he received a Daniel Pearl Fellowship, becoming the first Pearl fellow to work at *The New York Times*. Cheema holds a master's degree in science in comparative politics (conflict studies) from the London School of Economics.

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An Eye on the Cash: Covering the Money Behind the MDGs

Kimberly S. Johnson

There are the two essential questions a reporter covering business, the economy, or just about any topic should always ask: ‘How much does it cost?’ and ‘Where will you get the money from?’

These simple questions are not only key to gaining information about your current story’s topic, but they offer greater insight into reasons for decisions that have a direct impact on a country and its citizens.

Everything has a price associated with it—even the most humanitarian of efforts. Money is the backbone of all things. Once you figure out from where a business, government or non-profit group receives its money, and how the money is used, it’s a little easier to understand and write about broader, sweeping issues.

Government cash

Depending on the country and its level of development, money for government-funded efforts can be raised from sales, income, or business taxes; permits and licenses; and royalties/taxes from the extraction and exportation of natural resources. In less-developed countries, funds often come from development and donor aid (examples: the World Bank, United Nations, or Care International).

Know your budget

You should be aware of how much money (revenue) a country, state, or province is bringing in each year, or if it lacks enough money to pay government workers, run state-owned hospitals, or fix roads (known as running a deficit.) This information is usually contained in an annual budget.

Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, takes part in a lesson on gender equality to local women in Mali as part of a program funded by the Spanish Development Agency (AECID). *EFE/Emilio Naranjo*

Where to look for help:

- **Tracking statistics on development aid can be a difficult task.** One useful place to start is the aid database at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (www.oecd.org/dac/stats). Other places to begin researching are the AidData (www.aiddata.org) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (www.aidtransparency.net). But remember that the official numbers tell only a small part of the whole story—one of the key jobs of journalists is to find out where all those dollars and cents end up.
- **The International Budget Partnership** (www.internationalbudget.org) analyses budget transparency in countries around the world and provides resources for civil society organisations and researchers on how to read and access budgets.
- In some countries, there may be non-profit groups dedicated to increasing budget awareness among citizens. One example is the **Accountability Initiative** (www.accountabilityindia.in) in India.

Knowing where to find a nation's annual budget, and being able to read it properly is key. A budget will give you a good idea of how much a government plans to spend in the coming year, and will list how much it spent in the current and previous years.

In more-developed nations, budgets can be found online at government websites, particularly ministries of finance, or sites for budget or tax-collection offices. In less-developed countries, you may not be able to find this information online, so you may have to request a copy of the budget in person.

If a budget must be approved by a parliament or other governing body, these political avenues could be useful in the quest for a copy of a budget, considering politicians will likely want to hold debates over expenditures listed in the budget. Regardless of the country, some politicians and citizens may feel a government is spending too much in certain areas or not enough in others. Others will argue over proposed cuts to certain departments or agencies.

Be sure you know how to read the columns in a budget properly, following the given guidelines to compute the

currency amounts in thousands, millions, or billions. Also, be sure you know how to calculate percentage changes.

If the government has a surplus, meaning money left over after all its bills are paid, you should feel free to ask if this money will be saved or spent to increase services for citizens or on other things, like defence.

When there isn't enough money

If a government is operating with a deficit, meaning spending more money than it is taking in, it is fair to ask officials how the government will make up for that shortfall. Ask if it will take on loans from other governments, issue government-backed bonds, or receive donor aid.

Issues surrounding money—particularly budget deficits—are often sensitive areas for officials, mostly in less-developed nations, as they must often rely on donor aid or loans from the World Bank to make up for financial shortfalls.

Remember that questions about finances are neutral, and should be asked by savvy reporters regardless of the

political party in power. Be sure you approach officials—particularly heads of ministries and departments—respectfully. You should seek to develop positive, lasting relationships with heads of finance and trade, and key government advisors.

The money behind the MDGs

A government announcing a free health-care programme for pregnant women and children under five years old may be looking to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to child and maternal health. But bear in mind that someone must pay for additional doctors, nurses, medications, and other necessities needed to give more people access to health care. It's obviously a large undertaking, so it is fair to enquire about costs. The head of the ministry of health or similar department should be able to answer your questions, considering they are in charge of the project.

'Can you tell me how much this programme will cost, and what sources you will use to pay for it?' is a very neutral, casual question in comparison with, 'What did you do with the money for this project? I don't think the country can afford this.' Your tone should be confident but never accusatory. This is important when asking about specific projects or initiatives that often get much fanfare. Your readers/listeners/watchers will want to know this information because it could affect their everyday lives.

Regardless of what you may know from other sources, never imply that any corruption is involved. Feel free to ask if tax increases are involved, although raising taxes on people or business is never a happy topic.

Should an official fail to answer the question, feel free to ask if he/she knows of another source you should speak to, to get the answer. If you are dealing with a hostile official, your publication should allow you write about

your failed attempt to gather that information: 'The ministers of health and finance declined to answer questions about how much the project costs or offer details on how it would be funded.' Be sure to document these exchanges carefully or use a voice recorder.

Development aid

Much of the progress made towards achieving the MDGs is due, in part, to money coming from development aid groups. Bodies such as the United Nations and World Bank have spent billions around the world organizing and running projects. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also pouring money into programmes in various nations in an effort to help them achieve several MDGs.

Can you tell me how much this programme will cost, and what sources you will use to pay for it?

To figure out how much a group is spending in a particular country, journalists should look to online documentation, as much information is public. Keep in mind that many NGOs in their home country are required by law to make their budgets or annual reports public.

But figures contained in annual reports can differ from the actual amount being spent helping people in your country. According to Tamika D. Payne, an independent gender expert based in Sierra Leone, journalists should ask, 'How much money is being spent on direct beneficiary support?' She points out that knowing some "NGO lingo" is often useful and lets the person you're interviewing know you have a better understanding of the issue, so they're likely to provide a better answer. That kind of question forces the NGO to separate how much is being spent on overheads and other operational costs, such as paying its employees and transportation. 'If \$10 million is being earmarked for a new school, for example,

The President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Thomas Mirrow, shakes hands with Prime Minister of Moldova Vladimir Filat (R) during a visit to Chisinau, Moldova, in Dec. 2011. EPA/Dumitru Doru

journalists need to ask how much of that money is going to boys and girls in the school, for things such as books,' says Payne. 'That amount of money is different from the overall cost of building the school.'

Poverty, employment, and the private sector

Nations are going to take several approaches to reduce poverty levels. Improving the economic fate of families—particularly women—and educating them will go a long way on the road to ending poverty. Journalists need to understand the connections between these issues.

The only way to reduce poverty is for people to earn more money. To do so, they need jobs, jobs that pay a fair wage on a consistent basis. How government officials will create more jobs for their citizens is a fair question that should be asked often.

Developing nations are keen to attract investors, or companies from more-developed nations. When this happens, journalists should not be afraid to question these businesses about their intentions in the country. Ask questions about incentives, or special financial awards

The only way to reduce poverty is for people to earn more money. To do so, they need jobs, jobs that pay a fair wage on a consistent basis. How government officials will create more jobs for their citizens is a fair question that should be asked often.

the company received in exchange for setting up in the country (land, and discounted taxes, royalties, or tariffs are common).

Feel free to challenge businesses on whether their development will consist of all local workers. If not, what percentage, or how many local people, will be hired? How much will these workers be paid?

It is easy to relate these responses to the MDG on reducing poverty and raising employment levels, as the jobs are bound to have an impact on the economy.

Reporters may often have to be a bit more aggressive—but not accusatory—in their questioning of businesses. If the company is public, meaning its shares are traded on a stock exchange, reporters can find documents about the company's financial health and investment plans online. To find answers about questions specific to a company's project in a country, reporters may often have to call or e-mail someone in the country where the company is based, if a local representative cannot answer questions.

Trade and debt forgiveness

Developing countries are gaining greater access to markets of developed countries in terms of trade. The biggest benefit comes from tariff reductions on agricultural products.

Journalists should be familiar with products grown and exported from their country, and how much is sold to other countries. Speaking with officials from trade ministries and departments is key.

Because of budget shortfalls, many developing nations have a significant amount of debt on their books. 39 countries are eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative as of April 2013. Journalists in these nations should be aware of this status and the efforts the country needs in order to have some of that debt wiped away. Ask how much of the debt will be forgiven and the effect that easing will have on the economy.



Kimberly S. Johnson has over 15 years of journalism experience working at a wide variety of media organisations in the United States and abroad. She is currently a freelance financial journalist based in West Africa and serves as senior reporter for *mergermarket*, a subsidiary of The Financial Times Group, focused on forward-looking intelligence on mergers and acquisitions and other deal flow information around the world. Johnson also contributes to *GlobalPost.com*, a news website focused on international news.

Prior to her work in Africa, Kimberly served as auto writer for the Associated Press in Detroit, and technology writer for *The Denver Post*. She's also held positions at *The Boston Globe*, *New Haven Register* and CNN. Kimberly holds bachelor and master degrees from Boston University's College of Communication in Broadcast Journalism and Business and Economics Journalism, respectively.

On the Trail: How to Request Information from Authorities

Maye Primera

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Power sets barriers and the reporter pushes back against them—it's an unwritten rule on which Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez believed all journalistic work is based. Some governments, however, have begun to voluntarily lower these barriers by approving legislation designed to make information more accessible to their citizens.

To date, approximately 90 countries globally have freedom of information laws, which establish rules and deadlines for facilitating the collection of data. Even in (democratic) countries where no such specific statute exists, it is assumed that public access to information is guaranteed by the right to freedom of expression. Even in these countries, though, such laws certainly cannot guarantee transparency. In the first place, most people, including reporters, are unaware that they have the right to access information generated by their governments.



A Paraguayan activist looks through documents, unsealed in 2012, related to alleged crimes committed during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. *EFE/Andrés Cristaldo*

Editor's Tip: Check out the resource section of this handbook for a list of organisations promoting government transparency. Many of these groups provide detailed information on **national freedom-of-information (FOI) laws**. You will also find a model letter for requesting information under FOI statutes.

What follows are some suggestions and tips that can facilitate journalists' work in requesting information from authorities, even in those countries where there is no specific law regulating the issue. If reporters gain access to accurate data, their stories will be of a higher quality and citizens will be better informed when making decisions involving the future of their societies.

Some Key Points:

Where is the information?

The first task of journalists looking for information must be to identify which state institutions have the information they need. Often, diverse government offices possess the same information, and, in the case of countries that do not have a specific legislation regulating the issue, these offices can also regulate the access to that information. Importantly, reporters should consider, from the start, that the information they are looking for might not only be hidden in the desks of senior government officials, but also already available in public databases. Sometimes, they might also find the desired data in less bureaucratic locations, such as private institutions, regional offices of the major ministries, and so on.

Is the information 'secret'?

Before making a formal application, journalists must make sure that the information required has not been classified as a state secret by the constitution or any other national law, or exempted by any other standard. All information that affects national security or involves financial or commercial secrets, criminal investigations (sum-

mary trials), or the private lives of ordinary citizens who do not occupy bureaucratic positions, is often restricted. Everything else is public: official statistics, the execution of budgets, and procurements of the companies who have a contract with the state, for example. Anything that is public—although it sounds obvious to say—should never be a secret.

Less is more: The more accurate the information request is, the more likely it is that journalists will get an answer that meets their expectations. Each application must be written in a simple way, identifying the data required as clearly as possible. It is very important to define the parameters: if journalists are interested in obtaining information for a specific time period, they must indicate it on the order. Also note how the information should be expressed: as annual or monthly reports, for example.

One question at a time: When requesting information, journalists should ask one question at a time, thus requiring only one response from the public administration. It is better to make several requests for information, rather than taking the risk of writing a long list of questions that will end up unanswered.

Polite but strong: It is always advisable to invoke the law when making a request for information. When writing an application, mention the standards that guarantee the exercise of this right in each country, and the specific articles of the constitution or the laws on access to information, for example, depending on the case. In those states where a specific law to guarantee access to

information has not been approved, appeal to some articles of international human-rights documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (also Article 19)—or in the case of the American continent, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (Article IV), the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 13), and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (complete text). In democratic states, public officials, regardless of their rank, are duty-bound to provide timely and accurate information to citizens. However, as some officials may forget this fact, journalists—in respectful but firm language—should remind them as part of each information request.

Proof of the request: It is essential when they make the request for information that journalists obtain a signed and sealed copy of it from the public body or authority, to prove that the request was both made and received. It is also important to be in permanent contact with the officer who will answer the petition, to track the status of the request and clarify any doubt that may arise about specific data or required documentation.

Persist, always persist: Journalists must be persistent. If the first inquiry is not answered or the answer is incomplete or ambiguous, submit a second petition. If journalists make mistakes in the first application (lack of clarity about the information requested, for example), they should correct them. In cases where a second request

is needed, the journalists' tone should be even stronger to emphasize the legal obligation of all public officials in democratic states to provide information to citizens.

Silence is also news: Even when the laws and international treaties obligate public officials to report accurate and timely information, it is common that requests for information are not answered. Or, if they are, they do not meet journalists' expectations because the information is incomplete or unclear. This is particularly common in states where there is no system to facilitate access to public information. But in many cases, the lack of response is a deliberate government policy to deny the right to be informed. In that case, administrative silence can also become a story: a reporter can, for example, prepare a report based on the number of information requests that have not been answered and denounce the lack of transparency on a particular topic.



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She is the author of *The Biography of Diógenes Escalante*, a book of interviews called *The Deluded Republic*, and the extended report "Faces and Voices against Impunity". Her work has been included in the anthologies *Venezuelan Spoken Here* and the *Better than Fiction*. Currently, she works as the Caracas correspondent for the Spanish newspaper *El País* and Argentina's *Clarín*.



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The Art of the Interview

María Emilia Martín

The interview is one of the—if not the—most important tools we as journalists have to obtain information, to expand on information we may have from other sources, and to clarify facts and see things from different perspectives.

We use the interview to expand upon the basic “who, what, where, how, when and why” of newsgathering. This is true whatever beat we may be covering: health, economics, politics, or issues having to do with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In covering the issues of poverty eradication, corruption, gender equality, and environmental and health concerns, the interview is the way in which the voices of not only experts but also the people most affected by these issues will be heard. The interview is the manner in which

the voice of the often-unheard poor, and others affected by MDG issues, will be brought to a larger public.

Unfortunately, many journalists believe interviewing is simply a matter of asking questions and taking down the responses. Often, we pay little attention to this important skill. But to be a truly effective journalist demands we hone our interviewing skills to an art. This comes with practice, and by following certain guidelines:

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare

The quality of the information we get from our interview greatly depends on the degree of preparation we put into it. It is important to know the background of the subject you are covering and at least basic information regarding the interviewee. Here is where previous files of clips from your station or newspaper come in, as well as the Internet and your library.

Prepare a list of questions before hand, or at least a bullet point list of topics you want to touch on. But do not be so glued to your list that you break the next rule of the art of interviewing,

2. Listen, listen and listen

Be an active listener, and be very present during your interview. Do not become so preoccupied with looking at your list of questions that you miss something the interviewee says which calls for a follow-up question.

Especially when interviewing ordinary citizens, be present and attentive. Often they are sharing their pain—be respectful of that effort by listening in a polite and active manner.

3. Ask yourself: What do I want to get out of this interview?

Are you doing the interview to get a quick quote or sound-bite? Are you writing or producing a profile of a subject, which would call for a longer time and perhaps several interviews in different settings?

If the interview is for radio or television, perhaps consider whether the person will be a good visual or aural interviewee. Here, pre-interviewing by phone before hand is a good idea.

Ask yourself: Do I have a focus for the interview? Do I have a plan?

4. Choose the best place

Decide if it is best to interview by phone (if you do not need to have the interview in broadcast quality), or in person. Sometimes, busy people will be willing to speak with you on the phone for 15 or 20 minutes, but might be reluctant to do an in-person interview, as they think it may take longer.

If you have a choice, think about where might be the best place to do the interview. If you are doing this for radio or television, think about the setting and the noise level.

5. Make your interviewee comfortable

Some people clam up when they see a microphone, or freeze when they hear the word “interview.” For the latter, you might say you want to set up some time to “talk” or to ask a few questions.

Make the person comfortable with some chit-chat before you start the interview. And if you are using audio or video recording equipment, explain it to them to put them at ease.

Be especially sensitive when interviewing victims or families of victims, be these people who have suffered some sort of crime or disaster, or are living under circumstances that the MDGs try to address. Remember that whatever the circumstances, people who agree to an interview or to be photographed are giving you not only their time, but in some ways, as some indigenous groups believe, they are giving you a bit of their soul. Be very grateful and sensitive to that gift, and be very present in the moment of that interview.

If your interviewee becomes emotional during the interview, give him or her a moment to compose themselves. It is okay to let them know that you understand their situation and that by their agreeing to the interview, others will also understand their position.

6. Maintain control of the interview

Do share the general focus of the interview with the interviewee. Do not, however, generally share your list of questions. This would result in a scripted, stilted interview.

If you are using a microphone, never lose control of the mike. Never let the person you are interviewing grab it from you.

If you are interviewing a public official or anyone else at an office, it is preferable not to do the interview across a desk—try to see if there is a sofa or other seating arrangement where you might do the interview without a big space/power symbol between you and the person you are interviewing.

A few more points of advice:

Asking difficult questions

It is generally a good idea to start off the interview with softer, less controversial questions. As the person you are interviewing becomes more comfortable, it may become easier to bring up the harder subject. You may want to phrase your question by attributing the assumption to

a third party: “Your opponents say such and such ... How do you respond?”

The e-mail interview

Sometimes it is just not convenient or possible to interview someone face-to-face, or even by phone, so you can consider the possibility of doing an interview by e-mail. These are not ideal, either as an interviewer or an interviewee as details gained in a face-to-face interview are missed. There is no opportunity to make observational notes, which means nuances or a hesitation in a response that may be valuable are lost.

Practice, practice, and practice

The art of interviewing may be at the same time the simplest yet most difficult part of practicing journalism. Keep honing your art by trying to be better each time you do another interview.

What kinds of questions work well in an interview?

- Ask the person for his/her name and position up front.
- Ask open-ended questions that will elicit more than “yes” or “no” answers.
- Keep your questions neutral in tone.
- Ask for definitions, examples, anecdotes.
- Ask questions your audience/readers want to know the answers to.
- Keep your questions short and to the point.
- Ask one question at a time (do not double-up on questions).
- Be prepared to ask follow-up questions—and be sure to be listening for questions that require a follow-up.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Make sure you are asking a question, rather than making a commentary.
- Do not argue with the person you are interviewing.
- Do not try to cover too much territory during the interview. Remember your focus.
- Be polite, but persistent. Keep asking until you get a response to your question.
- Prepare a closing question.
- After the interview is over, ask if there is something he/she would care to add (This often elicits a very useable interview segment). Also ask if he/she recommends other people to interview ... and if you may contact him/her should you have further questions or need to clarify.

Tips for managing an e-mail interview:

1. Often, when I am asked to do an e-mail interview, I receive a long list of questions to which a thoughtful response would take up much more time than I have. So if the only option is an e-mail interview, first of all, do be thoughtful of your source's time and limit yourself to no more than three to five questions.
2. Identify yourself and your news organization to your source. Let them know how you came to contact them. Where did you find their name and contact? When you send your questions, also ask for the opportunity to ask follow-up or clarifying questions should you have any.
3. Let them know what your deadline is. Follow up if you have not heard from them, and also send your questions to several sources, especially if you are on deadline.
4. Once you have received a response, do follow up to ask for clarifications if you have the need. Then be sure to send a thank you note with an offer to send a link to your finished article (Do follow up on the latter if you made the offer).
5. With the widespread availability of Skype, I prefer to use this technology for phone interviews. There are a number of programs that let one easily tape these interviews (be sure to let your sources know you are taping the interview).
6. Whether you use phone, Skype, or the Internet, be sure to prepare for your interview.



María Emilia Martin is a pioneering public radio journalist and the recipient of over two dozen awards for her work covering Latino issues and Latin America. She started her career at the first community public radio station owned and operated by Latinos in the U.S. Since then, she has developed ground-breaking programs and series for public radio, including NPR's Latino USA, and Después de las Guerras: Central America after the Wars.

A recipient of Fulbright and Knight Fellowships, she has extensive experience in journalism and radio training in numerous countries in the Americas, including the U.S., Mexico, Guatemala, and Bolivia. Martin holds a master's degree in Journalism from the Ohio State University, and currently heads the GraciasVida Center for Media and GraciasVida Productions based in Austin, Texas and Antigua, Guatemala.

(Part 4)

Putting the MDGs in Context

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Energy Poverty Alleviation: The Missing Millennium Development Goal

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)

Much has been said in previous chapters about the motivation and process behind the introduction, in 2000, of quantitative goals to ease some of the world's most pressing human and social issues by 2015. These issues were not new, but until 2000 no collective global effort had been made to address them. The objectives that were agreed upon in 2000 are better known today as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Notably, the MDGs constitute one of the few instances in which the United Nations has led a global effort to coordinate a comprehensive human and social agenda, approved by governments, international development institutions, NGOs, and other parties. This united effort received widespread recognition from governments, academia, media, development institutions and practitioners alike, as the specific targets could be measured, followed, and ratified.

A few years after 2000, on the way to the target year of 2015, another pressing social issue started to appear: energy poverty. It had become clear that the relevance of energy to development had not been properly recognised during the founding of the MDGs. At the time, the lack of access to safe, reliable, and affordable energy sources was not associated with what were considered the more essential problems of hunger, health, and education.

Various organisations, individuals, groups, and institutions, including the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), took up the urgent call to address this issue, and their determination and perseverance has helped to highlight the vital link between energy and de-

velopment. As a development finance institution, OFID has been widely recognised as one of the pioneers in championing this theme at the international level, combating energy poverty through its Energy for the Poor Initiative (EPI), launched in 2008.

Two years later, in 2010, the UN announced its decision to mark 2012 as the Year of Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), an initiative that launched international efforts to achieve universal energy access by 2030. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called energy 'the golden thread that connects development, social

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called energy 'the golden thread that connects development, social inclusion and environmental protection', stating that 'achieving sustainable energy for all is not only possible, but necessary'.

inclusion and environmental protection', stating that 'achieving sustainable energy for all is not only possible, but necessary'.

Various initiatives, most significantly the 2012 SE4ALL, have brought the world's attention to energy poverty and have demonstrated the imperative need to tackle this problem in order to meet the MDGs. Due to the link between poverty and a lack of access to energy, and in order to maintain international focus on the issue of energy poverty, the UN General Assembly announced in December 2012 that it would name the period from 2014 to 2024 the Decade for Sustainable Energy for All. However, while the news media has covered the MDGs—



Uniting against Poverty

though as this handbook indicates, not enough—the international press has not exposed energy poverty and its concurrent problems to the same extent.

What is energy poverty?

Energy poverty may be defined as the lack of adequate, accessible, and affordable energy to satisfy basic human needs and promote economic growth.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), over 1.3 billion people—i.e. one person in every five—lack access to electricity and the concurrent advantages it provides for learning, working, driving industry and business, and running hospitals and schools. Similarly, 2.6 billion people—over a quarter of the world’s population—live without clean energy facilities, using instead wood, charcoal, or animal waste to cook food and heat their homes, exposing them to the kinds of dangerous smoke and fumes that kill nearly two million people a year.

Without access to energy, it is not possible to eradicate poverty. In the pursuit of economic growth, all developing countries need reliable power supplies in order to fuel industry and commerce, and enable public institutions. Therefore, the alleviation of energy poverty is a key pillar towards attaining the MDGs and achieving comprehensive, sustainable development. That is why OFID has named the eradication of energy poverty as the Ninth Millennium Development Goal.

Energy poverty alleviation: Advocacy and action

Since its establishment in 1976, OFID and its Member Countries have put words into action and shown their commitment to the elimination of poverty and its attendant human misery. OFID has been at the forefront of raising the profile of energy poverty on the international agenda, largely through the EPI, which was launched in direct response to calls made at the 3rd OPEC Summit, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November 2007. During that gathering, Member Countries acknowledged the ‘strong interrelationship between energy and development’ and committed ‘to continue to align the programmes of our aid institutions, including those of the OPEC Fund for International Development, with the objective of achieving sustainable development and eradication of energy poverty in the developing countries [...]’.

OFID approaches the challenge on two fronts: through advocacy and through the allocation of specific resources to those in need. Working with a wide network of partners and utilising all the financial instruments at its disposal, including a newly established special grant account for Energy Poverty Operations, OFID has considerably maximised its efforts in this latter area. In the two-year period from 2011 to 2012, the share of energy financing reached 39% of total OFID operations, compared to 20% on a cumulative basis since inception. These activities are spread worldwide and cover a diverse range of operations, from infrastructure and equipment provision to research and capacity building.

Advocacy efforts have been undertaken since 2008 when a workshop was held in Abuja, Nigeria, to discuss energy poverty in Africa. The culmination of OFID’s advocacy work, however, came in June 2012 with the release of a Ministerial Declaration on Energy Poverty, announced at the Rio+20 Summit. Issued by the Ministerial Council, OFID’s highest authority, the Declaration reaffirmed the commitment of Member Countries to the eradication of energy poverty and announced a provision of \$US 1 billion to finance the EPI, an amount that may be increased in order to meet extra demand.

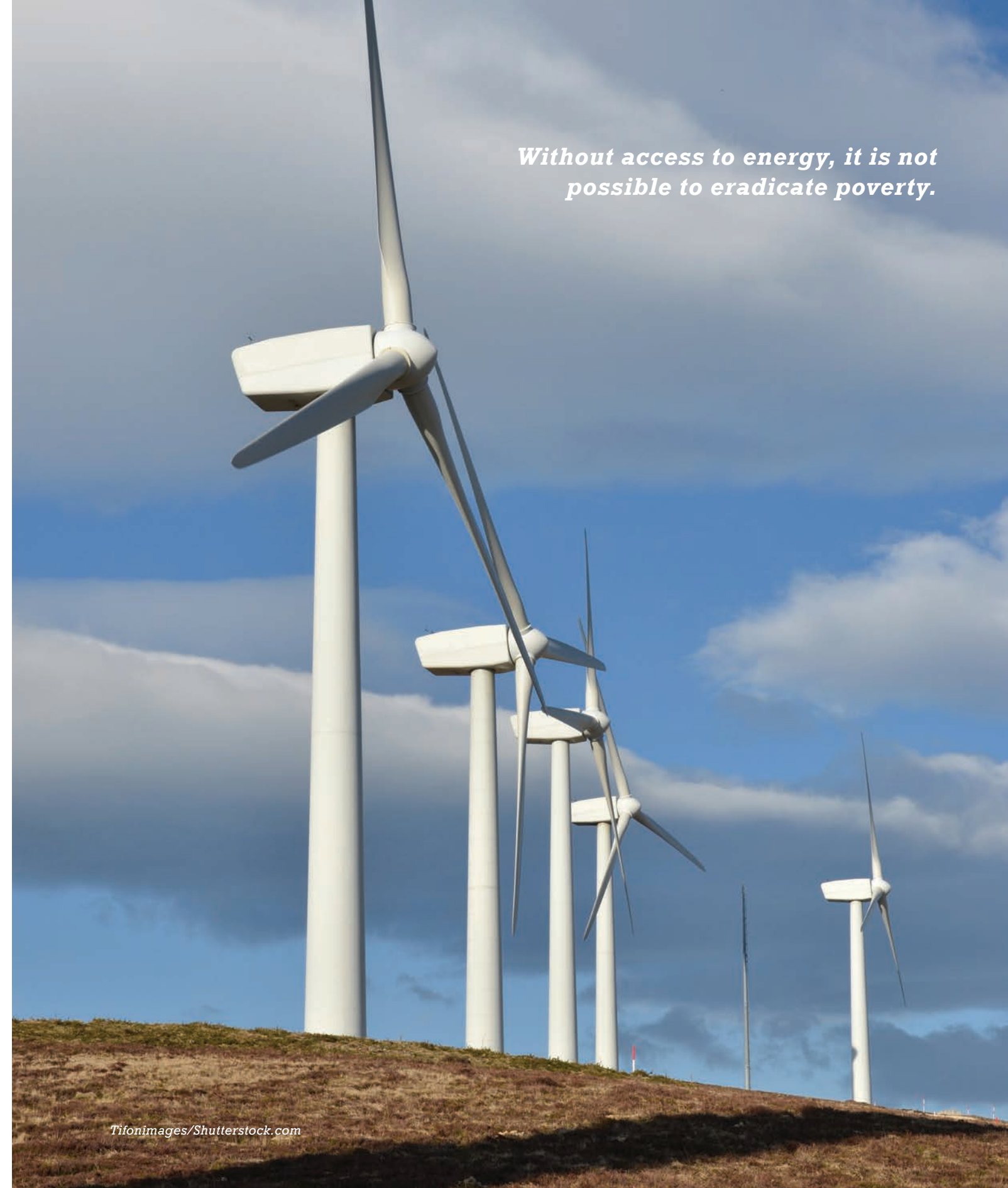
Further, in 2012, as part of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Group on Sustainable Energy for All, the institution contributed to the development of the Action Agenda that was submitted to the Rio+20 Global Summit, at which OFID was an active participant in its own right as well as part of the Group.

Energy poverty alleviation: Technology & environment

While the prospect of providing energy to those who lack it inevitably raises environmental concerns, research by the IEA suggests that such fears are unfounded. According to their 2009 publication, *World Energy Outlook*¹, if electricity were provided to all people worldwide, global energy-related CO2 emissions would increase by only 0.9 – 1.3 percent by the year 2030, depending on the penetration rate of clean energies in the energy mix.

It is widely accepted that, in order to achieve universal energy access, all energy options, including fossil fuels and renewable, should remain open. Among the latter group, solar energy and modern sustainable biomass are

¹ www.worldenergyoutlook.org/publications/weo-2009/



highly suitable for numerous, local, off-grid applications because their technologies and economies have improved drastically over the years. In areas like transportation, hydrocarbon fuels play a leading role. The international community’s strategy should thus remain technologically neutral: solutions may involve renewables as well as fossil fuels, with neither having precedence over the other. The priority is to provide energy, in whatever form possible, to alleviate the extreme suffering of the poorest in the world and to break the economic divide.

**Energy poverty alleviation:
Tips for reporting**

In order to report effectively on Energy Poverty, it is important to consider the following:

- What steps are being made in your country/region to ensure:
 - * Reliable and affordable electricity access
 - » Accessibility and/or cost
 - » Review of energy rates and affordability for poor consumers
 - * Adequate investment for energy access in urban and rural areas, including assessment of the existing infrastructure and maintenance:
 - » for households
 - » for community, education and health services
 - » for industry, agriculture and transportation
- The three pillars of SE4All
 - * Ensure universal access to modern energy services
 - * Double the global rate of improvement on energy efficiency
 - * Double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix

Sample Articles (Notes from the Field)

I. Yemen: “Harnessing the power of the wind”³

Energy poverty is a very real problem for the people of Yemen, with over fifty percent of the population lacking regular access to electricity. The situation is even more severe among poor and rural communities, which comprise

nearly half the country’s inhabitants. A rapidly increasing population and industrial growth are putting even more pressure on the sector, which is oil-dependent. In order to meet the basic needs of the population, the country is seeking to broaden its energy base to include alternative sources.

Yemen’s known oil and gas reserves are limited and quickly being used up. However, the country is uniquely placed to make use of significant renewable resources such as geothermal, solar, and wind. To assist the government in its effort to bolster the power sector and meet growing demand, OFID is co-financing the Al Mocha 60 MW Wind Park Project. As a clean source of energy and the least expensive form of alternative energy, wind power will not only provide underserved communities with a reliable and cost-efficient energy supply but will also diversify and enhance Yemen’s economy.

The project is expected to significantly improve the quality of life for approximately 75,000 inhabitants in the western part of the country by providing income-earning opportunities, and, more importantly, a reliable source of clean energy.

II. Latin America and the Caribbean: “Innovative facility addresses energy deficiencies”⁴

Although the Latin America and the Caribbean region is relatively rich in energy resources, supply and access to these resources is unevenly distributed. Around 31 million people lack access to electricity services, while some 85 million rely on biomass for their cooking and household needs. The Energy for the Poor Projects and Policies Preparation Facility has been set up jointly by OFID and the Andean Development Corporation to help address these deficiencies.

With an initial allocation of US\$1.6m—an amount shared equally between the two partners—this innovative facility will seek to identify and prepare projects that will improve energy access among the region’s poor.

The Facility will benefit 14 countries, specifically Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Do-

Key Facts about Energy Poverty²

- The amount of investment needed to achieve universal energy access by 2030, estimated by the IEA, is between US\$35 billion and \$40 billion per year.
- An estimated one billion people are served by health facilities without electricity.
- Over 291 million children go to primary schools without electricity.
- Almost 50% of vaccines in developing countries are ruined due to poor refrigeration services.
- Electric lighting allows schools to operate outside of daylight hours for evening classes and homework.
- Street lighting promotes safety, encourages school attendance, and enables economic activity.
- Of those people who have access to standard lighting from grid electricity, many are still deprived due to unreliability of supply.
- Even when infrastructure is in place and energy is available nearby, low-income households are faced with pressing questions of affordability.
- Agriculture is the primary earning activity of some 2.5 billion people, 45% of the developing world’s population; the productivity of irrigated land (for which energy is needed) is more than double that of rain-watered land.
- For the hundreds of millions of undernourished people in developing countries, the capacity to preserve food (for which energy is needed) is an important component in tackling hunger.
- To guarantee universal energy access by 2030, and to maximise the potential it has for helping poor people earn a decent living and escape poverty, the energy access ecosystem must be enhanced.
- Only policy can set the framework for enabling energy access for the poorest.
- Some of the most effective and innovative ways of reducing costs are in the area of financing; grants, loans, and subsidies targeting poor consumers are an essential element of the energy access ecosystem.

minican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. Priority, however, will be given to the most underserved among them.

Activities encompass various areas within the energy sector, including energy access, analysis and research, capabilities improvement (i.e. government regulations improvement and training), capacity building, and support to SMEs dealing with energy production/distribution. In terms of energy provision, the Facility will consider all available sources, including renewables.

A wide range of entities—both public and private—are eligible to apply for financing under the Facility,

among them government agencies, NGOs, community groups, international organizations, and any private enterprise or agency.

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)
Parkring 8, A-1010 Vienna, Austria
www.ofid.org

² United Nations Development Programme: Poor People’s energy outlook, 2010, 2012 and 2013
³ Article taken from OFID Annual Report 2012: The Al Mocha 60 MW Wind Park Project. An OFID co-financed Public Sector Loan with IDA, Arab Fund, and Government of Yemen.
⁴ Article taken from OFID Annual Report 2012: An OFID grant to co-finance the OFID – CAF Energy for the Poor Projects and Policies Preparation Facility in the LAC Region with the Andean Development Corporation (CAF).

The Way Forward: Thoughts on What Comes After 2015

UN Development Programme (UNDP)

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The responsibility of the media is to question the existing status quo, to bring to task the current development model, as well as the vested interests that underpin the assumptions underlining that model.

What we have learned from the MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been a tremendous success at many levels. First and foremost, they turned the tide in terms of international attention on development. By introducing time-bound, quantitative targets, which operationalised otherwise aspirational goals, they allowed the international community to measure development progress against specific benchmarks.

With the scope and breadth of development well defined at the global level, and later at national levels, the international community learned how to apply the MDGs to national planning processes at different levels, as necessary by each country's typology. By reviewing the data, it is clear to see that the MDGs have provided a strong political impetus for development, through:¹

- Bringing renewed attention to development;
- Reversing the downward trend in aid seen in the 1990s;
- Drafting the Millennium Development Compact to reform the global approach to development.

¹ Bourguignon, F. et al; Millennium Development Goals at Midpoint: where do we stand, where do we need to go, *European Report on Development*, Brussels, September 2008



A mother walks with her seriously malnourished child at a feeding centre run by German Agro Action (GAA) in the village of Nosy Varika on the eastern coast of Madagascar. EPA/Kim Ludbrook



Thai activists join hands as they hold up signs and shout slogans during an event called “Stand up and Speak out Against Poverty and For The Millennium Development Goals” outside the United Nations building in Bangkok, Thailand in Oct. 2007. EPA/Narong Sangnak

The MDGs, unanimously adopted by UN Member States in 2000, also represent a movement involving citizens, communities, and civil society all holding their governments accountable to the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Critically, the MDGs have taught us that development occurs when²

- There is effective government leadership and national ownership of development strategies;
- Effective policies support implementation;
- There is improved quantity, quality, and focus of investments, financed—with a holistic approach—both by domestic sources and international development assistance;
- There is effective monitoring and evaluation, and appropriate institutional capacity to deliver quality services on a national scale;
- There is empowering civil society and community involvement;
- There are effective global partnerships with mutual accountability of all stakeholders;
- There is good governance by donors and recipients.

Despite this, the MDGs have also received strong criticisms, mainly because

- The normative issues contained in the Millennium Declaration, such as human rights, peace, governance, equity, and non-discrimination, were lost by focusing on quantitative time-bound goals;
- The MDGs represent a minimalist approach to development;
- Global MDGs were not tailored to national contexts, and global yardsticks were used to assess national progress without taking into account the reality on the ground;
- MDGs are not universal—with time-bound responsibilities for developing countries, and not for developed countries.

² UNDP alone has supported the development of MDG-based National Development Strategies in over 60 countries.

The way forward

Today, most countries have in place strategies that are technically sound, and for the most part MDG-based . Furthermore, there has been tremendous progress globally with regard to the MDGs, yet not all the MDGs have progressed equally. Despite this fact, more than two-thirds of the countries that are not on track are close to being so, and to better achieve the MDGs in future, we have a wealth of cumulative evidence of what works and does not work, and under which circumstances.

Thus, at the 2010 MDG Summit in New York City, the international community focused on what could be done to accelerate MDG achievement. In particular, attendees encouraged a focus on sustainability, acknowledging that we live in a world where volatility is the new normal, one in which shocks and crises stemming from economic, political, climate, food, and energy risks are

Attendees [at the 2010 MDG Summit] acknowledg[ed] that we live in a world where volatility is the new normal, one in which shocks and crises stemming from economic, political, climate, food, and energy risks are ever more frequent.

ever more frequent. Attendees also recognised that there are significant multiplier effects across the MDGs, with synergistic returns on investments in

- Women’s empowerment;
- Health;
- Education;
- Environmental sustainability and resilience;
- Employment-intensive growth;
- Agricultural innovation; and
- Energy access for all.

As we approach the 2015 mark, efforts to accelerate MDG achievement are in full swing—and so are the discussions on what kind of post-2015 development framework should follow.

Despite the wide variety of proposals, there are certain basic principles that underlie the process driving the creation of a new development framework:

- The lessons learned from the MDGs, including the global political impetus for development, should be the basis of a post-2015 development framework;
- The process to agree on a new post-2015 framework should be transparent, participatory, inclusive, and Member State-driven, while remaining anchored in the UN System;
- The post-2015 framework must be anchored in the logic of universal applicability, with a common, but differentiated, responsibility.

Any development framework for post-2015 must also take into account how the context for development has changed since the MDGs were agreed.

Among others, it will need to consider, climate change and environmental vulnerability, recent crises and volatility arising from economic globalisation, the changing nature of global governance, patterns of inequalities between and within countries, as well as trends relating to technology, demography, urbanisation, and migration.

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, the political drive for achieving sustainable development was established. Sustainable Development was defined as the “interlinkage” of “economic, social, and environmental aspects” of development.³ It was established that the process of creating a post-2015 framework would be comprehensive and participative, including the process of establishing a global set of universal development goals—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The international community also reaffirmed its commitment to poverty eradication as the heart of any future development agenda.

But it is crucial to keep in mind that a development framework is bigger than a set of SDGs. In setting out his vision for developing a post-2015 agenda, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, announced a strategy that aims at continuing to position the UN as an advocate for, and facilitator of, a bottom-up and inclusive approach defined by national and local priorities. The strategy includes extensive national consultations, which are already underway, and the convening of a High Level Panel in the

summer of 2012, with the goal of producing a report by May 2013.

UNDP, as chair of the UN Development Group⁴, is currently leading an initiative that aims to:

- Build a strategic coalition of partners to shape the post-2015 development agenda, through broad engagement of poor and vulnerable people, governments, NGOs and grassroots organisations, the private sector, trade unions and workers, and the academic community;
- Ensure that the post-2015 development agenda accounts for the changing development context and critical challenges of our time, builds on the momentum of, and lessons learned from, the MDGs, and is guided by core UN norms, values, and commitments.

Finally, the evidence and perspectives generated through these activities will be synthesised and integrated into the work of the High Level Panel that the UN Secretary-General convened in 2012.

Hence, the responsibility of the media is to question the existing status quo, to bring to task the current development model, as well as the vested interests that underpin the assumptions underlining that model. The media is also key in participating in the consultations: asking the hard questions; and bringing to the table the matters that are relevant to discuss.

It is also the responsibility of the media to keep reminding heads of state that they are the signatories of commitments regarding efforts to relieve poverty and inequality in their countries, and to make sure they are made accountable for the progress achieved.

UN Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017 USA
www.undp.org



Filipino children eat porridge as part of a nutrition program for informal settlers in Quezon City, Philippines in March 2012. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, almost 600 million people in the Asia-Pacific region are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.
EPA/Rolax dela Pena

³ <http://rio20.net/en/iniciativas/the-future-we-want-final-document-of-the-rio20-conference>

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Resources

I. Sample Letter to Request Information under Freedom of Information (FOI) Laws

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How to draft a letter

1. Determine what records you need

Generally, an item in custody or control of a federal agency is considered a record (see suggested resources for a more detailed definition of “public record”). The form of the record does not matter; it can be a printed or typed document, photograph, tape recording, map, or computer disk. When filing the request, describe to the best of your ability the document you are seeking. If you want a specific report or data, it helps if you can cite the agency’s exact title or wording in your request. Specificity also may help save you money because most agencies will charge fees for processing the request. Depending on the nature of your work, you might be eligible for fee waivers (see sample request letter).

2. Identify the agency that has the records

In many countries there is no central government records office that processes FOI requests; therefore you must address a FOI request to a specific agency. If you are unsure which agency has the records, you may wish to make FOI requests to more than one agency.

Indian widows make flower garlands in an ashram or shelter for widows in Vrindavan, northern India, who have been ostracised and are living in poverty. *EPA/Anindito Mukherjee*

Sample request letter for public records covered by a Freedom of Information Act:

(Date)
Freedom of Information Act Officer
Name and Complete Address of Agency
RE: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOI Officer:

Under the Freedom of Information Act (cite name of the act here), I am requesting the following documents:

Reasonably describe the records and/or information you need. It helps to include names of people and places and the time period relevant to the material. If you know the name or title of the document you seek, include that. Attach any other documents describing your research and specify the form in which you would like to receive the information, such as paper or computer disk.

(Explain your background and the nature of your work, such as) As a representative of the news media affiliated with (name of your organization), I am gathering information on (subject) that is of current interest to the public because (briefly state reasons). This information will be disseminated to the general public. (If you are a freelancer, describe your work experience and mention any publication contracts to explain that the information will be presented to the public.)

(Optional fee-waiver request) Please waive any fees for record retrieval or copying associated with this request. Release of this information is in the public interest, because it will contribute significantly to understanding of government operations and activities. In the event that you deny my fee waiver, I agree to pay up to (state amount in local currency) for reasonable costs. However, please notify me prior to your incurring any expenses in excess of that amount.

(Suggested request for fee benefit as member of news media)

As a member of the news media, I am required to pay only for the direct cost of duplication after the first 100 pages.

If my request is denied in whole or in part, I expect a detailed justification for your decision. I also request that you release any segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. I, of course, reserve the right to appeal your decision to withhold any information or to deny a fee waiver.

A request for expedited review may be considered under two conditions. You must be a reporter or an individual who is “primarily engaged in disseminating information,” and your request must be a matter of “compelling need.” If you satisfy these conditions, include the following description:

Please honor expedited review of this request. This information is of timely value and of significant interest to the public. *(Optional) This information concerns a matter of urgency. (Explain the urgent and timely need for distributing the information to the public.)*

I certify that my statements concerning the need for expedited review are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I look forward to your response within 20 working days *(or as outlined by the specific statute in your country)*. Please contact me by telephone, mail, or e-mail, if you have any questions regarding this request.

Thank you in advance,

YOUR SIGNATURE

Your name and full address *(including country and daytime phone number; optional: fax number and e-mail address)*

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (www.icij.org) is a global network of reporters in more than 60 countries who collaborate on in-depth investigative stories that cross national boundaries. The ICIJ was founded in 1997 as a project of the Center for Public Integrity, a Washington DC-based non-profit.

3. Compose the letter

Most countries and agencies will require a written FOI request. The letter can be simple, as long as it contains the necessary information. The letter should:

- Address the request letter to the agency’s FOI Officer.
- In the letter, state that the request is being made under the country’s Freedom of Information Act.
- In the letter, reasonably describe the records you need. If you are requesting records in a form other than paper, describe how you would like to receive the information.
- Include a statement about the fees, either your request for a fee waiver or your agreement to pay the necessary costs.
- Remind the agency of the time limits on your request. Some FOI acts require a response within a set period of working days.
- Include your name and postal and e-mail addresses in the request, so the agency can contact you with questions regarding the letter, if necessary.
- Write “Freedom of Information Act Request” on the outside of the envelope containing the letter, in the bottom left-hand corner.
- Keep copies of your request letter and related correspondence until you receive the information. If and when your request has a FOI ID number, refer to it in all future correspondence.

4. Follow up your filing

After allowing time for your request to arrive, telephone the agency’s FOI Officer to be certain it was received. Ask to speak directly with the officer processing your request. Your request may be denied entirely or in part, but the agency may be required to explain the reasons for denial. In some countries, you have the right to appeal any denials to the head of the agency and, if necessary, beyond that through the court system.

II. Useful Dates

These international occasions can provide opportune moments to cover a particular development theme. IPI has provided suggestions on how to link these events to stories on the MDGs.

The following dates are observed by UN member states and established either by the General Assembly itself or by UN organisations such as the WHO or UNEP. For more information, please the official site of the United Nations Observations: www.un.org/en/events/observances/index.shtml

World Cancer Day, 4 February
Link to: MDGs 4,6

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February
Link to: MDG 3

International Women’s Day, 8 March
Link to: MDGs 2, 3, 5

International Day of Forests and the Tree, 21 March
Link to: MDG 7

World Water Day, 22 March
Link to: MDG 7

World Tuberculosis Day, 24 March
Link to: MDGs 4,6

World Health Day, 7 April
Link to: MDGs 4, 5, 6

International Mother Earth Day, 22 April
Link to: MDG 7

World Malaria Day, 25 April
Link to: MDGs 4,6

World Press Freedom Day, 3 May
Link to: all MDGs

The International Day for Biological
Diversity, 22 May
Link to: MDG 7

World Environment Day, 5 June
Link to: MDG 7

World Oceans Day, 8 June
Link to: MDG 7

World Day to Combat Desertification
and Drought, 17 June
Link to: MDG 7

World Population Day, 11 July
Link to: all MDGs

World Hepatitis Day, 28 July
Link to: MDG 6

International Day of the World's
Indigenous People, 9 August
Link to: all MDGs

World Humanitarian Day, 19 August
Link to: all MDGs

International Literacy Day, 8 September
Link to: MDGs 2, 3

World Heart Day, 29 September
Link to: MDG 6

World Habitat Day, first Monday in October
Link to: MDG 7

World Sight Day, second Thursday in October
Link to: MDG 6

International Day of the Girl, 11 October
Link to: MDGs 2, 3, 4

The International Day of Rural Women,
15 October
Link to: MDG 3

International Day for the Eradication
of Poverty, 17 October
Link to: MDG 1

World Diabetes Day, 14 November
Link to: MDG 6

International Day for Tolerance, 16 November
Link to: all MDGs

International Day for the Elimination
of Violence against Women, 25 November
Link to: MDG 3

World Aids Day, 1 December
Link to: MDGs 3,4,6

International Anti-Corruption Day, 9 December
Link to: all MDGs

Human Rights Day, 10 December
Link to: all MDGs

A Guatemalan indigenous woman participates in a rally
outside the country's congress in Guatemala City in Nov.
2012 to demand approval of a rural development bill
aimed at reducing poverty. EFE/Saúl Martínez





Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iceland, speaks during the Millennium Development Goals Summit at United Nations headquarters in New York City on Sept. 22, 2010. EPA/Andrew Gombert

III. MDG Resource Guide

IPI has compiled a set of useful resources and contacts for journalists covering topics related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While certainly not exhaustive, the links below may help point the intrepid reporter in the right direction.

Where can I find statistics on progress toward the MDGs?

Getting Started

- UN MDG Reports: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/reports.shtml
- UNDP Human Development Reports: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>
- The World Bank has put together a comprehensive list of sources for statistics and information on MDG progress, sorted by goal: data.worldbank.org/about/sources-of-data-and-info-about-mdgs

General Sources for Human Development Data

- OECD Statistics: www.oecd.org/statistics/
- UN Statistics Division: unstats.un.org/unsd/default.htm

List of National Statistics Offices: unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/internatlinks/sd_natstat.asp

- UN Data: <http://data.un.org/>
- UN Environmental Statistics Section unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/default.htm
- UNESCO International Education Statistics Database www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/default.aspx
- UN Women Statistics and Resources: www.unwomen.org/resources/
- UNICEF Statistics and Resources: www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24304.html
- UNFPA Statistics and Publications: www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications
- UN Water Statistics Portal: www.unwater.org/statistics.html
- WHO Global Health Observatory: www.who.int/gho/en/
- World Bank Monitoring the MDGs Program: go.worldbank.org/AECE2V7FU0
- World Bank Development Database: data.worldbank.org/

Further MDG and Human Development Statistics / Resources by Region

Africa:

- UNECA Statistics Division: new.uneca.org/acs/home_acs.aspx
- UNECA Publications and Resources: <http://new.uneca.org/Publications.aspx>
- African Development Bank Knowledge Portal: www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/
- Southern African Development Community Statistics: www.sadc.int/issues/statistics/

Europe:

- UNECE Statistics Division: www.unecce.org/stats/stats_h.html
- EuroStat (European Commission) epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/

Latin America and the Caribbean:

- ECLAC Statistics Division: www.eclac.org/deype/
- ECLAC MDG Resources: www.eclac.cl/mdg/
- CARICOM Regional Statistics Page: <http://caricomstats.org/index.htm>
- Inter-American Development Bank Database: www.iadb.org/en/research-and-data/statistics-and-databases,3161.html

Asia and the Pacific:

- UNESCAP Data Division: www.unescap.org/research
- Asian Development Bank (ADB): Statistics and Databases: www.adb.org/data/statistics
- Statistical Contacts in all ADB Member States: www.adb.org/data/contacts-members

Arab States:

- UNESCWA Information Division: www.escwa.un.org/information/pubcategory.asp?category=Studies
- Arab NGO Network for Development Resources: www.annd.org/english/publication.php
- Islamic Development Bank Resources: www.isdb.org/irj/portal/anonymouse?NavigationTarget=navurl://96d97a5309160dc3af80a8b1744db35a

Where can I learn about the terminology used in MDG reports and in international development programs?

- BBC Guide to Development Speak: www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/916_dev_speak/index.shtml
- UNDP Glossary of Terms: hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/glossary/
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Development Glossary: www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Glossary
- IMF Terminology Multilingual Dictionary: www.imf.org/external/np/term/eng/index.htm



A Burmese woman is innoculated against H1N1 at the Mae Tao clinic in the town of Mae Sot, Thailand along the border with Burma, in Oct. 2010. EPA/Barbara Walton

Where can I find research material and background information on issues related to human development?

Government and Social Development Resource Center (GSDRC)

‘GSDRC provides applied knowledge services on demand and online. Our expertise is in issues of governance, social development, humanitarian response and conflict. Our specialist research team supports a range of international development agencies, synthesising the latest evidence and expert thinking to inform policy and practice.’ www.gsdr.org/

GSDRC Development Guides

Topics including gender equality, climate change, justice, conflict and more; each topic area provides resources, background information, and statistics. www.gsdr.org/go/topic-guides

Global Development Network

‘GDNet is a knowledge hub that brings together and communicates policy-relevant research from the Global South.’ cloud2.gdnet.org/cms.php?id=gdn_development_research

International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (UNDP)

Online catalogue of development networks that share development-related information. www.ipc-undp.org/PovNetNew.do?active=5

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

‘To achieve self-reliance, poor communities need answers to questions like: How can we grow more and healthier food? Protect our health? Create jobs? A key part of Canada’s aid program since 1970, IDRC supports research in developing countries to answer these questions.’ www.idrc.ca/EN/Pages/default.aspx

Post2015.org

‘A hub for ideas, debate and resources on what comes after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).’ post2015.org/

UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform

The platform serves to “provide wide access to information and knowledge for sustainable development.” sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.html

World Bank Human Development Network

‘The Human Development Network (HDN) is the World Bank’s home for policy, programs, and research in the fields of education, health, and social protection and labor. The HDN Chief Economist’s Office supports evaluations and training to measure program impact and improve service delivery.’ go.worldbank.org/8TJ7JTJWJ0

World Resource Institute

‘WRI was launched June 3, 1982 as a center for policy research and analysis addressed to global resource and environmental issues.’ www.wri.org/

Where can I find information related to government accountability and access to information?

Access Info

‘Access Info Europe is a human rights organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting the right of access to information in Europe and globally as a tool for defending civil liberties and human rights, for facilitating public participation in decision-making and for holding governments accountable.’ www.access-info.org/

Anti-Corruption Research Network (ACRN)

ACRN is a podium to present innovative findings and approaches in corruption / anti-corruption research, a sounding board to bounce off ideas and questions, a marketplace to announce jobs, events, courses and funding. corruptionresearchnetwork.org/

Freedominfo.org

‘Freedominfo.org is a one-stop portal that describes best practices, consolidates lessons learned, explains campaign strategies and tactics, and links the efforts of freedom of information advocates around the world. It contains crucial information on freedom of information laws and how they were drafted and implemented, including how various provisions have worked in practice.’ www.freedominfo.org/

Global Integrity

‘Global Integrity is an innovation lab that produces high-quality research and creates cutting-edge technology to advance the work of a global network of civic, public, and private reformers pursuing increased transparency and accountability in governments.’ www.globalintegrity.org/
Global Integrity Report: www.globalintegrity.org/report

Right2Info

Right2INFO.org brings together information on the constitutional and legal framework for the right of access to information as well case law from more than 80 countries, organized and analyzed by topic. www.right2info.org/

Transparency International

‘Through more than 100 national chapters worldwide and an international secretariat in Berlin, we work with partners in government, business and civil society to put effective measures in place to tackle corruption.’ www.transparency.org

Global Corruption Report: www.transparency.org/research/gcr

UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

‘Corruption is a major impediment to economic and social development, UNODC partners with the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, to loosen the grip that corrupt individuals have on government, national borders and trading channels.’ www.unodc.org

List of Field Offices: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/field-offices.html?ref=menutop

Lists of Regional Resources on Corruption

GSDRC Corruption Resources: www.gsdr.org/go/gateway-guides/anti-corruption

Act Against Corruption Regional and National Resources:

www.actagainstcorruption.org/actagainstcorruption/en/resources/index.html

Which international organisations are working to promote the MDGs?

Many of the intergovernmental organisations listed below¹ have field presence across the world; check the particular website to see if there is an office near you. Remember, this list is just a start – there are many more MDG allies out there!

UN Millennium Development Goals Official Portal: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

‘UNDP works with a wide range of partners to help create coalitions for change to support the Millennium Development Goals at global, regional and national levels, to benchmark progress towards them, and to help countries to build the institutional capacity, policies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs.’ www.undp.org

MDG Site: www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html

Regional Bureau Africa: web.undp.org/africa/

Regional Bureau Arab States: arabstates.undp.org/rbas/en/home.html

Regional Bureau Asia: web.undp.org/asia/

Regional Europe/CIS: europeandcis.undp.org/

Regional Bureau Latin America and the Caribbean: web.undp.org/latinamerica/

African Development Bank

‘The overarching objective of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group is to spur sustainable economic development and social progress in its regional member countries (RMCs), thus contributing to poverty reduction.’

MDG Program: www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/topics/millennium-development-goals-mdgs/

List of Field Offices: www.afdb.org/en/about-us/structure/complexes/country-regional-programs-policy/field-offices/field-office-contacts/

Aga Khan Development Network

Works ‘to improve the welfare and prospects of people in the developing world, particularly in Asia and Africa, without regard to faith, origin or gender.’ www.akdn.org

Asian Development Bank (ADP)

‘Dedicated to its vision of an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty, ADB strongly supports the Millennium Development Goals, and the ADB’s developing member countries are guided by the MDG in preparing their own poverty reduction strategies, in collaboration with development partners.’

MDGs: www.adb.org/themes/poverty/topics/mdgs

AVERT

‘AVERT is an international HIV and AIDS charity, based in the UK, working to avert HIV and AIDS worldwide, through education, treatment and care.’ www.avert.org

BRAC

‘BRAC works with people whose lives are dominated by extreme poverty, illiteracy, disease and other handicaps. Our mission is to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice.’

www.brac.net/

CARE

‘CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. We place special focus on working alongside poor women because, equipped with the proper resources, women have the power to help whole families and entire communities escape poverty. Women are at the heart of CARE’s community-based efforts to improve basic education, prevent the spread of disease, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity and protect natural resources. CARE also delivers emergency aid to survivors of war and natural disasters, and helps people rebuild their lives.’ www.care.org/

MDG Site: www.care.org/getinvolved/advocacy/MDG/index.asp?s_src=MDG&s_subsrc=ShortURL

Caritas

‘We have until 2015 to meet the Goals and to keep our word. We can’t let this chance slip through our fingers – we may not have it again. Caritas believes in the Millennium Development Goals. Caritas believes all of us have the right to escape abject poverty. Caritas believes we can keep the moral commitment we have made.’ www.caritas.org/

MDG Site: <http://mdg2015.caritas.org/>

Inter-American Development Bank

‘Partnering with clients, the IDB seeks to eliminate poverty and inequality, and promotes sustainable economic growth.’ www.iadb.org

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD’s overarching goal is that rural women and men in developing countries are empowered to achieve higher incomes and improved food security at the household level. In this way it will contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal number 1: the eradication of extreme poverty. www.ifad.org

MDG Site: www.ifad.org/governance/mdgs/index.htm

List of Field Offices: www.ifad.org/operations/gmaps/index.htm

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

‘The IMF contributes to the MDG effort through its advice, technical assistance, and lending to countries, as well as its role in mobilizing donor support. Together with the World Bank, it assesses progress toward the MDGs through an annual Global Monitoring Report.’ www.imf.org

MDG Site: www.imf.org/external/np/exr/mdg/index.htm

¹ Note: All descriptions within quotes represent official statements, available on the respective organisation’s web page.



A Filipino worker carries a sack of rice at a government rice warehouse in Quezon City, east of Manila, the Philippines, June 20 2012. EPA/Rolox dela Pena

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

‘A joint venture of the United Nations family, bringing together the efforts and resources of ten UN organizations in the AIDS response to help the world prevent new HIV infections, care for people living with HIV, and mitigate the impact of the epidemic.’ www.unaids.org

MDG Achievement Fund

‘The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) is committed to eradicating poverty and inequality and changing people’s lives around the world. Set up in 2007 with a generous contribution from the Government of Spain to the United Nations system, we work together with and in support of citizens and their organizations as well as governments to implement programmes that help advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) worldwide.’ www.mdgfund.org/

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

‘The OECD’s work is intrinsically linked to supporting the MDG effort, specifically through work related to financing the MDGs, building a global partnership for development, and supporting strategic areas contributing to progress in the MDGs.’

MDG Site: www.oecd.org/dev/millenniumdevelopmentgoals.htm

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

‘PAHO is a key contributor to the effort towards the attainment of the MDGs in the countries of the Americas. The Organization’s vision on the MDGs was approved by member countries during the 45th Session of the Directing Council in September 2004, and led to an official resolution calling for countries and PAHO to use the MDGs as a guide for national and international efforts towards better health for the peoples of the Region.’

MDG Site: www.paho.org/english/mdg/cpo_bienvenida.asp

Panos Institute

‘The Panos institutes work to ensure that information is effectively used to foster public debate, pluralism and democracy. Globally and within nations, Panos works with media and other information actors to enable developing countries to shape and communicate their own development agendas through informed public debate.

We particularly focus on amplifying the voices of the poor and marginalised.’ www.panos.org

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

‘The main objectives of SADC are to achieve economic development, peace and security, and growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through Regional Integration’ www.sadc.int/

The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)

‘AWID is committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women’s human rights, with its mission focused on strengthening the impact and influence of women’s rights advocates, organizations and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women.’ www.awid.org

The Global Fund for Women

‘The Global Fund for Women advances women’s rights by making grants that support and strengthen women’s groups around the world, with the aim to promote women’s action for social change, equality, peace, and justice worldwide.’ www.globalfundforwomen.org

The Hunger Project

‘The Hunger Project is a global, non-profit, strategic organisation committed to the sustainable end of world hunger in order to enhance human dignity by empowering people to lead lives of self-reliance, meet their own basic needs and build better futures for their children.’ www.thp.org

MDG Site: www.thp.org/what_we_do/supporting_the_mdgs

The International Institute for Environment and Development

‘The International Institute for Environment and Development is a global leader in sustainable development, its mission to build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others.’

www.iied.org

MDG Site: www.iied.org/achieving-millennium-development-goals

UNICEF

UNICEF’s work ‘correlates closely with the Millennium Development Goals set by United Nations States in 2000 – and is central to meeting them. Of the 48 indicators of progress toward the Goals, UNICEF is chiefly responsible for progress in 13.’ *www.unicef.org*

MDG Site: www.unicef.org/mdg/index_unicefsrole.htm

UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

‘The UNCCD is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. By controlling and reversing desertification, curbing the effects of drought and restoring productive lands, there is an opportunity to make a direct positive contribution to reducing poverty, improving people’s lives and meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals.’ *www.unccd.int*

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

‘The overall objective of ESCAP is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region, with priority accorded to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.’ *www.unescap.org*

Subregional Offices: www.unescap.org/about/subregional-office-addresses

UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCA)

ESCWA ‘identifies emerging and strategic socio-economic development issues in the ESCWA region, including the social impacts of globalization, social dimensions of urban development, and the overall monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals in the region.’ *www.escwa.un.org/*

UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)

‘ECLAC has been working in supporting country policies and in improving monitoring systems to reach the Millennium Developing Goals.’ *www.cepal.org*

MDG Site: www.eclac.cl/mdg/default.asp?idioma=IN

UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

‘The ECA undertakes comprehensive secondary and empirical research to support policy making and programming for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development in Africa.’ *www.uneca.org*

List of Sub-Regional Offices: www.uneca.org/pages/subregional-offices

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

‘UNECE contributes to the latter objective of economic cooperation and integration (MDG 8), in particular through its activities in trade facilitation and border-crossing, as well as pan-European and Euro-Asian transport links, which are directly related to the targets on international trade and landlocked countries as contained in MDG 8. Through its environmental programme and its gender-related activities, UNECE also contributes to the achievement of MDGs 3 and 7, respectively. The Protocol on Water and Health, linked to UNECE Water Convention, also helps achieve some targets of MDG 4.’ *www.unece.org/*

UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

‘UNEP supports assessments of environmental conditions and trends including building the capacity of its many partners to generate the information necessary for sound environmental decision making to support sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Goals.’ *www.unep.org*

List of Field Offices: www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=296

List of Field Offices: www.afdb.org/en/about-us/structure/complexes/country-regional-programs-policy/field-offices/field-office-contacts/

UN Millennium Campaign

‘The UN Millennium Campaign supports and inspires people from around the world to take action in support of the Millennium Development Goals.’ *www.endpoverty2015.org*

UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

‘The eight Millennium Development Goals are interconnected and interdependent. UNFPAs’ work on population issues, reproductive health and women’s empowerment affects each of them. For some of the goals, especially goals 3, 4, 5 and 6, the connections are very direct.’

MDG Site: www.unfpa.org/public/home/sitemap/icpd/MDGs/pid/6626

List of Field Offices: www.unfpa.org/worldwide/

MDG Program: www.unfpa.org/public/icpd

UN Women (UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)

‘All eight MDGs touch essential aspects of women’s well-being, and in turn, women’s empowerment is critical for achieving the goals. UN Women has engaged in advancing the MDGs through three entry points: operational programs, monitoring and analysis, and advocacy.’ *www.unwomen.org*

MDG Site: www.unifem.org/gender_issues/millennium_development_goals/

List of Field Offices: www.unwomen.org/about-us/contact-us/

Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

‘WEDO promotes and protects human rights, gender equality and the integrity of the environment.’ *www.wedo.org*

MDG Site: www.wedo.org/category/themes/global-governance/mdgs

World Health Organization (WHO)

‘Working with partners to support national efforts to achieve all the health-related MDGs is core business for the WHO’

MDG Site: www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/en/

List of WHO Regional Offices: www.who.int/about/regions/en/index.html

World Food Program (WFP)

‘Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life (...) On average, WFP aim to reach more than 90 million people with food assistance in more than 73 countries. Around 15,000 people work for the organization, most of them in remote areas, directly serving the hungry poor.’ *www.wfp.org/policy-resources*

Looking for more?

The UN integrated Civil Society Organizations (iCSO) System contains a database of more than 24,000 non-governmental organisations, many of which promote human rights and the MDGs. ‘The advanced search allows many combinations, including by organization name and type, region and country, consultative status, language, geographic scope, fields of activity and meeting participation.’ esango.un.org/civilsociety/login.do

The UNODC also keeps a comprehensive list of NGOs working in all fields: www.unodc.org/ngo/list.jsp

The World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations maintains a similar searchable database: www.wango.org/default.aspx

Below are selected additional reporting guides related to human development (remember that tips designed for one region of the world may also apply in others!):

- **“Climate Change Handbook for Journalists”** (Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers): www.acmediaworkers.com/archive/publications/20050000-ClimateChangeHandbook.pdf
- **“Keeping Biodiversity in the News—A Toolkit for the Media”** (Association of Caribbean Media Workers): www.acmediaworkers.com/archive/publications/Biodiversity_Toolkit.pdf
- **“Data Journalism Handbook”**: datajournalismhandbook.org/
- **“Environmental Reporting for African Journalists Handbook”** (UNEP): www.unep.org/training/downloads/PDFs/journ_hb.pdf
- **“A Journalist’s Guide to Reporting Research Findings”** (PANOS): panos.org.uk/wp-content/files/2011/06/A-journalists-guide-to-reporting-research-findings.pdf
- **“Responsible Reporting on HIV and AIDS”** (PANOS Caribbean): panoscaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Responsible_Reporting_on_HIV.pdf
- **“Reporting Manual on HIV/AIDS”** (Kaiser Family Foundation): <http://www.kff.org/globalhealth/7124.cfm>
- **List of Practical Guides on Science Journalism** (Science and Development Network): www.scidev.net/en/science-communication/science-journalism/practical-guides/

Is there anything else I should know?

Yes! You should know that many organisations around the world, including the International Press Institute (IPI), work every day to protect the rights of journalists and support the media’s role in holding governments and special interests accountable to the people and to development agreements.

Freedom-of-expression NGOs can be valuable sources of support and can advocate for you if you run into trouble. The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) keeps a list of its members around the world here: www.ifex.org/our_network

How to contact IPI:

Spiegalgasse 2/29
1010 Vienna, Austria
T: +43 1 512 90 11
F: +43 1 512 90 14
W: www.freemedia.at
E: ipi@freemedia.at
Twitter: [@globalfreemedia](https://twitter.com/globalfreemedia)
Facebook: [InternationalPressInstituteIPI](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalPressInstituteIPI)

NOTES

(Part 5)

Learning by Example: Award-Winning Stories on Human Development

“Pink Gold Rush” *Syed Zain Al-Mahmood* 160

“Medicine vs. Myth in Sierra Leone” *Nele Mailin Obermueller* 164

“Tereso is Just One Example” *Mario Alejandro Muñoz de Loza* 168

Prize-Winning Story on Development I

Pink Gold Rush

Syed Zain Al-Mahmood

2012 Winner, Developing Asia
Journalism Awards (DAJA)

This article was originally published in the Dhaka Courier (Bangladesh) on Friday, August 31, 2012 and has been reprinted with the permission of Syed Zain Al-Mahmood.

Saleha Khatun, 27, faces an uncommon occupational hazard on her way to get water every morning—tigers on the prowl. Saleha's village, Madhyapara, in the Dakope upazila of Khulna district, is at the edge of the Sundarbans—the largest mangrove forest in the world and home to the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Struggling for the water her family needs to live, Saleha hikes twice a day from her dirt-floor shack to a hand-pumped tube well on the premises of the nearest school, roughly four kilometres away. Carrying her kolshi or local earthen pitcher, she has to run the gauntlet along a lonely path parallel to the river, with only the narrow stretch of water separating it from the great mangrove forest.

Tiger attacks kill up to a hundred people in the Sundarbans area every year. Two years ago, one of Saleha's cousins lost her life while collecting firewood. But despite the risk, Saleha feels she has no choice. Although their village is surrounded by water, Saleha and her neighbours don't have a drop to drink.

(26)

About the Prize: The Developing Asia Journalism Awards (DAJA) (www.adbi.org/journalism.awards) were established in 2004 to build capacity among journalists working on key development issues. The annual awards honour the work and contributions of journalists actively engaged in the responsible dissemination of knowledge related to poverty reduction, and other areas that support long-term growth in Asia and the Pacific.



Local residents in the region of Gabura, Bangladesh fish for shrimp, May 2009. EPA/Abir Abdullah

The salt trap

‘They dug ponds and let in salt water’, said Saleha, indicating with a sweep of her arm the broad expanse of dirty brown water surrounding her home. ‘We have to walk miles to get around the shrimp farms. Nothing grows around here anymore—no rice, no vegetables. The salt has ruined everything.’

Bangladesh lies at the forefront of climate change, and creeping salinity from the Bay of Bengal has been identified as a major threat. But many experts have blamed local factors, such as extensive shrimp farming, for accelerating the process of salinisation. Encouraged by strong demand in Europe and North America, Bangladeshi businessmen have invested in thousands of acres of shrimp farms, dramatically altering the coastal landscape. What used to be a region of green rice fields has now become a stark and watery wasteland.

Dr MG Neogi, a consultant with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), says industrial shrimp farming not only spreads salinity in surface water but taints ground water as well. ‘Large scale pumping in of salt water as well as drawing in of ground water is common in aquaculture farm areas’, he explained. ‘Large intake of groundwater lowers the water table, and salt water seeps into the aquifers.’

Some villages are fighting back. Groups of farmers are reacting by shutting down shrimp enclosures and reverting back to traditional rice farming. But the largest farms or *ghers*, mostly owned by absentee landowners, continue to operate—with disastrous consequences. Once a bread basket for Bangladesh, the south has now become a gigantic shrimp farm for overseas markets.

Bonanza

Hailed in the 1990s as an effective adaptation to a changing climate, shrimp farming has undergone a phenomenal growth in the coastal belt. Today shrimps are big business for Bangladesh, ranking as the second highest export earner behind garment products, raking in foreign currency worth more than \$450 million annually.

The shrimp industry has taken over around 600,000 acres of farm land spanning 18 coastal districts and last year produced 45,000 tonnes of shrimp—tiny, pink keys to a global treasure chest valued at more than \$12 billion per year. According to the Food and Agriculture Or-

ganization (FAO), shrimps make up around 16 percent of global fishery exports.

‘Shrimp is an important part of Bangladesh’s export-led growth’, said Kazi Belayet Hossain, Managing Director of Sobi Fish Processing Ltd and a former president of Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association. ‘If we get policy support from the government and favourable conditions in the global markets, we can easily take our earnings to \$1 billion a year. This is a bonanza for Bangladesh and a great way to broaden our export base.’

But for many analysts the ‘pink gold’ has lost its glitter. Rezaul Karim, a rural planning expert at the University of Khulna said the rush to farm shrimp was a perfect example of unchecked commercial greed trumping the needs of the marginalized local population.

‘Profits have certainly been made, but they have been pocketed by investors and absentee landlords’, said Karim. ‘Local people in the coastal areas have been deprived of their livelihoods. Water has been polluted; land has been rendered infertile due to salt and waste material from the shrimp farms; and health hazards have been created by the indiscriminate use of antibiotics.’

At rock bottom

Nowhere are the effects of shrimp aquaculture more evident than the districts flanking the Sundarbans—Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira—which have the highest concentration of shrimp farms. Environmentalists say large shrimp farms have been a major cause of mangrove wetlands destruction in the three coastal districts.

According to a study by the government’s Soil Resources Development Institute, salinity and pollution caused by export-oriented shrimping over the last three decades have damaged the soil fertility of more than a million acres of coastal agricultural land that could have yielded 2.5 million tonnes of rice—enough to meet the country’s annual food deficit.

Azfar Ali, a rice farmer in the Dakope area of Khulna, explained why it was difficult to hold out against the large shrimping companies: ‘The shrimp farms need to hold salt water through the year. This gradually seeps into surrounding fields. If farmers don’t want to lease their land for shrimp, sometimes their land is flooded on purpose. They end up renting out the land at rock bottom prices’.

Dr Neogi of IRRI says the proliferation of industrial shrimp farming has not only had an impact on the water and soil but also on the local workforce: ‘Local farmers used to hire around 100 workers for every acre’, he said. ‘For shrimp, they only need a couple of guys for the same acreage to act as caretaker’, he said. ‘That has increased unemployment in the region. Many are leaving to join the ranks of the urban poor.’

In a 2004 study, the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) noted that increased demand for warm-water shrimp species in the West has prompted a shift toward a “slash and burn” style of aquaculture because the networks of large, human-made ponds have to be abandoned after five or six years due to disease and poor water quality.

The shrimp conundrum

Experts say the Bangladesh shrimp industry highlights the problems that arise when economic policies are drawn up without regard to social and environmental objectives. Many blame the government for a lack of regulatory oversight and for allowing a get-rich-quick attitude to flourish.

‘We need the export earnings’, said Dr Tareque Salehin, an economist at Dhaka University. ‘But if industrial shrimp farming is to be sustainable, planning and management must be more effective and sensitive to the needs of local communities.’

The government currently offers shrimp exporters a lucrative 15 percent cash incentive on total export value, and Saiful Islam, a senior official at the Board of Investment (BOI) said it was trying to promote “semi-intensive” shrimp aquaculture. He claimed the government was involved in developing ‘initiatives of quality assurance in cooperation with exporters’.

Dr Neogi at IRRI believes the solution lies in sustainable forms of aquaculture, which benefit local communities and strengthen their economic base. Instead of intensive production systems, he says, methods such as polyculture should be encouraged.

“Polyculture” refers to a traditional farming method where several species are farmed together in the same water, helping to insure against the risk of disease and changing market conditions.

‘The shrimp industry must comply with environmental best practices’, stressed Neogi. ‘The use of antibiotics and chemicals must be regulated if the industry is to retain overseas markets.’

He added: ‘Diversification should not mean that we give up on age-old cash and food crops. In fact, we must give farmers the tools to grow traditional crops to offset the loss of productivity caused by salinisation’.

BRRI dhan 47, a salt tolerant variety of rice, has already been introduced in the coastal south. Farmers can grow it in their shrimp enclosures, allowing them to increase their earnings, according to scientists.

BRRI dhan-55, 56 and 57—three early-maturing varieties—are designed to allow farmers to squeeze in a third crop between the traditional Boro and Aman harvests.

Back in Madhyapara, Saleha’s husband Nurul Islam is one of a group of farmers who have decided to fill up their shrimp ponds. ‘I’m done with shrimp’, says Nurul. ‘We’re filling up the enclosures and blocking the salt water channels. The soil is too salty for crops, but after the rains next year, we will be able to start planting.’

Syed Zain Al-Mahmood is an investigative journalist and editor based in Bangladesh. He began his career at the *Daily Star*, Bangladesh’s most widely circulated English daily, first as a part-time features writer and later as a staff writer. He then worked as a senior staff writer at the *Independent*. Recently, he joined United News Bangladesh (UNB), Bangladesh’s largest independent news agency, as deputy editor. He also manages the *Dhaka Courier*, UNB’s sister publication. Mahmood has also covered Bangladesh for *The Guardian* (U.K.) and the *Wall Street Journal*.

In more than 11 years in print journalism, Syed has built a reputation as a resourceful reporter with the ability to handle complex stories, develop difficult beats and write in a way that engages the readers’ attention. His main interests are sustainable development, the environment, human rights, and health and safety.

Prize-Winning Story on Development II

Medicine Versus Myth in Sierra Leone

Nele Mailin Obermueller

2012 Winner, Guardian (UK) International
Development Journalism Competition
(professional category)

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on Monday, November 26, 2012 and has been reprinted with the
permission of Nele Mailin Obermueller.*

Even though Mamie Kemokai has had 12 children, she hesitates to call herself a mother. ‘Not one of my children is still with me today, not one’ she says quietly, her right hand cutting through the air emphatically before falling to rest limply in her lap. Kemokai lives in the remote village of Bendu Kpaka, around 200 miles south of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. As she tells her story, rain pelts down outside, turning the one dirt road that leads through the 30-house settlement to a mud slick.

Sierra Leone has the highest rate of under-five mortality in the world, according to a Unicef report published this year. Nearly one in five children die before their fifth birthdays, despite President Ernest Koroma’s introduction of a free healthcare programme in 2010 for under-fives, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers. In Kemokai’s case, 10 of her 12 children died before their first birthday.

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About the Prize: The Guardian International Development Journalism Competition was launched in 2008 to challenge exciting new voices in journalism to write about some of the most vital issues facing the developing world. The competition is run in partnership with a group of UK-based international non-governmental organisations (NGOs)—and is now in its fifth year. It was created with the support of Marie Stopes International and is run in partnership with Barclays and GlaxoSmithKline. Details on the contest can be found at www.guardian.co.uk/journalismcompetition.

Ten of Mamie Kemokai’s 12 children died before their first birthday. She and her husband have turned to a traditional healer for help. *Courtesy of Nele Mailin Obermueller*



Children in the village of Bendu Kpaka, Sierra Leone. Courtesy of Nele Mailin Obermueller.

‘I don’t think the free healthcare initiative has failed; it just faces many challenges’, says Heather Kerr, country director for Save the Children in Sierra Leone. The biggest problem, Kerr says, is the shortage of trained medical staff: ‘You can put up as many hospitals as you like, but if you have no one to fill them, it’s just another building’. In Sierra Leone there are 1.9 health workers per 10,000 people. That translates into one nurse, doctor, or midwife for every 5,263 patients (compared with 77 patients per health worker in the UK).

To bridge this gap, Save the Children has trained more than a thousand community healthcare workers up to September this year. These volunteers diagnose and administer basic treatment for some of the most common causes of child mortality: malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea. Kerr says ‘It would be preferable to have enough health professionals, but community healthcare workers are what is currently feasible—and they are very valuable. They build awareness of free healthcare, which many people still don’t know about, prevent infection, and are trusted by their communities’.

Kemokai’s 11th child, a girl named Kandi, died two weeks ago. ‘She was already two, so I thought at least she was safe’, Kemokai says. Sitting next to her while she speaks is Mohammed Mansaray, a community healthcare worker. He was away when Kandi fell sick but immediately sent Kemokai and her daughter to the closest health centre—a 3.5-mile walk—when he returned. However, Kandi died of malaria within an hour of their arrival.

Instead of turning to Mansaray for advice after Kandi’s death, Kemokai and her husband paid a traditional healer to try to find the cause of their misfortune. ‘He told me my children keep dying because a devil is after me. It has sex with me at night and steals my children’s blood when I breastfeed them’.

The healer told Kemokai her daughter, Howa, her only remaining child, was not safe with her. Following his advice, she sent the seven-year-old to live with relatives and vowed not to see her again.

‘I don’t think Kemokai’s children died because of a devil’, Mansaray says later. ‘I think they died from infectious diseases’. This middle-aged teacher has done much to improve health in the village, such as galvanising his community to ban outdoor defecation. ‘I have given Mamie advice about safe child-rearing, but I’m not sure she listens. I do not directly contradict her belief, though. If I did, she would simply turn away from me’, Mansaray says in his soothing voice. ‘Traditional beliefs are not going to disappear. Our fathers and even forefathers believed in them, whereas western medicine is still new to people here’.

Dr Serena Brusamento, an Italian paediatrician from Doctors with Africa Cuamm, is part of this “new western medicine”. She suspects most children she sees have previously been treated by a traditional herbalist or healer. ‘The problem is, mothers don’t admit this. They know we do not approve, so even when we simply try to find out about previous substances administered, they deny it’.

Brusamento works in the maternity hospital in Pujehun, the district in which Kemokai’s village is located. The hospital entrance brings to mind an orchard, with light streaming in through a glass ceiling and a somewhat neglected indoor garden. Beyond this entrance, however, everything is cast in shadow, and the air is thick with the smell of hot, ailing bodies.

‘We’ve had six children here seriously intoxicated from a herb traditional healers gave them. We were only able to save two. I still don’t know what that herb is’, Brusamento says. She is now treating a 14-month-old girl for a large wound on her left buttock, which festered and deepened after a herbalist put a salve on it. ‘Almost all of the flesh rotted away’, Brusamento says. ‘It will take months to grow back—if the little girl doesn’t die of an infection first’.

The baby’s mother, Fatmata Koroma, says she tried taking her daughter to two health centres before going to the herbalist, but both times the nurse was out. ‘I wouldn’t take Betty to a herbalist again if she gets another wound’, the 20-year-old says, with what looks like a guilty smile, as if she had escaped a scolding.

Brusamento understands Sierra Leoneans’ hesitancy to be honest with her. ‘People may be more open with community health workers than with me—and everything that makes health more accessible, provides education, and takes local culture into account is a good thing. Plus, they are always on site’.

Accessing treatment can be difficult in Sierra Leone. During the civil war that ravaged the west African country from 1991 to 2002, roads were neglected and even dug up to slow villagers’ escape. Now streets are flecked with crater-like potholes prone to flooding, and so uneven that driving along one feels like a child strapped loosely to an oversized rocking horse.

Kerr agrees that an important strength of the community health worker programme is that it circumvents the country’s abysmal infrastructure. ‘But in future, we will have to find better ways of working with traditional healers too’.

For Kemokai, the decision to send her only remaining child away was the most difficult of her life. ‘But I did it to keep her safe’, she says, turning her head to one side to hide tears. ‘My greatest wish is to be a mother, to have just one child that survives’. Time will tell whether Mansaray can convince her his help could make that wish come true.

Nele Mailin Obermueller is an award-winning journalist who primarily writes on social affairs and development. Her articles and features have appeared in both English and German press, including the *Guardian*, *Associated Press*, *Exberliner*, *Die Welt* and *Berliner Morgenpost*. Obermueller holds an M.Phil from the University of Cambridge. She is fluent in English, French and German and speaks basic Urdu, Hindi, and Italian.

A young Wixáritari boy plays basketball near his home in Jalisco, Mexico. *Alfredo García/El Informador*

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Prize-Winning Story on Development III

Tereso is Just One Example

Mario Alejandro Muñoz de Loza

2009 Winner, UNDP/Inter Press Service Latin America and the Millennium Development Goals Journalism Prize

An extended version of this article was originally published in El Informador (Guadalajara, Mexico) on June 7, 2009 and a translated version has been reprinted with the permission of Mario Alejandro Muñoz de Loza.

Author’s Introduction: Malnutrition, illness, extreme domestic violence, a lack of proper housing, impeded access to public services, illiteracy, and unemployment were part of everyday life for Tereso, an indigenous youth who died in terrible agony on Jan. 12th, 2009 at the Guadalajara Civil Hospital in Guadalajara, Mexico.

This is his story

Ever since childhood, Tereso had projected weakness and desolation. The majestic scenery of Cañón de Tlaxcala, a small community near Tuxpan de Bolaños in northern Jalisco, contrasted with the extreme poverty against which he had fought since adolescence. Tereso—“Rabbit nose”, as his friends had nicknamed him—died on Jan. 12, 2009 at age 16. One fewer among the more than 44.7 million Mexicans living in poverty.

Tereso’s inner paradise had been darkened since infancy. Regional underdevelopment, combined with his father’s violent behaviour, deprived Tereso of his most basic human rights. His mother and four siblings, abandoned by the authorities, can also be added to the list of victims. High rates of malnutrition and disease; a lack of adequate housing and basic public services; illiteracy; and working arduous jobs just to survive were all a part of daily life for a great number of families in Tuxpan de Bolaños, located about three hours by car on a dangerous dirt road from the municipal seat

About the Prize: The Latin America and the Millennium Development Goals journalist contest was a joint effort between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IPS (Inter Press Service). The 2009 contest sought to award the best reporting on the central themes of the MDGs, published between October 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 in printed media in continual circulation or on online information sites of civil society or community organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

of Bolaños. Travelling the route on foot, as the majority of the 2,000 Wikáritari (the local indigenous group, known in Spanish as huicholes, to which Tereso belonged) living in the area do, could take over 50 hours.

Young Tereso withstood everything until the death of his mother. More than two years before, he found her hanging by a red scarf on the branch of a tree in Cañón de Tlaxcala. Presumably, she decided to take her own life, pushed past the brink by the physical and sexual abuse of Felipe, her husband, who, in addition to his frequent drunkenness also maintained sexual relations with other women (Felipe forced these women into fulfilling his desires, protected by native customs, which prevent the direct intervention of the police). For Tereso, the loss of his mother was decisive in allowing himself to be defeated by his adversaries. He tried to confront his father, but was forced to yield before the latter's greater strength; at age 15, he was forcibly expelled from his home.

The separation from his family was accompanied by the continued presence of illness. Tereso was accustomed to going days without food, but now weakness overwhelmed him, and he felt that his body would break in the wind. The sun ate away at his pale skin and bones during the hours that he worked. Cement, earth, any bench he could find—these were the “beds of needles” that kept him from acquiescing to the comfort of sleep. The final years he had spent with his family had been the same. The mat on which he had slept on the floor of his home (made of stone, adobe, and straw) was to blame for the pain in his spine that now made it impossible for him to rest. He continually suffered headaches and fevers; it cost him energy to get to rest. The lack of money and remoteness of medical services prevented him from recovering from his maladies.

Living the life of a vagrant, he worked planting and harvesting corn and beans, as well as in brickmaking, activities that, since his youth, he had spent hours performing under the relentless rays of the sun. With regards to his family, he had two options: work in communities farther away or plant corn and beans to feed himself. (One of the principle characteristics of the Wixárika religion is the association among corn, deer, and peyote [the cactus plant whose ingestion produces hallucinogenic and narcotic effects]). Wixárika mythology makes reference to these elements and its rituals, festivals, material organisation, and life cycles revolve around them. Corn and deer represent sustenance; peyote is the most important means of transcending the profane world, and the most obvious material manifestation of the sacred.

The trigger

Tereso wandered here and there among the towns of far northern Jalisco until he paid a price from his past life. A pair of Wixáritari savagely beat him, on Dec. 27th, 2008, in retaliation for financial debts owed by his father. On that day, he brought himself, wounded, to the municipal police station in Chimaltitán, near to Bolaños. A huichol named Juan was suspected of the beating, together with another native who was not identified. ‘We were not able to apprehend the aggressors,’ says José David Ramírez Naranjo, head of public security at the Chimaltitán station. ‘They fled into the hills. The natives are wild, particularly when they are drunk. They left the young man badly wounded; he had to go to the health centre for treatment.’

Days later, Tereso (who spoke very little Spanish) appeared to have a change in fortune. On Sunday Jan. 4th, 2009, still suffering from the after-effects of the beating, Tereso was found by a sympathetic Basilio González Rodríguez, mayor of Chimaltitán. ‘Tereso was wandering at night in the plaza of the Agua Caliente neighbourhood; I saw that he was wounded, and he told me that some huicholes had beaten him up. He told me that his mother had died, and that his father had driven him out. I decided to take him to the local old-people's home so that he could stay there for a few days while he recovered.’

Tereso had found food and a place to sleep and shelter from the cold. The protection that the mayor had offered him led him to recall his brief stint in the primary school in Tuxpan de Bolaños. He had dropped out because he had to work in order to eat and help out his family financially. During his time in school, his classmates had nicknamed him “bunny nose” because of the redness caused by the cold, the prevailing climate in the region. His attire, like that of the rest of the Wixáritari, was insufficient to withstand the severe winters: a huerruri (a long pair of cotton trousers, decorated with traditional designs on the back side, embroidered with cross stitch) and a kamirra or kutuni (a long shirt open at the sides and tied at the waist with a juayame, a thick belt of wool or yarn).

During the first five days in the Chimaltitán old-people's home, Tereso ventured out on occasion to look for work. He would return with an energy drink because he felt weak. ‘He looked dejected; he was always very quiet,’ recalls Socorro Yáñez, who was in charge of the morning shift at the home. On Saturday Jan. 10th, Tereso was unable to get out of bed. ‘He declared that he was feeling very ill, so workers at the home phoned the Chimaltitán medical centre, which

recommended transferring him to the hospital in Colotlán (which is under the management of the Jalisco Department of Health). The problem is that on that day and on the next the [Chimaltitán] health centre did not open, and we were [thus] not able to get the form for the transfer. He was very yellow and was vomiting a lot,’ said Socorro Yáñez.

In agony

Hope made an impression on Tereso's health. On Monday Jan. 12th, he was examined again by the local doctor, who reiterated the urgency of moving him to Colotlán. The doctor also diagnosed Tereso with pneumonia, in addition to the wounds from the beating. Tereso was hardly able to stand up. His steps were slow. ‘The huicholito seemed to be doing alright, but then he became very sick,’ describes María de la Luz Martínez Rico, who managed the evening shift at the home. ‘On Sunday he ate well; we prepared a small meal, and he ate twice in the morning; he ate and ate again. I asked if all the eating was hurting him, but he answered “no”, shaking his head. On Monday, he was no longer able to eat breakfast; he was complaining a lot of feeling unwell.’

At noon, the ambulance arrived for the transfer. María de la Luz accompanied Tereso. The journey was long: they arrived at the hospital more than two-and-a-half hours later. Tereso was catheterised and was administered blood tests. The diagnosis demanded a new transfer: he needed to be urgently treated at Guadalajara Civil Hospital. “I couldn't believe it”, says María de la Luz. “Tereso was in very serious condition. He urgently needed a blood transfusion—if not, he could die. The problem is that the Hospital de Colotlán cannot handle these kinds of cases, or many others for that matter. They couldn't give him blood because there is no blood bank in the whole region of northern Jalisco. They told me that at any moment he could fall into cardiac arrest. At 18:30 the ambulance left for Guadalajara. During the drive, Tereso insisted that his head and back hurt, and that the pain was great. We needed almost three hours to reach Guadalajara from Colotlán.’

‘At 22.00, we reached Dr. Juan I. Mechaca Civil Hospital in Guadalajara. We had to fight with hospital authorities because they did not admit Tereso quickly, and there were no beds—they examined him on a stretcher inside the hospital,’ recounts María de la Luz, who “celebrated” her 40th birthday there, surrounded by hospital patients. ‘About an hour and a half later, they tried to put Tereso on a bed in order to attend to him properly, but the movement provoked a kind of attack. At that moment, the doctors

made me leave the room because I had become agitated. Minutes later, the doctors told me that they were doing everything possible to revive Tereso. They tried cardiopulmonary resuscitation for 20 minutes, but nothing worked. He was dead. They didn't get to treat him ... they brought the same serum from Colotlán; they did not give him medicine or give him a blood transfusion.’

Without blood in his veins

Tereso did not die because of the deficiencies of the health system, but rather because of the underdevelopment and social context of one of the most marginalised populations in Jalisco, argues José Güitrón Ramírez, chief of the adult urgent care department at the Civil Hospital. First, the physician speculates that the youth arrived at the hospital with ‘a leukaemia or bone marrow failure’. But there were doubts in the coroner's report as to the source of Tereso's wounds.

The head of the evening shift at the hospital, Leticia González, did not dare to specify the cause of death¹ and sent the body to the Jalisco Institute for Forensic Sciences for an autopsy. ‘The doctor performed her legal requirements, but she did not want to cause problems for herself because she was unable to state who had beaten him. Taking away the mystery of the beating, the cause of death was an internal haemorrhage, cerebral or abdominal,’ says Güitrón. ‘It is probable that he had leukaemia (a group of illnesses of the bone marrow defined by an uncontrolled increase in white blood cells, or leukocytes) or bone marrow failure, which are very grave illnesses.’

Medical reports state that Tereso had 2.5 units of haemoglobin in his blood, whereas a male should maintain an average of 16 units: that is, Tereso had just 15% of the normal amount of haemoglobin. ‘I have only ever seen a few people alive in this situation, during my career of over 20 years. He also had another problem: his platelet count was very low (platelets work to coagulate blood): he had 12,000, while a normal amount varies between 250,000 and 300,000. Tereso had only 5%. If a person is in that condition, he may spontaneously bleed from the gums, the head, or any other part of the body’, says Güitrón.

The doctor recounts that when Tereso arrived at the hospital (weighing 46 kg), they asked for blood and platelets, but the Civil Hospital had only been informed of the transfer that morning. ‘Blood requires three hours to be transfused (it must first be decoagulated), so it arrived a half hour

¹ Translator's note: I.e. whether Tereso's death was caused by the wounds from the beating or a long-running illness

after the patient died (he had blood type O positive). And even if the blood had arrived, we would have had to wait for it to successfully pass through the veins over a period of four hours; he would have needed around four blood-transfusion packs and some 30,000 packed red blood cells to be out of danger of bleeding to death.’

It was estimated that Tereso’s illness had evolved over more than six months. ‘These patients let themselves die’, Güitrón said, referring to the indigenous populations in general. ‘They practically come to die in the hospitals, given the condition that they are in. It pains me to say it. The indigenous don’t look after themselves until they finish planting or harvesting. In July or August is when they don’t work, and then they come to the hospitals. 10% of the cases involving indigenous patients are serious. Tereso is just one example. He would not have died if he had been treated earlier in the Civil Hospital. His situation is not unusual to me; to be sure, the indigenous often come with cases of terrible anaemia, advanced alcoholism, cirrhosis, grave malnutrition, and even pregnancies in girls under 15.’

One week later, the communications department of the Jalisco Institute for Forensic Sciences responded with regards to Tereso’s death: ‘The patient died due to an acute pulmonary oedema, accompanied by pneumonia (an infection of the lungs that can be caused by a number of organisms, including bacteria, viruses, and fungi) and anaemia (a condition in which there is a lower-than-normal red blood cell count, usually measured by the amount of haemoglobin. But the Civil Hospital is the institution that should issue a cause of death, not we.’ The institution did not comment on Tereso’s wounds from the beating.

Although a pulmonary oedema constitutes a true medical emergency, and should therefore be identified quickly in order to begin treatment, Tereso’s life ended in terrible agony because there was no communication between authorities and municipal and state medical centres. Had there been, Tereso could have been treated in a specialist hospital beginning on Dec. 27, when he appeared for the first time at the health centre in Chimaltitán. Instead, he died two weeks later. [...]

Three million Jaliscans living in poverty

Northern Jalisco stands out for its high level of social underdevelopment. It is primarily inhabited by natives and mestizos, concentrated in the towns of Bolaños, Chimaltitán, Mezquitic, and Huejuquilla El Alto. Malnutrition and

a lack of basic resources are common among residents, leading to a permanent struggle to survive.

There are three million people living in poverty in Jalisco, according to the federal Department of Social Development. The story of Tereso is an example of living and dying in this misery.

The Jalisco Department of Human Development counts more than 730,000 living in nutritional poverty; 1.3 million lacking basic health and educational requirements; and 2.3 million without proper clothing, housing, and transport possibilities. The department’s director, Martín Hernández Balderas, highlights the benefits that human development programmes under Governor Emilio González Márquez will bring: ‘We are trying to reduce the number of Jaliscans living in nutritional poverty to just 365,000 by the end of this six-year term. That will reduce this problem, the most concerning, by half.’

Experts ridicule the state government’s goal, in the face of blows from the economic crisis and the impacts of an influenza alert in the country.

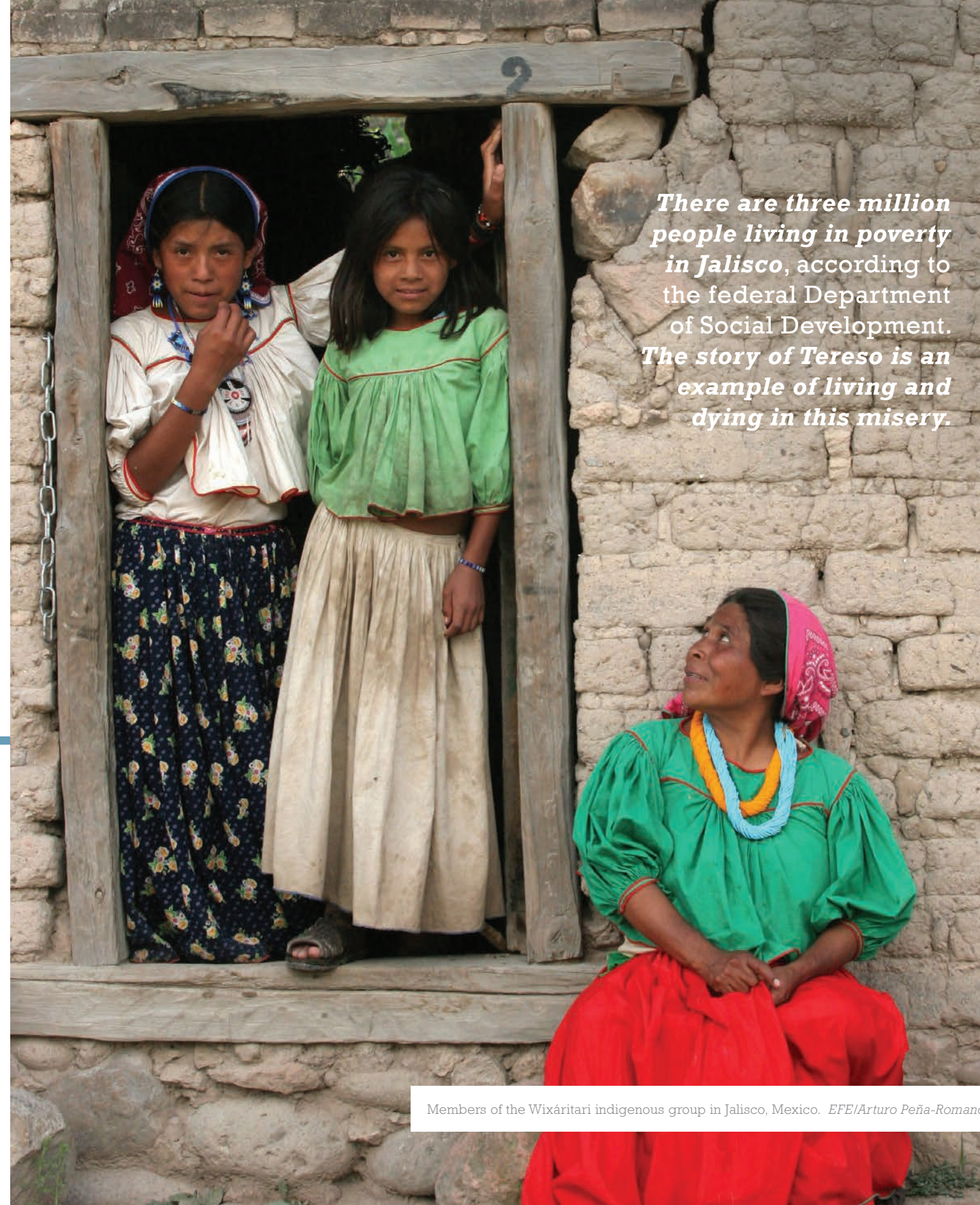
To read the expanded version of Mario Alejandro Muñoz de Loza’s article, including interviews with local politicians and representatives of the local office of the National System for Integral Family Development, follow this link: www.informador.com.mx/jalisco/2009/109475/6/jalla-la-estructura-del-estado-en-proteccion-de-la-familia.htm

Translated from the Spanish by Scott F. Griffen

Mario Alejandro Muñoz de Loza holds degrees in journalism and psychology and has worked for 15 years as a reporter and editor for *El Informador* in Guadalajara, Mexico. He specialises in covering social issues, politics, and economics, with a particular focus on transparency and accounting.

In 2009, he won first prize in the second ‘Latin America and the MDGs’ reporting contest, sponsored by the UNDP and IPS. In 2011, the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) awarded him its top award for journalistic excellence in the category of Human Rights and Service to the Community. Mario is also the recipient of the Latin American Journalism Prize for coverage of drugs, awarded by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

There are three million people living in poverty in Jalisco, according to the federal Department of Social Development. The story of Tereso is an example of living and dying in this misery.



Members of the Wixáritari indigenous group in Jalisco, Mexico. EFE/Arturo Peña-Romano.

(Part 6)

Stories from the Field: Personal Reflections on Covering the MDGs

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My Journey through the MDGs (Haiti)

Jean Claude Louis

(29)

Haiti's media and the MDGs

Quite often, the only privilege that people already living in dire circumstances have is the opportunity to share their ideas and offer their perspectives. To this end, journalists and the media have a pivotal role to play in promoting development and giving voices to the marginalised. Persistent coverage and lots of follow-up stories on development issues and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) may force governments and decision makers to become accountable.

However, working with media and journalists in Haiti to cover development aid and issues related to the MDGs is not easy. The Haitian media landscape, which consists of just one private daily printed newspaper, a few weeklies and approximately 300 radio and TV stations, devotes very little time and space to development. Haitian journalists are underpaid and often lack the capacity and the resources to report on development targets, which requires in-depth analysis, time, and research.

On the few occasions when these issues are addressed by the media, it is the voices of politicians and stakeholders, rather than those of the marginalised, that get attention. There are just a few foreign correspondents; after extensive media coverage related to the January 2010 earthquake, the international media seems to have deserted the country. The most serious pieces on tracking development funding were done by foreign investigative journalists with support from their Haitian colleagues.

It takes a true commitment to raise awareness of the MDGs among journalists, particularly given the fact that many media workers are often attracted by more popular or lucrative topics. With this challenge in mind, I have



A woman walks in the Cité Soleil neighbourhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in Nov. 2012. EPA/Orlando Barria

striven to help build the capacity of reporters to cover the MDGs, and thereby encourage their full participation in the development of their communities.

HIV/AIDS

Before the end of the 1990s, the Haitian media devoted very little attention to HIV/AIDS. The few journalists who did cover the growing epidemic lacked the necessary medical knowledge to properly explain the disease to the public. The silence and confusion contributed to social stigmatisation against those who suffered from AIDS, including several friends of mine.

I have vivid memories of a cousin whose parents were devastated by her death, seen as a curse because she was the mistress of a married man. The family, already ruined financially after trying to get her treatment, had to find yet more money to cremate her body, which shocked the

Adult prevalence declined from 6.1 percent in 1993 to under 2 percent, according to a joint UN/Haitian government report, in 2012. I am proud to say that the media, through increased coverage of HIV/AIDS, has contributed to this improvement.

community culturally, as cremation is severely frowned upon in Haiti, where there is a deep respect for the dead and a belief in resurrection.

My cousin's death led me to commit to working with people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and to raise awareness among fellow journalists, so they can report and emphasise the human angle in their stories. Fortunately, training programmes, some of which I helped to launch, have helped to bridge that gap and capacitate journalists to take on complex healthcare topics. Seeing the need for media workers to have a reference guide for their stories, I co-wrote a reporting guide with the support of experts and civil society organizations involved in the epidemic.

Despite the disruption caused by the January 2010 earthquake, which destroyed most of the country's healthcare infrastructure and made it difficult to supply essential drugs and services, Haiti has stood out in the Caribbean for its remarkable progress in fighting the

spread of HIV/AIDS. Adult prevalence declined from 6.1 percent in 1993 to under 2 percent, according to a joint UN/Haitian government report, in 2012. I am proud to say that the media, through increased coverage of HIV/AIDS, has contributed to this improvement.

Working with Haiti's children and youth

In Haiti, children are often viewed as passive bystanders, rather than as active members of society. In recent years, I have been working and developing activities for hundreds of young men and women, encouraging them to actively participate in the community via the media.

Various workshops and practices that I have developed have trained young people in print journalism, radio and video reporting, and photography, and allowed participants to produce programmes and reports on the state of children's rights. These productions are broadcast on several stations in Port-au-Prince as well as on community radios.

Training has also focused on teaching adult journalists how to cover child-related topics, particularly child trafficking, a common practice in Haiti, where poor rural families often send their children to larger towns or the Dominican Republic

to work as domestics. The resulting coverage has led to journalists looking more closely at local root causes for child trafficking and has brought about improvements in the situation.

Building environmental sustainability

The forested area of Haiti was reduced considerably over the last four decades. The causes of environmental degradation in Haiti stem from poverty and include, among others, an increased demand for firewood and wood for construction. The environmental issues, be they land degradation or the destruction of biodiversity, are long-term problems that will not be solved soon. However, the public tends to forget them without continuous media coverage.

Reporting on the environment can be difficult because it requires scientific knowledge that journalists often lack. To this end, I helped prepare a reporting guide that explained some key concepts and issues involving the environment. This guide was well received by journalists



View of several children at the Fondamentale Olympcia School in the Cité Soleil neighbourhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in Nov. 2012. EPA/Orlando Barria

in Haiti, and I have realized that, by working with journalists, environmental reporting can influence actions taken by individuals and the government.

Haiti's 2010 earthquake and its aftermath

In November 2007, the Haitian government designed a strategic plan for economic growth and the reduction of poverty, in order to improve the lives of the Haitian people and bring the country in line with the MDGs by the year 2015.

Political turmoil, combined with the lack of resources and investments in key sectors, such as health, education, and agriculture, were already hindering implementation of the country's development plan when the massive earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010. The effects of the quake are difficult to understate—the tremor killed some 300,000 people and caused damage and losses equivalent to 66% of the GNP.

Twenty months after the tremor, the challenges remain phenomenal and daunting. We are still in an emergency situation, with over half a million internally displaced people living in tents and in precarious conditions. An outbreak of cholera, a disease last seen in Haiti more than a century ago, has killed nearly 7,000 people across the country, international news reports indicate.

Food insecurity and the need for potable water are recurrent. Many school-age children are not able to attend school. Haiti's development continues to be heavily reliant on external funding, but just half of the \$382 million requested from international donors has been provided.

Haiti's MDG future

Just three years before the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, the challenges for Haiti to reach the most basic targets, such as providing universal primary education, improving child mortality and improving maternal health, remain enormous. Even before the catastrophic damage caused by the earthquake, the outlook was not very bright.

Haitian society has never taken ownership of the MDGs, in part because of the lack of media attention. Paul Eddy Lacoste, a professor and development expert, said that the media has never been considered a development partner that could work together with the state and other decision makers.

Tom Drumond, a radio broadcaster with the privately owned Signal FM, noted that he had never had any training on the MDGs and rarely hears about them. But, he added, 'With seminars on the MDGs, we can fill the gap that exists in the media.' Jean Phares Jerome, a journalist with Nouvelliste, told me he has begun to write about the fulfilment of the MDGs after such training.

Haiti has a long way to go to achieve the MDGs, but I remain confident that the media can promote progress by raising awareness of the goals and by giving voice to the marginalised. By doing so, government and civil society will feel compelled to increase efforts toward the MDGs on behalf of the Haitian population, the majority of which is struggling to get by on a daily basis.

For author biography please see pg. 73

Ghanian women at a women's co-op in the Volta Region. *Courtesy Sophie Nicholls Jones*



From Canada to Ghana: A Personal Account (Canada/Ghana)

Sophie Nicholls Jones

In October 2007, I left Canada and headed to Ghana with an assurance that, as a print journalist in Toronto, I understood and therefore knew how to detect, unravel, and tell a news story, no matter what context in which I happened to be placed. That is, after all, what my training at Ryerson University's journalism school in Toronto had instilled, and my practice as a news reporter at Sun

Media had implemented and sustained. I was enthusiastic yet anxious, confident yet humble, and certainly not over-run with expectation or presumption. Or, so I thought.

My pre-departure training with Journalists for Human Rights (JHR)—the Canadian non-governmental organization that I would work for in Ghana's capital city of Accra—was a compilation of exercises with my fellow JHR co-workers. Our role, as journalist trainers, was to work alongside Ghanaian journalists, helping build their capability to report effectively on human rights and social justice issues. Our main duties were mentoring, coaching and training on such topics as media ethics, interviewing skills, generating story ideas, incorporating the human voice, etc. By addressing issues such as poverty, health, gender equity, and education, amongst others, we were essentially targeting the key aspects of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Collectively, we brainstormed what human rights meant to us as Canadians, how that definition would differ depending upon one's country of birth, upbringing, and education ... and why. We sorted through and analyzed various African newspapers, reflecting upon the differences between our own country's media coverage and what stood out to us in these publications. We discussed what our role would be overseas for the next eight months, the challenges we may face and how to overcome these. Finally, we reviewed JHR's role as a media development organization, rooted in a rights-based approach to development work. We analyzed the organization's responsibility to help achieve the MDGs, and how we would effectively assume our roles to do just this.

Following a mandatory cross-cultural communications course on how to successfully live and work overseas, and after reviewing the guidance notes from a former JHR trainer, I felt—let us say—relatively prepared.

However, it was not long after arriving in Accra, and subsequently working at two local newspapers—a major daily and a smaller, privately-owned daily—when my assurance shifted. What I knew to be standard journalism practice in my own country was by no means what it was in Ghana, particularly when it came to determining what is newsworthy and what constitutes a 'real' story.

Of the journalists I worked alongside, I felt a sense of complacency when it came to generating story ideas and reporting on their country's systemic issues such as poverty, healthcare, and education—issues at the root of the MDGs. Voices of the local population, their stories, experiences, and hardships were generally ignored or considered irrelevant. What a politician or expert had to say had far greater clout and was considered the only source necessary to relay a message.

Though there was a general knowledge of the MDGs, the importance of incorporating them into a story was not understood. A “show, don't tell outlook” was missing. A journalist's ambition and sense of responsibility to shed light on injustices, pressure leadership to implement change, and represent all citizens holistically was missing. The MDGs themselves were weakly, if at all, represented.

Why was this and how could it be changed?

During my first placement at the major daily, I detected a stringent, authoritative dynamic between the editors and reporters. Reporters would wait to be assigned stories, then attend the relevant press conferences, and later return to the newsroom to meet their deadlines.

Editors did not encourage journalists to generate their own stories, think outside the box, or push the boundaries beyond the standard press release. This power dynamic seemed to stymie those reporters keen on working independently. Convincing the editors, who were difficult to approach and negotiate with, that there were other stories worth telling was also challenging and perhaps the reason journalists hesitated to do so.

After several attempts to undertake my role, I left and moved to a smaller, privately-owned newspaper for the remainder of my term with JHR. There, the editorial team was much more open and receptive. I still, however, remained disillusioned by the journalists' drive and motivation. The press release continued to underpin the newspapers' content. Reporters seemed more comfortable attending news conferences, where they could collect compensation for time and transportation (known as

Though there was a general knowledge of the MDGs, the importance of incorporating them into a story was not understood. A “show, don't tell outlook” was missing.

T&T). Rewriting press releases or speeches was standard as opposed to brainstorming, researching, and writing 'home-grown' stories.

Even during press conferences, I witnessed a lack of incentive to ask questions, take notes or challenge what was presented. Additionally, press conferences ran too long—sometimes up to three hours—leaving reporters with little time to conduct other interviews and meet their deadlines, even if they desired to do so.

This lack of incentive was driven by other factors. In Ghana, journalists receive little compensation for their

efforts. The average salary is less than US\$ 100 per month—and that's with experience. More often than not, media outlets do not compensate their employees for travel costs to and from conferences or events, hence the need for T&T compensation.

Having harped on the issues, there are some highlights and accomplishments during my eight-month term that I would like to relay. A few journalists I worked with did produce stories that challenged the status quo and brought relevant human rights, social justice, and MDG-backed issues to light. Topics such as the sanitation risks of public toilets, the questionable treatment of disabled children residing at a mental institution, and the abominable working conditions for informal employees at an electronic waste dump site were tackled and given decent representation.

The story on public toilets made the front page and the electronic waste feature became a double-page spread, with multiple photos and substantial text. As well, I noticed that, once on site, the reporters' interest, curiosity, and critical analysis peaked. In my mind, the 'true journalist' emerged. With this in mind, I believe it is not that the reporters did not want to dig deeper and get to the heart of a story. It was that the incentive to do so may not have been there, and certainly was not encouraged.

Behaviours and practices across the media industry—particularly in Ghana and other nations where freedom of the press is restricted and pressure to adhere to political agendas prevails—must shift. Editors must be called on to tap into the talent before them. Reporters' assets must be fully realized. Journalists worldwide must be trusted and empowered to help drive the media outlets' content. A more collaborative approach in newsrooms can boost morale and improve the overall quality of work.

Reporters need to be encouraged to approach every story from a human right's perspective and with the MDGs in mind. The voices of those unheard must be listened to and appropriately incorporated. Authoritative figures must be challenged by refusing to accept the status quo, posing the right questions, and critically analysing the responses. This will diversify and strengthen media coverage, holistically representing the population that it is meant to serve, addressing the issues that need to be altered, and subsequently bringing to light what the MDGs aim to eliminate.

Additionally, salaries need to increase, and compensation for travel costs must become an industry standard, driving away the need for T&T handouts. With all this in place, the press release will no longer exclusively drive a newspaper's content, and reporters themselves will decide what news conferences they attend, and how long they stay.

These changes, I believe, can and will happen with increased training and a greater understanding of and adherence to international journalism standards and the MDGs. We, as journalists, irrespective of where we live and practise our trade, are responsible for shedding light on human rights issues and social injustices. It is our role to put pressure on governments and leaders to implement change, while helping achieve the MDGs.

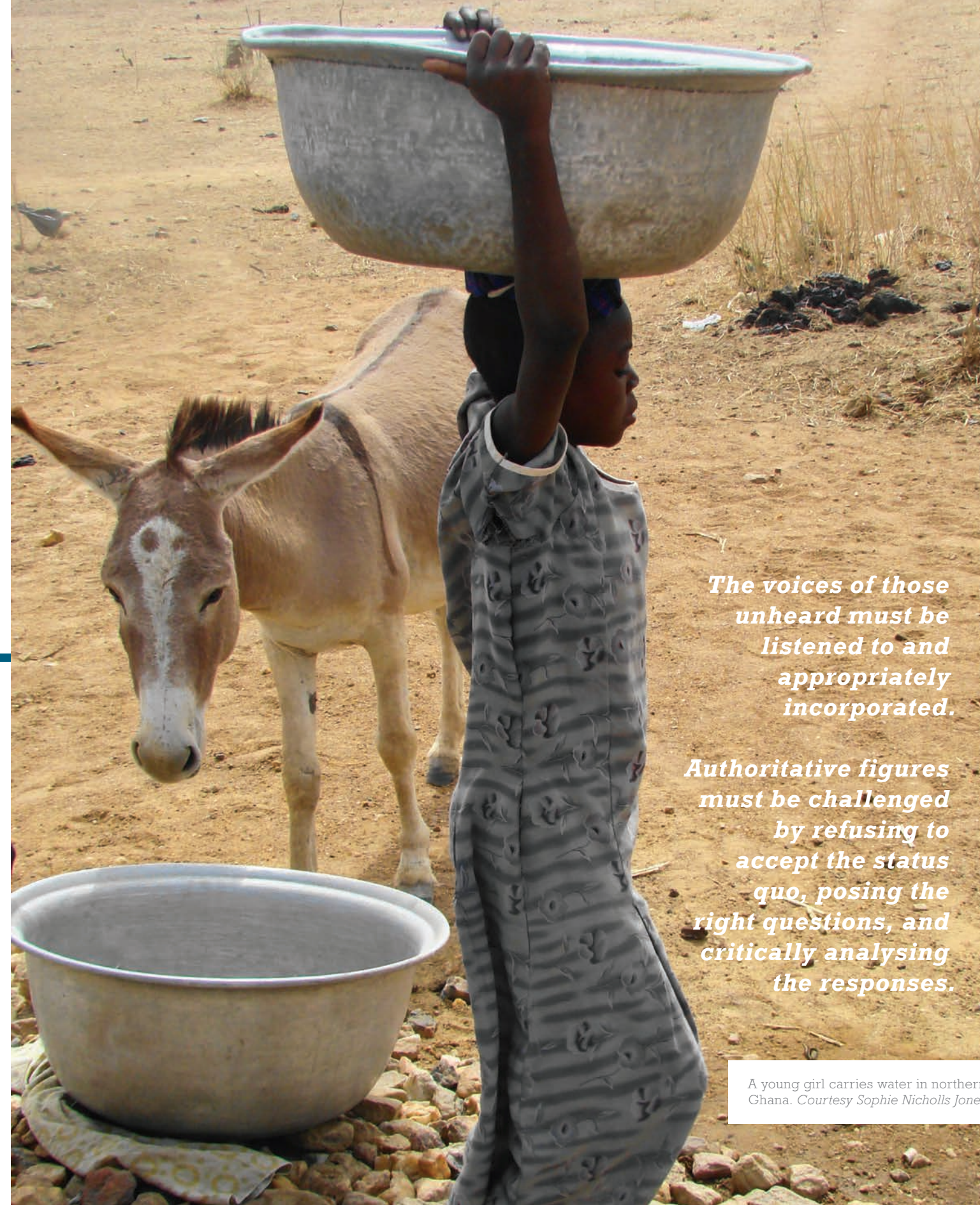
Generating awareness, educating the citizens we represent, and holding those leading the way accountable for their actions and decisions is the only way international commitments will be fulfilled and change will occur.

The deadline for the MDGs is 2015—just two-and-a-half years away. Though progress has been made, we are nowhere near achieving these goals. This can only happen if those that have the ability to lead the way can motivate and empower others to follow.



Sophie Nicholls Jones is a Toronto-based journalist working as a copy editor for Metro News International. Born and raised in Canada, her career as a journalist began after graduating from Ryerson University's journalism program in 2001. Over the last decade, she has worked as a newspaper reporter with Sun Media Corp. and as a freelance writer for various Canadian publications.

A desire to live and work abroad led Sophie to Ghana in 2007, where she served as a journalist trainer with a Canadian NGO, Journalists for Human Rights (JHR). This experience sparked an interest in overseas development, motivating her to pursue a post-graduate degree in International Development from Toronto's Humber College. Using the skills and knowledge acquired from that program, Sophie also works on a part-time basis with the charity organisation Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE).



The voices of those unheard must be listened to and appropriately incorporated.

Authoritative figures must be challenged by refusing to accept the status quo, posing the right questions, and critically analysing the responses.

A young girl carries water in northern Ghana. Courtesy Sophie Nicholls Jones

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Eight Goals, One Collective Effort (Papua New Guinea)

Shirlyn Belden

Media and the MDGs in Papua New Guinea

Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Papua New Guinea is a critical job—but it is also a difficult one, requiring dedication and responsibility. Those who write about the MDGs must be able to capture the human angle in their stories and, moreover, they require in-depth knowledge about their subject matter in order to understand the needs of the people and communicate these effectively to decision-makers.

The publication and broadcasting of news on the MDGs is very important in every newsroom in Papua New Guinea. The media here has a strong relationship with local communities, the government, churches, and non-governmental organisations and, in many ways, has already had an impact in terms of educating people about the MDGs.

Radio stations, newspapers, television programmes, freelancers, and public relations personnel all aim to work together to address pressing development issues. By doing so, they are raising not only public awareness but also the necessary government attention to ensure that progress is on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

What inspires me to report on the MDGs in Papua New Guinea

Last year, Papua New Guinea ranked 153th out of 180 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), falling into the “low human development” category. Over the past 10 years, the government has focused its attention on improving its HDI standing: development initiatives have been launched, bills and policies passed, and declarations signed. But many of these measures have fallen short.

For instance, the Papua New Guinea government has signed but has so far failed to ratify the UN Convention

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). The government’s actions in this case have left a lot to be desired by the estimated 10 percent of the country’s population that is disabled.

The MDGs cover the very areas that need prompt attention in Papua New Guinea and were adopted here to drive development strategies in the social, economic, and political arenas. However, it is clear that properly addressing high rates of child and maternal mortality, illiteracy, youth unemployment, school avoidance, HIV/AIDS and other killer diseases, and domestic violence plus pressing gender and environment issues requires a collective effort. This realisation, and the need for specific mechanisms to tackle these development issues, has led me to advocate for and report on the MDGs.

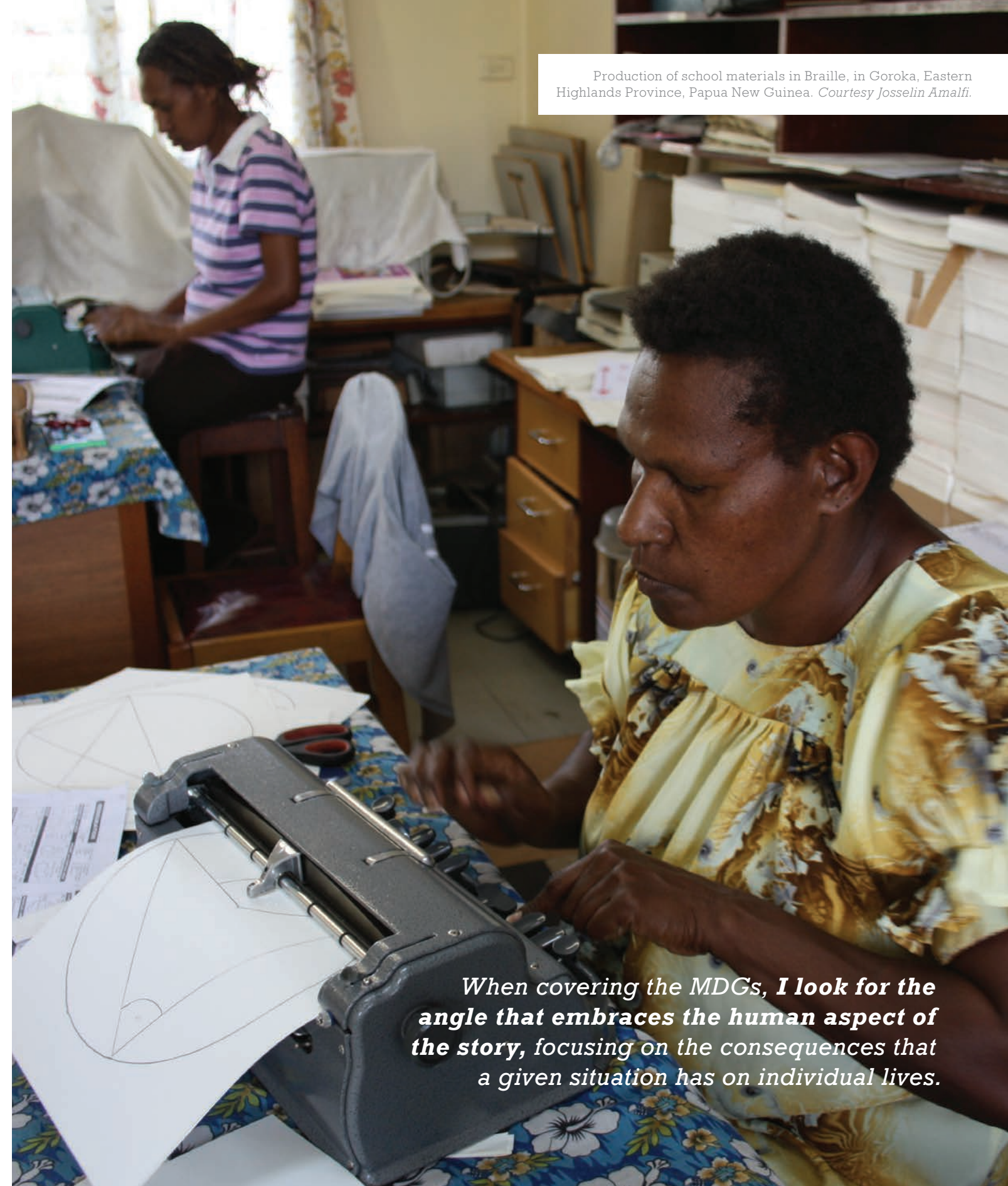
In my reporting, I am often exposed to the reality of growing poverty and hunger in my country. On one occasion, I came across 11-year-old Raphael, who came from a broken family and who had been living on the streets since he was nine years old. Rafael had never been to school and could not read or write. When I found him, he was homeless, hungry, and appeared hopeless. He wore torn clothes and had no footwear. It was hard fending for himself on the streets, he told me.

I was saddened to hear about the plight of Raphael, who is just one of 20,000 homeless children in the capital city of Port Moresby alone. Such scenarios inspire me to write about the MDGs and other development approaches in order to help my community.

How I report on the MDGs

As a journalist, I am aware of the challenges and barriers my country continues to face. Thus, in my writing, I try to be as precise and frank as possible in order to effectively deliver what needs to be known.

Production of school materials in Braille, in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea. *Courtesy Josselin Amalfi.*



When covering the MDGs, I look for the angle that embraces the human aspect of the story, focusing on the consequences that a given situation has on individual lives.

When covering the MDGs, I look for the angle that embraces the human aspect of the story, focusing on the consequences that a given situation has on individual lives. Doing so can be quite challenging at times because in Papua New Guinea talking about people's livelihoods can be very personal.

First and foremost, the question that needs to be asked is: 'What is hindering development in the community?' Trying to pinpoint the answers to this question makes reporting on the MDGs a challenging task.

Then, I ask myself:

- What can I do as a journalist to help these affected people?
- Is the Papua New Guinea government implementing plans and initiatives to address these problems?
- How much has been achieved through these plans and initiatives?
- What is the best way to work in partnership with my government and development partners to eradicate poverty in my country?

These thoughtful questions require an answer, which, depending on how I report it, can compel immediate action on the part of those with the power to initiate change.

Barriers

In Papua New Guinea, the main barriers to MDG reporting include limited public awareness, a lack of modern resources and media technology, the mountainous terrain, and ineffective leadership.

According to a recent estimate by UNESCO, at least 44% of Papua New Guinea's population is illiterate—a figure the organisation partly attributes to the fact that over 800 languages are spoken natively in the country. So educating people about the MDGs in a way that they will understand and react positively to is in itself a major obstacle that must be overcome.

Many newsrooms are not equipped with the latest software or infrastructure to effectively access and communicate information. The country's rugged terrain—the geography is such that air travel is often the only viable option—makes the distribution of news all the more difficult. It can also mean that the benefits of an MDG-oriented initiative that takes place in an urban area do not always reach more remote populations.

Poor leadership on the part of the authorities is also challenging. It is very discouraging to report on government agencies not implementing MDG-oriented projects that would benefit the people.

In Papua New Guinea, every journalist faced with these constraints has to put extra effort into investigative reporting on the MDGs. Again, highlighting the human angle can increase the chances of getting a story a spot on the television, radio news bulletin, or newspaper page—which, in turn, can lead to increased awareness and advocacy opportunities.

Another effective way to improve MDG reporting is by working together with development partners such as faith- and community-based organisations and business houses or other supporting agencies.

Given the current situation in Papua New Guinea relative to the MDGs, it is evident that there needs to be a collective effort among citizens, national and international development partners, and the national government in order to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Papua New Guinean journalists can and already do play a critical role in this effort by keeping tabs on the initiatives and policies needed to arrive at the desired outcome.



Shirlyn Belden is a journalist for the daily newspaper *The National* in Papua New Guinea. Her specialty is covering social issues that affect women and children; and issues related to HIV/AIDS, disability and community development. She also contributes to *The National's* political and health-care coverage.

Shirlyn graduated from the University of Papua New Guinea in 2011 with a B.A. in Media Studies. She joined *The National* after graduation, and lives in Port Moresby.

First and foremost, the question that needs to be asked is: 'What is hindering development in the community?'



Young girls participate in a traditional dancing show on Nusa Island, Papua New Guinea, a country considered to have one of the most severe gender disparities in the world. *Courtesy Josselin Amalfi.*

A woman helps her son with his homework in a run-down house in Managua, Nicaragua, on Aug. 7, 2008. EFE/Mario López



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Why Write About the MDGs? (Nicaragua)

María Haydée Brenes Flores

Why write about the Millennium Development Goals?

It has been hard for me to identify what it is that motivates me to write about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the importance of fulfilling them.

To start working on the topic of human rights, many journalists experience a triggering event. One journalist, for example, might be motivated by statistics that reveal poor families' struggles to afford school and university for their children. Another journalist might find a single personal event inspires the need to report on human rights.

The spark, for me, was a little boy called Eliécer; I encountered him when I covered “The Hunger Walk” (La Marcha del Hambre) in 2002. He was just one of many severely malnourished children of rural farm labourers from northern Nicaragua who walked their families and meagre belongings to the capital, Managua, to ask the government for food, after a fall in coffee prices left farm owners with no incentive to harvest their crop, and with no need for labourers.

Eliécer had been hospitalised for malnutrition several times before the walk, but, each time, doctors told his mother that he could not be cured at the hospital but at home, with food—food that she did not have.

Without even the strength to flick away the flies that landed on his face, Eliécer lay on a pile of wood, inside an improvised dwelling made of plastic. A human-rights attorney saw him and sent him to a clinic, but it was already too late: Eliécer died, another victim of a government unwilling to look after its people.

The MDGs represent an essential chance to change the world, and the lives of people who live in it. The goals serve both as an effective tool to accomplish change and as a frame of reference to measure not only advances, but also disregard.

Yet, twelve years after their unveiling, nothing has changed. Yes, there have been some programmes established, but at a structural level no differences can be seen. Treaties and agreements—both those signed and those still to come—are important, but are no guarantee of change. The Nicaraguan government, in its efforts to meet some of the MDGs, has made international commitments, for example, to protect the environment, which it lists as its third-highest priority, yet spends only 0.7% of its national budget on doing so. Not even 1%—hard to believe.

Even though more than a few independent analysts have confirmed that governments are distorting numbers for their own convenience, it is evident that there is a crisis: people still beg for food and children still do not attend school, even though education is free. But would you send your child to school barefoot, with no food, no pencil, and no notebook?

It is difficult to write about hunger and shortages when you have had to endure them. It is difficult to write about gender equality when you come from a country where a single mother is less likely to get a bank loan for a car than a single man with absolutely no responsibilities. It is certainly difficult to write about improving maternal health in a country where women aware of the risks of pregnancy are afraid to try for children now that abortion is now illegal. In 2006, the Nicaraguan government repealed the “therapeutic” abortion legislation that prioritised the lives of women in cases of disease or life-threatening complications. Now, with abortions banned under any circumstance, doctors are scared of going to jail for saving the lives of these women, so they avoid them or transfer them to other hospitals until they die, leaving newborns and their siblings as orphans.

While it may well be hard for journalists to report on stories so close to their own narrative, we must stay true to our purpose as journalists, stand strong in our duty to tell the stories that need to be told, and tell the world what is happening. This is our commitment, one in which we must believe, in order to not lose another Eliécer.



Born in Corinto, western Nicaragua, **María Haydée Brenes Flores** studied at Universidad Centroamericana, where she also worked in the press and public relations department. Following graduation, she worked for the Sunday section of *La Prensa* and the features department at *HOY*. Later, she joined

El Nuevo Diario, where she remained for nine years and served as chief of human-rights reporting.

María has won numerous awards for her work, including first and third prize at the National Journalism Contest on Children's Rights Reporting, administered by UNICEF and Universidad Centroamericana, in 2010 and 2009, respectively. She received a scholarship from Balboa Program for Iberoamerican Journalists in 2009 and worked at the Servimedia News Agency in Madrid. Currently, she works as a freelance journalist.

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IPI Executive Director

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Editors

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