Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the British government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty. The government elected in May 1997 increased its commitment to development by strengthening the department and increasing its budget.

The policy of the government was set out in the White Paper on International Development, published in November 1997. The central focus of the policy is a commitment to the internationally agreed target to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, together with the associated targets including basic health care provision and universal access to primary education by the same date.

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We are also contributing to poverty elimination in middle income countries, and helping the transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe to enable the widest number of people to benefit from the process of change.

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Executive Summary

In a multi-media age television is the foremost provider of information about international affairs to the British public. Repeated surveys confirm this. And in this globally integrated age, television’s role in shaping people’s understanding of the world takes on a greater significance than ever.

So what kinds of images and ideas from around the world are British viewers being offered? What impact are they having on the viewers? And how do television decision-makers approach the global content on their channels?

This research project addresses these questions, in three distinct studies, focusing on programming about the developing world. The content study analysed news and feature programme output over a three-month period. The audience study looked at viewers’ responses to this programming. And the production study examined the broadcasters’ approach to their international output.

The content study found a marked imbalance in the way developing countries are portrayed, especially on news where coverage was generally limited to disasters, bizarre events, or visits by prominent westerners.

The audience study found that television was a strong source of beliefs and impressions about the developing world. Viewers generally perceived the developing world in a negative way, blaming this on television images. This study identified a serious problem with audience understanding of development issues, especially on news programmes.

The production study pointed to a dilemma. Television policy-makers all recognise the importance of television’s role in informing people about the world. But most doubt that viewers want to watch programmes about the developing world, so this output has come to be regarded as a ratings risk.

Together, the studies highlight existing problems, but also point to new approaches that could be taken with television’s global coverage. The research points to programme formats and genres that have both attracted and informed their audiences, which should be placed more prominently in the TV schedules. It points to the need for continued work on making global issues comprehensible to viewers. And it reveals the concern of television programme-makers and policy-makers that the portrayal of the wider world should be turned into compelling viewing.

---

1Harris 1989, RSGB 1993, MORI 1997, ONS 1999
Introduction to the Three-Part Study

Definitions
The terms ‘developing world’ and ‘developing countries’ appear extensively in this document. They are used to cover the low-income countries of the world, as defined by the World Bank according to Gross National Product and per capita income.

In the audience and content studies, the Glasgow Media Group defined the developing world as all those countries outside of Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand and the countries of Eastern Europe formerly within the Soviet ambit. These are listed at the end of the full audience study report.

In the production study, participants generally assumed the term also included the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Purpose of the study
This research project was commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID) in order to examine the role of television in public understanding of international affairs.

With its concern to raise public awareness of development, the Department acknowledges the huge influence exerted by the media on our knowledge and attitudes. The influence of television in particular was confirmed by a recent national survey which showed that over 80% of the British public were informed about developing countries by television, far more than by the print media, radio or any other source (ONS Omnibus Survey, July 1999).

In 1998 DFID decided to work with the major British television companies on a research project designed to review attitudes to international coverage within the television industry, analyse current coverage, and test audience attitudes.

Conduct of the study
A steering committee of senior broadcasters was set up for the project, and first met in January 1999. This consisted of representatives from the BBC, ITN, the ITC, Channel 4, Channel 5, and Discovery Channel.

DFID invited the Glasgow Media Group at Glasgow University to conduct the audience research and content analysis, and the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project (3WE) to carry out the production study reviewing attitudes within the television industry.

Context of the study
The study is a timely undertaking for a number of reasons.

The changing face of television services
With the rapid development of digital, multi-channel technology and media convergence, there is currently widespread uncertainty and debate about the implications of these changes for television programme content. UK television output is still regulated, and still dominated by a handful of channels imbued with public service principles. But as internet, broadband and multi-channel services transform viewing practices into a far more personalised and market-led activity, the question of maintaining programme content quality and diversity will arguably become all the more pressing.

The public service and quality debate
The competitive, commercial climate now dominating the television industry has put pressure on television’s traditional public service ideals: to inform and educate as well as to entertain, and to provide breadth and diversity in programming alongside predictable mass audience favourites. The drive to increase audience share has favoured programme genres like game shows, sport and popular drama, but not those such as news, current affairs, education, arts, science and religion which have been the key providers of television’s foreign coverage.

The deregulation debate
Television’s regulatory framework is currently under review. A white paper due in the Autumn of 2000 is set to redefine the regulation of all the main terrestrial channels. At the moment these channels are all obliged, under their licence or charter terms, to meet certain public service requirements, which include the inclusion of international news and current affairs coverage. But most broadcasters are pushing for more relaxed regulation in order to operate more competitively.

The decline of international programming
In an age of undoubted global integration and interdependence, when most people still look to television to help them make sense of the world, easily accessible foreign coverage is arguably a vital necessity which should not be dismissed as a minority specialism.
Yet quantitative research shows that, apart from news output, there is substantially less international factual programming on British television screens now than there was 10 years ago. And whereas 10 years ago, developing world output concerned human rights, development, environmental, religious and cultural topics, these categories have tended to be replaced by travel and wildlife programmes, which give a more partial view of these countries (Losing Perspective report, 3WE, January 2000).

Such considerations raise questions not simply about the quantity of global programmes on British television in the future, but also about the quality of representation of other countries on our screens, the impact of this output on the audience, and the outlook of the television policy-makers who decide what goes out.

This unprecedented three-part study tackles these questions from both ‘sides’ of the screen, examining the issues from the perspectives of both the broadcasters and the audience.
I. Content study conducted by the Glasgow Media Group

I.1 Television news profiles

The Glasgow University Media Group examined the coverage of the developing world on the major British news channels in the first three months of 1999 (1 January to 31 March), in order to produce data on routine patterns of coverage.

The sample included the three main daily news programmes on both BBC1 (The One, Six and Nine O’Clock News) and ITV (Lunch Time News, Early Evening News and News At Ten), plus Channel 4 News, BBC2’s Newsnight, and the two main news programmes on Channel 5.

The researchers compiled their account from the computerised commercial sales archives of both the BBC and ITN, searching under the names of 137 developing countries (listed in the Appendix of the full version of the report), as well as conducting searches on stories relating to developing countries, but which may not have been mentioned or filmed in developing countries. The key criteria for inclusion in the sample were whether the news report included material filmed in developing countries or whether the item contained explicit discussion of developing countries.

The analysis had two key dimensions. Firstly, they analysed which countries were covered over this period. And secondly, they noted which issues and types of events were covered.

I.2 Television news case studies

From this analysis of three months’ coverage the researchers selected a number of case studies for detailed analysis which were representative of the coverage more generally, and typical examples of the most frequent categories of TV news story about the developing world.

The major categories (with the case study stories indicated in brackets) were:
- Conflict / war / terrorism (Ugandan Tourist Killings)
- Politics (Nigerian elections)
- Disasters / accidents (Colombian earthquake)
- Trade / finance (Banana war)

They also studied in depth some other items which were exceptions to the type of reporting generally found on routine news coverage. These included a Newsnight special on education in Tanzania, and BBC and ITN reports on the long-term effects of, and responses to, Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

The method employed in these detailed content studies is called Thematic Analysis. It consists of a detailed examination of the language and visuals of news reports. The purpose is to examine how key themes emerge in television news reporting and how they are used to structure and develop stories. The researchers break down the news text into separate phrases or sentences, which relate to the range of themes covered in the story. They also give a numerical account of these, which allows some judgements to be made about the dominance of specific themes. For this study they also identified explanatory and contextualising references in order to assess how much the content might assist audiences in understanding development issues. For the purposes of comparison, they also identified ‘explanatory accounts’ in other areas of news output such as newspapers or web-sites.

I.3 Other television genres

During the same period of time (January to March 1999) the Glasgow University Media Group studied a sample of programmes from other areas of output on the main terrestrial channels:

- Children’s programmes (notably Newsround and Blue Peter)
- Documentaries, current affairs and news features (including GMTV, Snapshots, Panorama, South Bank Show and Correspondent, Lagos Stories)
- Comic Relief
- Comedy (The Mark Thomas Comedy Product)
- Holiday, travel and adventure (including Holiday, The Rough Guide, The Travel Show, Wish You Were Here, The Edge of Blue Heaven)
- Wildlife (including Champions of the Wild, The Really Wild Show, Defenders of the Wild, Champions of Nature)
- Cookery (including Rick Stein’s Seafood Odyssey, Ready Steady Cook, Dishes, The Food and Drink Programme).

Since the audience study indicated that cookery programmes are an important source of images of the developing world, they also looked at Ainsley’s Big Cook Out, broadcast in August and September 1999, which covered parts of Latin America.

In addition to this output from the terrestrial channels, the researchers also recorded one week of programmes on Discovery Channel (2–9 March 1999),
and examined programmes relating to the developing world that included *Great Escapes*, *Time Travellers*, *Trailblazers*, and *Walker’s World*.

II. Audience study conducted by the Glasgow Media Group

The audience study used focus groups to investigate how media messages about the developing world are received and understood by the public.

The researchers set themselves two key objectives. First, to identify patterns of understanding and belief, and to trace the origin of these in, for example, media output or other sources such as schooling or peer group influence. And second, to examine how television programmes work to compel audience attention, to entertain and to create lasting images.

Twenty-six focus groups were convened (14 in England and 12 in Scotland), each involving six to eight people. The groups were ‘naturally occurring’ (people who knew each other through work, school, friendships or family connections) in order to preserve elements of the social context within which people actually receive media messages. A total of 165 individuals took part, aged between 10 and 74. The sample was 56% female and 44% male. They included groups of 10 year-olds, 15 year-olds, low income, middle class, ethnic minority and retired people. 87% of the sample watched at least one news programme daily.

Each session lasted between one and two hours and was audio-taped and transcribed. Within each session respondents were required to:
- fill out a general questionnaire
- complete a ‘news exercise’ or watch video material
- participate in a ‘focused discussion’

The questionnaire asked for general biographical details and television consumption patterns.

In each exercise, group members were either shown a story about the developing world to discuss, or invited to construct their own short programme, using photographs from actual news, wildlife, holiday and travel programmes. The images were selected to represent major themes in these areas of programming, and to highlight key issues which were later pursued in discussion. The researchers then examined how the group members interpreted the stories, and the sources of information which they used to construct their own items.

Five separate exercises were developed, with five or six groups allotted to each one (Fig.1).

Each exercise was chosen to highlight different parts of the developing world, specifically China, Africa, Latin America and Asia. The fifth exercise was devoted to *Comic Relief*, as this was identified as potentially a key source of popular imagery in this area. *Comic Relief* and *Shanghai Vice* were also chosen for their innovative content, so that researchers could examine audience response to this.

Following the exercise, each group took part in a focused discussion. Questions were put to all of the groups, including:
- What does ‘development’ mean? What comes to mind when people hear the words ‘developing world’ or ‘third world’?
- Do the groups distinguish between disasters in the ‘first world’ and disasters in the ‘third world’?
- What difference do presenters make?
- Do viewers remember any appeals? If so, which?
- Which programme formats/genres and approaches compel attention and entertain?

One group of 10 year-olds was also interviewed to explore issues in children’s television.

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**Fig.1: List of groups and exercises carried out**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Africa Ugandan tourist killings</th>
<th>Caribbean Holiday/Dominican Republic</th>
<th>Latin America/Asia Adventure holiday/natural history</th>
<th>Comic Relief</th>
<th>China Shanghai Vice/student demonstration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5 Groups)</td>
<td>(5 Groups)</td>
<td>(5 Groups)</td>
<td>(5 Groups)</td>
<td>(6 Groups)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15 year-olds</td>
<td>15 year-olds</td>
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<td>Low income</td>
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<td>Ethnic Minority</td>
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<td>Retired</td>
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DFID – July 2000
III. Production study conducted by 3WE

The purpose of this study was to conduct interviews with key decision-makers within the British television industry in order to understand the industry perspective on television coverage of the developing world.

The study selected 38 interviewees from the five British terrestrial channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5) and from four satellite/cable channels (Sky One, Sky News, Discovery, National Geographic). A full list of participants is given at the end of this chapter.

The interviewees were drawn from across the television hierarchy, from programme-makers to directors of programmes. The majority were in the upper commissioning levels, since these have the most influence on programme output. The programme-makers worked in news, current affairs, documentaries and features programmes, the areas most likely to cover the developing world. For collation purposes the interviewees were broadly divided between policy-makers/commissioning editors on the one hand, and programme-makers on the other (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2: Levels of 'decision-makers' as classified in the study](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy-makers</th>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
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<td>Director of programmes or channel controller</td>
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<table>
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<th>LEVEL 2</th>
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<td>Department heads or commissioning editors</td>
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<td>Schedulers</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Programme-makers</th>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Programme editors or executive producers</td>
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<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Correspondents and producers</td>
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</table>

Interviews generally lasted for about an hour, and they were all audio-recorded. They were based on a questionnaire that pursued the following areas:

- The nature of their output about the developing countries: broad questions including the quantity and positioning of programmes in the schedules.
- Detailed examination of their criteria used in pursuing programmes or news items on the developing world – and the rationale behind the relevant criteria.
- Features associated with successful output on the developing world (such as style, scheduling, content, size of budgets).
- Representation issues: interviewees’ perception of the accuracy and fairness with which their programmes depict the developing world, and problems relating to this.
- Personal programme preferences and opinions, including beliefs about television’s role to inform and the protection of public service ideals.

The interviews took place between March and July 1999, which happened to be a time of considerable public debate about television regulation and public service obligations², as well as an exceptional time for television’s foreign news staff covering the NATO offensive on Kosovo.

In addition to the 38 broadcasters interviewed, the survey included interviews with two directors of programme sales and three advertising directors, in order to gain perspectives on the broader commercial context within which the broadcasters operate.

²The BBC licence was under independent review. The BBC was also seeking a new Director-General, which led to much speculation about its future. And the ITC was putting pressure on ITV to continue to meet its news and current affairs obligations as it dropped News at Ten and rescheduled its evening news programmes.
## List of participants in the 3WE production study

### Policy-Makers/Commissioning Editors (25)

#### All programmes
- Alan Yentob, Director of Television, BBC
- Peter Salmon, Controller, BBC1
- Jane Root, Controller, BBC2
- Adam MacDonald, Head of Scheduling, BBC TV
- Bill Hilary, Head of Independent Commissioning Group, BBC TV
- David Liddiment, Director of Programmes, ITV Network
- David Bergg, Director of Planning and Strategy, ITV Network
- Peter McHugh, Director of Programmes, GMTV
- Tim Gardam, Director of Programmes, Channel 4
- Rosemary Newell, Head of Programme Planning and Strategy, Channel 4
- Richard Ayre, Deputy Chief Executive, BBC News
- Vin Ray, Executive Editor Newsgathering, BBC TV
- Steve Anderson, Controller, News, Current Affairs and Religion, ITV Network
- Nigel Dacre, Editor of ITN News on ITV (and Executive Producer of *Tonight*)
- David Lloyd, Head of News, Current Affairs & Business, Channel 4
- Chris Shaw, Controller News, Current Affairs and Documentaries, Channel 5
- Nick Pollard, Head of Sky News
- Anne Morrison, Head of Features and Events, BBC
- Jeremy Gibson, Head of Features, BBC Bristol
- Joanna Clinton Davis, Factual Commissioning Editor, BBC TV
- Grant Mansfield, Controller Documentaries and Features ITV Network
- Peter Dale, Commissioning Editor, Documentaries, Channel 4
- Nick Comer-Calder, Senior VP and General Manager, Discovery Europe
- Giselle Burnett, Head of Programmes, National Geographic
- Mo Joseph, Controller of Editorial and Factual Programmes, Sky One

### Programme-Makers (13)

#### News
- George Alagiah, BBC TV News
- Al Anstey, Acting Head of Foreign News, ITN
- Robert Moore, Head Foreign Affairs Correspondent, ITN

#### Features and documentaries
- Jannine Waddell, Editor, *Holiday*, BBC TV
- Alex Holmes, Editor, *Modern Times*, BBC TV
- Ian Stuttard, Producer, Documentaries and History, BBC
- Jacqui Stephenson, Producer, *Holiday*, BBC
- Steve Hewlett, Director of Programmes, Carlton TV
- Charles Tremayne, Controller of Factual Programmes, Granada TV
- David Boardman, Researcher/Producer, ITV
- George Carey, Director of Programmes, Mentorn Barraclough Carey
- Ali Rashid, Real Life TV
- Andre Singer, Café Productions

### Programme Distributors
- Jane Balfour, Jane Balfour Films
- Paul Sowerbutts, Director of Programmes, ITEL

### Advertising/Advertising Sales Directors
- Bjarne Thelin, Planning Director, Carlton UK Sales
- Tony Hopewell Smith, Head of Audience Research, Carlton UK Sales
- Graham Hinton, Chairman, Bates UK
## Contents

### A. Key Findings
- A.1. Content Study (Glasgow Media Group) 3
- A.2. Audience Study (Glasgow Media Group) 3
- A.3. Production Study (3WE) 3

### B. Summaries
- B.1. Content Study (Glasgow Media Group) 5
  - B.1.1. Sample 5
  - B.1.2. TV News 5
  - B.1.3. Other Television Genres 6
- B.2. Audience Study (Glasgow Media Group) 9
  - B.2.1. Sample 9
  - B.2.2. Method 9
  - B.2.3. Results 10
  - B.2.4. Conclusions 13
- B.3. Production Study (3WE) 14

### CONTENT AND AUDIENCE STUDIES (Glasgow Media Group)

#### C. Content Study (Glasgow Media Group)
- C.1. Television News Profiles 16
  - C.1.1. Sample and Method 16
  - C.1.2. Results 16
  - C.1.3. Types of Coverage 19
  - C.1.4. Conclusions 22
- C.2. Television News Case Studies 23
  - C.2.1. The Banana War 33
  - C.2.2. Nigerian Presidential Elections 36
  - C.2.3. Ugandan Tourist Killings 45
  - C.2.4. Colombian Earthquake 53
  - C.2.5. Education in Tanzania 60
  - C.2.6. Hurricane Mitch 61
- C.3. Other Television Output 63
  - C.3.1. Children’s Television 63
  - C.3.2. Documentaries, current affairs and news features 69

#### D. Audience Study (Glasgow Media Group)
- D.1. Method and Sample 122
  - D.1.1. Questionnaire 122
  - D.1.2. Exercise 122
  - D.1.3. Group Discussion 123
- D.2. Results 123
  - D.2.1. Profile of the Audience Groups 123
  - D.2.2. Group Exercises 123
  - D.2.3. Group Discussions 136
## E. Recommendations 144

## F. Appendix: Countries of the developing world 145

### PRODUCTION STUDY (3WE)

#### G. Production Study (3WE) 148

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G.1. Introduction</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.1. The Purpose of the Production Study</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.2. Method</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.3. Context</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.4. Note on Audience Research</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.5. Acknowledgements</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.1.6. Participants</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.2. General Trends</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.2.1. Figures</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.2.2. Summary</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.3. Commissioning Criteria</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.3.1. Directors of Programmes', Commissioning Editors' and Departmental Heads' criteria</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.3.2. Programme-makers'/reporters' criteria</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.4. Representation of the developing world on television</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.4.1. ‘Reasonably balanced’</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.4.2. ‘Unbalanced – inevitably’</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.4.3. Unbalanced – but trying to redress the balance</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5. TV Coverage of the developing world</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5.1. What works against it?</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5.2. The programme-makers’ perspective</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5.3. What does work on television?</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5.4. Examples of successful output</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.5.5. Commercial Considerations</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### H. Conclusion 174

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.1. The Puzzle</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.2. The Pressures</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.3. The Possibilities</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### I. Recommendations 176

#### J. Appendix: Other research in this area 177
A. Key Findings

A.1. Content Study
(Glasgow Media Group)

- In news output most developing countries were either not covered, or were mentioned only in the context of visits by westerners, sports events, wildlife or bizarre/exotic stories.
- Disasters and terrorism were also main categories of news story, but there was little explanation or context given in most news accounts.
- Channel 4 News and BBC 2’s Newsnight gave the most in-depth coverage of issues such as elections and trade in the developing world.
- The most positive and well-explained coverage was on the BBC’s children’s news programme Newsround, and in documentaries.
- Comedy programmes (Comic Relief programmes, The Mark Thomas Project) also combined explanation with new formats designed to hold audience attention and interest.
- Holiday programmes were mostly about what tourists could obtain cheaply from the developing world, but some travel and cookery programmes went beyond this to explain local cultures.

A.2. Audience Study
(Glasgow Media Group)

- The developing world was perceived very negatively in almost all of the focus groups, and media images (especially news) were cited as the major source of this view.
- More positive images came from cookery and wildlife programmes, and from innovative documentaries.
- There was a serious problem of audience understanding of development issues, especially in relation to news programmes.
- Some programmes on development could engage a strong interest. The commitment of programme presenters was important. It was also important that viewers understood the issues and identified with the problems and lives of people who were featured.
- Documentaries were seen to offer well-informed accounts, but there were complaints about their lack of accessibility in the schedules, and requests that they should be more prominently promoted.

- People with direct experience of developing countries (including the ethnic minority groups) were the most critical of media coverage.
- About 25% of the sample had no interest in development issues, while around 10% claimed an active interest. Amongst the rest of the sample there were varying levels of interest.
- Young people were apparently put off development issues by forced participation in charitable events at schools. The 15 year-olds showed very low levels of interest. The 10 year-olds were more interested, wanting to know more about the lives of children abroad.
- There were variations between groups of different income levels. Some low income groups thought that charity should begin at home. Middle class groups were more likely to be critical of the poor quality of explanations offered in programming.

A.3. Production Study (3WE)

- All the interviewees said that television still has an important role to play in informing people about the developing world. And almost all believed this role should be played out on the popular, mainstream channels, not just the niche channels. They all claimed to have a place for coverage of the developing world on their own channels.
- However, most (28 out of 38) did not believe viewers want to watch programmes about the developing world, an assumption generally based on ratings and the sense that a domestic agenda makes more attractive viewing. This area of programming has therefore come to be regarded as risky and ‘difficult’, even (though to a lesser extent) in some news areas.
- The majority of interviewees thought that more programmes/items about the developing world could engender greater public interest in this area, if done in the right way.
- The majority of interviewees did not think that the portrayal of the developing world on television is well balanced, but most of these considered that imbalance to be inevitable.
- Most policymakers and commissioning editors thought that non-news programmes in this area need to be exceptionally arresting, innovative and
well-related to the viewers. They looked to the programme-makers for this input, and some suggested there was a dearth of good programme ideas.

- Most programme-makers identified deterrents to good programming in this area, including: the commissioning structure, the cost of developing ideas abroad, and the reluctance of commissioning editors to consider programmes about the developing world.

- Commercial pressure from advertisers discourages global output. But programme distributors would like to see more of this output, and fear that broadcasters may be eliminating audiences for international programming.
B. Summaries

B.1. Content Study
(Glasgow Media Group)

B.1.1. Sample
The sample covers all main news programmes broadcast on networked terrestrial television channels in the UK, from 1 January to 31 March 1999. This included BBC1 (The One O’clock News, The Six O’clock News, The Nine o’clock News) and ITV (Lunch Time News, News at 5.40 and News at Ten), Channel Four News, BBC2’s Newsnight and the two main bulletins on Channel 5.

Non-news programme output analysed over the same period covered the terrestrial channels as well as some cable and satellite broadcasting in March 1999. The results of this are included in the detailed analysis of individual news stories and in the studies of non-news output.

The developing world was defined as all those countries outside Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand and the countries of Eastern Europe formerly within the Soviet ambit. These are listed in the Appendix.

B.1.2. TV News
B.1.2.1. General profile
Of the 137 countries of the developing world there was no discussion of or reference to 65 of them. A further sixteen were mentioned only in the context of reporting sports events, visits from Westerners, wildlife or bizarre/quixotic stories (such as a round-the-world balloon travelling over them).

Overall, Channel Four News carried many more stories on the developing world than other programmes. Channel Four News and Newsnight were also much more likely to cover stories outside the rather limited and negative coverage of disaster, conflict and western visitors. Newsnight especially had a high proportion of political coverage. Although most of the news was concerned with recent events and tended to be limited to reporting visible activities, some news programmes did make an effort to produce longer and more contextual special reports, giving the background necessary for understanding and sometimes providing positive stories from developing countries.

Other news programmes offered more limited reporting of the developing world. About 80% of Channel Five’s coverage featured conflict, disasters, western visitors and the bizarre. ITN’s lunch-time news was only marginally different with over 75% of its coverage on the same topics. The high level of sport on Channel Five was also noteworthy in the context of the Channel’s generally minimal level of coverage of the developing world. BBC news tended to include less populist coverage than the mainstream ITN bulletins. The BBC’s One O’clock News did however broadcast twice as many disaster stories as the other BBC bulletins, but did not provide contextual reporting of the aftermath of the events (in contrast to the Nine o’clock News), in the period of this sample.

B.1.2.2. Case studies
A number of case studies were selected for detailed analysis. Each was chosen because it was a typical example of the most frequent categories of TV news coverage. The major categories were:

- trade/finance (the banana war)
- politics (Nigerian elections)
- conflict/war/terrorism (killing of tourists in Uganda)
- disasters/accidents (Colombian earthquake)

A Newsnight special on education in Tanzania was also examined, as well as BBC and ITN reports on the long-term effects of, and responses to, Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

THE BANANA WAR
The main focus of the coverage was on potential consequences of the dispute, with most emphasis placed on possible effects on British and European industry, and the potential for damage to the relationship between the two Western trading blocks. The potential for devastation of the economy of several Caribbean countries was given less attention. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was referred to as the arbiter in the dispute, but there was very little discussion of the history or role of this organisation. Only Sky News referred to the possibility of job losses on both sides of the Atlantic. The power of multinational companies was referred to by Channel 4 and both BBC news channels in relation to the role of the American banana company Chiquita. No link was made between the power of the multinationals and their influence in the WTO. Following the initial coverage of the dispute in March 1999, the story was not followed up, though a final decision had not been made by the end of that year.
NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
Channel 5 and ITV broadcast only very brief statements. While BBC1 covered the elections most frequently, BBC2 and Channel 4 provided more in depth coverage of competing interests within the country. BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 included interviews with local people, particularly focusing on those groups like the Ijaws and Ibos who feel they have been marginalised and exploited either by successive military governments and/or by the oil companies. Although Nigeria only obtained independence from Britain in 1960, there was only one reference to the legacy of colonialism in the country. Channel 4 News referred to the imposition of boundaries which cut across the different cultures and traditions of North and South of the country. While the oil company Shell was linked to conflict in the Delta Region, there was little discussion of the interdependence between Nigeria and the interests of the West.

KILLING OF TOURISTS IN UGANDA
The BBC, Sky News and ITN all featured the ‘slaughter’, ‘massacre’ and ‘horror’ of the events. Most news reports provided little in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the attack or related it to developments in central African politics. On most channels, explanations subscribed to the idea that adventure travel is by nature precarious and this was a dangerous area. Although some news reports provided explanations of the events and their historical causes, many of the accounts given were very brief and moved little beyond traditional accounts of Africa, some of which suggested crude views of ‘tribal’ behaviour.

COLOMBIAN EARTHQUAKE
Reports were mostly composed of accounts of destruction which focused on the effects of disaster more than its causes. As such, these descriptions appear more often than any other aspect of the crisis, appearing almost nine times more often than explanation of the situation. Almost half the coverage was subsumed by scenes of destruction. Other main themes were the rescue effort and public disorder. Little of this put into any social or economic context. The relationship of coffee to cocaine is not explored. Many farmers planted coffee instead of cocaine in a bid to stamp out the drugs trade, yet there is no discussion of what will happen if the coffee crop has been destroyed. The focus of television on pictures and extra-ordinary visual moments which illustrate the crisis, has led to a neglect of context and explanation. But if Colombia is to be seen and understood as anything more than a disaster area, then it is important that its people be shown as having a history, politics, economy and everyday life which both pre- and post-date the visual images of an earthquake.

EDUCATION IN TANZANIA
This individual report by the BBC’s Newsnight explored the relationship between development, education and debt cancellation in Tanzania. The report included positive images of the educational achievements of an African country. This included reference to the movement towards almost universal primary education under the former president, Nyerere. It also included footage of the first graduation ceremony of Tanzania’s open university. The report included interviews with local people, politicians and IMF representatives, and combined clear explanation with a sympathetic account of the difficulties facing local people.

HURRICANE MITCH
Hurricane Mitch which hit Central America in October 1998, was one of several environmental disasters to take place in the developing world in the previous year. Unusually for a disaster story, two channels returned to the scene of the disaster to report on progress. The BBC’s Nine o’clock News in February and then ITN in March reported on the progress made by the government and people of Honduras in the attempt to recover from the devastation caused by the hurricane. Both channels included images of children returning to school for the first time in the months since the hurricane. They also included interviews with government ministers in the country, and included the voices of local people who described their experiences. BBC1 broadcast two bulletins on successive nights. The first of these focused on the necessity of debt cancellation for Honduras to have any prospect of full recovery. This was particularly apt given that the hurricane’s devastation of much of Central America had escalated Jubilee 2000’s debt campaign.

B.1.3. Other Television Genres
B.1.3.1. Children’s Television: BBC’s Newsround, Blue Peter and wildlife programmes
On BBC’s Newsround a total of 21 bulletins featured issues in developing countries. These ranged from wildlife conservation in China, Africa and Northern Pakistan to natural disasters in Colombia and the Fiji Islands, aid and development in Latin America and Africa, cultural celebrations in Brazil and conflict in Africa. The key areas of coverage are significantly different from national news programmes geared to adults. Environmental issues predominate with 6
bullets, followed by aid/development projects with 5 bulletins and natural disasters with 4 bulletins. Conflict in Africa and cultural news received proportionately less coverage, receiving only 3 bulletins in each case. Four of the six environmental reports focused on wildlife conservation. These discussed topics as wide ranging as the ‘mission to stop poachers killing tigers’ for Chinese medicine, Orang-utans who are ‘alive and doing well in Singapore zoo’, Himalayan ibexes in Northern Pakistan and the controversial debate over lifting the ban on ivory sales in Africa. Reports on Africa mainly focused on aid and charitable projects organised by first world countries. In the language and visuals of some of these items, Africa is shown as a place of poverty, disease and destitution.

Other Newsround reports on development in Africa encouraged children to participate, showing how they could take the initiative and play an informed part. A report on the Jubilee 2000 campaign used the celebrity status of the appeal to capture the attention of viewers. Rather than representing Africa as simply the passive recipient of western charity, it explained the concept of world debt, and African children were given the opportunity to tell their story of development and what it means to them. Other items offered an alternative view of developing countries. These focused entirely on positive issues (festivals and celebrations). By explaining other cultures, they conveyed cultural diversity. Two of the three programmes focused on the Brazil carnival when a young viewer travelled to Brazil to present the report and interview local performers and participants. Newsround has developed a very positive approach to much of its coverage of the developing world. It has also managed to combine this with relatively clear explanations of complex issues. Some members of our adult audience groups commented on this and said that they found it a useful programme for this reason.

Coverage of developing countries on children’s television, excluding the educational slots, was scarce. There were only four programmes (from the general sample outside Blue Peter) which featured this. These were mostly wildlife shows. One of these did, however, explore some pre-conceptions about Africa amongst children who were visiting.

Blue Peter ran the ‘New Future Mozambique Appeal’ over the period of our sample. This aimed to collect a target of aluminium cans from around the country and donate the funds raised to building and equipping a school in Mozambique. The programme was strong on the issue of collection but offered less in terms of understanding the nature of the country or its people.

This point was made explicitly in the focus group of children who watched Blue Peter.

B.1.3.2. Documentaries, current affairs and news features
SOUTH AFRICA
There were three programmes in the sample which were filmed in South Africa. Each programme had a specific focus, presenting varying images of the country. GMTV visited South Africa in January. It presented very positive imagery of life for white residents of the country and emphasised the appeal of South Africa as a holiday destination or relocation site for British viewers. It included two alternative features on township life and on the escalating crime statistics of the country – though it discussed the effect of crime only in relation to white people.

Two other documentaries – Snapshot and Panorama (‘The Search for Cynthia Mthebe’) focused entirely on township life. White people featured only occasionally, either as aid workers or in one case, to highlight the continuing contrast between black and white lifestyles in the country. The second of these was later identified in the audience groups as having a powerful impact because of its focus on the struggles of everyday life.

ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA
Coverage of the developing world focused on 1) arts and cultural features in India, Africa and Mexico, 2) historical items on China-U.S. relations during the Cold War, Chile under the rule of General Pinochet, the Biafran War 1968, Vietnam and South Africa 1990, 3) current affairs in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Brazil, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, 4) Discovery features on snake hunting in Malaysia and archaeological finds in Egypt.

Three of the four programs in the Arts section focused on artists of Indian origin and their work in post-colonial India. Presented in the first person of the artists themselves, they were often critical of British imperialism. Cultural encounters were also an important theme. Distant Echoes: Yo Yo Ma and the Kalahari Bushmen, focused on the cultural journey which Yo Yo Ma, a Chinese cellist, must undergo in his meeting with the bushmen. The program begins with the artist exploring his own ‘fears’ of other cultures.

Historical documentaries also offered a radically different perspective of the developing world and its relationship with the industrialised West. These were often critical of Western involvement in the politics of these regions and especially of U.S. foreign policy and the Nixon-Kissinger period in diplomatic relations.
Other reports offered a different perspective of developing countries which focused on cultural difference and the ‘unusual’. Correspondent ran a feature on a two-year-old boy thought to be the re-incarnation of the former President, Premidasa in the ‘mystical island of Sri Lanka.’ Lifeline focused on images of underdevelopment, poverty and disease. It featured the charity War on Want in Brazil, and showed how money raised in the past has been used to make a difference. The strength of such documentaries is that they combine key source interviewees with clear explanations and strong visual moments.

Channel 4’s Lagos Stories gave voice to five Nigerians from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. This short series of films resulted in a portrayal which was distinct from most television programmes in our sample. Each individual was allowed to give a personal account of his/her life and hopes without narrative or voice-over.

COMIC RELIEF

Much of the appeal was generated by the humorous build-up to Red Nose Day. BBC1 featured a series of short programmes on cookery, comedy and documentaries, which slowly built momentum towards giving on the day. Comic Relief’s Great Big Excellent African Adventure featured television celebrities journeying across Africa to collect videotaped messages from the locals. The show highlighted the social and economic hardships which affect the continent and showed how money raised by Comic Relief has been used to support local development projects. This interplay of extremes is a key ingredient of fund-raising. The juxtaposition of humour with pathos, glitz with destitution accentuate the contrasts between the developing and developed world in a way that suggests that imbalances in the world economy, political turbulence and conflict can be rectified through the giving of money. A positive focus on negative issues is a key ingredient, with films that report back how the money raised in previous years has made a difference. Some of the audience groups suggested that they would like regular updates on this.

In its presentation of Rwanda, Comic Relief challenged popular images of Africa as a place of ‘people at war’ and ‘war mongers’ by focusing on the lives of ‘ordinary people’, ‘people just like you and me’. This became a key theme, with 14 references to this. The word ‘genocide’ was used in the films, but is not explained or contextualised by reference to the historical or political catalysts of the conflict. There is no easy prescription for how such a desperate story as the genocide in Rwanda could be covered. The difficulty which faced Comic Relief and many other news and documentary filmmakers was how to convey both the enormity of the tragedy and the humanity of the victims without engendering a sense of despair in the audience about the problems of Africa and its future.

The strength of Comic Relief is that it can use comedy and the high profile of its performers to present issues such as the debt crisis to mainstream mass audience. The difficulty is that the need to sustain audience attention through humour means that there are limits to how much a complex issue can be explained. An attendant problem is that the need to summarise and provide shorthand explanations might mean that an issue becomes distorted or unclear and that the audience ends up understanding little more than when the programme started. But the programme did go some way to resolving the ‘explanation’ problem and it was commented on favourably in the audience groups.

COMEDY: THE MARK THOMAS COMEDY PRODUCT

This comedy series began its third series during our recording period. While much of the subject matter concerns domestic issues, the first two programmes focused on the arms industry and its exports to developing countries. Mark Thomas used a combination of practical jokes and current affairs to highlight injustices, or seek out the truth from political and corporate decision-makers. Issues covered in these two programmes were: oppressive regimes which use imported arms to enforce domestic rule, the British arms industry and the British government which he accused of leaving legal loopholes in arms export controls.

HOLIDAY/TRAVEL

This section of the sample formed the largest representation of the developing world on terrestrial television. The 19 holiday shows and two travel/adventure programmes covered a total of 33 features from a range of locations in the developing world. The agenda of most mainstream holiday shows in our sample was dominated by an emphasis on bargain hunting at every stage of the holiday. Local people were usually only referred to as service providers, or in relation to ‘authentic ethnic’ entertainment. There was little information available in most holiday shows on the ethics of tourism, in terms of damage caused to local communities or to the environment or to local livelihoods and culture. Some later programmes outside our sample did explore these issues (notably The Travel Show on BBC2). There were comparatively few
travel/adventure programmes in the sample. These programmes were more likely to offer an alternative agenda, exploring the lives of local people.

WILDLIFE
The programmes provided one-off discussions on a wide range of animals ranging from the foxes of the Kalahari desert to elephants in Tanzania, lions in Namibia, the mountain gorillas of Rwanda, giant pandas in China, leopards in Sri Lanka and tigers in Taiwan. The species most often featured were the primates of Central America, Africa and south-east Asia. These mainly appeared on Channel 5 where they were featured 4 times, compared to once on BBC2. Comparison of primates and humans was a pervasive theme. Champions of the Wild remarked that they focused on primates because ‘the similarities attract people, it is a good way of getting people to be more concerned about conserving them’. Conservation was also a key theme in our sample, with 11 of the 15 programmes focusing on this. Six in particular discussed the threat of habitat destruction where a combination of population pressure and market demand for natural resources in the developing world have pushed humans and animals to compete for land. Africa was the country most often focused on in our sample. In 4 of the programmes, the animals were depicted as being ‘endangered’ by the political turbulence of the continent.

COOKERY
Both holiday and cookery programmes provided viewers with what could be seen as very positive images of the developing world, which could counter the negative images of other programme formats. Rick Stein’s Seafood Odyssey (BBC2) included two journeys to South-East Asia and Ainsley’s Big Cook-out (BBC2) was shot partly in Latin America. These international cookery series tended to resemble the more informative and thoughtful holiday programmes. They were filmed amongst local people, communicating with those connected to the local food industries. They were very positive and the second of the two programmes was effectively a celebration of South American culture, which included comments on the history and, occasionally, ecology of the countries featured.

DISCOVERY CHANNEL
During the week of programmes examined on Discovery Channel, there were ten programmes which featured developing countries, most of which could be categorised as travel/adventure series. They varied in terms of style and content, ranging from the picturesque but less informative to the more adventurous and pioneering series which resembled terrestrial travel/adventure programmes in the range of information offered. Two documentaries stood out in terms of the detailed information offered, placing countries in a global context. The first presented an informative reconstruction and analysis of the events of the 1973 Chilean coup. The second of the documentaries was on the ‘Lost city of Zimbabwe’ which focused on the damage caused by colonialists over the last century and the reasons for their attempts to claim that the city was a Western construction.

B.2. Audience Study
(Glasgow Media Group)
There were two key objectives for the study.
- To identify patterns of understanding and belief and to trace the origin of these.
- To examine how media products work to compel audience attention, to entertain and to create lasting images.

B.2.1. Sample
Focus group methods were used to investigate how media messages about the developing world are received and understood by the public. The groups chosen were ‘naturally occurring’ (i.e. people who knew each other through work, school, friendships or family connections), in order to preserve elements of the social context within which people actually receive media messages. Twenty-six groups were convened in England and Scotland (14 in England, 12 in Scotland) each involving between 6-8 people. There were a total of 165 individuals, aged between 10 and 74. The sample was 56% female and 44% male. These included groups of 15 year-olds, low income, middle class, ethnic minority and retired people.

B.2.2. Method
The audience groups undertook a series of short exercises, in which they either viewed video or constructed their own short programmes, using materials provided. There were five different exercises aimed at looking at different television formats as well as assessing how individuals perceive different parts of the developing world. The 26 focus groups were split into four sets of 5 and one set of six. In each group, members were either shown highlights from a television programme about the developing world or asked to construct their own television item using photographs.
from actual programmes. These photographs were taken from television news items, wildlife, holiday and adventure travel programmes. The images were selected to represent major themes in the specific programmes and also to highlight key issues which we pursued in later discussions. An additional purpose of the exercises was to examine how people interpreted the stories and the sources of information which they used to construct their own items. In other groups the video material (Comic Relief, Shanghai Vice) formed the basis of discussions on these particular programmes. They were chosen because of their innovative content and so that we could examine how this might affect audience responses.

The exercises were then followed by a focused discussion. There were a series of specific questions which were addressed to all of the groups. These included

- What does development mean? What comes to mind when people hear the words developing world/third world?
- Do the audience groups distinguish between disasters in the first world and in the developing world?
- What difference do presenters make?
- Do the audience groups remember any appeals? Which formats and approaches compel attention and entertain?

Respondents also filled in a general biographical questionnaire. The sessions lasted between one and two hours. The discussions were audio-taped and transcribed.

**B.2.3. Results**

**B.2.3.1. Group exercises**

The results of the five exercises were as follows.

**EXERCISE 1: IMAGES OF AFRICA**

Groups were given photographs taken from a TV news story based on the killing of tourists in Uganda. The pictures included a map of Uganda, a newscaster presenting the Uganda story (Edward Stourton), a safari homestead, a military style meeting, as well as other images such as animals in the wild and Africans at a border point in grass skirts. On the basis of these photos, each group wrote a TV news story. Some of these paralleled very closely themes in actual news stories, and group members were able to re-construct both the original story line as well as the style of news reports.

**EXERCISE 2: IMAGES OF THE CARIBBEAN**

The groups were given photographs of the Dominican Republic, taken from a TV news item and a holiday programme. The photographs included images of holiday pursuits such as people relaxing by a pool, hotel complexes, restaurants, children playing and people indulging in water-sports. The groups were also given photographs of damage caused by the hurricane (flooded homes, collapsed bridges) to see how respondents might use these very different images of the region. In practice, the stories produced by the audience groups highlighted the twin themes of consumption and destruction/devastation which were shown to be key themes in mainstream TV output.

**EXERCISE 3: IMAGES OF LATIN AMERICA/ASIA**

For this exercise each group was divided into two sub-groups of three people each. One of these reconstructed a natural history programme and the other a travel/adventure style programme. They were given appropriate photographs from TV programming. The travel/adventure photographs were from Latin America, specifically from a Rough Guide programme on Bolivia. The photographs used included a map of Bolivia, different landscapes, tourists shopping in markets and travelling, local people working in mines, local musical entertainment and night-life in La Paz and billboards showing Che Guevera. Some groups used the images to make critical points on economic disparities within developing countries, but most groups lacked detailed knowledge.

The photographs from natural history were taken from a programme on the Indian sub-continent, Land of the Tiger. They included images of animals in their natural environment, local village scenes of people working and also images of humans interacting with both domestic and wild animals. The natural history/wildlife stories constructed by the groups mostly focused on the damage to natural habitats and to animals by humans. Wildlife programmes were generally liked by the majority of the respondents. There was a feeling within most of the groups that wildlife programmes were well made and informative. This type of programme was seen as offering a positive image of the developing world. Respondents also stated that they would like to see more programmes such as Land of the Tiger, showing interactions between animals and humans.
EXERCISE 4: COMIC RELIEF
Groups were shown sections of the Comic Relief programmes from 1999. They then discussed the material in relation to possible changes in attitudes or beliefs. Some of the respondents enjoyed the programmes, particularly the younger groups. The respondents who watched most were the 15 year-olds and a group of 26-30 year-olds. These groups had been involved in Comic Relief at some level – the children within the school context and the 26-30 year-olds all had given money (via credit cards) on the night the main show was on.

The formats which held attention and entertained people differed between age groups. Those who did not watch stated that they did not like the telethon format: it was ‘too long’, and more specifically, they did not accept the programmes way of attempting to make them give money. Some respondents said that they disliked the way the programme made them feel guilty in order to extract money from them. Others said that they could not watch because it made them feel too sad. Presenters were seen as an important element of the Comic Relief programme. Some were seen as being successful in the role while others seemed less credible. It was clear from the groups that the most successful presenters were those who were seen as being ‘credible’, who were perceived to be taking the causes they were highlighting seriously.

EXERCISE 5: IMAGES OF CHINA
This exercise involved showing each group three separate pieces of video which offered very different images. The first was a news item showing the student demonstrations following the bombing of the Chinese Embassy by Nato. The second extract was from Shanghai Vice and shows a group of Chinese people who go ballroom dancing and sing western songs. The third extract was also from Shanghai Vice and showed the impact of an earthquake on a local community.

The 15 year-old group had no interest in the programme and claimed that they would not watch this type of programme on television. They had little comprehension of China at any level. Having been shown a section of film reporting on rioting they could not give any clear explanations as to why it was happening. The ten year-olds were, however, very interested in the references to drugs in China. There were differences between those respondents who saw China as a ‘poor’ country and those who viewed it as being highly industrial. The ten year-olds saw it as a ‘rich’ country because that was where their toys came from. It was easier for the respondents to discuss China in relation to fictional programmes or films they had seen (rather than factual news or documentaries).

The Chinese group differed sharply from the rest. They thought that many of the images shown of China were perhaps dated, and did not consider British television images of the country to be conducive to understanding. This latter view was perhaps reinforced by the fact that none of the other groups in this section could discuss China, its problems or potential solutions to them. The Chinese group did, however, have a very high opinion of Shanghai Vice because of its representation of ‘everyday life’. This programme had also appealed to some participants in other groups who had been surprised and interested by its content.

B.2.3.2. Group discussions
IMAGES OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD
The developing world was perceived very negatively in almost all of the groups. Most of the respondents used words like ‘poverty’, ‘famine’, ‘drought’, ‘wars’ and ‘disasters’ in relation to the third world and began initially to speak about Africa. Most people said that their impressions came from the media (though school children said libraries and school were more relevant to them). Some referred to familiar images of corrupt governments, and the idea that nothing ever changes in such countries. In some groups there was criticism of what was seen as the constant flow of negative images from television.

A small number of people had been in developing world countries either on holiday, to live or work for extended periods of time. There were variations in the attitudes of those who had experienced different cultures first hand. Those who had been on holiday (independent holidays as opposed to a package holiday) had a desire to ‘experience’ different cultures and had watched relevant programmes and read about the countries they were planning to visit. Only those respondents with an active interest in international development could spontaneously discuss issues around world economies, debt and both international and ecological/environmental politics.

LACK OF EXPLANATION, AND THE ‘HALF WAY THROUGH’ PROBLEM
Television and other media were a strong source of beliefs and impressions about the developing world but it was also clear that there was a very low level of understanding in this area. It is significant that group members themselves realised this and frequently commented upon it. The strength of television news was
its immediacy but its weakness could be that it is superficial. Television in general was not seen as offering enough insights into the outside world. While described as a ‘window on the world’ there was agreement within most of the groups that in-depth contextualisation of situations did not really exist. Respondents said that television coverage enhanced notions which they held about certain problems being ‘too far away’ to be concerned about. Another criticism was that the focus by the media on disasters in the developing world led to a constant flow of images in which one catastrophe followed another, but without any sense of what had happened before or after each one. There was a desire to have stories followed up.

A number of respondents referred to the usefulness of Newsround as a way of getting simple background information on issues. This programme was seen as offering the viewer an explanation that did not assume background knowledge of an issue. The ‘5 points’ bullet system of C5 News was also commented on favourably. There was much discussion in the groups about why television news offered very limited explanations about events in the developing world. The short length of some bulletins was pointed to as a possible issue and these were compared with the longer and more in-depth coverage of programmes such as Channel 4 News and Newsnight. These programmes are however shown at relative marginal times in the television schedule and only a minority of people watched them.

Some in the groups commented on the strong focus in news programmes on stories from Britain and America, which lead to viewers not getting a ‘proper’ look at the world. Some of the groups also identified what might be termed the ‘half-way through problem’: when journalists covering a long running story tend to assume that their audience has watched the full sequence of reports, and so they do not need to repeat background issues mentioned in earlier reports. But in practice audiences come into stories at different points in the sequence, and may have difficulty following the next series of reports. Questions were also raised in the group discussions about the understanding of major institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which are frequently referred to in news bulletins. We found that there was almost no knowledge at all about what these institutions were or how they operated.

DEBT RELIEF
In the initial groups none of the respondents knew anything about the campaign to cancel debt in developing countries, and claimed to have seen nothing about it on television. In later groups this changed as a number of programmes and news items appeared which could then be discussed. On the whole the attitude of all the respondents was that they really did not understand what the issue was about, but they agreed that writing off debt was a good idea. There was very little discussion about the underlying causes of the debt problem, indicating a lack of knowledge of the issues involved and of the basis of international economics.

It was also felt in the groups that there needed to be more discussion (particularly within varied media formats) of the implications of writing off debt. This raises very important questions about how the current debate on debt relief is reported. For example, on BBC 1 recently it was reported that ‘cancelling the debt will cost British tax payers £640 million over 20 years’. (BBC1 1800, 21/12/99). To a great many people with little knowledge of how the national economy or international finance works this may sound like a significant personal cost. But another way of expressing this amount might have been that it will cost each person in Britain around 50 pence per year for the next 20 years: not a great deal of money when spread over a long time period.

DOCUMENTARIES
The majority of respondents believed that documentaries could be both informative and interesting but that there were not many of these programmes. Dislike of documentaries centred on how ‘dry’ or ‘boring’ their presentation was, and discussion centred on how formats could be altered to make programmes more watchable. Some suggestions were offered such as mixing political situations with the reality of that situation for ‘normal’ people.

HOLIDAY/TRAVEL, WILDLIFE AND COOKERY
Respondents commented that mainstream holiday programmes focused on holiday complexes and safaris, selling a ‘sanitised’ version of reality where you could actually be almost anywhere in the world. Some respondents did find appeal in travel programmes which were perceived as offering a more realistic notion of what countries were like. These types of programmes were seen to be informative because they offered insights into both the cultural and political backgrounds of countries visited.

Most respondents liked wildlife programmes, and there was a positive response to programmes which show how the animals and humans impact one another, and which feature local human communities.
Cookery programmes seemed to bring out the most positive responses about the developing world. Respondents who watched these particularly liked to see the food of different cultures. Some suggested that this was probably the only time they saw ‘good’ images, presenting countries in a positive light. They also felt that this format could be used to offer more information on cultural or political aspects of a country. It was also mentioned that this genre was the only one apart from holiday/travel programmes which covers regions like the Caribbean or Latin America.

B.2.3.3. Variations between groups
The purpose of the group work was to examine processes of interpretation and understanding in television audiences. The sample size is not large enough to make quantitative generalisations. However, there were some variations in the responses of the groups which it is useful to note.

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS
The 15 year-olds were with few exceptions not interested in the developing world. Their negative responses seemed to be influenced by their forced participation in charity events about which they had little understanding. They did not typically watch news or documentary programming on developing countries, other than wildlife. They were however attracted to comedy programmes and specifically to Comic Relief.

The 10 year-olds showed more interest, and used Blue Peter as a source of information. Some wanted more information on countries which were featured, particularly in areas with which they could identify.

Amongst the other groups there were relatively low levels of interest in development issues, with the exception of a middle class group aged 20-30 years and the ethnic minority groups. In all of the groups, perceptions of the developing world drawn from the media were predominantly negative. Individual exceptions occurred where people had direct experience of specific countries.

INCOME
There were some differences between groups on the basis of income levels. Respondents on lower incomes had a problem with charitable giving to the developing world. It was commonly stated amongst these groups that they were being made to feel ‘guilty’ in order to give money. They argued that they did not have much to give, and that it would be more appropriate to collect money to sort out problems in Britain itself before helping the rest of the world. This is not to say that these respondents did not give to charity, but they did see problems with the way organisations attempted to compel their attention and concern.

In most of these groups the lack of understanding and inability to discuss a particular country or perceived problem in detail meant that they could only discuss the developing world in relation to whether they could or should give aid and what offering help meant to them.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
The groups were carried out in Glasgow, London and Bath. There were small north/south differences in attitudes, particularly in relation to the role of government in relation to dealing with the developing world. In Scotland there was more criticism of governments as being responsible for world problems. This reflects existing knowledge of differences in political belief between the north and south.

ETHNIC ORIGIN
Ethnic minority groups were the only ones, apart from the 15 year-olds, who discussed issues of racism in relation to television TV programmes. While other groups said that the news, for example, highlighted negative images of countries, those groups containing ethnic minorities claimed that this was because of innate racism.

There was a good deal of discussion about whether there could be positive programming about development which gave context to particular issues. The major problem expressed was that programmes were always going to be made from a western point of view. This was particularly the case in relation to political unrest. Respondents in the ethnic minority groups said that when they saw or heard something about their country of origin, they immediately thought, ‘What’s really going on? We’re not getting the real picture here’ (Afro-Caribbean, London) and would go in search of alternative sources of information to ‘fill in the gaps’. What came across most clearly in these groups was that they wanted the television audience to be told why things were happening and to be given more detailed and ‘honest’ explanations.

B.2.4. Conclusions
Responses to media coverage of development issues ranged from people who were literally switched off from the subject, to those who expressed a very active interest and concern. In general about one quarter of our sample stated that they had no interest at all in development issues. About 10% claimed to have an active interest.
There was much discussion in the groups about how television coverage of development issues might be improved to make it more interesting as well as more informative. Suggestions included:

- The populations of the developing world should be seen to have a more active role in stories. They should speak more (preferably in English) and should be seen to be actively helping themselves. Some group members who had already seen stories on these lines gave a very positive response to them.
- While the ‘exotic’ and ‘strange’ could obviously attract attention, the everyday lives of people in the developing world should also be shown. The 10 year-olds in the sample wanted to know what a school playground was like in Africa, while adults were interested in how parents dealt with problems such as drugs.
- The follow-up of disaster stories, to show what happens afterwards. This might include the process of rebuilding and reconstruction. In the absence of such coverage people were left with a view of the developing world as not much more than a series of catastrophes. As one group member put it, the sense of it happening so often, without any follow-up leads to viewers being desensitised.

It seemed clear that to produce lasting images which ‘worked’ with viewers, the issues needed to be clearly understood, and viewers needed to be able to identify with subjects. If viewers can identify with people in the developing world in their ordinary everyday lives, it may be easier to relate to them in times of disaster, when they are more usually featured. But identification is not enough without context and explanation. If the problems of the developing world are seen as having political and economic causes, then it can be understood that new policies and new approaches may improve the situation. But without such understanding, the developing world is likely to be seen as a suitable area for our sympathy but still a hopeless and inexplicable mess.

B.3. Production Study (3WE)

British television has traditionally sought to provide its audience with a window on the world, through a combination of entertainment, information and education. But in a highly competitive, multi-channel age, television output is increasingly geared to domestic, audience-pulling entertainment.

This study investigates the ‘window’ presented by television on the least developed nations of the world, as perceived by 43 influential decision-makers within the television industry. It seeks to ascertain how programming that represents this area to the British viewing public fares in the current climate.

Topics examined include general programming trends, commissioning criteria, television’s representation of the developing world, and the factors that work against or in favour of this area of programming.

The findings point to a dilemma. All participants believe television has a role to play in informing people about the developing world, and almost all feel this should be played out on mainstream television channels. Yet most doubt the public want to watch programmes about the developing world, so it has been marked out as an area of risk.

However, the interviews also reveal untapped possibilities. Programme commissioners are looking to programme-makers for fresh inspiration in this area: programmes should be unpredictable, engaging and timely. Programme-makers are looking for greater openness and encouragement from the commissioners. Both think television should portray the wider world, and propose ways to turn this ideal into compelling viewing.
Content and Audience Studies (Glasgow Media Group)
C.1. Television News Profiles

C.1.1. Sample and Method
Television news has the biggest audience of any programme type which routinely covers the developing world. It is the main source of information about many developing countries for the bulk of the British population. Because the developing world features relatively frequently on TV news it was decided to establish some sense of the pattern of distribution across the major channels over a significant period of time. The period chosen was the first three months of 1999 (1 January to 31 March). Although there are likely to be variations in news which relate to seasonal fluctuations in climate or in the political cycle, three months does give a reasonable period from which to generalise.

The sample included the lunch time, early evening and main evening bulletins on BBC1 (The One O’clock News, The Six O’clock News, The Nine O’clock News) and ITV (Lunch Time News, News at 5.40 and News at Ten), Channel Four News, BBC2’s Newsnight and the two main bulletins on Channel 5. Other areas of programme output examined included cable and satellite broadcasting in March 1999. The results of this are included in the detailed analysis of individual news stories and in the studies of other genres such as travel and cookery which follow this section on news profiles.

For the purposes of this sample, the developing world was defined as all those countries outside of Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand and the countries of Eastern Europe formerly within the Soviet ambit. This amounted to 137 countries. An alphabetical list of these countries can be found in the Appendix: Countries of the developing world.

This account was compiled by making use of the computerised archives of both the BBC and ITN. The BBC archive is available commercially and the ITN archive is available on the Internet (www.ITNarchive.com). These are the archives which the respective companies use to index all their news output for commercial sale. This indicates that they are relatively reliable, but it doesn’t guarantee that absolutely everything which is broadcast is properly catalogued or retrievable. Nevertheless it does give a reasonably good data-set from which to produce an account of overall trends in coverage.

Both archives were searched under the names of all the countries in the sample together with conducting a number of secondary searches. These included firstly, searches on the names of regions or of groups of countries such as East Timor or the Windward Islands and secondly a number of searches on stories known to have been reported which at least partly related to developing countries, but which may not have mentioned or been filmed in developing countries. These included general stories on debt relief, land-mines, the arms industry, international trade as well as searches for all stories on round-the-world balloon trips and the like, some of which featured reporting from developing countries.

The analysis had two key dimensions:

- Which countries and which issues and types of events were covered. In the first case each country was noted even where more than one country appeared in one news item. For example, reports on the war in Sierra Leone also featured reports from or on the role of Nigeria and Liberia in the conflict.
- In the second part of the analysis, by contrast, each item was counted only once. The news was divided according to the type of events which were covered and which were the main angle of the story. The main angle of the story was determined in relation to the headline and the bulk of the report. Where there was more than one report on the same country, but on differing issues, these were counted separately. In addition where the same issue was covered in more than one report in the same bulletin but each was filmed in different countries (such as a visit by a Western politician to more than one country in one day) this was also counted separately.

C.1.2. Results
Of the 137 countries of the developing world there was no discussion or report from 65 of these (See Figure 1). A further sixteen countries were mentioned or reported on only in the context of participation in and hosting of sporting events, the visits of westerners to those countries or stories about animals or the bizarre (See Figure 2). For example the only coverage of Kuwait and the Seychelles was when Tony Blair visited; the only coverage of Uruguay was the visit of Prince Charles and the rescue of a British traveller was the only story from Papua New Guinea. Mauritania, Western Sahara and Sudan featured only because a hot air balloon travelled over these countries as part of a round-the-world-flight. Similarly, the only coverage of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Trinidad and Tobago was their participation in sporting
events. Jamaica featured only in sports coverage and as the destination of British tourists who were thrown off a plane in New York. There was more significant coverage of the remaining 56 (see Figure 3).

**Figure 1: Countries not covered on British network news (1 January–31 March 1999)**

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### Figure 2: Countries only covered on news about sport, western visitors, animals or the bizarre on British network news (1 January–31 March 1999)

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<th>Countries featured on the news (January–March 1999)</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Middle East</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>South/Central American/Caribbean</th>
<th>Pacific rim</th>
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<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Costa Rica</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
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<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>St Lucia</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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Comparing Figures 1, 2 and 3 shows the structure of attention devoted to the countries of the developing world. A majority of countries in the Middle East and in Asia did receive some attention on the news. The bigger countries of the Pacific rim were also covered. It is noticeable, that with the exception of Singapore all the rapidly developing south-east Asian ‘tiger economies’ were featured whereas poorer and less developed countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, Laos, Mongolia, Bhutan and Nepal were not. A roughly even number of countries in South/Central America and the Caribbean received some coverage as received none, with a further five featuring only in relation to sport, western visitors or animals. By contrast the African continent received proportionately much less coverage than the other areas. Less than half the 52 African states/territories received any coverage at all on the news in our sample. Many of the poorest and least developed countries in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and across central sub-Saharan Africa were simply not mentioned on the news (including Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal).

The countries which received the most coverage in the period were either those in which long running crises/stories occurred during the period of our sample or in those which British television companies have a significant journalistic presence. Thus in the first case there was extensive coverage of the civil war in Sierra Leone, the kidnapping and killing of tourists in Uganda, earthquake in Colombia, hostages and the arrest of Britons in Yemen and the bombing of Iraq. Secondly, there were a small number of countries which were featured on five or more occasions in relation to different stories. These can be seen in Figure 4. It can be noted that those countries featured most often are South Africa, India and Israel, where British television networks have major offices. Overall, the structure of attention of British TV news is skewed towards the richer and more economically powerful countries, but with some important exceptions which relate most noticeably to political conflict and natural disasters as we shall see in more detail in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries featured on five or more occasions</th>
<th>No. of stories</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Rep of the Congo</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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C.1.3. Types of Coverage

Of the 72 countries which were mentioned or shown on the news there were a variety of types of coverage. For most of the 72 there were fleeting appearances on one or two topics. But some countries did receive extended coverage. The types of events or occasions which resulted in extended coverage tended to be confined to a fairly limited repertoire. The main types of news were sport, conflict/war/terrorism, natural disasters/accidents, politics and the visits of westerners to developing countries. These accounted for more than eighty percent of coverage on both BBC and ITN (ITV, C4 and C5) news programmes. The number of items on each topic/category are given in Figure 5 for ITN and Figure 6 for the BBC.
C.1.3.1. War, conflict and terrorism

The biggest category of news story broadcast by both news providers was war, conflict and terrorism which accounted for 32% of coverage on ITN and 44% on the BBC. In fact it was the largest category on all news programmes except those on Channel Five where it took second place to sport. The stories ranged from running stories to single reports, with the longest running stories in our sample being the killing of British tourists in Uganda by Rwandan Hutu rebels, the civil war in Sierra Leone, the Western bombing of Iraq and the killings of tourists (and the arrest of British citizens on related charges) in Yemen. Stories which were covered only fleetingly on a single day or over a couple of days included conflict in Israel (and Israeli occupied territory), South Africa, Turkey, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan.

C.1.3.2. Sport

The next biggest category overall was sport. Included here were cricket, golf and football events held in developing countries or featuring developing country teams. The amount of sport coverage varied markedly between bulletins. Channel Five far outstripped the other bulletins with more sports coverage on its two bulletins than all the other channels put together. Almost 33% of Channel Five coverage of the developing world was sport. By contrast BBC news covered it comparatively rarely. Almost without exception stories on sport featured very little information about developing countries. Where there was such information, such as in items about the politics of sport, this was counted in other categories. For example Channel Four News reported on the politics of the first India/Pakistan test match for ten years (28 January 1999) and this was classified as a political story.
The third largest category overall was news which featured western visitors to developing countries as the only or predominant reason for coverage. There was a wide variety of such coverage which featured western celebrities, politicians and other leaders, travellers and members of the public. For example there was footage of Barbados and the Bahamas in relation to a story about Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall and the main reason for covering the Brazilian carnival seemed to be the shots of Jagger’s lover dancing in a parade. As Channel Five News reported:

*Thousands of people packed Rio for carnival, in what’s become the world’s best known street party. Some of the faces become better known than others. Luciana Gimenez Mora, the model supposedly seven months pregnant with Mick Jagger’s baby, was seen dancing in an outfit that leaves very little to the imagination* (16 February 1999).

Thailand got on the news because actor Leonardo Di Caprio was shooting a film there. There was coverage of South Africa, Kuwait and the Seychelles because Tony Blair visited and Prince Charles’ visit was the occasion for coverage of Uruguay and Argentina. Mexico was reported when the Pope visited.

Travellers were also the subject of news reports. The most significant stories were the two contending attempts to fly around the world in a hot air balloon. Reporting of these resulted in (very brief) coverage of the Western Sahara, Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, China, Taiwan and Mexico. French Guyana also featured as the site of the launch of the European Ariane 4 rocket.

As for members of the public, there was coverage on ITN of the Bahamas when a couple from the TV programme *Blind Date* got married and there was brief coverage of Jamaica which was the destination of some British tourists who were thrown off a flight in the US before they even got there.

Such coverage tells British audiences little about developing countries. It uses film of developing countries as an incidental backdrop to the activities of...
westerners and is the news equivalent of some of the travel and nature programmes we review elsewhere in this report. Coverage of the visits of political leaders like Tony Blair are more likely to feature some information on the country visited, but even here the rationale for the story tends to rule out significant coverage. In any case where there were separate items on these countries at the same time as the visit, these items were included in a more appropriate category. As can be seen from Figures 5 and 6, these types of story also varied widely across the bulletins. It is noteworthy that stories of this nature were comparatively rare on BBC news programmes (making up 10% of coverage), featuring half as much as political news stories. By contrast they were noticeably more common on ITN’s bulletins for ITV (making up 17% of ITN coverage) especially in relation to the coverage of the balloon trips.

C.1.3.4. Politics
Politics was the next most numerous category of news story, with a variety of stories rather than a small number of running stories. The largest number of items on politics in absolute terms was on Channel Four News (47 items). Channel 4 had almost four times as much coverage of politics as its nearest rival (News at Ten) and more than 11 times as much as Channel Five’s main evening bulletin. Nearly a quarter of all Channel 4 items on the developing world were on politics. The largest proportion of coverage on politics was found on Newsnight, where just under a third of all Newsnight coverage was on politics. By contrast the level of coverage of politics on ITN bulletins was much lower (6%, 8%, 10%, 5.5% and 4.5% on the Lunch Time News, Early Evening News, News at Ten, Channel Five lunch time and Channel Five’s main bulletins respectively)

C.1.3.5. Disasters/accidents
These were relatively minor elements of the news in the sample period. There were a variety of stories reported for one or two days with only a small number gaining more sustained coverage. The most extensive was an earthquake in Colombia which was featured on seven consecutive days (25-31 January 1999). It is noteworthy that almost all of these reports featured the immediate aftermath of the disaster or accident. It was exceptional to find reporting taking a longer term perspective and examples of this are discussed in more detail below.

C.1.3.6. Human rights
The next largest category was that of human rights. This was atypical in that almost all of the coverage featured the Chilean former dictator General Augusto Pinochet, whose attempts to avoid extradition to Spain from the UK were extensively reported especially on Channel Four News.

C.1.3.7. Finance/trade
Finance and trade were the next biggest items featuring a small number of stories which touched on the global or regional issues affecting developing economies. It is noteworthy that the global economic order is very rarely discussed on TV news and so we examined the only major running story on this in our sample on the dispute before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) over bananas.

C.1.3.8. Other categories
The rest of the news consisted of a variety of other topics and subjects. Amongst these were a number of stories about animals and some which could only be described as bizarre. The stories on animals included four items on conservation (three on the BBC and one on Channel Five). The bizarre stories featured on both Channel Five and the ITN lunchtime bulletin. These included the arrest of an alleged cannibal in Venezuela (Channel Five News), an attempted endurance record for staying in a chamber with poisonous snakes in Malaysia (ITN lunchtime news), the ‘discovery’ of the world’s oldest woman in Kenya (Channel Five News) and a televised suicide attempt made by a prisoner in a Colombian jail (Channel Five News).

The rest of the news which supplied a variety of images, discussion and context on the developing world consisted of less than 10% of news on both BBC and ITN overall. Included here was reporting on the internal affairs of developing countries (history, health, education, crime, peace negotiations, culture, agriculture and religion) as well as reporting about wider issues and about relations between the developed and developing worlds (such as debt, aid, the arms industry, landmine clearance, trade, international finance, tourism). Channel 4 broadcast the most reports on peace negotiations in countries as diverse as Colombia, Afghanistan and Indonesia. Channel Four also had the most reports on crime in developing countries as well as more on debt, and trade and finance than other ITN news programmes. The BBC’s Newsnight had more items on the history of developing nations than other channels.

C.1.4. Conclusions
Overall, Channel 4 News carried many more stories on the developing world than other programmes. Channel 4
and Newsnight were also much more likely to cover stories outside the rather limited and negative coverage of disaster, conflict and western visitors. Newsnight especially had a high proportion of political coverage. Although most of the news was concerned with recent events and tended to be limited to reporting visible activities, some news programmes did make an effort to produce longer and more contextual special reports giving the background necessary for understanding and sometimes providing positive stories from developing countries. Key examples in our sample were Newsnight’s special report on Education in Tanzania, or Channel Four’s extended report on immigration from Africa into special report on Education in Tanzania, or Channel Four’s extended report on immigration from Africa into Europe. In addition there were three reports produced by News at Ten and the BBC’s Nine o’clock News which looked at the impact of Hurricane Mitch on Central America four months after the disaster had happened.

By contrast the other news programmes offered a more limited reporting of the developing world. About 80% of Channel Five’s coverage featured sport, conflict, disasters, western visitors and the bizarre. ITN’s lunchtime news was only marginally different with over 75% of its coverage on the same topics. The high level of sport on Channel Five was also noteworthy in the context of the Channel’s generally minimal level of coverage of the developing world. BBC news tended to include less populist coverage than the mainstream ITN bulletins. There were no bizarre stories on the BBC in our sample and nor did the BBC cover any stories simply on the basis that celebrities happened to be in developing countries. The BBC lunchtime news did however broadcast twice as many disaster stories as the other BBC bulletins, and did not provide any contextual reporting of the aftermath of the events (in contrast to the Nine o’clock News).

The analysis of three months’ coverage allowed for the selection of a number of case studies for detailed analysis. These were typical examples of the most frequent categories of TV news coverage of events occurring in the developing world. In the event the major categories (and the case studies chosen) were: trade/finance (banana wars), politics (Nigerian elections), conflict/war/terrorism (tourist killings in Uganda), and disasters/accidents (Colombian earthquake). Some other items were also examined in depth since they showed a notably differing type of reporting to that found on routine news coverage. These included a Newsnight special on education in Tanzania, and BBC and ITN reports on the long terms effects of and responses to Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

C.2. Television News Case Studies

C.2.1. The Banana War

This section examines television news coverage of the trade dispute between the United States and the European Union over bananas. The central period of news coverage of the ‘banana war’ took place during the first week of March, 1999. On 4th March, the United States announced that they were imposing 100% tariffs on a range of European exports. The issue at the heart of the conflict was access to the European market for bananas. The US complained that the European banana importation system disadvantaged US companies by setting quotas for bananas from African, Pacific and Caribbean – ACP countries, which are mainly former colonies. The Windward Islands (Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada) were viewed as particularly vulnerable. The EU argued under the Lomé agreement, that it was entitled to help ACP countries, who were heavily dependent on their banana trade. The main coverage of the banana dispute took place over the next few days.

TV News reporting during this period focused primarily on the potential consequences of the banana dispute. Much of the discussion concerned the threat to British industry and jobs, as well the potentially devastating effects on Caribbean countries dependent on the banana trade. Other consequences considered were the possibility of the banana dispute leading to a trade war between the US and the EU, and also to the potential for disruption to the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the US. The second most reported section of the news coverage concerned responses to the American imposition of tariffs, and developments arising from this. In other words, the news coverage followed the flurry of diplomatic activity surrounding the dispute. There were some references to the history of this particular dispute within the World Trade Organisation, and to the importance of its outcome for pending and future trade disagreements. However, there was no explanation on television news of the history or role of the World Trade Organisation itself, the key decision making body involved in the crisis.

C.2.1.1. Background

In the wake of the second world war, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was set up to promote free trade between nations. From its inception in 1947, GATT held eight rounds of talks, with the aim and effect of gradually opening world markets. It was agreed at the Uruguay round, in 1994, to set up the World Trade Organisation. Established on 1 January
1995, the World Trade Organisation is based in Geneva. As of 10 February 1999, it had a membership of 134 countries. The WTO’s website describes its functions in brief (http://www.wto.org/wto/about/about.htm):

- Administering WTO trade agreements
- Forum for trade negotiations
- Handling trade disputes
- Monitoring national trade policies
- Technical assistance and training for developing countries
- Co-operation with other international organisations

One important difference between GATT and the WTO was highlighted in The Guardian by Charlotte Denny:

Unlike GATT, the WTO has power and clout. While a GATT ruling could be overturned by a single member dissenting – so effectively any country that lost a GATT case could veto the decision – it takes unanimity to reverse a WTO ruling. (Charlotte Denny, The Guardian, 1.5.99, p24)

With regard to the banana dispute, the US had complained at GATT talks, and subsequently made complaints to the WTO over a period of six years, each time winning concessions in favour of US banana companies. The WTO ruled in September 1997 that certain aspects of the EU regime were inconsistent with WTO rules. More recently, on 1.1.99 the EU adopted an amended regime, designed to conform with the WTO ruling. On 3.3.99 the WTO delayed the publication of a ruling which would have allowed the Americans to impose sanctions. Although a decision was to be made at the next scheduled meeting, the US took the unilateral decision to go ahead and impose sanctions anyway. Within weeks the WTO granted authority for the US to impose $200 million of trade sanctions against European exporters. The aim here is to assess the quantity and quality of explanation available to the viewer on television news coverage of this dispute.

C.2.1.2. Sample and Method

The main coverage of this dispute took place between 4 and 8 March, 1999. Television news bulletins from each of the five terrestrial channels covered the story to varying extents. For this study, the 18.00 Sky News bulletins were included. In addition, two earlier bulletins on the emerging banana dispute were examined, broadcast by Channel 4 News from January 1999. In total the content of 30 news bulletins was analysed. Seven of these bulletins were brief, containing not more than a few sentences. However, most of the reporting included some further discussion of the causes and implications of the trade dispute.

The method employed in these detailed content studies is called Thematic Analysis. It consists of a detailed examination of the language and visuals of news reports. The purpose is to examine how key themes emerge in TV news reporting and how they are used to structure and develop stories. In practice the news text is broken down into separate references (phrases or sentences) which relate to the range of themes which are covered in the story. A numerical account of these is also given, which allows some judgements to be made about the dominance of specific themes. For this study explanatory and contextualising references have been identified in order to assess how much of the content might assist audiences in understanding development issues. For purposes of comparison, ‘explanatory accounts’ have also been identified in other areas of news output such as newspapers or web-sites.

C.2.1.3. Results

Figure 1 indicates how the references in the sample were categorised, starting with initial statements about the fact that the US had decided to impose sanctions on Europe because of a dispute over bananas. The remaining categories are based on the type of statements which were typically made on the news, and follow the pattern of the longer news bulletins. This table helps illustrate where the bulk of the coverage was concentrated, and each theme listed will be discussed in turn.

Figure 2 indicates the origin of interviewees shown during the period of coverage. Whereas most channels broadcast more statements from UK or EU than US representatives, BBC1 interviewed 9 from each trading block. Almost all of the 22 statements from the US were governmental. The only individual business represented was a US shop owner who was concerned about the implications of price rises in pecorino cheese. Unlike the Caribbean and UK, who had trade spokespersons putting the case for their industries, there was no such representative from the American multinationals involved in the dispute.
Figure 1: Number of references made to the crisis

References to the Crisis

- Trade/banana dispute/war between the US and the EU: 124 references
- US accuses EU of favouring ACP bananas – wants quota system lifted: 32 references
- US has calculated losses incurred and imposed sanctions accordingly: 60 references

Responses and developments

- EU/UK says this unilateral action is unacceptable: 20 references
- US ambassador summoned to the Foreign Office twice in 24 hours: 27 references
- Diplomatic activity continuing: 34 references
- Environmentalists protest in Edinburgh, urging boycott of US bananas: 3 references
- UK government to offer support to affected British companies: 7 references
- Madeleine Albright flies to UK for discussions with Robin Cook: 46 references
- WTO emergency summit: 12 references
- US minimisation of dispute: 11 references

Potential consequences

- Could damage British industry, leading to job losses: 59 references
- Could damage fragile Windward Isles economies - increase drug production: 39 references
- Could damage relations between EU and US – leading to a trade war: 57 references
- Could damage special relationship between the UK and the US: 18 references
- Could cause job losses in the US: 5 references

References to the WTO

- References to the UK breaking WTO rules: 34 references
- References to the US breaking WTO rules: 26 references
- History of the dispute: 34 references
- US questions stability/integrity of WTO: 10 references
- WTO was set up to protect small countries/monitor fair trade: 2 references

The Two Bananas

- Caribbean bananas produced by small family run farms – need support: 22 references
- US bananas grown on large Latin American plantations: 10 references
- Statements about the considerable power of US banana companies: 47 references
- US does not produce bananas itself: 8 references
- Neither UK nor US produces bananas: 2 references
- Caribbean bananas are more costly: 3 references
- US companies already supply most of the EU banana imports: 2 references

Figure 2: Origin of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Number of bulletins</th>
<th>Interviewees Caribbean business/govt.</th>
<th>UK/EU business/govt.</th>
<th>US government</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Most of the interviews broadcast only involved very brief statements. Only eight longer interviews – consisting of more than a few sentences – took place, usually in the news studio. The lengthiest of these was a Newsnight interview with Jerry Ziegler of the US Trade Representative Office. The only Caribbean trade representative to be interviewed at length, Sir Shridaith Rhamphai was brought in to join the discussion at the end of Ziegler’s interview. Channel 4 conducted four of the longer interviews in the sample, two of which involved British politicians and a third with a British political commentator. Channel 4’s fourth interviewee was also interviewed by Sky News and BBC1, the US ambassador in London, Philip Lader. Lader was the most quoted participant in the banana dispute, with a total of 13 television appearances.

C.2.1.4. References to the crisis
There were three types of statement in this section, which involved a total of 125 references to the emerging crisis. There were 32 references to a clash between the US and the EU – variously described as a trade/banana dispute/war:

Reporter: And this is what the row is all about... today they sparked the most serious trade dispute between the EU and US for a decade. (BBC1: 1800, 4.3.99)

Reporter: It all started as a fall-out over bananas. (Sky News: 1800, 4.3.99)

Newscaster: Well, this has to be the biggest banana split yet. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

Newscaster: Neither side in the banana trade war was giving any ground today. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

Secondly, there were 32 references in total to the European banana quota system, around which the dispute centred. By waiving import tariffs, the European system ensured that a percentage of its banana imports originated from former ACP colonies, most specifically the Caribbean Windward Isles. The US government argued that these quotas discriminated against American multinational companies, who grow bananas in Central America. 21 references were couched in terms of American accusations of discrimination:

Reporter: Washington says the penalties are in retaliation for Europe’s discrimination against American banana producers. (BBC1: 2100, 5.3.99) (BBC2: 2230, 5.3.99)

In some of these examples, it was not clear whether the quota system actually existed, or whether this was simply the belief of the Americans:

Newscaster: The dispute centres on whether Europe favours Caribbean bananas over those from Central America. (BBC1: 1210, 6.3.99)

Reporter: The Americans believe Europe’s unfairly favouring bananas which come from its former colonies. (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

Reporter: This dispute... basically hinges around the US belief that the EU is trying to protect the banana industry from countries that it’s close to, for example former British Caribbean colonies. (ITN: 1645, 6.3.99)

However, 11 of these references clearly indicated that the import quotas did exist:

Reporter: Washington says Caribbean bananas, the backbone of the West Indian economy, should have special access to EU consumers, but the US says this discriminates against producers in Central America. (Channel 4: 1900, 12.1.99)

Political editor: The problem here is that Europeans have always had a quota that can only be fitted by exports of bananas from certain countries – basically former colonies. (Channel 5: 1900, 5.3.99)

Thirdly, 60 references were made in relation to the US imposing tariffs on a selection of European goods, in particular Scottish cashmere. One reason for the high number of references here is that in some cases, detailed information was provided on the range of goods selected for tariffs:

Reporter: On the list is pecorino cheese, but only if it’s not suitable for grating. Handbags are also included, whether or not they have straps. Bedlinen is named, unless it contains any braid, lace or trimming. Greeting cards will suffer, with or without envelopes. But most high profile – sweaters or pullovers, if knitted wholly in cashmere. (Channel 4: 1900, 4.3.99)

There were only two comments amongst the coverage which attempted to begin to explain the bizarre list of goods targeted by the imposition of American import tariffs. In the first instance, there was the suggestion on Channel 4 that the industry which faced the greatest threat from these sanctions, Scottish cashmere, had been targeted because of pending elections in the country.
Newscaster: Well of course they may not know it, but the cleverest thing they’ve done is to go and target Scots cashmere right in the middle of an election fever. (Channel 4: 1900, 4.3.99)

Secondly, an American representative outlined the logic behind the selection of a broad range of products: US Trades Spokesperson: We hope to cover a wide range of products exported from Europe to the US from the overwhelming number of different members in the European Union. And we put that list together to try to have broad diversity of products and a wide diversity of political interests in Europe so as to increase the influence of these particular industries on the European Commission. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

Thus of 125 statements on American strategy in the trade crisis, only two gave any explanation, and these were limited to why specific European goods were targeted.

C.2.1.5. Responses and developments
This section includes responses to the crisis caused by the escalation of the banana dispute, and further developments which arose. This was the second largest section of the analysis of the banana dispute coverage, with 160 references. There were eight responses and developments. One of the earliest responses, which was referred to on 20 occasions was a statement from the Prime Minister, repeated by other British politicians, saying that the American action was unacceptable: UK Prime Minister: This is an unacceptable procedure and we won’t have it. (ITN: 2200, 4.3.99)

Further to this, the UK government promised to make good any losses incurred by the British industries affected by the US imposition of tariffs. There were 7 references like this: UK Prime Minister: We’ve made the arrangements necessary to give guarantees to the companies so that they can keep going. (Sky News: 1800, 4.3.99)

However, most of the references in this section involved statements about the flurry of diplomatic activity which took place, with 34 relevant references: Reporter: The US ambassador hauled over the coals for the second day running, the World Trade Organisation to meet in emergency session and the US Secretary of State rushing from Indonesia to London tomorrow.” (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

The majority here involved individual diplomatic incidents, negotiations and meetings, including an emergency meeting of the WTO:

Newscaster: Yes, Tony Blair has had crisis talks on the phone with President Clinton in a bid to resolve the escalating banana trade crisis between Britain and the US. (ITN: 1230, 5.3.99)

Fourthly, 27 statements were made about the US ambassador being summoned to the Foreign Office, first on the 4th of March and then for a second time the next day. Some of these references were accompanied by comments indicating the highly unusual nature of this response:
Reporter: American ambassadors aren’t accustomed to being summoned to see British government ministers. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

Diplomatic editor: The American ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Office to be told for the second time in 24 hours that US actions were unacceptable. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

At short notice, an arrangement was made for an emergency session at the WTO in Geneva on 8th March. This was referred to 12 times, prior to and following the meeting:
Newscaster: The WTO is meeting today in a bid to end the transatlantic banana war. (Channel 5: 1200, 8.3.99)

Newscaster: Emergency talks in Geneva have failed to resolve the bitter trade row between Europe and the US. (BBC1: 2100, 8.3.99)

Sixth, the diplomatic procedure referred to most frequently, with 46 references, was the arrival of Madeleine Albright in London, for talks with the British Foreign Secretary. Included here were 12 rather confusing references to the significance of the banana dispute on the agenda in the talks between the American Secretary of State and the British Foreign Secretary:
HEADLINE: Madeleine Albright flies in for an emergency summit. (ITN: 1740, 5.3.99)

Reporter: Top of the agenda was the banana dispute between the US and the EU which threatens an all out trade war. (BBC1: 2220, 6.3.99)

Newscaster: As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is in London for talks on Kosovo, has found bananas the more pressing British concern. (ITN: 1300, 6.3.99)

Newscaster: They were also expected to discuss the murder of British and American tourists in Uganda. (BBC1: 1820, 6.3.99)

Reporter: Well, certainly the Foreign Office are trying to play down the importance of them – saying they were
never intended to resolve the banana trade dispute. (ITN: 1645, 6.3.99)

On 11 occasions, there were references to US attempts to minimise the dispute. These included statements by the American ambassador, who referred to the banana dispute as an ‘irritant’, and secondly to news statements where his comments were interpreted as minimising the conflict:

**US ambassador:** The friendship is so deep and so broad. We share so much in economic and political terms. This is an irritant in this overwhelmingly positive relationship. (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

**Reporter:** the US ambassador did his diplomatic best to minimise the conflict. (BBC1: 2100, 4.3.99)

Finally in this section, a further response to the dispute came from environmentalists who campaigned on the street in Edinburgh:

**Reporter:** Suitably attired, environmentalists in Edinburgh urged shoppers to boycott bananas grown on US-owned plantations. (Man dressed in furry banana suit offers free bananas to passers by) (BBC1: 1300, 5.3.99)

The same footage was shown again in The Six O’clock News the same day, and one further reference was made on Channel 4. However, the reasons for Scottish environmentalists urging a boycott of US plantations were not explored anywhere in the coverage.

**C.2.1.6. Potential consequences**

A number of potential consequences of the dispute were covered to varying extents by the different television channels. Statements about possible consequences formed the largest section of the coverage, with a total of 178 references. Top of the list of possible outcomes was the potential for damage to British industry, resulting in job losses. There were 59 such references:

**Newscaster:** Thousands of British jobs could be at risk. (BBC1: 1800, 4.3.99)

The primary concern here was for the industry which was expected to be hardest hit by the sanctions, the Scottish Borders cashmere industry. All six channels referred to this issue, although more than half of the statements in this category were made by BBC1, who interviewed a number of representatives from the cashmere industry:

**Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Enterprise:**
It would be immensely serious. There’s 22 companies involved, employing 2,300 people and we believe that 1,000 jobs are immediately at risk as a result of these sanctions. (BBC1: 1800, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** This is an industry on which two and a half thousand jobs depend in an area which has seen a spate of redundancies in recent months. The American measures will slap a tax of more than £200 on each cashmere jumper made here for the US market. (ITN, News at Ten, 4.2.99)

Secondly, concerns about an escalation of the conflict were raised, with the possibility of a trade war between the United States and the European Union. Reporters raised the question of whether there would be further disputes over a range of controversial trading issues. In total, there were 57 references:

**Reporter:** tonight all sides acknowledge that a dispute over bananas could rapidly escalate into a major transatlantic trade war. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

Reference was made to pending disputes between the two trading blocks on four separate issues: genetically modified food, plane noises, hormone injected beef, and trade with China:

**Reporter:** Alas more disputes may be on the way. Europe hopes to ban noisy American planes. The US says it will ban Concorde in revenge. They’re arguing about China and its trade with the rest of the world. And the big one is Europe’s attempt to keep American hormone injected beef out. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

Thirdly, 39 references were made to the likelihood of damage to the fragile economies of the Windward Islands in the Caribbean, with concerns about the existing high levels of unemployment, and the fear that illegal drug production would increase if the trade in bananas was overtaken by US companies:

**Grenada Ambassador to the US:** For as we have made the point, we have sounded that very, very critical warning that our island will be severely threatened. (Sky News: 1800, 4.3.99)

A fourth potential consequence of the banana dispute which was referred to 18 times, across the channels in our sample, was of damage to the ‘special relationship’ between the US and the UK. Six of these references were made by Sky News. What was viewed as ‘special’ about this relationship was not made clear:

**Newscaster:** The special relationship between Tony Blair and Bill Clinton is under threat tonight. (Channel 5: 1900, 5.3.99)

**Newscaster:** It started with a dispute over bananas. Now it’s threatening Britain’s special relationship with the US. (Sky News: 1800, 4.3.99)
A fifth possible consequence of the dispute was raised by only one news programme. *Sky News* broadcast a brief statement made by an Italian/American shop owner, who feared his business could be hit by the import tariffs. *Sky News* made five references to the possibility of job losses on both sides of the Atlantic:

**Reporter:** If there isn’t (agreement) there will be job losses on both side of the Atlantic, with the possibility of measures that will threaten even multinational profits. (*Sky News: 1800, 6.3.99*)

One reference on BBC2 demonstrated the situation faced by Britain in the dispute:

**Reporter:** Unless Britain and France and others agree to arrangements which would wreck the economies of various Caribbean countries, the Americans will make sure that textile workers in Britain and biscuit makers, chandelier operatives and pen makers elsewhere in Europe will lose their jobs. (*BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99*)

In this largest section of the coverage, a range of potential consequences were covered. The possibility of British job losses was referred to most frequently. Two other consequences also focused on the potential effects on Britain or Europe: the possibility of an escalating trade war between Europe and America, and damage to the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and America. Combining these three, there were a total of 134 references to consequences for Britain/Europe. By contrast, there were only 39 references to consequences for the Windward Islands, even though bananas constitute the Islands’ primary export and damage to the industry was viewed as inevitably devastating to the population there.

### C.2.1.7. References to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

The earlier coverage by Channel 4 provided some indication of the background to the dispute. On 12.1.99, *Channel 4 News* informed the viewer that at that stage, America was asking the WTO to approve tough sanctions against the European Union, and that it had announced that sanctions would be imposed within two weeks because of European favouritism towards Caribbean bananas. Interestingly, the newscaster expressed an opinion on the dispute which was turned around in later coverage by Channel 4:

**Newscaster:** The fact is there’s no right and wrong in this banana battle – just various shades of grey, or even yellow. (*Channel 4: 1900, 12.1.99*)

Much of the information presented in this early report was to be repeated when the story re-emerged in March. However, there were a few references which did not reappear. One example concerned the WTO view on the status of Caribbean bananas:

**Newscaster:** The WTO has said Caribbean bananas should retain special status. (*Channel 4: 1900, 12.1.99*)

On 30th January, *Channel 4 News* returned to the subject of the banana dispute, following a WTO decision made that day. The following brief statement was made updating the viewer on the situation:

**Newscaster:** Yes, we have no banana war, according to the EU which claimed victory today over America. The WTO has told the US to postpone its threat to impose sanctions worth half a million dollars. First it wants to decide whether the EU is acting unfairly to protect its own banana trade. (*Channel 4: 1900, 30.1.99*)

Overall, discussion of the central role of the WTO in this dispute was very limited. Although the involvement of the organisation was referred to on 105 occasions, virtually no explanation was offered to help the viewer understand the significance, function, background or activities of the World Trade Organisation. On only two separate occasions, very brief statements were made indicating what the role of this organisation might be:

**Spokesperson for Caribbean producers:** What the WTO was set up for, which was in the interests of small countries who need the law because they haven’t got the power. (*BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99*)

**Political editor:** Now they’ve taken their case to the WTO – the body that’s supposed to oversee fairness in trade. (*Channel 5: 1900, 5.3.99*)

However, 60 of the relevant statements involved tit-for-tat accusations from both sides that the other had broken the rules of the WTO. Thirty four of these references were to the UK/EU breaking the rules by failing to comply with WTO requests to modify its banana import arrangements. On the other hand, the US was accused on 26 occasions of acting illegally by imposing sanctions in advance of the pending WTO ruling. Additionally there were 34 references to the history of the banana dispute and the involvement of the WTO over recent years – almost all of these references were made by US political figures, in an attempt to demonstrate that the EU had not been complying with WTO rulings.

The first set of references concern accusations by the US that the European Union had failed to comply with previous WTO rulings:
**US ambassador, London:** the issue is really not about cashmere or bananas. It’s about playing by the rules. (BBC1: 1900, 5.3.99)

In contrast, the statements that the United States had acted unilaterally and/or illegally in advance of a WTO decision:

**Foreign Secretary:** I made it clear that we cannot accept that the US should act only a few weeks before the WTO gives its ruling. (ITN: 2240, 6.3.99)

EU ambassador, Washington: I don’t understand why the US has been so anxious to come in now in a unilateral way, in an illegal way, in a case which they pretend they’re confidant they’re going to win. (Sky News: 1800, 6.3.99)

**Reporter:** The US is escalating a tiny dispute before the WTO has produced a verdict from Europe’s latest concession. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

There were 34 references to the history of this dispute. A minority of these were made by newscasters and reporters, acknowledging that there was in fact a historical background to the crisis:

**Reporter:** a dispute which has been festering since 1993. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** a rift which has dragged on for six years (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

**Reporter:** (Europe) has been found wrong three times by international authorities. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** and in 1994 the WTO agreed. The EU was ordered to open up its markets. (ITN: 1230, 5.3.99)

The majority of the historical references – 24 in total – were made by US representatives, in an effort to justify their decision to impose sanctions on the EU. There were a few such references by reporters. American politicians expressed frustration with the EU and the WTO in referencing the development of the dispute over recent years:

**President Clinton:** Twice, just twice since I’ve been president, we won this case in the EU. I think we won it four times in the last ten years. Somehow the rules have to work. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

**US Trade Representative:** For six years – we have tried directly over the last 18 months – to engage the EU in direct negotiations, in negotiations with the WTO. Nothing seems to have worked. (BBC1: 2100, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** The dispute began in September 1995, when the US first complained about the EU policy that offers some protection to Caribbean banana growers. In September 1997 the WTO ruled for the second time against the EU. At the start of this year the EU did introduce minor changes. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

Further to this, there were ten occasions when the US questioned the integrity and feasibility of the WTO itself:

**Philip Lader:** it really is the integrity of the WTO which is of question foremost... It’s dealing with the stability and the ability of the WTO to follow its own regulations and to have all of its member nations and member entities comply with those. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

**Philip Lader:** What we have to be doing is working on the WTO’s continued feasibility. (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

C.2.1.8. The two bananas: explaining the crisis

**Reporter:** They aren’t grown in Europe or even in America, but today they sparked the most serious trade dispute between the European Union and the United States for a decade. (BBC1: 1800, 4.3.99)

This was one of the only two references which made explicit the fact that, somewhat ironically, the fruit at the centre of the banana dispute is not grown in either the EU or the US. This section considers the explanations available to the viewer for how the two trading blocks involved were on the brink of a trade war over a product which is grown in other parts of the world. This section was fairly limited, with 95 references. These included comments about where imported European bananas are grown as well as comparisons between small Caribbean producers and American multinationals based in Central and Latin America. Exactly half of the references in this section – 47 in total – concerned the powerful position of the multinational banana companies.

While there was one statement to the effect that bananas are not grown in either the US or the EU, there were a further eight references to the fact that the US does not grow bananas. These comments questioned the significance of the dispute to American industry:

**Windward Islands Banana Development Spokesperson:** It certainly does not mean much to the US. They’re not exporting bananas. There’s not one US job at stake. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

In most of the coverage, there was no reference to the extent of the protection offered to Caribbean banana farmers in the EU. The fact is that the majority of bananas purchased in Europe are already dollar bananas – bought from American multinationals. The quota for Caribbean bananas affects only a small proportion of total European imports. While this information could have a substantial impact on the viewer’s perception of
American accusations of discrimination, this key point in this argument about quotas was only referred to twice – both on minority news bulletins:

**Reporter:** Although they have less than ten percent of the European market, their privileges upset big American interests who grow bananas in Central America. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** Even though around 80% of European Union bananas still come from the United States anyway... (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

A significant part of the discussion on the context of the crisis involved comparisons between the producers of bananas. This section of the news coverage was important to the viewers’ understanding of the interests of the EU and US. Ten references here focused on the fact that Caribbean bananas are produced by small-scale farmers, eight of them made on BBC1:

**Reporter:** There are about 3,500 banana farmers here, and they work on small family run plots of about 2 or 3 acres. (BBC1: 2100, 12.3.99)

Further to this, there were 12 references to the concern of British or European concerns to protect the economies of former colonies. All six channels in our sample referred to this:

**Reporter:** The origins of this dispute lie far away and long ago. Small family farms in former British and French colonies in the Caribbean, Pacific and in Africa are protected by EU quotas. (BBC1: 2100, 4.3.99)

**Reporter:** (Europe) is just trying to help poor nations with historic ties without just bunging money at them. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

**Political Editor:** It’s basically to protect farmers in some very poor countries – in the Caribbean and in Africa. (Channel 5: 1900, 5.3.99)

Most of the discussion concerned the considerable power of US banana companies. Ten statements were made referring to the vastness of US banana plantations. 47 references concerned their power. Three channels dominated this discussion, with 26 references on Channel 4, and 23 references between BBC1 and BBC2. The discussion included statements about the vastness of the US banana plantations, the large political donations made by the US banana companies to the US government, and the powerful position of these multinationals in influencing American policy and controlling Latin American governments. In contrast to comments about small family-run businesses in the Caribbean, there were ten references to large US companies producing bananas on plantations.

**Reporter:** These quotas anger the huge American growers like Chiquita which cultivates bananas on vast plantations like this in Central America. (BBC1: 2100, 4.3.99)

There was only one statement which suggested that American motivation in the banana dispute was prompted by similar concerns for banana growers as the EU:

**Newscaster interviewing US Ambassador:** Britain’s worried about the banana growers in the Caribbean where we have traditional ties. America’s worried about banana growers in Latin America. Both laudable concerns. (Sky News: 1800, 6.3.99)

One of the most significant points in the discussion of the power of the American banana companies is that of political donations to the US government. Some comments on these substantial donations referred simply to large sums of money exchanging hands:

**Reporter:** South American bananas produced by companies that pump a great deal of money into American politics. (ITN: 1740, 5.3.99)

But most references linked the political donations to the origins of the banana dispute:

**Reporter:** The most powerful government in the world now stands accused of yielding to their money and their influence by European politicians closest to the current trade dispute. (BBC1: 2100, 8.3.99)

Channel 4 News was the only programme to provide details of the specific donation from Chiquita, which it said donated half a million dollars the day after the US government agreed to take the complaint about banana quotas back to the WTO.

**Reporter:** Chiquita, one banana giant, persuaded Washington to take its grievance to the WTO. The next day, the company’s top executives reportedly began funnelling half a million dollars to Democratic coffers in about a dozen states. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

This political donation was referred to on four separate occasions within the same news bulletin. While this statement would appear to provide key information in explaining the origins of the banana crisis, it was not explicitly reported elsewhere. There were other examples where reference was also made to the power of American banana companies – again with particular reference to Chiquita – in relation to politics in Central and Latin America, and further, to their alleged ambitions to control the world banana trade:
Reporter: If anyone’s going to benefit from the trade war, it will be these producers in South America, but the profits aren’t likely to reach the pockets of the plantation workers. Instead they’ll go to the big US firms that want to run the world banana trade. (Sky News: 1800, 6.3.99)

Reporter: Driving American stridency – the giant banana companies – the biggest of them all Chiquita. It contributes millions to both big American political parties. It has the sort of power that can make or break governments in Central and Latin America, the original banana republics. (BBC1: 2100, 8.3.99)

Reporter: And the challenge is that this is, as I say a dirty company, previously United Fruit, with a notorious record in the banana plantations of Central and Latin America, and it is they who are calling the shots. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

There were occasional references to Chiquita having a ‘murky’ or ‘dirty’ past, although no reason was given for these comments. Further explanation was however available in the press:

Bananas and American influence-peddling have had a long and close association. Notoriously, the CIA organised a coup in Guatemala in 1954 on behalf of the United Fruit Company, corporate predecessor to Chiquita. (Ben Laurance, The Observer, 7.3.99, p.16)

The contrast between the two types of banana grower was drawn most forcefully by Sir James Mitchell, Premier of St. Vincent and the Grenadines:

Caribbean Premier: And we’re talking about a war between 25,000 farmers in a property owning democracy in the Caribbean and one plantation owner and nineteenth century slavery in Latin America. (BBC1: 2100, 12.3.99)

The fact that Caribbean bananas are more costly barely featured in the coverage of the dispute. There were only two news bulletins which mentioned the actual cost of bananas.

Reporter: EU quotas...make fruit more expensive. (BBC1: 1300, 5.3.99)

The point was made most forcefully by US Trade Spokesman Jerry Ziegler on the day the crisis caused by American sanctions was first reported on television news. While the US argued that Europeans were losing out due to the higher cost of Caribbean as compared to Latin American bananas, this information was not viewed as significant in the wider discussion of the issues involved:

US Trades Spokesperson: If you look at what the banana regime has actually done in Europe, it’s been quite a travesty in terms of its economic impact. We have seen the prices of bananas – Germany is one example – go up 25% under this new system, while consumption has gone down 25%. It's certainly not working for the Caribbean, and not for the European consumer. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

C.2.1.9. Wider economic references

Trade Minister, Brian Wilson was the only person to state that the dispute had a long history:

Trade Minister: This has not been going on for five years, but for decades in one form or another. (Channel 4: 1900, 4.3.99)

However, standing alone, this comment is of limited value in aiding understanding. In discussing the wider economic background to this dispute, it is important to consider some of the key terms which arise in any debate on international trade. In particular, there were two terms which arose in the coverage of the banana dispute – free trade and protectionism – but neither of these terms were explained on the television news.

The wider trade implications of the banana dispute were discussed in very limited terms across the television channels (28 references were counted). There were three references to the US argument that free trade is essential:

US President: But we cannot maintain an open trading system which I’m convinced is essential for global prosperity unless we also have rules that are abided by. (ITN: 2200, 5.3.99)

This statement by Bill Clinton was infrequently referred to in the television news. While he noted the importance of an open trading system, there were nine separate references by American political figures to the necessity of protecting their own trading rights:

US Ambassador: The issue really is how does the US protect its rights until there’s the final decision. (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

US Ambassador: What in fact we’ve done is acted to preserve the American interests in this interim period until a final determination is made. (BBC1: 1300, 5.3.99)

There was one example on BBC1, where trading principles were mentioned and briefly explained in relation to the banana dispute:

Reporter: One way of looking at the problem is as a choice between free trade on the one hand and fair trade. In other words a choice between a multinational’s right to sell as many bananas as they want into Europe against
the desire of the small scale farmers to protect their livelihood. (BBC1: 2100, 12.3.99)

Newsnight and Channel 4 News were the only two programmes to comment on the considerable economic power of the US, with 14 references to this effect, including statements that the US is prepared to adopt strong measures to protect its trade interests. In one example, a Caribbean spokesperson talked of America’s ‘bullying’ tactics on Newsnight:

Spokesperson for Caribbean producers: I think we’re looking at a major case of trade terrorism. The US is adopting bullying and now blackmailing tactics, trying to put a pistol – I would describe it as a Chiquita pistol – at the head of the EU and threatening that unless Europe abandons the Caribbean, European workers who are innocent in all this would be hostage. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

Also, in an isolated example, Channel 4 referred to the continuing development of the European Union as a trading block and compared this to the similar trading status of the US. Here, there was a suggestion that the possible arrival of a European dollar was viewed as a threat to American trade:

Newscaster: We may be witnessing the start of a new and hostile relationship between the US and the EU, based on what America calls protectionism and spurred by the birth of the euro, which though weak today, will certainly come to be viewed eventually as the European dollar. Compare the two trading blocks. Europe has a population of 289 million. In the stars and stripes corner, America has a slightly smaller population of 267 million, but a bigger GDP at $7,600 billion and the same share of world trade – 15%. (Graphics in background) (Channel 4: 1900, 6.3.99)

A similar point was made by Phil Davison, reporting from St. Lucia for The Independent:

Many feel that the US is simply flexing its muscles towards a changing Europe that could pose a threat to the supremacy America has enjoyed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Phil Davison, The Independent, 13.3.99, p.15)

According to Stephen Bates writing in The Guardian on 6.3.99 (p.9), Caribbean’s complained that they were not allowed to give evidence when the banana dispute was last heard by the WTO in 1997, and no representative from the third world sat on the arbitration panel, which was chaired by a former US congressman. While these considerable concerns about the role of the WTO in the development of the global economy were barely reported, one Channel 4 reporter clearly had reservations:

Reporter: Some say this is American imperialism reborn and today’s spat is about much more than bananas. This is about dominating the world economy, and there’s much more acrimony to come. (Channel 4: 1900, 6.3.99)

But such a view and the necessary background information to make sense of the dispute were largely absent from mainstream news programmes.

C.2.1.10. Prescriptions

Discussion of how this escalating dispute between the two Western trading blocks could be resolved was limited. There were a total of 32 references to what should be done. There were no references on Channel Five News. Where means of resolving the crisis were referred to, they usually concluded that negotiation was the way forward. Of 25 references to the option of a negotiated settlement, 16 were made on Channel 4 News. On two editions of Channel 4 News, government ministers were asked specific questions about retaliatory measures. Their responses made the government position clear:

Trade Minister: The last thing I have any interest in, and I hope the European Union has any interest in is escalating this through tit for tat because nobody gains out of that. What we have to do is to get into some kind of sanity here, and get this thing into the dispute procedures again, get an outcome by April 12th, and that should be the resolution of the matter. (Channel 4: 1900, 6.3.99)

Interviewed on Channel 4 News on 5.3.99, Robin Cook made eight statements to the effect that negotiation was the only option. When the newscaster asked the Foreign Secretary whether he had made it clear that Britain would retaliate if the sanctions went forward, he responded emphatically:

Foreign Secretary: We want to wind down this dispute. We don’t want to escalate the dispute. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

Following a meeting with the Trade Secretary, Leon Brittan, the EU Trade Commissioner expressed similar sentiments, although framing his statement in terms of legality:

EU Trade Commissioner: We believe in observing the law. We think that we stand to gain in the long run and in the short term as well by observing the law, rather than by breaking the law. (Sky News: 1800, 5.3.99)

Most of the statements advocating a negotiated settlement were made by UK government representatives. There were two occasions when such references originated from US government representatives:
Newscaster: The US ambassador to Britain hopes that the two countries can reach an agreement soon. (ITN: 1230, 5.3.99)

US Special Trade Representative: Our view remains today as it did before that the best way to resolve this is through direct negotiations to a mutually agreeable solution. (Channel 4: 1900, 4.3.99)

Another prescription, originating from the UK government involved the suggestion that the United States could still change its mind about imposing sanctions on Europe. The statement only featured twice across the television channels. The Trade and Industry Secretary Steven Byers was quoted on this on Channel Four News:

Trade and Industry Secretary: Even now it’s not too late for the United States to reverse its decision. (Channel 4: 1900, 4.3.99)

The same statement was repeated by a Sky News reporter the same day:

Reporter: The government has urged its American cousins to think again, with the Trade Secretary imploring them – it’s not too late to reverse the decision. (Sky News: 1800, 4.3.99)

A spokesperson for the World Development Movement speaking on Channel 4 urged the government not to give in to ‘bullying’:

WDM spokesperson: If the US succeeds with bullying this time, they’re going to try again in the future. (Channel 4: 1900, 5.3.99)

In the discussion of the potential consequences of the banana dispute, references were made to possible damage to the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the US. While this received less attention than other potential consequences of the dispute, it was referred to on all six channels in our sample. However, there were three occasions where statements were made regarding trading relations and traditional loyalties, which question the strength and validity of any ‘special relationship’:

Reporter: Old friendships are under new and unprecedented pressure as Britain and its European partners are forced to choose between loyalty to former colonies and Commonwealth, and trade relations with the most powerful economy on earth. (BBC1: 2100, 8.3.99)

Spokesperson for the Caribbean producers: The EU is facing a major test to stand up to the Americans in the interests of the Caribbean, and in the interests of Europe, but beyond that in the interests of the rule of law on international trade. (BBC2: 2230, 4.3.99)

Will Hutton: The Americans don’t have friends – they have interests. Tony Blair is learning the hard way that a great power like America, and I think it behaves in some respects like an imperial power – when it sees its interests going begging – goes after people who it thinks are offending it. And it’s going after the EU and Britain has to decide which side it’s on – the EU or the US. (Channel 4: 1900, 6.3.99)

C.2.1.11. Discussion

Much of the coverage of the banana dispute suggested that the UK government remained firm and authoritative in face of the US sanctions. The second largest section of the coverage, which concerned diplomatic activity, largely gave the impression that the British government was undaunted by the US action. Part of this impression was created by the key players in the dispute, such as the Prime Minister who was frequently quoted as stating that the US action was ‘unacceptable’ and that ‘we won’t have it.’ The impression was also fostered by reporters who dramatised some of the diplomatic events following the announcement of sanctions. While it may have been unusual for the US ambassador to be summoned to the Foreign Office, there were numerous comments about him being ‘hauled over the coals,’ ‘carpeted’ and ‘dressed down’.

On the other hand, there were indications that there was little the UK government could do in face of the US sanctions. The diplomatic event which received most coverage was the arrival of the US Secretary of State, for talks with the British Foreign Secretary. While some news programmes stated that Madeleine Albright was flying in specifically to talk about the banana dispute, there were several contradictory comments about the agenda of the meeting. The government in particular was anxious to play down the significance of the banana dispute in the talks. Despite telephone conversations between the premiers of the UK and the US, meetings between EU officials and an emergency summit at the World Trade Organisation, the result of the flurry of diplomatic activity following the announcement of sanctions was that the US position was not moving.

The other key area of coverage was on the subject of potential consequences of the banana dispute, with three key consequences discussed. The possibility of job losses in the UK was referred to most often, partly because BBC1 covered the threat to the Scottish cashmere
industry in considerable detail. The possibility of the dispute escalating into a trade war was also a key concern in this section. Combining these two consequences with the third factor concerning Britain – damage to the ‘special relationship’ with America – there was far more attention paid to possible losses to be incurred by Britain/Europe than to the consequences for the Caribbean. The Windward Islands’ dependence on the banana trade has already been affected by the dispute: “Governments here, as well as US anti-narcotics agents, say one-third of all cocaine reaching the US or Europe now comes through the Windward Islands – more than 100 tons a year. As a result of the so-called ‘banana war’... marijuana is increasingly becoming the cash crop of choice here.” (Phil Davison, Independent on Sunday, 14.5.99, p.21)

Some references to the possibility of an escalation of the trade dispute mentioned pending disputes on a number of other trade issues – such as genetically modified foods and hormone injected beef. However, the potential implications of an all out trade war were not discussed. The third potential consequence – of damage to the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the US – was referred to by all channels, though less frequently than the previous two. What makes the relationship between these two countries special, as compared to the relationship between the EU and the US, or Britain and the EU was not explained. The US ambassador was quoted frequently on his comment about the ‘overwhelming friendship’ between his country and Britain. However, the harsh reality was that the British government was forced by its ‘special friend’ into a no-win situation by the US action. As indicated only on BBC2, Britain either had to agree to arrangements which would devastate the banana economy of the Windward Isles, or accept four figure job losses at home, and particularly in Scotland in the midst of an election.

Chiquita’s donations to the Democratic Party in the States did not feature strongly in the television news coverage. EU Trade Commissioner Leon Brittan was quoted in the Independent on Sunday on the drive behind American stridency: “The whole policy is driven by politics in the US. It is driven by the fact that Chiquita is a company that gives money to the political parties.” The following comment in The Observer also provided information which helps make sense of the motivation behind the dispute:

The issue at the heart of the row is access to the European market for bananas. For Chiquita – one of the world’s largest banana conglomerates which Linder became involved with in the mid-Eighties – this is a huge prize. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, American-owned banana companies – Dole, Chiquita and Del Monte, who between them control nearly two-thirds of the world market – believed that they would be able to increase sales enormously to Eastern Europe. They invested heavily to expand their plantations, principally in Latin America... But the hoped-for growth in sales failed to materialise... American banana giants, of which Chiquita is the largest, found themselves examining the market in the rest of Europe. (Ben Laurance, The Observer, 7.3.99, p.16)

But none of this explanation was made available to a mass audience on television news. The role of the World Trade Organisation was also barely explained in the coverage of this dispute, despite it having a key role in any decisions to be made. Most of the references relating to the WTO concerned allegations and counter allegations to the effect that its rules had been broken. The US ambassador was quoted frequently on allegations of EU rule breaking. There were numerous counter comments to the effect that the US had acted ahead of a WTO ruling. The fact that it acted illegally was not frequently stated. Again in the interview for Brixton On-Line, Laurent cited the specific statute involved:

The WTO’s Dispute Settlement Understanding states clearly in Article 22.6: ‘Concessions or other obligations shall not be suspended during the course of the arbitration.’

Beyond questions of rule/law breaking with regard to the WTO, the US demonstrated questionable commitment to the organisation in comments made. The US ambassador in London in particular, questioned the stability and feasibility of the WTO, and its ability to follow its own rules. He was not questioned on these remarks at any stage of the news coverage, but it might have been helpful to explore these views.

It is important in discussing the wider economic implications of the banana dispute to consider again the role of the World Trade Organisation. As we have shown, in the context of the television coverage of the banana dispute, one pressure group was filmed demonstrating in Edinburgh against American multinational banana companies. While the viewer was informed that this was an environmental pressure group, no member of the group was interviewed, and no explanation was offered for the protest. However, the following quote from the Independent on Sunday shows that considerable concern existed among a wide variety of Non Governmental Organisations about the relationship between the WTO and multinationals generally:
This autumn (the WTO) will begin a push, backed by many of the richest nations, to extend its powers even more. And some 700 organisations from 73 countries have sworn to stop it. Ranging from big outfits such as Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and the Japanese Consumers’ Union to small grassroots networks in the Third World, they have signed a joint declaration to oppose any effort to expand the powers of the World Trade Organisation, saying that it has worked ‘to prise open markets for the benefit of transnational corporations at the expense of national economies, workers, farmers and other people’. (Geoffrey Lean, Independent on Sunday, 18.7.99, p13)

The four largest sections of the coverage – references to the crisis, responses and developments, potential consequences, and most references to the WTO – accounted for 79% of television news output on the banana dispute. While a great deal of information was available amongst this coverage, little of it involved explanation. Where some form of explanation was available it was in discussion of the relative power and influence of the producers of bananas, in relation to governments and to the WTO. The smallest section of the coverage concerned wider economic references, including the fact that there are separate and potentially conflicting principles involved in the drive for free trade throughout the world.

C.2.2. Nigerian Presidential Elections
The Nigerian presidential elections were held on 27 February 1999. These democratic elections had particular significance after 15 years of military rule in the country.

C.2.2.1. Sample and Background
There were 13 relevant bulletins in the sample from the week of the elections, between 25 February and 1 March, including at least one each from the five terrestrial channels. Additional news programmes examined were three BBC1 bulletins from mid-February, providing information about conflict over oil wealth in the country, and also the only bulletin covering the Nigerian parliamentary elections, already held on 19 February. Cable/satellite channels were not analysed during this period.

ITN and Channel 5 provided the briefest coverage. Newsnight highlighted the circumstances of Nigeria’s Ibo people in a special report on 1.3.99. BBC1 covered the elections (and related stories on Nigeria) most frequently, with a total of 8 bulletins. Channel 4 provided the most in-depth coverage of the election, including background reports on the protest of the Ijaw people in the Delta, and on conflict between the North and South of the country. Channel 4 also ran a series of video diaries from Nigeria, Lagos Stories, on five evenings of the week of the elections, following its 19.00 news broadcasts (see E.3.2.2. Asia, Africa and Latin America). Channel 4’s accompanying website (www.channel4.com/next step/lagos_stories/recent.html) provided useful background information on Nigeria’s recent history, summarised as follows.

Nigeria obtained independence from Britain on 1 October 1960. A federal government was formed. In 1966 a group of army officers killed the prime minister, overthrew the federal government and installed a centralised government. In an unstable political climate, regional and ethnic tension flared. In 1967 Nigeria was divided into 12 states. The massacres of Ibo peoples in the north led to the declaration of a separate Republic of Biafra. This declaration marked the start of a three-year civil war in which more than a million – mainly Biafrans – died. The war ended in 1971 with the surrender of Biafra.

During the 1970s and 80s Nigeria saw a succession of military coups and governments. At the same time the oil industry boomed, with only a tiny minority of Nigerians benefiting. In 1985 General Babangida became the first military president, promising to restore democracy. Eventually, in 1993, Nigerians went to the polls, when Chief Abiola was voted president. However, Babangida annulled the elections. In the ensuing political crisis, General Sani Abacha seized power and suppressed any opposition to his government.

In 1993, 300,000 Ogoni people marched in protest at the money being made from their oil-rich lands, which were being exploited by the Anglo-Dutch consortium Shell. The march marked the start of a period of military terrorisation of the Ogonis. The plight of the Ogonis was brought to the world’s attention in May 1994 when the environmentalist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa was arrested with other Ogoni leaders on fraudulent charges. In November 1995 Ken Saro Wiwa, along with eight Ogoni leaders, was executed. Abacha died in June 1998, followed rapidly by the death of Abiola in custody. General Abubakar became the interim president, and the 1999 presidential elections took place some eight months later.

C.2.2.2. Results
The following table indicates the range of information available on television news on the Nigerian presidential elections. The table also indicates the frequency of each
statement made. The wide range and limited frequency of most of the references included in this case are largely due to special reports which were broadcast by Newsnight and Channel 4 News, which included more in-depth information on specific issues surrounding the elections.

Newsnight reported on the Biafran War and the Ibos on 1.3.99 while Channel 4 News broadcast a report on the Delta Region on 25.5.99 and on tensions between North and South Nigeria on 1.3.99. Overall, the news covered six main themes. Apart from the three sections which are based on special reports, the remaining sections include the elections themselves, information about Nigeria and prescriptions. Each theme will be discussed in turn:

Figure 1: Main themes in TV News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Presidential Elections</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The army’s retreat to barracks is far from assured</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning candidate in last elections – Abiola – died in prison last year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military dictator Sani Abacha died last year, paving way for elections</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former military general Olusegun Obasanjo is tipped to win</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty years ago he organised elections and handed power to civilian regime</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obasanjo late for rally</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His opponent is former finance minister Olu Falae</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s an open secret ballot – fingerprinting in the open</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International observers are present</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There have been accusations/evidence of vote-rigging</td>
<td>11/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading opponent Olu Falae said he would reject the results</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former US president Carter says some rigging, but it is difficult to judge</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote rigging only compensated for low turnout</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ob is Nigeria’s new civilian president – 65% of the vote</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World led to believe it’s a watershed.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For ordinary Nigerians it’s a different story</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates/Newly elected president lacks policy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country to return to democracy at end May</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obasanjo has promised new anti corruption measures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obasanjo is mistrusted because of his military connections</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria’s Guardian newspaper formerly subject of oppression</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most populous African country/vast country</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria is the world’s sixth largest oil producer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil wealth has been squandered/economy in a shambles</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People left poor and angry</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic fuel shortages – Motorists can’t buy petrol</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The price of oil is falling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No electricity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No water</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need properly equipped schools and hospitals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result significant to rest of Africa and outside investors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Biafran War and the Ibos</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos one of the biggest/third largest tribes in the country</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos live mainly in the East where the Biafran war was fought</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biafran war was one of independence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Biafrans were crushed/A million died in the fighting and famine</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian army was far better equipped</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos deprived of basic amenities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos feel disenfranchised/marginalised</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos believe they’re still being punished for Biafran war</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of a businessman who despite his best efforts, sees no return</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biafran veterans beg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Eastern radicals ready to fight again</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian soldiers regret fighting Biafra – symbolic of what’s happening to Nigeria</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Delta Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing numbers of kidnappings – youth demanding share of wealth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution of Ken Saro Wiwa (under Abacha)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria was outcast (after the execution)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria’s elections to result in return to international community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands of Delta region (a headache to new govt.)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta people have no voice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil/Shell does not provide wealth for Delta people</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil industry causes pollution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local chief punished for his people’s protests</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw the angry young men of the Delta</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbouring Itshekiri say the Ijaws are attacking their villages/that they should vote</td>
<td>3/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North and South</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The North is Muslim/culturally different from the South</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The military power base is in the North</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Nigeria has dominated politics and military since independence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both candidates are Christians and Yorubas from the South</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obasanjo favoured in North – military connections and not biased against Muslims</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Muslim North – women say their husbands tell them who to vote for</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor turnout in North because candidates are from the South</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North is poor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North is feudal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military leaders stole the money for themselves</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South sees the North as parasitic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emir remains the cultural leader in the North</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Muslims united with Yorubas and Ijaws of the South through colonialism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescriptions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections will not make any difference</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy will be better than a military regime</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria needs to be united</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military will not stay out of power long.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C.2.2.3. The Presidential elections

The election coverage formed by far the largest section of the analysis, and included comments on the recent history of military rule in Nigeria, the organisation of the presidential elections, the background of the two candidates and their policies. There were 23 separate references in this section, of which only two were made on more than twelve occasions. The first of these two stated that democratic elections were being held in Nigeria. This statement formed the headline of most bulletins, and usually included a reference to previous years of military rule. In total there were 19 such references. Some references to the recent history of military rule were implied:

**HEADLINE: A general election and a new civilian president in Nigeria** (2230, BBC2: 1.3.99)

Other references were more direct:

**HEADLINE: And ending fifteen years of military dictatorship and corruption, Nigeria votes for democratic government.** (1830, Channel 4: 27.2.99)

The second most frequent reference was to allegations of vote-rigging, or in some cases to evidence that vote-rigging had taken place:

**HEADLINE: A president is elected, but there are allegations of vote-rigging on a huge scale.** (1900, Channel 4: 1.3.99)

**Reporter:** Election observers including the former US president Jimmy Carter were worried by some of the cheating they saw. (1800, BBC1: 1.3.99)

Of eighteen such references, thirteen were made by BBC1, which included video evidence from one town, where inhabitants had waited all day for ballot papers, only to discover that there were far too few papers for all those eligible to vote. However, BBC1 was the only channel to suggest that there was method to the ballot rigging:

**Reporter:** It looks as though the ballot rigging was intended mostly to make up for the low turnout. A senior aide told me privately that they’d only done it in places where they were strong. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

Significantly, the briefest of the bulletins in the sample, which was broadcast after the election, contained no information other than the two most frequent references:

**Nigeria’s ousted General Obasanjo looks set to win the country’s crucial elections to restore democracy. But the vote’s been marred by rigging allegations and the leading opponent Olu Falae said he would not accept the results.** (ITN: 28.2.99, 1815)

A similar statement was made on Channel 5, on the day the election results were announced:

**The results of the Nigerian presidential election have just been announced, with a landslide victory for the PDP. General Obasanjo won by 7 million votes, ending 15 years of army rule. But international observers are already investigating accusations of cheating and ballot rigging made by the opposition.** (Channel 5: 1.3.99, 1900)

The effect of these bulletins is to convey a negative impression. While indicating that here is an African country which has an opportunity to restore democracy in a national election, the ITN news statement already indicates that corruption and conflict are the outcome of the elections. Although the Channel 5 bulletin starts on a positive note, the end impression is the same. While these same statements were made by the other channels in the sample, the inclusion of background and contextualising information gave a broader picture of events surrounding the elections.

The third most frequent reference in this opening section – that Obasanjo was late for a campaign rally – was made on 9 occasions. The reason for this was that on 26.2.99 Channel 4 News was broadcast from a planned rally the day before the election:

**Reporter:** It’s 2.30 in the afternoon and we’re waiting for the big man – the man who would be president of Nigeria. (Channel 4: 26.2.99, 1900)

The entire afternoon was spent waiting for Obasanjo to arrive. While the reporter included background information on the elections, there were continuing references to the lateness of the candidate. Then finally:

**Reporter:** Oh, is he coming? Well it’s gone 7 o’clock and we’re still waiting but they say he’s definitely on his way now. At last... (in darkness) The general talked not of his policies, but how all the other big men on the podium supported him. Nigeria’s still enthralled to its old elite. (Channel 4: 26.2.99, 1900)

It should be noted that references in this section were the only ones made by ITN and Channel 5. The remainder of this analysis concerns only BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 News.

C.2.2.4. Nigeria

This second section included references to Nigeria as a whole. The ten references mainly covered statements about the vast size and population of the country and the contradiction between its considerable oil wealth and the poverty of its inhabitants. Of a total of 42 references here, 25 were made by BBC1, 10 by BBC2 and 7 by Channel 4.
The following refer to the size and oil wealth of the country:

**Newscaster:** Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation, rich in oil and gas. (BBC1: 19.2.99, 2100)

**Reporter:** The country which General Obasanjo has been elected to govern is vast: 110 million people, 280 different ethnic groups. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

The third most frequent reference in the election coverage was to Nigeria’s oil wealth being plundered, contributing to its economic problems. The three news channels referred to this, with a total of 12 references between them:

**Reporter:** Nigeria’s military rulers have been masters of illusion. While the country’s oil industry produced millions of dollars, the people running the government simply made the money disappear… It is a telling contrast – on the one hand Nigeria’s oil wealth, and on the other its agonising poverty. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

**Reporter:** The economy is in a state of complete shambles after years of corruption and misrule by military leaders. (BBC2: 1.3.99, 2230)

**Reporter:** The trick of Nigeria’s military rulers has been to make the country’s wealth vanish – as if by magic. (Channel 4: 26.2.99, 1900)

Although there were references in the coverage, which will be included in the following sections, to the interests of Western oil companies in Nigeria, there was only one direct mention of Western interests in relation to the elections:

**Reporter:** The biggest country in Africa has struggled off military rule after 15 years, and voted in a civilian government. That’s important for the rest of Africa and to all those countries like Britain with big investments here. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

C.2.2.5. The Biafran war and the Ibos

Most of the remainder of this analysis concerns Channel 4 News or Newsnight, which broadcast special reports on Nigeria during the election week, and some BBC1 coverage. Newsnight covered the Nigerian elections in a single special news report on 1.3.99. There were 30 references in this report, as indicated in the table. The reporter visited the East of Nigeria, where the Biafran war of independence was fought. The report focused on ‘one of the biggest tribes’ in the country, the Ibos. The argument was made that the Ibos feel marginalised within Nigeria, using documentary evidence of deprivation, lack of amenities and interviews with local people. The quotes in this section are from the Newsnight report:

**Reporter:** One of the biggest tribes in the country are the Ibos… For them the election is a painful reminder of what they’ve lost in a country they feel they have no part in.

The report then introduced an Ibo businessman, Ruben Ogbannaya, who commented on the hopelessness of trying to keep his textile shop running:

**Businessman:** This is my sales book. My last sale was on 13th February. You see what I said – there is no sale. I’m tired. I’m fed up. Since all this military rule, nothing is moving in Nigeria.

In addition to his role in illustrating the economic difficulties of the region, Ogbannaya provided an introduction to the subject of the Biafran War, as a veteran who fought for independence:

**Reporter:** The aim was to have a separate state. Losing meant staying inside Nigeria… When the war began, his commanders believed their people’s sense of purpose would see them through to a glorious victory. They could not have been more wrong. The Nigerian army was far better equipped, and with the world against them, the Biafrans were crushed.

The theme of the Biafran war was important in this section. Another veteran, Chief Nwosu who runs a hotel in Enugu, was interviewed. He commented on the lack of amenities in the country, a theme referred to frequently across the channels:

**Biafra veteran:** When we turn on the tap, we want to find water. We want to have electricity 24 hours. We want to have schools, we want to have hospitals… We want to have a life that human beings are supposed to be living, which we are not at the moment.

The reporter summarised the feelings of the Ibo people, as a group who feel disenfranchised:

**Reporter:** It’s almost as if the Ibos, Nigeria’s third largest tribe, have been left on the scrapheap. The level of neglect in Enugu does violence to the senses….. They know they’re referred to in other parts of Nigeria as ‘the vanquished’… As far as most Ijaws are concerned, they’re still being punished for fighting the Biafran war.

Finally he interviewed Ezeke Ibuchukwu, an Ibo described as a young radical. Ezeke was filmed interviewing and collecting the stories of disabled Biafran veterans, who beg at the roadside. Ezeke, who claimed to speak for all young Ibo, indicated that the continuing neglect of the Ibo people was fueling resentment:

**Youth activist:** Completely we will fight again, if the injustices in this country are not corrected.
The Newsnight report on the elections was made more informative by the inclusion of local people’s voices, each with a different point to make. While Ogbannaya illustrated the economic barriers blocking one individual’s attempt to make a living through self-employment, Chief Nwosu, who was also self employed, commented on how the lack of basic amenities hampers every sphere of life. Finally, Ezeke concluded that young Ibos are ready to fight against the unfairness of their situation, just as the previous generation had fought the Biafran War. This report was the only one to focus on the Eastern region of Nigeria, the Biafran war there, and the continued marginalisation of the Ibos since the war.

C.2.2.6. The Delta region

Channel 4 News broadcast a special report on the Delta region of Nigeria on 25 February 1999. BBC1 had also concentrated on Nigeria’s oil industry in a briefer report on 19 February. In this section, twelve references were made by BBC1, with the remainder of the total of 39 references made by Channel 4. The section included references to Nigeria’s oil industry, including criticisms of the oil company Shell, and reported on the protests by the inhabitants of the oil producing area of the Delta. Channel 4 began its report with an introductory comment about the conflict between oil wealth and poverty in the Delta, and a question about the likelihood of democratic elections succeeding against this background:

HEADLINE: And from the Nigerian Delta, how squandered oil riches have left its people poor and angry. So will they seize their chance to vote for change?. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

The newscaster continued his introduction by referring to the former repression of protesters such as Ken Saro Wiwa.

Newscaster: In the swampland of Nigeria’s Delta, the heirs of Ken Saro Wiwa are demanding change. The government hanged him for his protests but that hasn’t silenced those who now want a share of their region’s vast oil wealth. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

Both the Channel 4 and BBC1 reports included local voices, who together illustrated the extent to which the inhabitants of the Delta feel powerless, excluded and damaged by the oil industry. Following the studio introduction to Channel 4’s bulletin, the report from Nigeria began with a statement from an elderly Nigerian couple standing in their doorway:

Local people: We have no voice, we have no voice. If you talk, they bring armed men to silence you. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

On BBC1, a local spokesperson explained the reasons for existing resentment towards the oil companies:

Local person: Our people have nothing – no benefit from Shell – no employment, no render, nothing from Shell. They are just here for their own purpose, their own money. (BBC1: 19.2.99, 2100)

The same report introduced a disaffected young male whose livelihood was adversely affected by the polluting aspects of the oil industry:

People like Adam belong to a youth organisation of the Ijaw tribe, which is becoming increasingly militant because they say they can’t fish for example in clear water and they’re begging the new government to change things. (BBC1: 19.2.99, 2100)

The following comment from Adam echoes that made by Ezeke, the young Ibo from the Eastern Region, whose comment on his disaffection was included in the previous section:

The system we are in now is like we are rejected people. We are not Nigerian. We are only living in Nigeria. (BBC1: 19.2.99, 2100)

On Channel 4, a young local activist was introduced as a follower of Ken Saro Wiwa:

Reporter: Some Ijaws have taken to sabotaging oil heads and kidnapping oil workers. Others like Paterson Ogan see themselves as the heirs to Ken Saro Wiwa who organised protests about poverty in the oil communities of the Delta and was killed by Nigeria’s military government in 1995. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

Paterson Ogan: There’s no justice, there’s no fairness in what we are living here. We’re living in poverty, in misery – we are living in oppression. And the leadership is just a clique. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

However, the ‘angry young men of the Delta’ were not the only ones to be given a voice in this report. The neighbouring Itshekiri people claimed in the programme that elements of the Ijaw youth were behaving in a lawless fashion and advocated giving the democratic process a chance:

Youth leader: We’ve had enough military rule, and so now it’s time for democracy. Let us try this – whether it will actually work for us. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)
Finally, Channel 4’s report concluded with a comment on the diminishing profits of the oil industry: 

_Reporter:_ Nigeria’s greatest irony – fuel shortages, because oil is exported and the refineries for local consumption have broken down. The oil now selling at only $10 a barrel – even if the new government does ensure that more wealth stays where it’s produced – there’ll be far less to go round. Oil should have been Nigeria’s blessing, but it’s become the Delta’s curse. The flares pollute the bush. The boom years are over, just as the people are ready to demand their due. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

Both news channels highlighted the contrast between Nigeria’s oil wealth and the impoverished living conditions of the people. In the Delta, the viewer could see that not only were the neighbours of the oilfields living in poverty, they had to live on polluted land, and fish in water polluted by the oil industry.

There was further discussion in the press of the interests of companies like Shell in Nigeria. Alex Duval Smith indicates the motivation of Western countries and companies in supporting the apparently democratic elections there:

_The developed world is eager to do business with Nigeria. Its oil companies have been unable to do so properly since November 1995, when General Abacha ordered the execution of the author Ken Saro-Wiwa.... Last week, in a show of support for General Abubakar’s transition programme, Royal Dutch/Shell announced that it would invest $8.5 billion (£5.3 billion). Nigeria wants the world to come back: it earns 95 per cent of its foreign currency from oil.... European and US companies are dying to return, now the word “democracy” can be said to be part of Nigerian politics._ (Alex Duval Smith, Independent on Sunday, 14.2.99, p.17)

Conflict in the Delta Region has continued since the elections, with reports of sabotage and kidnapping by Ijaw splinter groups, and of summary executions of Ijaw protesters by the Nigerian military – Shell fights fires as strife flares in delta (John Vidal, The Guardian, 15.9.99).

This has not deterred Western investors, who have waited since 1995 to be able to increase dealings with the country. The Nigerian Guardian reported on 18.11.99 that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation – NNPC – had signed a $1 billion pact with Shell and others to finance development of a new oilfield, with production expected to come on stream in 2002. A manager of the company reportedly ‘expressed confidence in the Nigerian economy, adding that the petroleum sector, in spite of some temporary difficulties, had enormous potential.’ The same newspaper reported on the same day that thirteen companies from the UK Energy Industries Council were to arrive in Nigeria on 29.11.99 ‘to promote new and mutually beneficial commercial relations between the British energy sector operators and their Nigerian counterparts.’ Television news coverage of the elections demonstrated considerable doubt about the potential inclusiveness of Nigerian governance, given the limited influence of the Ibos, Ijaws and the conflict between North and South. But the purposes and priorities of Western investors received less attention on television news.

C.2.2.7. **North and South**

This section is again based mainly on reports by Channel 4 News, broadcast on 27.2.99 and 1.3.99 (with a total of 23 statements, 2 made by BBC1). Most references in this section involve comparisons between the North and South of Nigeria, although mainly consisting of comments on the culture and lifestyle of Northern Nigeria. The North is described as being conservative, Muslim and occupied by military personnel. The candidates’ appeal to the electorate was also explained against this background, as indicated in the table above.

Both BBC1 and Channel 4 made similar points about the importance of the cultural leader in the North – the Emir. On BBC1, the cultural leader was described as a powerful individual:

_This is the Emir of Kano – a hereditary ruler of extraordinary significance. The Emir has no formal power, but he is enormously influential and he’ll be an important ally for the new president._ (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

On Channel 4, the comment on the power of the Emir was accompanied by the only reference to the legacy of colonialism amidst the coverage:

_Reporter:_ Nigeria might just have elected a new president, but here in Kano the Emir remains the cultural leader of the people. The traditions of Northern Nigeria are very different from the South and very much alive. The people are Muslim. They speak Hausa – united with the Yorubas and Ijaws of the South by an accident of colonialism. (Channel 4: 1.3.99, 1900)

Local doctor Beko Ransome Kuti, explained that people living in the South had considerable reservations about the different culture of the North:

_Beko Ransome Kuti:_ I am very clear that we are just not the same people. We have different cultures, we have different regions, different outlooks, different aspirations. You see they have the feudal system there, which cannot
work in the South. Nobody will allow that kind of thing to happen in the South, when the Emir can literally do whatever he likes. (Channel 4: 1.3.99, 1900)

The extent of the suspicion and resentment of people living in Southern Nigeria was also highlighted by the reporter, who emphasised the difficulty faced by the new president in gaining the trust of the South Nigeria:

**Reporter:** Most people here in Lagos and elsewhere in Southern Nigeria voted against General Obasanjo, even though he comes from this part of the country. He’s going to find it really difficult to persuade Southerners that he’s not just a stooge for the North and the military, protecting the same old interests. (Channel 4: 1.3.99, 1900)

Apart from a brief comment on the subject from BBC1, Channel 4 was the only channel to report on ethnic tensions between North and South Nigeria.

**C.2.2.8. Predictions/prescriptions**

The analysis above indicates the considerable range of opinions and conflicting interests involved behind the Nigerian elections. Prediction of the longer term outcome and suggestions of what should be done to avoid deepening conflict in the country varied. Channel 5 and ITN, who provided only very brief statements on the elections, did not make predictions about the consequences for Nigeria. The report by Newsnight cautiously concluded with an open verdict:

**Reporter:** The election has lit a path but no one knows where it will lead. (Newsnight: 1.3.99, 2230)

However, in both BBC1 and Channel 4, there were attempts to assess how effective the changeover from military to civilian government would be. A small number of these predictions and prescriptions were made by Nigerian people, with the majority expressed by reporters. There were two references which indicated that the elections were irrelevant, or would make no difference:

**Fela Ransome Kuti:** I’m one of the pessimists. I don’t think these elections are relevant. (Channel 4: 1.3.99, 1900)

**Reporter:** These are the Ijaw – the angry young men of the Delta... They don’t believe the elections – the transition from military to civilian rule – will make any difference to their lives. (Channel 4: 25.5.99, 1900)

Similarly sceptical, a further three references indicated that the military would not stay out of power for long:

**Reporter:** The worry for everybody is that civilians won’t rule Nigeria for long. (BBC1: 26.2.99, 1800)

And while Channel 4 on the day of the elections emphasised the importance of tackling the military’s legacy of corruption:

**Reporter:** Today the democratic process seems more important than who wins. Tomorrow the victor will have to start addressing the military government’s legacy of corruption and poverty. (Channel 4: 27.2.99, 1830)

The same reporter also recognised the underlying threat of the military to the transition to democracy:

**Reporter:** The South sees the North as parasitic and the government predatory. If General Obasanjo does nothing to change that, Southerners will remain resentful. But if he allows the South to retain more of its own resources, the North will lose out and that could provoke the military to overturn Nigeria’s latest attempt at democracy. (Channel 4: 1.3.99, 1900)

There were four statements to the effect that democracy was in itself an improvement in Nigeria’s circumstances: Three of these were made by BBC1

**Reporter:** So there are high expectations that at last Nigeria’s poor may start to get a slice of its wealth. Fortunately the vote rigging has not much affected confidence in the election result. Democracy is sending a thrill through this country. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 1800)

**World Affairs Editor:** Maybe this is the beginning of a new era for this country. (BBC1: 26.2.99)

While a fourth was made by a Nigerian businessman on Channel 4 New:

**Nigerian oil prospector:** It is important because we’ve been making one step forwards and twenty backwards in terms of democracy, and I think this is one of the last opportunities we have to restore democracy. (Channel 4: 27.2.99, 1830)

Most prescriptive references on the Nigerian elections concerned the need to unite the population of the country, for democracy to succeed. There were a total of 12 references here. Some of these involved general statements about the need for unity:

**Reporter:** The new president will need the backing of his people to turn the country around. (BBC1: 28.2.99, 1710)

Other references concerned specific divisions within the country, such as that between rich and poor – in this case concluding a report on the distribution of oil wealth in the country:

**Reporter:** The next government’s biggest task will be to bring Nigeria together – to give its poor people a share in the country’s riches. (BBC1: 19.2.99, 2100)
Referring to the large population and wide variety of ethnic groups in Nigeria, the following conclusions were drawn:

**Reporter:** Keeping all these different peoples together will be extremely hard. General Obasanjo has just four years to do it. (BBC1: 1.3.99, 2100)

**Law Student:** The priority of any leader that will be voted today is to see that Nigeria becomes united, in such a way that everybody will have the feeling that he’s a Nigerian irrespective of his religion and tribe. (Channel 4: 27.2.99, 1830)

### C.2.2.9. Discussion

The quality and quantity of the coverage of the Nigerian elections varied considerably across the five terrestrial television channels. ITN and Channel 5 provided the briefest coverage, which included only the most frequent references from the overall coverage. As has been shown, in the absence of contextual information, the wording of these brief statements is particularly significant in the impression given to the viewer. While all five channels included references to allegations or evidence of vote rigging, a statement referring only to this aspect of the elections conveyed a rather hopeless image of the Nigerian attempt to install democracy.

Among the remaining three channels, specific case studies and examples were used to illustrate the various competing demands and conflicts confronting Nigeria’s new president. BBC1 provided the greatest breadth of coverage, with a total of eight related bulletins. Most of the information contained within these bulletins involved references to the presidential elections. BBC1 also covered the oil industry as a source of increasing conflict in the country. BBC2 and Channel 4, which were frequently mentioned in the audience study as being generally more informative, focused on specific social issues within Nigeria in order to illustrate the complexity of the society in which the elections were being held.

*Newsnight*’s report on 1 March concentrated on the Ibo people of the East of Nigeria. This was the only part of the coverage which included several references to the recent history of the country. References to the Biafran War, which took place in the wake of Nigeria’s independence from Britain, pointed to a people who had been crushed in their bid for independence from Nigeria, and who continue to be discriminated against almost three decades later. Interviews with local people highlighted that the Ibo people feel frustrated by their marginal position in the country. The focus of this report from Eastern Nigeria was unusual, with more press and television attention paid to the Delta Region in the South in recent months.

Channel 4’s reports on the conflict between the North and South of Nigeria provided background information on cultural and religious divides in the country, which have been strengthened by Northern alliances with the powerful military. The report on the Delta region concentrated on the irony of the contrast between the considerable oil wealth generated in the area, and the abject poverty of the mainly Ijaw people, who receive no benefit from the oil industry but suffer the consequences of pollution.

While the issue of debt relief did not feature in the television news, the transition from military to civilian rule in Nigeria was discussed in policy circles and in the press. Nigeria’s need for international aid increased with slumping oil prices. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook visited General Obasanjo within days of the latter’s election victory. Following the meeting, Cook was quoted in *The Guardian* (11.3.99) on the rapidly transforming status of Nigeria in terms of global economics:

*If they convince the international financial institutions that this really is new management then they will want to look at how to reschedule the debt in a realistic way.*

In the same newspaper weeks later, the following point further indicated the interdependence of the West and this developing country:

*The West needs a stable Nigeria to be an economic engine for west Africa and to continue its role as regional peacekeeper in Sierra Leone. In return, Nigeria needs debt relief. Britain is leading the charge to ease the country’s burden.* (Chris McGreal, *The Guardian*, 28.5.99, p.19)

Despite a number of reports which gave background information on Nigerian culture and politics and the oil industry, television news did not report on the Nigerian elections in relation to the global economy or Western interests other than the oil industries. The overall image is simply of a country which has not been able to govern itself and from which the mass of the population is excluded. What is not discussed is the extent to which this situation results from the links with the West. A key issue is that an economy based on oil requires only a relatively small number of experts to run it. An unelected military group is required only to ensure that the process continues. The military can buy their arms from the West or on the ‘free market’ financed by the oil companies. The mass of the population does not enter the equation. It may be that the skills exist within the Nigerian population to govern the country in a more progressive way.
fashion, but they are not allowed to do so. What is missing from the television news is an explanation of how the global economy works to contribute to such situations in the developing world.

C.2.3. Ugandan Tourist Killings

The television news coverage surrounding the kidnap and murder of Western tourists in Uganda 1 – 6 March 1999, revealed seven key areas of coverage, relating to descriptions of the crisis, its causes and prescriptions for resolving it. Each of these contained a number of sub-themes. The main areas are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive references to the kidnap and murder of tourists in Uganda.</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of the actions of the Ugandan government and prescriptions/responses to the crisis.</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The issue of risk and accountability in issuing advice to tourists visiting ‘remote’ areas.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations for the attack</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative view, that Africa is still a safe place to visit.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider economic and political implications of global terrorism</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section, the frequency of references to these themes is reviewed, as well as the manner in which they occurred for each of these categories.

C.2.3.1. Descriptive references to the events of the crisis

There were a total of 479 descriptive references to the kidnap and murder of a group of western tourists in Uganda by Rwandan Hutu rebels. Descriptions of the attack appeared more often than any other aspect of the crisis: five times more often, for example, than discussion of the quality of advice offered to tourists visiting ‘remote’ areas and accountability in issuing guidance. News of the incident first broke on ITN’s early evening bulletin with the headline:

**Newscaster**: Foreign Office says British tourists kidnapped in Uganda. The Foreign Office says several British tourists are among up to a dozen people who’ve been taken hostage while on holiday in Uganda. Straight to our correspondent at the Foreign Office. What’s the latest, what do we know? (1.3.99 ITN 1740-1800)

At this point, there is no contextual information from which to understand or make sense of the events which underpin the attack. Although the report did contain a brief reference to motive, by the time the late-night bulletin was broadcast there was no discussion of motive at all. As might be expected, the focus was initially overwhelmingly on the kidnapped British tourists. For example:

**Newscaster**: Fears for British tourists kidnapped in Uganda. The Foreign Office confirmed tonight that five British tourists are among 14 people kidnapped by Rwandan rebels. The tourists, who were on a gorilla tracking holiday, were captured during a raid on their campsite in south-west Uganda. (1.3.99 ITN 2200-2230)

The report was weighed heavily towards descriptions of their holiday; the tourists’ reasons for being there and the events which ensued. There was no discussion of the rebel abductors. Of 43 references which attributed the kidnap to the Hutu Interahamwe group, only 15 gave explanations of who they were. Some of these 15 explained the violence in terms of ‘trouble in neighbouring Rwanda between...different tribes’ or ‘bitter, murderous’ groups ‘roaming’ whose actions are related to genocide in Rwanda that is scarcely explained. For example:

**Newscaster**: And it’s the first time that this has happened to tourists in this neck of the woods?

**Reporter**: It’s been increasingly volatile, ever since the trouble in neighbouring Rwanda between the different tribes there and indeed last August there was another attack when several tourists were abducted, that still hasn’t been cleared up. (BBC1 1800-1830)

**Reporter**: But, its close neighbours, Congo and Rwanda are fighting and displaced Rwandan rebels are roaming. These are bitter, murderous men, the remnants of the militia which committed the Rwandan genocide. (2.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830)

While we were told that ‘a shared interest in wildlife’ brought the tourists together because it is ‘one of the few places in the world where it is possible to see and photograph the rare mountain gorillas’, the rebels were not discussed beyond statements of their accountability. The sense of ambiguity encasing the kidnap is added to by lack of clarity in the details. On the first day of the coverage, estimates of the number abducted were ‘up to 13 British tourists’ on Channel 4 (1.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1955), and ‘as many as a dozen tourists, several of them believed to be British’ on Channel 5 (1.3.99 Channel 5
of the dead were Britons. Two were Americans and two New Zealanders.

There are grave fears for the safety of six more tourists who were yet to be accounted for.

Newscaster: Some reports are saying of course that eight people have been killed, but obviously let’s hope that you are right and it’s only five. Do you know anything about the nationalities of those who were killed? (2.3.99 BBC1 1300-1330; our emboldening)

The language and visuals conveyed an increasingly ‘violent’ and ‘bloody’ image of Africa. News that some tourists had died in a gun-battle between the Rwandan rebels and Ugandan army is broken as ‘shattering the peace of the forest’ and ‘a story of violence and terror unfolding from Uganda this lunchtime’ (Channel 5 2.3.99 1200-1230). Descriptions such as these paralleled visuals on BBC1 where statements on the numbers killed were silhouetted by an image of African rebels dancing in grass skirts at a border post (2.3.99 BBC1 1300-1330). As the report departed and returned from the studio to reporter and back, this same visual anchored the newscaster throughout. Discussions on the quality of Foreign Office advice, the ‘warning’ to avoid ‘far flung destinations’ and personal accounts of survivors all fall against this visual backdrop. Although, the image was dropped by BBC1’s evening bulletin, the children’s news programme Newsround carried it with the summary:

Newscaster: Eight tourists including four Britons have been killed on holiday in Africa. A group of fourteen people were on safari, hoping to catch a glimpse of the famous Black Gorillas, whose home is in the Bwindi National Park in Uganda, when they were kidnapped.

Today, Ugandan soldiers tried to rescue the group from the rebels who were holding them, but eight of the tourists were killed in the gun battle that followed. Six people managed to escape. (Newsround, BBC1 1700-1710)

However, when it was revealed that the tourists had not died as part of a botched rescue attempt but had in fact been murdered, there were almost three times as many references to the murder of British people abroad than to their death in the ‘gun battle’. This became a major news theme with 130 references, particularly on BBC1 and ITN which featured 22 and 17 references compared to 9 on Channel 4, 8 on BBC2 and Channel 5 with 7 references. Reports were structured around descriptions that convey the ‘horror’ and ‘shock’ of the
attack. *Sky News* reported, ‘It is horrific, as the details become clear of exactly what happened, it’s even more shocking, (the tourists) were separated off from the trail and butchered, they were literally hacked to death,’ (3.3.99 *Sky News* 1808 hours). The adjectives ‘hacked’ and ‘bludgeoned’ to death permeated the news accounts between 1-5 March 1999. 15 of the 17 references to this were direct statements by journalists. For example:

**Newscaster:** This is *Sky News*, the headlines. *Uganda has vowed to hunt down and kill the Rwandan rebels who bludgeoned to death 8 tourists, including 4 Britons. Sky News 1818*)

**Newscaster:** Among the shaken survivors today, there were accounts of how tourists were hacked to death after the gang had separated the British and Americans from among them. (2.3.99 BBC2 2230-2315; our italics)

The phrase ‘murdered in cold blood’ frequently appears in direct statements on Channel 5, BBC1 and BBC2. BBC1 for example, carried this headline:

**Newscaster** (Repeat of headlines at end of news): Eight tourists, four of them British have been murdered in Uganda. Hutu rebels from Rwanda crossed the border, rounded up tourists and killed them in cold blood. BBC1 2100-2130)

On *Sky News*, the incident became known as the ‘Ugandan jungle massacre’ and ‘slaughter in the jungle’ and their abductors, the ‘safari slaughterers’. Their captions read ‘Holiday Massacre’ and ‘Tourist Massacre’. On Channel 4 ‘the details’ were described as ‘almost too horrific to contemplate’ (2.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1950). On ITN headlines which declared ‘safari park massacre’ and ‘horror stories from the jungle,’ were juxtaposed with accounts on BBC2 which described ‘the grotesque way in which some were chosen for death by machete’ (2.3.99 BBC2 2230-2315).

There were a further 41 references to the ‘brutality’, ‘ruthless’, ‘terrifying’ ‘savagery of the ‘slaughter’; 36 of these were direct statements by journalists. It was described as a ‘rather grisly, hideous publicity stunt,’ by one reporter (2.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830). Another report on *Sky News* referred to rivalry in the investigation that followed, between the local Ugandan authorities and the British CID who were being flown over to assist in the inquiry. *Sky News* described how it was turning into an ‘undeclared bush war’ (5.3.99 *Sky News* 1838). The ‘ruthlessness’ of the crime and condemnation of the attack by the Prime Minister who denounced it as an act of ‘wickedness’ are set out against the shocked accounts of survivors.

### C.2.3.2. Responses to the crisis

When the news broke that Western tourists had been murdered in Uganda, discussion quickly moved to review what actions were being taken to resolve the crisis in the short-term and vows by the President of Uganda, ‘that the rebels who slaughtered eight tourists will be captured or killed’ and that troops had already begun to pursue the killers through the jungle. This was a main theme of the news coverage with 234 references. For example:

**Newscaster:** The Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni has vowed to capture dead or alive, the gang responsible for murdering eight Western tourists. His troops are pursuing the killers, thought to be Rwandan Hutu rebels, over the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo. (3.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830)

Some reports on *Sky News* and Channel 4 explored how the Ugandan response was a battle for public opinion emanating from the fact that it was a ‘global story’. For example:

**Reporter:** the battle at the moment is for the world’s public opinion, this is very much a global story simply because of the number of nationalities involved, the world’s media is here and tomorrow representatives of the media are being invited by the military to be helicoptered down to that region, to show exactly what they’re doing, how determined they are to try to track down the killers and to make the national park safe again, but I think that is very much a battle for public opinion as I say and to try to repair some of the devastation that has been done to Uganda’s once promising tourist industry. (2.3.99 *Sky News* 1800-1808)

By 4 March, consideration of their actions had moved from criticism of their failure to prevent the attack to their response and suggestions that efforts to pursue the killers were a PR stunt:

**Charles Obbo, Editor, The Monitor:** I think they are under a lot of pressure to show that they are doing something, but my own point is that most of that is PR. If they don’t tackle the broader regional issues, if they do not resolve the various conflicts in the region, it won’t make a difference, they are just cracking the surface, we will have another attack in another part of the country, only a different tally and the casualties will be higher. (4.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1955)

The Ugandan government was heavily criticised for failing to prevent the crisis. Criticisms mainly occurred on ITN (8 references), *Sky News* (7 references), Channel 4 (6 references) and BBC1 (5 references). ITN in particular focused on allegations that warnings which could have prevented the massacre, were not passed on. These were
often accompanied by self-criticisms of the Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, that the country had not done enough to protect its visitors.

Criticism of the Ugandan government and prescriptions to resolve the crisis also focused on how agents from the American FBI had arrived in Uganda to conduct their own investigation. On 4 March, Sky News focused on moves by the CID to participate in the Ugandan investigation. Former Commander of Scotland Yard, John O’Connor was interviewed describing at length what part they would play and how the CID would ‘bring their own methods of the tried and tested’ to bear on the inquiry. In particular:

*John O’Connor*: they’ll run the Home computer system, which is the Home Office large measure enquiry system, so they will bring the expertise, they also bring the resources that go with that, they bring the Forensic Science Services, with them and they bring the fingerprint services... Secondly, the most important thing as well, they raise the standards, because the standard of investigation which are carried out in most African countries, is not to the standard that you get here. So, you’d need to look at, when they get confessions out of people, had the confessions been obtained with due regard to someone’s human rights, had they beaten the confessions out...

He makes the point that the CID will be conducting their own investigation because often in developing countries the murder of Western tourists is treated as an economic matter. For example:

*John O’Connor*: But, it’s not that, that isn’t the case, you’ve go to look at who the victims are, it becomes an economic matter because very often these countries are dependent on western aid, they’re also dependent on tourism money and the minute that it comes out that somewhere like this is going to be dangerous, it affects them in their pockets. So, they want to make sure that the public at large realise that everything is being done that can be done. (4.3.99 Sky News 1816-20)

There is very little critical questioning about the effectiveness of a CID operation and whether a British policing approach would be of much use in a situation such as this.

**C.2.3.3. Explanations of the crisis**

The news reports contained 165 explanations, of which only 31 provided any in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the attack, or related it to developments in central African politics. On most channels, explanations subscribed to the idea that adventure travel is by nature precarious and this was a dangerous area. Repeatedly we heard ‘it was dangerous, it was one of these adventure holidays’ and that it ‘seems an extremely risky area in which to take tourists’ (2.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830; 2.3.99 ITN 1230-1300 respectively). There were 63 references to this, where danger is qualified as adventure and the issue is deflected onto the risks involved where, for many, the risks were part of the attraction. We are told these were no ordinary travellers, they were ‘holiday makers in search of an African adventure’ who would have been aware of the risks involved (2.3.99 ITN 2200-2230). As ITN notes, the place ‘beckoned those with a spirit of adventure and a passion for the wild’ (2.3.99 ITN 2200-2230). Channel 4 explored the issue in some detail. The editor of Condé Nast Traveller magazine, in an interview, profiled the adventure traveller for whom ‘the desire to escape and experience some of the world’s beautiful places is incredibly appealing’. Barely however, is the nature of the danger explored beyond appeals to ‘tribal friction’, ‘regional instability’, ‘ethnic conflict’ and ‘insurrection’:

*Reporter*: The tourists had no inkling that, what for some was a once in a lifetime safari, would plunge them into the violent cockpit of Central African politics and to their deaths. (4.3.99 Sky News 1800)

*Reporter*: The insurrections that continue in so many parts of Africa have forced western travellers to avoid vast swathes of the continent. Such countries are judged simply too dangerous to visit. (Visual: Militia men on truck with large rifle behind them). From the militias and violence of East Africa to the civil war in Sierra Leone, the Foreign Office now advises Britons against travelling to 17 separate countries. (Visual: Militia on truck with gun pointing at the top). Other areas are judged to be risky but acceptable for travellers on essential business. Uganda is still judged to be relatively safe for tourists, but not of course, the rainforest in South-West Uganda, so popular with adventure travellers, but with the Hutu death squads in the region, now off-limits. (3.3.99 ITN 2210-2315)

The image of Africa is obviously very negative. But the news also explored why travellers would still want to go:

*John Gillis, Adventure Tour Operator*: Life is quite boring and predictable mostly and that’s precisely why people go to places where they’re not quite sure what’s going to happen tomorrow. That doesn’t necessarily mean to say that what will happen tomorrow is unsafe.

*Reporter*: But there’s still a dilemma. Travel companies want to offer out of the ordinary adventure holidays and sometimes extraordinary adventure holidays carry real danger. (2.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830)
There is little explanation of why the rebels segregated British and American tourists from the rest. For example:

**Newscaster:** As more information emerges about the way in which the victims died, it seems likely that most of them were murdered because they were British and American, who the rebels regard as their enemies.

**Reporter:** And tonight it’s emerged that these killers may have singled out British victims in particular. (3.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830)

Only BBC2 conducted an investigation of British and American foreign policy in the region. This linked western intervention to the attack. The report opens:

**Newscaster:** Rebels murder four Britons in Uganda. Is the cost of our foreign policy now to be counted in the lives of holiday makers?

The newscaster continues:

**Newscaster:** Good evening, the people who murdered eight tourists, four of them British, had singled them out, they said because they disliked the politics of their government. It’s not the first time that British holiday makers have died as a consequence of our foreign policy. What’s to be done? The people responsible for killing innocent tourists in cold blood are the Rwandan rebels, who fled the Tutsi regime in Rwanda which is backed by both Britain and the United States.

The newscaster sustained his examination of this view, despite resistance from the Foreign Office minister. Six times he challenged Baroness Symons on the issue that British tourists may have been ‘killed by people who do not like some of the policies of our government.’ A point which he endorsed with a direct quote from the British High Commissioner in Kampala. The newscaster asked:

**Newscaster:** Baroness Symons, this isn’t the first time that British tourists have been killed by people who don’t like some of the policies of our government. Are you planning to change anything?

**Baroness Symons, Foreign Office Minister:** Can I just say at the start that we don’t actually know why these people were killed. I think until we are able to debrief everybody and get a much fuller picture of exactly the circumstances of what happened, eye-witness accounts and other accounts that may be available, it’s very easy to rush to judgement over what happened.

**Newscaster:** I’m sorry, I’ve been quoting the British High Commissioner in Kampala, who says, quote ‘the rebels tried to identify Britain and American tourists from the others, they claimed that it was revenge for alleged British and American support for Ugandan and Rwandan intervention in the Congo.’

**Baroness Symons:** I have that, but I think we must also take into account the other reports that we are getting. I very much hope we will have a much fuller picture tomorrow. I understand that you’re quoting what’s been said and I understand as well that there have been other people who have cast some doubt about exactly what happened and they were there on the spot, I do think that we’ve got to be careful, but I do take your general point that it seems to be the case that more and more people, do find themselves susceptible to this sort of appalling atrocity. (2.3.99 BBC2 2230-2315)

There are references on other channels to how victims may have been targeted because they were British or American. Against visuals of a mass grave in Rwanda, a BBC1 report states:

**Reporter:** This is just one of the mass graves in Rwanda, ghastly legacy of the great terror unleashed by Hutus now directed against tourists. The Hutus did succeed then in killing over half a million, but they lost control of Rwanda to their enemies, the Tutsis, who now rule. Certainly, Britain and the United States support the new order, but so does most of the rest of the world. The Hutus did get some active support from France, troops were sent by President Mitterand, apparently to promote peace and create a safe-haven in south-west Rwanda, instead, it became a refuge for French-speaking Hutus who regrouped there to go on killing. At the Foreign Office, he says, Britain have been especially forceful denouncing genocide, but he says, he’s trying to bring peace to the entire region.

**Tony Lloyd, MP, Foreign Office Minister:** We’ve made it very clear that there can be no support for those who commit those evil crimes and I think that our reasons for taking that position have been borne out by the equally wicked crimes that we saw committed yesterday. (3.3.99 BBC1 2100-2130)

We are told ‘officials stress there is nothing new about Britain’s policy in the region’ and that although ‘Britain and the United States support the new order...so does most of the rest of the world.’ Britain’s support of Ugandan troops in the Congo is described as ‘Britain being ‘especially forceful in denouncing genocide’ where the Foreign Office minister, Tony Lloyd is ‘trying to bring peace to the entire region’. Only 15 of the explanations dealt with the political and economic implications of the attack on Uganda, most of which
dealt with the impact on the tourism industry. For example:

**Reporter:** This is Uganda's web-site, sold as the Pearl of Africa, tourism is a crucial part of her economy. (BBC1 1300-1330)

But statements such as these were generally insubstantial in nature. Only Sky News covered the issue in any depth, this focused on how tourism had helped rebuild East Africa's economy '20 years after Idi Amin's blood-drenched tyranny'. We are told that tourism, after coffee, is Uganda's 'biggest dollar and pound earner' and that the 'massacre has done untold damage to the image of one of East Africa's emerging economies'. For example:

**John Kayihura, Tour Operator:** ...it's going to be a year or so before we can really get back in line, but the gorilla viewing and gorilla safaris are going to be affected tremendously.

**Reporter:** Kampala's tour offices are busy only with cancellations, what normally are the peak sessions for safaris. It's estimated that the stay-away could cost over £100,000 a month. And that's money this country could ill-afford to lose and after coffee production and prices have financially become volatile, overseas visitors contributed the biggest amount of foreign currency, accounting until Monday at any rate, for 5% of the entire national wealth. Last year, there was a year's waiting list for permits to track the rare Silver-Backed Gorillas through the Bwindi Hills, now the Impenetrable Forest lives up to its name, swept only by helicopter gunships in search for the elusive killers who were bringing a slow death to Uganda's tourism. (5.3.99 Sky News 1838)

There was only one report which referred to the consequences on conservation in the region.

**Shaun Mann, Tourism Advisor to the Ugandan Government:** From a conservation perspective, it's very damaging because the gorilla permits bring a lot of revenue, about 70% of the revenue required to kind of keep these protected areas staffed and operating and without that revenue we're going to struggle to pay salaries next month. (3.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1955)

Although many of the explanations did attempt to relate the murder of Western tourists to the history of the region, the quality of these accounts varied substantially. Most of the 31 explanations provided little more than a basic allusion to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and in most cases, the economic or political structure that yielded the violence is not discussed. The genocide is represented simply as the result of ‘trouble...between...tribes’ and ‘rebel groups’:

**Reporter:** It's been increasingly volatile, ever since the trouble in neighbouring Rwanda, between the different tribes there... (1.3.99 BBC1 1800-1830)

**Reporter:** Those responsible for the kidnapping are Rwandan Hutus, known as the Interahamwe. They were responsible for the genocide against the Tutsi four years ago when one million people died in just 100 days. Since the killing they've linked up with other rebel groups in the Bwindi National Park area, known also as the Impenetrable Forest. (2.3.99 Channel 5 1200-1230)

Explanations which attribute responsibility for the kidnapping to the Interahamwe gave little sense of the political conflict that precipitated the violence and continues to furnish rebel activity. We are told repeatedly they are ‘bitter, murderous men’ who ‘slaughtered hundreds of thousands of men, women and children during the Rwandan civil war of 1994’ but with no reference to the history of the nature of Rwandan society. The genocide is little explained, as this Channel 5 report demonstrates:

**Reporter:** Tourists have been coming to these jungles for adventure and to see the famous mountain gorillas, but now this area known as the Impenetrable Forest, has clearly been infiltrated by the notorious killers, the Interahamwe.

Facts intended to contextualise the events, are so compressed that they render the information meaningless. Juxtaposed against the visual of a crowd of people pushing and pulling, the graphic appears:

**Graphic:** INTERAHAMWE

'Those who kill together'

Genocide left more than half a million dead

Lost control of Rwanda

In exile on the borders

**Reporter:** They caused havoc in their native Rwanda. The name Interahamwe means 'Those who kill together.' In 1994, those extremists from the Hutu ethnic group killed more than half a million people. They lost out to rivals from the ethnic group, the Tutsi, who now control Rwanda, but it's thought tens of thousands of Hutu now live in exile on the borders of Uganda. And tonight it's emerged that these killers may have singled out British victims in particular.

**Professor George Kirya, Ugandan High Commissioner:** There was a message which was left by
these thugs which stated that they were in for the Britons and Americans, because they said, these two countries are supporting the Tutsis, who are in the minority, leaving the Hutus, who are in the majority suffering. (2.3.99 Channel 5 1900-1930)

We are told, ‘those extremists from the Hutu ethnic group killed more than half a million people’ and then ‘lost out to rivals from the ethnic group, the Tutsi.’ But, the reasons for the violence are not explained. The genocide is depicted as both the cause and effect of ethnic hatred in Africa. We are told they are killing because of ‘ethnic hatred’ and the murder of the tourists is retribution for British and American support of the new Tutsi government in Rwanda. Other reports tell how ‘since the genocide in 1994 there have been a lot of those Hutu Interahamwe people running wild really’ (2.3.99 Channel 5 1200-1230; researcher’s italics) and that ‘thousands of Hutus took to the bush and jungle and still mount murderous raids on communities in Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo’ (2.3.99 BBC1 1300-1330; our italics). In the absence of detailed explanation, such violence may appear inexplicable and perhaps systemic to Africa.

It would be difficult to see how viewers could make much sense of these events, beyond the fact that Hutus and Tutsis are ‘rivals’ and that the violence is driven by deep-seated ‘ethnic hatred’. What is not said is that more than ‘ethnic hatred’ propelled the violence. Reports such as these deflect attention from politics to notions of anarchy resulting from the innate ‘brutality’ of its inhabitants. Channel 4 contained a more comprehensive explanation of the genocide. For example:

**Reporter:** The conflict between Hutus and Tutsis goes back to the end of colonialism in 1959. In 1994 Rwanda collapsed into anarchy. Hutu extremists including the Interahamwe, killed more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

**Graphic (Over map of Congo and Rwanda and visual of dead bodies):** 1994 – Extremists then flee to former Zaire

**Graphic:** 1996 – Laurent Kabila topples the dictatorship in Zaire...renaming the Democratic Republic of Congo

1998 – The Interahamwe maintain their presence in Eastern Congo...Kabila switches sides and supports Hutus.

**Reporter:** The extremists were defeated and fled mainly to what’s now become the Democratic Republic of Congo. Behind the minority Tutsi during the fighting was President Museveni of Uganda. In 1996, Laurent Kabila toppled the dictatorship of President Mobutu and renamed Zaire, the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Hutu Interahamwe retain their presence in the East of the country by 1998, Kabila had changed allegiances from Tutsis to Hutus and made enemies of the governments. (2.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1950)

This report also notes, unusually, that the Hutu ‘extremists’ killed both Hutu moderates and Tutsis in the genocide. The majority of the reports refer to the kidnapping and murder of British and American tourists, but not to how the release of French captives relates to the history of Rwanda. Reports refer to how Britons were murdered because it is ‘the Tutsi dominated government, with British and American support that they want to get rid of’ (3.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1955). But, in only two reports is it explained how the intricacies of Rwandan politics determined the release of French tourists from the kidnapped group. Both the lunchtime and late evening bulletins on BBC1 dealt with this, the lunchtime bulletin in particular, contained a detailed discussions. The report begins with a review of why British and American tourists may have been targeted, but quickly moves on to consider why French tourists were released because the Hutus have ‘historic colonial links with the French’:

**Reporter:** It’s a United Nations tribunal which tried and convicted the former Hutu Prime Minister, who led the genocide. But the Hutu did get some active support and have historic colonial links with the French. That probably explains why their nationals among the safari group were spared.

This is addressed in more depth in the discussion which follows:

**Newscaster:** You mention in your piece, the links between France and Belgium and the Hutus, the traditional links, are these purely a thing of the past or do they still exist?

**Reporter:** No, they’re not a thing of the past and I think this is a cause for concern, particularly within Western Europe. Many of the leaders of the Hutu rebels have actually sought and found refuge, exile in both France and in Belgium, the old colonial power and its believed that there’s some good evidence that Hutus in both these countries, France and Belgium, are actively raising funds, helping the Interahamwe to carry on this last ditch effort to sow mayhem and bring bloodshed to the area. So, there is a strong feeling that the Hutus are enjoying some form of tacit support within France and Belgium, although the governments there of course, would deny any form of active support. (3.3.99 BBC1 1300-1330)
C.2.3.4. Risk and accountability in issuing advice to tourists visiting remote areas

The murder of tourists in Uganda raised serious questions about the quality of advice given to tourists visiting remote destinations and the nature of risk and accountability in issuing that guidance. There were 86 references to this theme in news reports between 1-6 March. These mainly occurred on ITN and BBC1, which featured 18 references each, and Channel 5 with nine. Twenty two of these references focused on how the region had been considered safe for tourists to visit.

Reporter: This particular National Park, set up in 1991, had been relatively tranquil and Uganda had been making a lot of effort to try and resuscitate its economically important tourist industry, but obviously, this has been a bitter blow. (2.3.99 ITN 1230-1300)

Although reports were organised initially to explore the quality of advice offered by the Foreign Office, these contained strong defences of the British Foreign Office position. For example, on BBC1 where both the lunchtime and tea-time bulletins on 2 March contained Foreign Office officials and ministers defending their advice.

C.2.3.5. Economic and political implications of global terrorism

A few reports contextualised the events within a wider framework, with analysis focusing on longer-term global developments. Only 27 references related to this, 19 of which occurred on Channel 4 on 3 March. These considered how the death of tourists in Uganda related to emerging new patterns of world disorder after the Cold War. The report explored the developing phenomenon of global terrorism and its impact on tourism. It showed how tourists are the growing capital of terrorist groups, so much so that:

abduction is to the 1990s what hijacking was to the 1970s. On Dawson’s Field in Jordan, Palestinian guerrillas blew up planes to make their demands felt. Today’s armed groups from Uganda and Yemen are realising abducting foreigners carries similar force. The end of the Cold War was supposed to open up the world. Instead areas like Chechnya have become no-go areas for foreigners.

The report considers how ‘across the globe from Uganda in Yemen’ kidnap and murder emerged as the ‘calling card’ for ‘Yemen’s Islamic terrorists’. The report considers how the interventionist policies of the Cold War unleashed the uncontrollable across the globe, as political interests condense around religious difference and ethnic identity. The report is heavily directed toward the growing danger of terrorism for tourists and the collapse of order in the developing world. Only an interview with a Channel 4 reporter, highlighted how traumatic the proliferation of such disorder must be for citizens of post-client states. For example:

Reporter: It’s becoming increasingly difficult to untangle the threads. All of the little rebel movements have started to work together and then fight against each other. Each movement had its own logic, but that logic no longer applies as the region becomes more volatile, as there are more and more weapons, as people are poor and desperate and what that means is that it is occasionally dangerous for tourists or other foreigners who come here and it’s horribly dangerous all the time for people who live here. (3.3.99 Channel 4 1900-1955)

Only six references discounted the negative image of Africa. These cited the comments of Mark Ross, tour guide to the kidnapped tourists. But, his statement is often inserted into reports that cast a dubious light on the judgements of tour operators. One report on BBC2, for example, notes how ‘despite obvious dangers, similar trips to the area are likely to resume.’

Newscaster: The westerners who survived the attack are preparing for their journey home, but despite the obvious dangers, similar trips to the area are likely to resume.

Mark Ross, Tour Guide: The vast majority of East Africa and South Africa is fantastic with wonderful wildlife and wonderful people. No, I’m not giving up the business at all. It was a really sad, freaky, I think unpredictable occurrence.

Other reports contrasted the attitude of survivors against the dead victims.

Reporter: For the eight victims though, it is a different story. At Kampala morgue, their coffins were being prepared to fly them home. Four Britons, two Americans and two New Zealanders. (BBC1 1800-1830)

The murder of Western tourists in Uganda reflects many of the issues raised in earlier work by the Glasgow Media Unit. For although some news reports provided explanations of the events and their historical causes, many of the accounts given were very brief and more little beyond traditional accounts of Africa, with references to ‘tribal’ behaviour which may do little more than reflect a view of Africa as a place of conflict and unexplained ‘savagery’. At the heart of many of these problems is the fact that public knowledge of Africa and much of the developing world is very limited. This is sometimes also the case for journalists who are assigned to cover stories in such areas. One result is that a highly
differentiated continent, with many different languages and social structures can be seen through a series of general stereotypes.

C.2.4. Colombian Earthquake
This study of television news reports of the Colombian earthquake 25-31 January 1999, revealed four key areas of coverage which relate to the devastation, relief effort, civil disorder and looting which occurred in the aftermath of the disaster. The main areas are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1: Main themes in TV News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained references to disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relief effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil disorder and looting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of the crisis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section the frequency of these themes are reviewed, as well as the manner in which they occurred.

C.2.4.1. Unexplained references to disaster
There were 355 unexplained references to disaster in our news sample; reports were composed of layers of description which focused on the effects of disaster more than its causes. As such, descriptions appear more often than any other aspect of the crisis, appearing almost nine times more often than explanation of the situation so that almost half the coverage was subsumed by this. Scenes of destruction permeate the news accounts; on BBC1 and ITN in particular, aerial views of dwellings without roofs, abandoned vehicles and rescuers lifting stretchers head high, shoulder to shoulder through the rubble to ambulances, accompany headlines which weigh out the devastation in terms of the casualties; the numbers dead, those buried alive and those still missing. These channels featured 170 and 80 references respectively, in comparison to 46 on Channel 5, 40 on BBC2 and 26 on Channel 4. For example:

**Newscaster:** Many hundreds are feared to have died in an earthquake in Colombia. (BBC1 1300-1330)

**Newscaster:** Colombia’s earthquake, death toll rises to a thousand (ITN 2200-2230)

**Newscaster:** More than 1,000 people are now known to have died in the earthquake that’s destroyed entire cities in Colombia. Thousands more are still missing. (BBC1 2100-2130)

We are told the ‘death toll’ ‘has passed 1,000 and is likely to rise to more than 2,000 making it the worst disaster in the country’s history’ and BBC1 declares, ‘blood is in short supply and the local Red Cross fear the death toll could rise dramatically.’ (26.1.99 BBC1 1300-1330). Accounts of the rising death toll repeatedly accompany descriptions of the devastation:

**Reporter:** Whole cities have been flattened, houses and office blocks collapsing into rubble, and the death toll is still going up. For every one rescued, there are many more bodies left trapped beneath the concrete and dust. (Channel 5 1200-1230)

Bulletins are saturated with visual and textual images of disaster, devastation and loss which occur mostly without context or in-depth analysis. Panning shots frame frantic rescue attempts; survivors being lifted from the rubble of their former homes, rescuers searching with bare hands through the concrete carcasses of shops, office blocks and tea-rooms, raised to the ground with the entrails of life laid bare – furnishings, pipes, cables, a child’s hand clasping adult fingers jut out from beneath the dust. Aerial views in wide-angle lens and close-ups suture tragic scenes into the rhetoric of disaster. On BBC1 we are told, ‘it is a sea of devastation’ and Channel 5 declares ‘from the air you can see the complete devastation’ (26.1.99 BBC1 2100-2130; 26.1.99 Channel 5 1900-1930). Another report compares it to a war zone:

**Reporter:** It looks like a city blitzed from the air, in fact, Armenia in Western Colombia has been torn down by the massive shaking of the earth. (26.1.99 BBC1 1800-1830).

The coverage deals with the risk of epidemic from the lack of water, food and electricity; how the poor were the most vulnerable because their homes ‘were built with clay bricks,’ hospitals ‘overwhelmed by the...casualties’ and survivors – a population left homeless and destitute. BBC1 states, ‘this evening on street after street, people are living outside their ruined houses, tens of thousands of them, without a hope, without a town,’ (27.1.99 BBC1 2200-2300). Visuals of mass destruction are fleshed out with tales of individual tragedy that privatise disaster to each and every citizen. In one ITN report, the dilapidated remains of a ruined apartment block, its outer wall missing and inner rooms exposed, are personalised to the ‘grandfather of three children’, ‘for 72 hours his family have waited and hoped, but today the hope finally disappeared.’ The destroyed ‘hope’ of one family

DFID – July 2000
becomes the hopelessness of a nation digging ‘pitifully’ with ‘bare hands’ to salvage loved ones and possessions from the ruins. Descriptions pan out to Brasilia, where we are told ‘they’ve given up digging…failing to comprehend what has happened to their lives’. (28.1.99 ITN 2200-2230)

Language and visuals relay an overwhelming picture of devastation; massive six foot lists of the dead and row upon row of corpses laid out in black plastic bags in the local sports stadium. In one BBC1 report we are told that ‘a few yards away, a steady flow of coffins arrives at the cathedral in a community running out of caskets’ (27.1.99 BBC1 2100-2130). The scene of devastation is total, but there is little for an audience to understand except that this is yet another hopeless tale of disaster form the developing world; as BBC1 put it ‘today they were carrying their coffins through the ruins of a town called Armenia and it really is in ruins…the venom of an earthquake…has shocked a population well-used to such calamity’ (27.1.99 BBC1 2200-2300; our italics). There is no sense of what Armenia was before the earthquake, although the Independent on Sunday reported that the scenes of poverty and destitution which now confronted Western audiences were the remains of:

...a thriving city of coffee and cattle ranchers, a fashion-conscious middle class and coffee pickers who appeared relatively content to move around as migrant workers.

(Independent on Sunday 31.1.99)

On only one report, Channel 5’s ‘5 Facts’, was the point made that earthquakes are not specific to the developing world, Britain too has experienced them, though on a smaller scale, for example:

Reporter: Believe it or not, there are between 2 and 300 earthquakes in Britain every year, but they’re so small that only around 40 are even felt. The biggest one in recent times was in 1984. It happened in North Wales, caused chimneys to fall down in Liverpool and was felt as far afield as Edinburgh and Plymouth.

Graphic: Up to 300 UK quakes every year

Graphic: One felt from Edinburgh to Plymouth (Channel 5 1900-1930)

There were just 13 references to the fact that the earthquake hit Colombia’s coffee growing region, 13 that it had a reading of six on the Richter scale, three that the cities of Armenia and Pereira were the worst hit where the earthquake struck, and seven on the effects of the aftershocks. For example:

Newscaster: Reports from South America in the last hour say an earthquake has struck in Colombia, killing at least 87 people and injuring nearly a thousand. People were dragged from six on the Richter scale. The epicentre was in the heart of Colombia’s Western coffee growing belt. (25.1.99 ITN 2200-2230)

Some phrases insert technical information on the Richter reading and the location of the epicentre into the flow of imagery, but they are not developed by the dialogue that encase them. As such, they function more as lynchpins locking description and visuals into an account of disaster that sounds explanatory if in fact it is rather limited. Andreas Pastrana, the President of Colombia is featured addressing the nation on television. He declares that American banks have pledged $10 million in emergency aid and calls for international assistance:

Andreas Pastrana, Colombian President: American banks have guaranteed us $10 million from their special reserves, that’s on top of the $90 million in aid that we’ve already got in store. It’s my duty to do all I can to solve the tragedy in the coffee region. (27.1.99 BBC1 1300-1330)

Yet, why in fact it is important to ‘solve the tragedy in the coffee growing region’ beyond humanitarian reasons is not made clear in the report. In only one account in our sample are the effects of the disaster on the economy considered. ITN noted:

Reporter: Four days after the earthquake and this is about as civilized as it can get. Fresh water from a broken mains pipe, the chance to wash for families who have no homes, no possessions. The whole fabric of normal life for those who survived was lost in Colombia’s earthquake. They can rebuild again, but the task is overwhelming. In Armenia, a region with an economy dependent on coffee growing, there is simply no infrastructure in existence now to carry on with the trade. (ITN 1230-1330)

The type of aid given whether as soft loans or charitable assistance, is also not explored in the coverage. What we do see are scenes of disaster followed by calls for international assistance and pledges of financial aid from the West, but there is no discussion of its financial composition or how assistance in the form of loans with interest will affect the economy of a developing country badly affected in the past by natural disasters.

Of course, the scale of the disaster did have to be emphasised since this was in a sense the news story and it played a crucial role in Colombia’s calls for aid. There were 17 references to Colombia’s call for humanitarian assistance, these noted: ‘60% of the city is in ruins and few people will risk going back inside the damaged buildings that remain,’ (26.1.99 BBC1 1800-1830). The Colombian
ambassador, Humberto De La Calle was featured five times in reports on BBC1, ITN and BBC2 discussing the scale of the devastation and imploring the international community for help:

**Humberto De La Calle, Colombian Ambassador:**
First rescue teams, drugs, antibiotics, powder milk, shirts, blankets etc and I repeat, we can no longer be sure of the problem, financial help. (ITN 2200-2230)

Andreas Pastrana, appeared twice on BBC1 calling for international relief:

**Andreas Pastrana, Colombian President:** So, we’re asking the help of the world, we’re asking the international community to give us… food for these people. (BBC1 2100-2130)

Journalists were confronted with the scenes of devastation relayed in these examples and the desperate efforts of rescue teams to save them. It was very much a ‘pulse’ issue, with the emphasis targeted towards survivors, ‘save and rescue’ missions, more than explanation. In this sense, descriptive accounts of disaster convey the sense of devastation and urgency required to enforce Colombia’s call for aid and international assistance.

**C.2.4.2. The relief effort**
The relief effort and international rescue mission thus became a major news theme from 26 January. Descriptions of disaster were accompanied by accounts of emergency aid, in particular the ‘desperate struggle to find survivors.’ For example:

**Reporter:** Saving the injured matters more than counting the dead. The people of Armenia have been searching the rubble for 24 hours now. After today, the chance of finding anyone else alive drops sharply. There’s little time to rest or mourn.

**Local Rescue Worker:** We’re working with our nails, we’ve had to lift two or three really heavy sections, we’ve seen several bodies and some people who aren’t alive. It’s possible that at the bottom people are still alive, but we need heavy machinery to move the debris so that we can get down there. If these machines don’t arrive, it’ll mean working with our hands again today and it’s impossible. People who’ve got a chance of life will lose it. (29.1.99 Channel 4 1900-1955)

Descriptions such as these were carried on all channels, but especially on BBC1 and ITN which featured 33 and 21 references respectively, in comparison to 9 on Channel 4, 9 on Channel 5 and 8 on BBC2. Reports focused on how locals were helping rescue teams dig for survivors, how emergency medical supplies were being flown to the region and curfews imposed to allow rescue workers to work ‘unhampered’, descriptions of this occurred alongside scenes of locals queuing up to donate blood and medics touring the streets to administer aid to the injured. For example:

**Reporter:** The Colombian authorities are overwhelmed; local residents have been helping the rescue teams in an increasingly desperate struggle to find survivors. Much of the work is being done by hand. (BBC1 1300-1330)

**Reporter:** Emergency medical staff and supplies have been flown in to help with the thousands of injured. (Channel 5 1900-1930)

**Reporter:** Medics are touring the streets trying to treat the less seriously injured, but this doctor ran out of medicines after just 2 hours and he says there are no more available. (BBC1 2200-2300)

As pressure intensifies to get the news out that aid is desperately required, confusion becomes paramount and there are variations between reports on the exact nature of the aid required. BBC1, for example, carried mixed reports on whether medical supplies were needed. The lunchtime bulletins reported, ‘the authorities are still appealing for antibiotics, clothes, food, tents and generators,’ but by the time the tea-time and late night bulletins were broadcast, prescriptions had changed and we are told ‘they have enough blood and medicine, now the most urgent need is for tents, blankets and water,’ (27.1.99 BBC1 1300-1330; 27.1.99 BBC1 1800-1830). By contrast, Channel 5 and ITN maintained that ‘food and medicine are in short supply’ (29.1.99 Channel 5 1900-1930). For example:

**Reporter:** Medical supplies have begun to reach the stricken region, but much more is needed. (27.1.99 ITN 1740-1800)

**Reporter:** As the body count climbs in Armenia, they’re running out of coffins. More are being sent from the capital, Bogota, these filled with food and medicines. Medical help for the more than 4,000 injured also remains in short supply. (28.1.99 ITN 1740-1800)

The emphasis is on short-term relief and prescriptions for short-term aid rather than analysis of the long-term repercussions of the earthquake. Of 237 references, most of these, 198 in fact, focused on short-term relief and the priority for emergency aid, only four relate to the long-term damage. The bulk of coverage on the relief effort then, was given over to the international response; in contrast to 73 references to this there were only three references to the aid given by the South
American countries. All of these appeared on BBC1 and made the point that despite the suffering caused by Hurricane Mitch earlier that year, they had come to Colombia’s assistance. For example:

**Reporter:** In Bogota, capital of Colombia, troops loaded supplies as the first international aid started to arrive. Even Honduras and Nicaragua have sent help. Two countries still recovering from last year’s disaster in the region, Hurricane Mitch. (BBC1 2100-2130)

By 27 January the international response had become a major theme on BBC1 and ITN, which featured 34 and 29 references over the period 25-31 January, in contrast to 7 on Channel 4 and 3 on Channel 5. For example, on BBC1 we are told of how ‘an American rescue team has begun to sieve the rubble with the help of a sniffer dog’ and how ‘earthquake specialists from Japan and the United States’ were ‘quick to arrive’ and ‘the European Union has offered three quarters of a million pounds’:

**Reporter:** Aid and rescue teams are arriving from America and Japan and the European Union has offered three quarters of a million pounds as Colombia struggles with its worst earthquake for more than a century. (BBC1 1300-1330)

**Reporter:** International aid has been quick to arrive. Colombia is used to earthquakes but not on this scale. Along with food and medicines, earthquake specialists from Japan and the United States are now helping with the search for survivors. (27.1.99 Channel 5 1200-1230)

But mainly reports were structured to explore the contribution made by non-governmental aid organisations from Europe and especially Britain. A spokesman for the International Rescue Corps was interviewed on BBC1. The interview is focused around the ‘rescue window’ and estimates of the number of hours and days people can survive trapped in the rubble, pictures of past rescues are shown and we are talked through the techniques, before once again returning to the issue of survivors and the question of whether they can still be pulled from the debris, (29.1.99 BBC1 1300-1330). Relief workers interviewed were mainly European, of the 24 rescue personnel featured in the news 16 were European NGOs compared to only 8 local rescue workers. By contrast, only three guests with a specialist knowledge of earthquakes were interviewed, all on BBC2. These included a seismologist, a geo-seismic engineer and a spokesman for the building convention to discuss why the earthquake had had such a devastating impact on Colombia. The majority of NGOs interviewed, however, were from the Red Cross five references) and the International Rescue Corps (five references), followed by Oxfam (three references) and UK Rescue Workers (three references). NGOs mainly appeared on ITN and BBC1 which featured six and five respectively in comparison to three references on Channel 4, one on Channel 5 and one on BBC2. Notably, there were no economists, social-economists or sociologists interviewed in the coverage to discuss the impact or the long-term economic and social repercussions for the society.

**C.2.4.3. Civil disorder and looting**

As the crisis intensified, reports of ‘natural disaster’ became scenes of ‘man-made trauma’ as civil disorder and looting became major news themes from 27 January, accounting for 203 references. Headlines juxtapose the ‘battle to save lives’ against the looting:

**Newscaster:** Looting in Colombia and the battle to save lives. Looting broke out in Colombia today in the wake of Monday’s catastrophic earthquake. Police looked on as hungry and desperate survivors seized what they could from supermarkets. (BBC1 2200-2300)

Visuals of riot troops struggling to control the looting crowds, people ‘scrambling’ through windows, doors and over fences for boxes of food are accompanied by adjectives that temper accounts of ‘disaster’ with scenes of ‘desperation’. The adjective ‘desperate’ is used pervasively: ‘desperate scenes’, ‘desperate people’, ‘desperate survivors’ ‘thousands of people now desperate simply for the means to survive’, ‘people desperate for food’ “Comida, comida! Food, food, the message of desperation is everywhere here. Until the organisation improves, this place will continue to have the look of fear...What started with a natural disaster is turning into a man-made trauma and is leaving the city reeling’ (29.1.99 BBC1 2100-2130). Of 131 references which described the looting, 82 combined descriptions of the disorder with justifications. Channel 5 declared, ‘desperate crowds have stripped bare local shops in the search for food and medical supplies,’ (28.1.99 Channel 5 1900-1930). The looting is said to be the result of ‘hunger’, ‘food shortages’ and profiteering from misery:

**Reporter:** The new enemy is hunger and there’s been widespread looting across Western Colombia, with food shortages and price rises, survivors have taken matters and supplies into their own hands. (Channel 4 1900-1955)

**Reporter:** ...but across this town there’s anger. Looting has broken out, the people raiding this supermarket reacted violently when trying to profit from catastrophe, the shop owner had raised his food prices fourfold. The police are simply watching the looting going on. This is one of the poorest areas of Armenia and the people here
say the government is doing nothing to help them in the crisis. (BBC1 2200-2256)

It is said to be the result of an uncoordinated relief effort. We are told ‘aid has been slow to get through’ and that the relief effort is ‘unco-ordinated and chaotic’.

**Reporter:** It’s not the aid that’s the problem, but it’s the distribution of it that’s proving so chaotic and haphazard. (ITN 2200-2230)

**Reporter:** The central government has the supplies but the distribution is chaotic. There’s growing anger here. With relief effort here uncoordinated and stretched to breaking point, the hunt for bodies goes on. (ITN 1740-1800)

**Reporter:** They are already Armenia’s poorest, now they have nothing. In the slum areas of the city, these are the people who’ve resorted to breaking into shops to get food, drinking water, anything they can lay their hands on. There are no rescue workers here and they say they’ve been forgotten. (Visual: Woman shouting at the camera). The government won’t give us food she says so this is what we’re forced to do the hard way. ‘We’re all dying’ cried this woman, ‘I have children but no food’. ‘Aid is arriving in Colombi but distribution is slow and the poorest are always the last to get fed.

**Reporter:** Even if international aid is sent to Colombia, there is the problem of delivery. Red Cross workers have reported that only 10% of the food they need to feed survivors is getting through. (29.1.99 BBC2 2230-2315)

There are visuals on ITN of people squatting in the street in make-shift tents, their furnishings piled up outside and a young child grasping tight to a massive crust of bread as he sculpts his body to balance the weight. The report focuses on a man in Brasilia who lost everything yet was given just two containers of water. It concludes, ‘they’re clinging to whatever they’ve got. These are people somehow making do in the most desperate of circumstances,’ (28.1.99 ITN 2200-2230).

With the looting comes ‘chaos’ and we are told, ‘the relief operation has descended into chaos’ (29.1.99 ITN 2200-2230), ‘the government is bungling at the violence and chaos’ (29.1.99 ITN 2200-2230) and how ‘police chiefs say its on the brink of anarchy’ (30.1.99 ITN 1300-1310). Visuals of crowds raiding a Red Cross warehouse are described, ‘the desperation of starving homeless people is turning the aid operation into complete chaos’ (29.1.98 BBC1 1800-1900) and ‘there’s a real danger now the anarchy will engulf the city’ (29.1.99 BBC1 1800-1900).

Against accounts which justify the looting there are also reports of ‘criminal theft’, BBC1 reported how ‘gangs of criminals have taken advantage of the chaos to steal jewellery, TV sets and anything else of value they can get heir hands on’ (28.1.99 BBC1 1300-1330). In the midst of this, nine references relate to how the Colombian president has ordered a military crackdown on the looting and 22 references relate to the violent clashes of police and looters, but with the police finding it hard to restore order, vigilantes are said to have taken to the streets to protect their possessions and civil unrest is now ‘hampering’ relief efforts (six references) as ITN notes:

**Newscaster:** Earthquake survivors in Colombia have clashed with troops as looting and riots continue.

**Reporter:** Hundreds of police and soldiers have been brought into the region to impose order Colombian style. President Andreas Pastrana has arrived in Armenia and admitted that officials are having difficulty distributing whatever aid has arrived. (Channel 4 1900-1955)

C.2.4.4. Explanations and analysis

Explanations are very few, there were only 39 statements which could be described as explanatory or made an attempt to analyse the crisis in terms of the structural scale of the damage, its impact on people’s lives and the long term reconstruction of the country. These references mostly occurred on BBC2 which featured 20 in comparison to BBC1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 which featured five each and ITN which featured four. 28 of the 39 explanations focused on why it had had such a disastrous effect and whether science could offer a way of saving lives in the future. ITN and Channel 5 explored the scale of the devastation, showing that it was a result of the spatial location of the earthquake beneath the earth’s crust and near ‘densely populated areas’. For example:

**Reporter:** The earthquake measured six on the Richter scale and erupted just 20 miles below the earth’s surface, which accounted for the wide scale damage and the high number of victims. (ITN 1230-1300)

But, the technical details vary between reports. In contrast to ITN which reported that it had erupted ‘20 miles below the earth’s surface’, Channel 5 said it was 12 miles. For example:

**Reporter:** In Armenia, one of the towns worst affected, up to 2,000 have been killed. Earthquakes are quite common in the region, but this one was different, first its epicentre was in the middle of a densely populated area, just 115 miles from the capital, Bogota. Further out, it would have had a less disastrous effect. Second, while most earthquakes here are located deep under the earth’s crust, this one was just 12 miles below the surface. (Channel 5 1900-1930)
Many more explanations however related to more controllable concerns such as building design and attributed the damage to lax building conventions in developing countries. Channel 5’s ‘5 Facts’, for example, said that building regulations, less strict than those in developed countries, had been responsible for the high death toll:

**Graphic:** 200 a year this size or bigger

**Reporter:** Most of them are not near built-up areas. One earthquake in Peru left 70,000 people dead and 600,000 homeless.

**Graphic:** 70,000 killed in Peru in 1970

**Reporter:** The death toll is higher in developing countries because regulations aren’t so strict, this latest earthquake wouldn’t have claimed as many victims if it had happened in California for example.

**Graphic:** Building regulations important (29.1.99 Channel 5 1900-1930)

Simon Gillan, UK Rescue Worker interviewed on both BBC1 and BBC2 on 28 January, related the devastation to the ‘mixed building materials’ used in developing countries:

*Simon Gillan, UK Rescue Worker:* I was really surprised, it was absolutely horrendous. I mean they have got all sorts of mixed building materials here, some buildings are standing, other buildings are like what’s standing behind me, sort of shanty type buildings, that just collapsed totally. (BBC1 1800-1830; 28.1.99 BBC2 2230-2320)

By and large, these appear as short one-off statements in the flow of extended accounts of devastation which are not taken up by the reporter’s dialogue that encase them. Only BBC2 featured an in-depth report on the scale of the damage and its future prevention. Juxtaposed against appeals by the Colombian government for international aid, BBC2 looked at recent earthquakes in Afghanistan, Turkey and China and asked ‘how close is science to giving a way of saving human life?’ The newscaster states:

**Newscaster:** Earthquakes are acts of God, they cannot be prevented. But if there was some way of getting reasonable warning, then at least buildings could be evacuated and lives saved...In Japan, the government has been spending around £100 million a year on research into earthquake prediction. At this center they keep a 24-hour watch for potential pressure points. But, despite decades of effort, neither they nor anyone else can manage more than broad, brash ideas on when, where or if the earth might quake again.... The uncomfortable truth is that disasters like the one which hit Cobai in 1995, still happen, 4,500 people killed, 100,000 homes destroyed and a repair bill of $100 billion.

The newscaster concludes, ‘prediction would be inevitable, but the chances of it happening are slim’:

**Newscaster:** There are just too many variables, we need to know the location of a potential hit, in terms of its longitude, latitude and depth, the month, day and time and the expected magnitude of the quake.

With this, the report turns from prediction to the devastating effects of earthquakes and how this can be modified. This ultimately concerns building materials. The report interviews a geo-seismic engineer:

*Zygmunt Lubkowski, Geo-seismic engineer, Ove Arup & Partners:* If we design to modern codes of practice and we ensure that buildings, bridges etc are constructed properly, then we can prevent the sort of loss of life which has been observed in Colombia.

**Newscaster:** Using computer simulations, the engineers can design and build bridges and buildings to withstand even very strong earthquakes.

The report goes on to look at how a ‘lack of education, money and engineering expertise...allows such devastation:

**Richard Hughes, Building Conventor:** Education is obviously a high priority because in most areas a community will experience an earthquake once in a generation, or every few generations and therefore it’s important to keep the message alive that people are living in a seismic area and should be aware of it. So, they should know what to do when an earthquake occurs and they should know what to do to maintain their houses.

The newscaster follows this up with descriptions of the ‘frightening’ effects of earthquakes and how ‘victims’ need an ‘even chance of surviving them.’ But with this the report ends; there is no discussion of the ‘repair bill of $100 billion’ for Cobai in 1995 and how Colombia, a developing country could afford this, let alone the expensive building modifications specified, which would be costly.

Channel 4 does report that the looting has created a ‘security crisis’ that even Colombia, ‘one of the most violent countries on earth has never seen before’, that it is ‘a country that’s been racked for so long by civil war’, and that ‘the state of Colombia is in no shape, its infrastructure, its political hierarchy...to deal with a disaster like this.’ However nowhere in the news coverage are there attempts to contextualise accounts of disaster within the politics of the country. There is no discussion...
of the violence and civil war which has torn Colombia for 40 years and how the civil crisis caused by the earthquake could destabilise the political status quo or affect paramilitary groups who have been fighting a guerrilla war for 35 years. According to newspapers at the time, some of these had used the drama of the earthquake to their own advantage, to distract attention from their activities. For example:

As the world’s attention is focused on the Colombian earthquake, the country’s paramilitary death squads have taken advantage of the distraction provided by the catastrophe to step up their activities. Fears are growing for the safety of four Colombian human rights workers abducted by a paramilitary group on Thursday in the city of Medellin, known as the center of the country’s drugs trade...The paramilitary death squads are believed to be financed by Colombia’s drugs traffickers and to operate with the consent of the Colombian army. They say they have a mission to combat Colombia’s left-wing guerrillas, but they are accused by human rights groups of conducting a campaign of terror against the civilian population that has driven hundreds of thousands of Colombians from their homes in the past five years...Last week’s abduction is a major embarrassment for Colombia’s president, Andres Pastrana, who has been trying to open peace talks with the main guerrilla armies in Colombia, but who has been widely criticized for failing to curb the death squad activities. The main guerrilla army, the FARC, has demanded the dismantling of the paramilitary groups as a condition of any peace negotiations and they accuse the Colombian army of supporting paramilitary activities. (The Independent on Sunday 31.1.99)

The earthquake struck a region in Central Western Colombia, previously vulnerable to earthquakes. In 1995, for example, The Financial Times reported how Pereira suffered an earthquake and that throughout the region many of the buildings that collapsed were those re-built after the last disaster (The Financial Times 26.1.99). There were only eight references to the long-term reconstruction of the country. On several occasions throughout the news coverage, Humberto De La Calle, the Colombian Ambassador is featured calling for aid and long term financial assistance, but these comments are not pursued by the text which follows. Repeatedly, the discussion flows back to short term solutions of charitable giving and medical aid.

There are one-off statements by reporters on re-building, for example on ITN we hear ‘they can rebuild again but the task is overwhelming’ (29.1.99 ITN 1230-1330) and on BBC1:

**Reporter:** It will take years for Akindo Province to recover from a disaster which struck a nation in the middle of a government-directed austerity drive. (BBC1 2100-2130)

There is no discussion of what this term actually refers to, or how it relates to the report that precedes it, which deals with ‘outbreaks of looting by armed gangs.’ We are told that ‘the town of Kodova, the poorest in this coffee-growing region, was at the epicentre of the earthquake,’ that:

**Reporter:** Usually, these soldiers would be fighting the private armies and drug lords who’ve made Colombia the world’s kingdom of cocaine......Outbreaks of looting are still going on. Hunger is the motivation for most of these desperate people. The authorities are clamping down with armed police and soldiers deployed and a curfew ordered for yet another night in the largest towns. Because of a bottleneck in distribution, the president of Colombia has come to the region to command and cajole, but there’s widespread public cynicism that even in this instance of disaster, local political bosses will rise above the corruption that plagues their country. (BBC1 2100-2130)

There is no discussion of the impact of the earthquake on Colombia’s ‘coffee growing region.’ Nowhere is it said for example, that coffee is the main export and that Armenia produces 50% of the country’s annual coffee harvest. The way in which damage on this scale affects the lives of ordinary people beyond the immediate civil disorder and looting, how homes and livelihoods may have to be rebuilt at their own expense, without government assistance, is not discussed. Neither are the long term economic repercussions on unemployment and investment referred to. As The Guardian newspaper noted:

*But victims in the poor neighbourhood of Santander were not convinced. ‘We had to build this place without state help, and no doubt we will have to rebuild it ourselves too,’ said a group of men huddled round their campfire. ‘They will only invest their money where they can get a decent return.’ (The Guardian 1.2.99)*

The cost of re-building Colombia’s coffee growing region could cost $1.5 billion, a cost which this developing country could ill-afford. Yet, there is little discussion of how the money will be raised, as The Financial Times noted:

*Juan Camilo Restrepo, finance minister, said the package to help restore normality would total 60bn pesos (about Dollars 38m)...Mr. Restrepo said the package would be available to affected coffee producers by Monday. He added that the package would consist of “long-term, soft
loans". Private exporters, responsible for about 60% of the country’s exports, said this week many growers and intermediaries had failed to deliver coffee since the earthquake, potentially complicating export obligations. (The Financial Times 5.2.99)

The relationship of coffee to cocaine is not explored. Many farmers planted coffee instead of cocaine in a bid to stamp out the drug trade, yet there is no discussion of what will happen if the coffee crop has been destroyed. The focus of television on pictures and extra-ordinary visual moments which illustrate the crisis, has led to a neglect of context and explanation. But if Colombia is to be seen and understood as anything more than a disaster area, then it is important that its people be shown as having a history, politics, economy and everyday life which both pre and post-date the visual images of an earthquake.

C.2.5. Education in Tanzania
There was one item in the sample which concentrated specifically on the role of the International Monetary Fund in relation to debt cancellation. A special report on education and debt was broadcast on BBC’s Newsnight on 22 March, 1999. This report from Tanzania incorporated interviews with governmental and IMF representatives within Tanzania, discussions with local people and teaching staff and an explanatory narrative from the Newsnight reporter. One of the strengths of this report was the use of visual images of local people in a variety of settings, rather than stereotypical imagery of malnourished children.

The point that ‘developing countries’ cannot ‘develop’ without education was repeated at various stages. The report began with a repetition of the same theme, quoting a new report by the charity Oxfam:

**Newscaster:** More than a quarter of the world’s children face the prospect of a life of poverty because they never go to school, or they leave before they learn to read and write. One reason according to an Oxfam report published today is a simple matter of mathematics. Many poor countries are being forced to spend far more on debt repayment than on education.

One of the unusual features of this report was that it highlighted achievements previously attained by Tanzania: that here was an African country where the former president Nyerere had made significant advances in moving towards universal primary education. It also included impressive images of a graduation ceremony in a relatively poor African country:

*It’s an important day for Tanzanian education. 37 years on from independence, the East African state now has its own Open University, and this is the first graduation ceremony. Sitting alongside President Mhapa is the guest of honour, Julius Nyerere, Tanzania’s first president. He spent his political life supporting the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and stressing that true liberation at home could only come through education. As president he declared the goal of free primary education for all, and almost achieved it back in the late seventies. Now the country’s in debt and that goal has been abandoned.*

The report then moved on to a film of a village school in Tanzania’s farming heartland. The pupils all stood outside the school building, dressed smartly in their uniforms. The headteacher called out a number of names of children, who came forward. He then dismissed them from the school, while the narrator explained:

*The new school year started in January when pupils who haven’t paid their fees are summoned by the headmaster. The sums they owe may seem negligible translated into sterling, but these are the children of often desperately poor subsistence farmers, who find it hard to find £3 a year for school fees, and further contributions for desks or uniforms. It can come to nearly £12 per child.*

Film of the conditions inside the school highlighted the lack of funding in education in recent years. With no desks and chairs, the children had to sit on the dirt floor. The headteacher also explained that he had only four teachers for over 200 pupils. The camera followed one of the dismissed pupils, Kasim Djuma, to his home. The narrator explained that his father’s crops had failed due to drought one year, then El Niño and severe flooding last year, and drought again this year. The father, Daudi Djuma explained (subtitled):

*As you can see, this is a very small farm and I only grow maize. I don’t have any cattle. The soil is poor, there’s a drought and I’m unable to get together the money for my children’s school fees.*

Focusing on an individual family within one small farming community in Tanzania, Newsnight illustrated how farmers have struggled to sustain their businesses in the face of severe climate changes. The feature showed how children from such families are being locked out of
education. The reporter then linked this situation with the role of the International Monetary Fund, explaining that Tanzania’s economic and social welfare policies have to be agreed with the IMF. He spoke to Godfrey Wiwa from Oxfam who explained the constraints placed upon education policy by the IMF:

This whole question of cost sharing which was imposed by IMF policies has affected very much mostly very poor parents. Over fifty percent of our people are very poor.

Despite the impossibility of many parents finding money to pay school fees, penalties can be harsh. The headmaster who had a family himself, faced having his own salary cut, if he failed to produce fees for all the pupils. He therefore reluctantly referred Daudi Djuma to the local council. Djuma was filmed appearing before the village council, who imposed financial penalties upon him. He explained that because he simply could not pay, he might be sent to prison, increasing hardship on his family. The narrator explained that despite the stringent conditions imposed on education under the IMF, debt relief remained a distant goal. An IMF assessment team was due to visit Tanzania:

If their report is positive, that Tanzania has correctly followed the agreed economic policies for the last three years, then the country’s individual creditors have agreed to cut part of their debt. But there will still be no relief of the debt to the IMF and World Bank until after a second three year term in 2002, and that’s not guaranteed.

The report concluded:

For the children of Isundi and all those others who’re damaged by the crisis in Tanzania’s schools, it’s surely crucial that there is rapid relief, and a guarantee from the government that any savings made are spent on priorities like education.

### C.2.5.1. Discussion

Analysis of television news shows that key economic terms are used regularly in discussion of such issues as world trade and debt cancellation. The feature on education in Tanzania focused particularly on the role of the IMF. The audience study indicated that although viewers were usually aware of the existence of this organisation, and had heard of the debt campaign, they had little or no understanding of the relationship between the two. The Tanzanian story differed from most similar news items in its attempt to explore concepts of development. Statements about the conflict between debt repayment and education were repeated throughout the feature, while the point about education being essential for development was reinforced by interviewees like President Nyerere.

The audience study indicated some concern about debts being cancelled too quickly, without sufficient regulation to ensure that funds would not be squandered. The Newsnight feature offered an example of a country which had had to impose strict conditions on its education provision, in order to begin the process of even being considered for debt relief. Positive images were included in the report, including the introductory film of the first Open University graduation ceremony. Images of built up urban areas were interspersed with the continuing narrative of life in a rural area. The focus on one family, the Djumas, helped to illustrate, firstly, the hardship faced by subsistence farmers struggling to survive following three years of destructive climatic conditions. It also indicated that the conditions instigated by the IMF had resulted in the introduction of school fees which were unaffordable to these subsistence farmers. The policy of penalising individuals who failed to pay school fees was dramatically illustrated by the film of children being dismissed in front of the whole school, and subsequently by the imposition of unpayable fines on the father of the family.

A report such as this can be very effective, as indicated in the audience research groups, because it focuses on what are seen as the ‘everyday lives’ of people in the developing world’, while still explaining the key relationships which affect social and economic development.

#### C.2.6. Hurricane Mitch

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch had hit Central America. Flooding caused by the hurricane had caused thousands of deaths, destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes and devastated much of the country’s farmland and infrastructure. This event was one of an increasing number of natural disasters to take place in the past few years. It was covered by news programmes on all channels at the time it occurred.

Participants in the audience study said that they felt overwhelmed by the reporting of natural disasters on television news. Many indicated that they would like to see follow-up reports which indicated how countries which had experienced such events were progressing. From the profile of news programmes (see E.1. of this Study), it was found that two news programmes had returned to the scene of a major disaster to report on the current situation. BBC1’s Nine o’clock News returned to Honduras on 9 and 10 February 1999, to assess the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. A few weeks later, on 2 March 1999, ITN’s News at Ten also returned to
Honduras. Both channels began these reports with a summary of the devastation caused by the hurricane:

**Newscaster:** Four months after Central America was devastated by Hurricane Mitch, the government of Honduras has only now completed its final assessment of the damage. 5,000 people were killed in the storm, the worst in the area for two centuries, and a quarter of a million are still homeless. Much of Honduras’ industry has been destroyed, with 90% of its principle export crop, bananas, lost. (BBC1: 10.2.99, 2100)

**Newscaster:** Last Autumn here on News at Ten, we were carrying reports from Central America the unforgettable impact of Hurricane Mitch. Honduras in particular took a terrible battering. Thousands were killed and hundreds of thousands left homeless. Roads and railways were washed away, banana plantations flattened. The outlook for an already poor people looked hopeless. (ITN: 2.3.99)

These summaries were followed by an introductory comment on the progress made over the previous three or four months:

**Newscaster:** Our international business correspondent... looks at the country’s attempt at reconstruction (BBC1: 10.2.99, 2100)

**Newscaster:** So four months on from the hurricane, what hope is there for Honduras. (ITN: 2.3.99, 2200)

Both reports then included pictures from two separate schools in Honduras, indicating that there had been no school for these children to attend in recent months. The fact that the children were now able to return was viewed as an important step in the recovery process:

**Reporter:** It’s playtime at the school playground in Moralica. But school’s been out for three months now since Hurricane Mitch reduced the entire town to rubble and to dust. This community and the whole of Honduras is salvaging what it can from the wreckage. (BBC1: 9.2.99, 1900)

**Reporter:** For the first time in four months the children of Honduras have gone back to school. Here in the capital Tegucigalpa they are regaining some semblance of normality. Remarkable when you remember what ripped through their lives such a short time ago. (ITN: 2.3.99, 2200)

Both reports included footage of local families or individuals who had been directly affected by the hurricane. BBC1 began and ended the report from Honduras on 10.2.99 with shots of ‘Noah, Rose and their family’ who had returned to where their home was destroyed, on the riverbank in Tegucigalpa. While the family themselves did not speak, the following comment was made by the reporter:

**Reporter:** Three months after Hurricane Mitch they’re only beginning to rebuild their lives. For this family and this country it will take many years yet to recover from nature’s most savage assault on Central America in two centuries. (BBC1: 10.2.99, 2100)

ITN returned to an island they had previously visited at the time of the original devastation, showing how the inhabitants had started down ‘the long road to reconstruction.’ This report included shots of one individual makeshift hut, with a comment from one family member stating that he thought it would take ten years to return to they way things were. Footage of the island showing it stripped of vegetation was followed by a current shot of a lush green hill. A similar comparison was then made of a banana farm on the island:

**Reporter:** This is how we found one farm four months ago. The banana plants rotting under feet of mud and silt. These are the same fields today. (plants growing) Jason Green the farm manager had feared this land would never be replanted – that the owners Chiquita bananas would not want to make the investment. Instead at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, the fields are being levelled, drainage ditches redug and by next year there will be bananas here again. (ITN: 2.3.99, 2200)

While the reporter commented further on positive developments including the reconstruction of the capital’s bridge and the rapid construction of temporary housing there, it concluded:

**Reporter:** Honduras was a poor country before the storm. It is poorer now. It still needs help. But it has made a tremendous start in helping itself. (ITN: 2.3.99, 2200)

All three reports included statements from governmental ministers or the president. Each comment made a separate point about the impact of the hurricane, depending on the specific remit of the spokesperson. The Housing Minister commented on housing and infrastructure as a priority:

**Roberto Flores, Housing Minister:** Imagine a country that has been totally devastated. Imagine a country that now additionally it has to reconstruct the infrastructure, the road networks, telecoms. We have to recover the housing that was lost. A third of the population was directly affected. It’s really a major challenge. (ITN: 2.3.99, 2200)
A significant section of BBC1’s second report on 10th February focused on the Honduran government’s recognition of the need to diversify, given that the country’s primary export crop, bananas, had been largely destroyed by the hurricane. This section included footage of the Minister of Tourism visiting a site of Mayan architecture, which was being developed as a tourist facility:

**Norman Garcia, Minister of Tourism:** After Mitch we found out that agriculture was going to be difficult to re-establish so the government has at this point in time assigned tourism the highest priority in order to bring the economy back on its feet. (BBC1: 10.2.99, 2100)

The president, Carlos Flores, made a statement about the importance of debt relief:

**Carlos Flores, President of Honduras:** We have lost in a few hours what it took the country to build more than fifty years. That’s why debt relief is not enough. It’s an important step, but it’s fresh resources that the country needs. (BBC1: 9.2.99, 2100)

This last comment on debt relief was a key aspect of BBC1’s initial report on Honduras after the hurricane. Of the three retrospective reports, two did not mention the debt campaign. However, the report on 9 February included 14 references to the necessity of cancelling Honduran debts. There were a further three references to the fact that the country would also need to borrow afresh in order to manage the process of reconstruction.

C.2.6.1. Discussion
The three news reports on Honduras after Hurricane Mitch differ from most news stories. While natural disasters are clearly newsworthy, the increasing occurrence and reporting of such events, which take place most frequently in developing countries, can lead to the viewer feeling overwhelmed by images of destruction and death.

These three reports all included messages indicating that although the Honduran government and people were partly dependant on outside aid, they were making real attempts to help themselves, as with the government’s decision to focus on tourism as an alternative to the banana industry. The audience study indicated that viewers would like to see more retrospective reports like these, in which reporters return to the scene of a natural disaster to assess the process of recovery.

This story also provided a significant opportunity to explore the issue of debt relief, particularly as the events surrounding Hurricane Mitch rapidly escalated Jubilee 2000’s campaign for debt cancellation. It should be noted that viewers of the *Nine o’clock News* who had watched only the bulletin on 9 February would have received different messages from those tuning in only on the following night. The first of the two BBC1 reports presented a strong case for debt cancellation and new loans, with a variety of voices strengthening the argument.

C.3. Other Television Output

C.3.1. Children’s Television

C.3.1.1. Newsround

A three-month sample of the BBC1 children’s programme *Newsround* was recorded for the period 11 January – 11 March 1999. A total of 21 stories featured issues in developing countries. These ranged from wildlife conservation in China, Africa and Northern Pakistan to natural disasters in Colombia and the Fiji Islands, aid and development in Latin America and Africa, cultural celebrations in Brazil and conflict in Africa. The key areas of coverage are significantly different from mainstream national news. Environmental issues predominate with six items, followed by aid/development projects with five items and natural disasters with four items. Conflict in Africa and cultural news received proportionately less coverage, with only three items in each case. The table opposite outlines the frequency of these themes.

The emphasis is on the environment. Four of the six environmental reports focused on wildlife conservation. These discussed topics as wide ranging as the ‘mission to stop poachers killing tigers’ for Chinese medicine, Orang-utans who are ‘alive and doing well in Singapore zoo’, Himalayan Ibexes in Northern Pakistan and the debate over lifting the ban on ivory sales in Africa. Reports are structured to inform, educate and entertain through a positive focus on issues. One report shown on 15 February was headlined ‘Licensed to kill, conservation with a difference.’ It dealt with the contradictory case of how killing animals in Northern Pakistan was actually being used to aid conservation. The report states:

**Reporter:** The Hunsa Valley in the Himalayas, home to some 200 Ibexes or wild goats, adventurers come here from all over the world, but now a new breed of tourist has arrived. They’re hunters from America and Argentina who’ve paid thousands of pounds each just for the pleasure of shooting the animals.

**Howard Pollok, Hunter:** I’ve dreamed for a long time of coming to Pakistan because I’m interested personally in getting a Himalayan Ibex, I think it’s one of the world’s rare, great trophies.
The report then explains the important development issues behind the programme:

Reporter: It may seem cruel, but there is a reason behind it. The Ibechs were endangered in this area because the locals were hunting lots for food. A project supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the World Conservation Union now encourages the foreign hunters to come here. The local people are given money raised by the license making, it's worth their while to leave the animals alone. Fewer Ibechs are killed and that's exactly what the scheme’s about...It may be sport for the hunters, but the success of this scheme may mean that the lives of many other Ibechs may now be spared. (BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)

On 10 February, Newsround ran a story on the decision by the world conservation group, Cites, to lift the 10 year ban on the sale of ivory in Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe. The report is structured around the arguments of conservation groups. The presenter terms it ‘the battle to protect the elephants’ in the headline summary and the reporter puts forward key conservation arguments which he endorses by interviewing a conservation activist who explores the alternatives to killing animals, highlighting the benefits of tourism to the economy.

Reporter: Elephants are worth money if you’re prepared to kill them. For years poachers shot the animals for their tusks and sold the ivory. But the elephants began to die out and now almost 10 years ago the deadly trade was banned, now thanks in part to that ban there are more elephants and poor African countries are able to use them to make money for their people. Rich hunters are allowed to kill elephants if they pay several thousand pounds and today’s decision means Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana are being allowed to sell a small amount of the ivory they took from the animals before the trade started. But, environmental groups say there are better ways of making money from the elephant like tourism.

Allan Thornton, Environmental Investigator: Tourism is a growing industry, that’s a fact throughout many countries in Africa and it’s surprised people with good jobs, well-paying jobs that can go on for years. The ivory industry relies on killing the elephant, once you’ve killed it and sold the ivory, that’s it, you can’t use it again. In the tourism industry, you can use the elephant again and again.

Reporter: There are fears now the total ban has been lifted, ivory will become more fashionable and it won’t be possible to control how much is sold. If so, poachers could start killing more elephants once again. (10.2.99 BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)

Although our sample of Newsround reports covered areas as diverse as child soldiers in Africa, earthquakes in Colombia, pollution in Mexico, environmental damage in Thailand, conservation in China, Africa and Northern Pakistan and cultural issues in Brazil and the Philippines only five of the countries are explicitly identified as developing countries. These mainly appeared in aid and development stories, three of the four explicit references to development occurring in this section.
Although a range of countries are identified as developing in the news reports, in the case of Africa, development is sometimes depicted as dependence: economic and charitable dependence between the developing and developed world. Reports on Africa mainly focused on aid and charitable projects organised by first world countries. In the language and visuals of these items, Africa is synonymous with poverty, disease and destitution. One report, for example, referred to ‘children in this half of the world who are trying to make things better in the poorer half of the world...It’s all part of a charity called A Game of Two Halves.’ In the course of the item, this ‘poorer half of the world’ is equated with African children. The reporter makes the point that ‘as well as paying for sports facilities, the money raised will help pay for medical equipment. Every year thousands of children die in poorer countries because they don’t have the right medicines.’ The statement is preceded by visuals of a young African boy playing football in a run-down street, sewers flow through it and an old washing line laden with clothes hangs above. At the end of the statement, the visuals switch to boys playing football in a green field, rain falling into a bucket, thatched wooden huts and dirt roads.

A group of African children are pictured playing with an old toy made from a milk bottle and a little girl holds up her doll with its mouth missing to the camera. African children are passive images of want and need depicted en masse, their individuality, personalities, personage even, like their voices, muted by the text which is structured around the voices of British children who are active. Their passivity is counterpoised by the action of British children, who speak about their involvement in the fundraising. In this sense the images of passivity which counterpoise these represent the face of poverty, the face of need in Africa, requiring western charitable assistance:

Schoolboy: Schools can raise money by doing sponsored football, swimming whatever they like and if they aren’t particularly good at sport or don’t enjoy it, they can pay to go to watch the teachers play pupils

Schoolboy: Myself and some of my friends are doing a sponsored basketball match with the teachers to earn money and one of my other friends is doing a sponsored swim

Reporter: The campaign is going nationwide this summer, so there’s plenty of time to get involved (BBC1 1700-1710)

Such reports which are structured around negative, passive images, do little to redress popular stereotypes of Africa as a source of problems and relentless hardship. These contrast with other more positive examples of reporting on the developing world. In another report on fair trade in South America, the issue is illustrated by the sale of chocolate:

Reporter: Now eating chocolate may not seem particularly amazing, but school children today have been showing how the chocolate bar today you choose can help people thousands of miles away. They’ve been giving their support to food sold as part of the Fair Trade Very Much Money project, which aims to get a better deal for food producers in developing countries. Our reporter went to one of the schools in Thame (Oxfordshire) to check it out.

The farmers are given a voice by the report. One cocoa farmer explained to British school children the contribution which the project has made to their lives. The school children were also featured, speaking about their reasons for supporting the issue. For example:

Reporter: Often the farmers and their families who grow the cocoa beans in places like Africa and South America don’t get very much money, while the international companies that buy their crop make huge profits from it. But with fair trade it’s very different. They make sure the farmers are paid a fair price for what they grow.

Cayetano Ico, Cocoa Farmer: I am a cocoa farmer, I produce cocoa beans

Reporter: Cayetano farms in South America. He’s visiting schools in the UK at the moment telling children how important the Fair Trade project is. In his village, it’s changed people’s lives

Cayetano Ico, Cocoa Farmer: Some parents now are sending their children to school to higher education, they are able to afford to buy books, buy uniforms, shoes or whatever, meet the standards of education.

Reporter: The children here have also set up a mini shop selling Fair Trade products, although they’re a bit more expensive, the children think it’s worth it.

Pupil: I buy it because it helps poor countries, it may cost a little bit more, but I don’t really mind.

Pupil: I think it’s fair to give the poor people a go in life and now they’re getting a profit and I know that I’m helping a good cause.

Reporter: There are only a few Fair Trade products around at the moment, like muesli, tea and coffee, but by buying them you’ll know you’re helping someone else somewhere else. (BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)
Other reports on development in Africa encouraged children to participate, showing how they can take the initiative and play an informed part in these issues. A report on the Jubilee 2000 campaign for example, engaged with the issue on several levels. Initially, it used the celebrity status of the appeal to capture the attention of viewers. It opened with a reference to how ‘pop stars are helping the world’s poorest people’ and it referred to how ‘at tomorrow’s Brit awards they’ll announce they’re supporting the biggest music industry charity campaign for nearly 10 years. People like Robbie, Bono, Oasis and the prodigy are backing the campaign with a slogan ‘Drop the Debt’ which will appear on CDs throughout the year.’ Rather than representing Africa as simply the passive recipient of western charity, it explained what world debt actually referred to, and African children were given the opportunity to tell their story of development and what it means to them. For example:

**Presenter:** The aim is to get rid of what’s called world debt where many countries suffer by having to pay back huge sums of money they’ve borrowed in the past. World debt has a huge impact on people. We have taken 2 ordinary young people and brought them together by getting them to ask each other questions by video. 15 year-old Kerrie who lives in Britain and 15 year-old Daniel who lives on the streets of Dares Salaam in Tanzania.

**School children:** Hi, I’m Sam. When I’m ill I just go down to the doctors where do you go?

**School children:** Hi, I’m Bethnie, one of my dreams is to travel round the world, what are your dreams and ambitions?

**School children:** The finished video with our questions will be sent to children at a youth centre in Dares Salaam. Once they get it, they’ll fill their answers and send it back. By communicating like this we hope to understand more about what their lives are like.

**School children:** Dares Salaam in Tanzania, for most people here it’s a constant battle against poverty. This is Daniel, in many ways we’re very similar. Both 15 years, like to hang out with our mates and have a good time. But, for Daniel, life is also very different.

**Daniel:** I sleep here with my friend Immanuel (Visual of his sleeping area next to a wall in the street). We go to the shops to collect boxes and use them as beds. It’s normally quite comfortable. Immanuel normally wakes up early in the morning because he feels ashamed to be seen sleeping on the side of the street. It personally doesn’t worry me.

**British Schoolgirl:** Danny came to the city after his parents split up. Like most children in Tanzania he doesn’t go to school, instead he supports himself by washing cars and begging. Swimming is not an option for Daniel. 5 months ago he gashed his foot, but because of the poor state of the country’s health service, he hasn’t been able to get his wound treated yet. Charities in countries like Tanzania have to spend 9 times more in paying their debts to other countries than they do on the health service. But, there is hope for children like Daniel. Every day he came to this cultural centre paid for by the charities, Christian Aid and Comic Relief. He learns to read, he can find out about the arts and he can watch the video we sent him.

**Daniel:** I feel pain when I compare myself with children in England. They have a room to sleep in, I have to sleep in cardboard boxes on the streets where there is danger from mosquitoes and snakes.

**British Schoolgirl:** Sending videos to each other is a simple idea, but has helped us to get to know more about children we would never normally have a chance to meet.

**Presenter:** Well, charities like Christian Aid say life could be better for children such as Daniel if debt was wiped out, but Tanzania is just one of dozens of poor countries struggling to cope with huge money problems. So, why have things got so bad and what is the campaign being backed by so many pop stars? Here’s Kate.

It is only after engaging the audience in the human interest story of a young boy sleeping rough in Africa that the report ends with a detailed examination of the debt issue:

**Reporter:** Many of the countries with huge debts are in South America, Africa and parts of Asia. They started borrowing money big time in the 1970s and 1980s to develop facilities like hospitals and water systems, build roads and railways and buy weapons. They got their money from banks and governments in countries like ours. Altogether, they now owe more than £1 trillion. But, that’s not all. Banks don’t lend money for free, they demand high fees for the loans they give and many of these countries are now spending millions of pounds extra each week paying back the changes. It’s all cash which could be spent helping people in their country. ‘Drop the Debt’ being launched by Britain’s pop stars this week is part of what’s called the Jubilee 2000 campaign. Its aim is to scrap all this world debt by the year 2000. So, is it possibly time to ask Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer...Gordon Brown says canceling all world debt is too difficult, instead he wants it reduced. The last time
pop stars supported a big campaign was in 1986. When a huge concert raised money for striving children in Ethiopia. Getting world debt cancelled is a far bigger task but with so many famous names signing up, hope is now on. (15.2.99 BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)

Three of the bulletins in our sample referred to conflict in this region. On 2 March Newsround covered the Western tourists killed on safari in Uganda by Rwandan Hutu rebels. The background visuals for the newscaster showed African rebels dancing in grass skirts as a border post. Two of the reports focused on child soldiers. On 11 January, this focused on ‘young protesters’ who were fronting a new campaign to protest against the use of child soldiers in London. We are told that ‘hundreds of thousands of young people are forced to fight in 44 countries across Africa. 300,000 children are in the firing line and thousands are killed. In some countries, children as young as eight years are recruited. Another report on 4 March is extremely engaging in the way it talks to the children directly. For example:

**Presenter:** The tragedy of children forced to fight wars abroad.

**Reporter:** Hello and first the suffering of children forced to become soldiers. In many parts of the world, children are being captured, taken from their families and trained for battle. The charity Save The Children is calling for this practice to be made illegal throughout the world. One of the most brutal wars is taking place in Africa, there hundreds of children have been trained by rebel forces to help fight against the current government in Sierra Leone.

The visuals switch to a soldier pushing a child less than eight years old over to his jeep. The report continues:

**Reporter:** Like hundreds of other children, Moses was taken from his family and trained to be a soldier. This video was filmed earlier this year.

**Reporter:** The soldiers say children make good soldiers because they quickly learn how to follow orders

**Young Boy:** They catch people and make you join, they teach you how to shoot, they make you walk a long way and teach you how to spy

**Reporter:** The journalist who filmed Moses believes countries around the world need to help children like him

**Sorious Samura,** **Journalist:** I just hope for their sake that the outside world will give us the support and let these children have the opportunity and the lifestyle that they deserve as children.

**Reporter:** Plans are underway to make it a crime everywhere in the world for children under 15 years to be trained as soldiers, but that won’t happen for another 7 years when an international court is set up. Charities like Save the Children are now pressing for that to happen more quickly to protect young people like Moses. He’s now being encouraged to make friends by other children at the camp, despite all they’ve seen, their kindness to each other hasn’t been destroyed. (BBC1 1700-1710)

Natural disasters were another key area of the coverage. There were four items which focused on this, all of which occurred in January. These mainly focused on the Colombian earthquake which occurred at this time, three of the four items referred to this between 26-28 February. Layers of description appear with almost no explanation of either the events or their damaging impact on the economic infrastructure of the country and its future long term development. In this it reproduced the pattern which has already been identified in the main adult news bulletins.

The other report in this section was on flooding in the Pacific island of Fiji. Similar to the reports on Colombia, the story of the flood in is also purely descriptive:

**Presenter:** Severe flooding in the Pacific island of Fiji has left one person drowned and hundreds stranded. 24 hours of heavy rain caused flood waters to rise as high as four feet damaging shops and homes. (BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)

Three programmes offered an alternative view of developing countries. These were concentrated within the month of February. These focused entirely on positive issues and focused on festivals and celebrations. By explaining other cultures, they convey the cultural diversity of nations. Two of the three programmes focused on the Brazil carnival when a young viewer travelled to Brazil to present the report and interview local performers and participants. For example:

**Presenter:** Now to our latest presspack reporter as the street party on a grand scale. 13 year-old Lucy Williams in Surrey put on her dancing shoes to attend the world’s biggest carnival, she joined millions of other party goers at the week long celebrations held every year in the city of Salvador on the East coast of Brazil. Here’s her report.

**Beto Daltro,** **Carnival Performer:** Basically, the people here get together every year to celebrate life and this year’s more special because Salvador, the capital is 150 years old.
Lucy takes part in the procession and you see her rehearsing the dance steps. 

**Lucy**: Vanada told me the children of El Salvador have a special part to play in the carnival. Part of the carnival is dedicated to the children and she really enjoys joining in. *(BBC1 Newsround 700-1710)*

One other report focused on an environmentally friendly band from the Philippines which makes its musical equipment from ‘pieces of junk yard scrap’.

**Reporter**: Elemento are a group who actually don’t mind being told that they’re a load of old rubbish. The band play their songs on instruments made up from pieces of junk yard scrap. That other people have thrown away. The band weighs up what is and what isn’t useful, door hinges, bicycle gear wheels and rusty car exhausts are just some of the objects that are eventually made into guitars and even the clothes they wear on stage. After dividing the instruments, Elemento play the junk.

The reporter ends with the statement:

**Reporter**: If the band takes off perhaps they could soon be taking their particular brand of eco-music to the rest of the world. *(BBC1 Newsround 1700-1710)*

*Newsround* has developed a very positive approach to much of its coverage of the developing world. It has also managed to combine this with relatively clear explanations of complex issues. The adult audience groups in the audience study sometimes commented on this and the fact that they found it a useful programme for this reason.

**C.3.1.2. Blue Peter and wildlife programmes**

Coverage of developing countries on children’s television, excluding the educational slots, was rather scarce. Only four programmes (from the general sample outside *Blue Peter*) featured developing countries. These were mostly wildlife shows, filming animals in their natural habitats, which happened to be regions of the developing world. As can be seen from the outline below, there were so few examples available that some of these programmes were even taken from outside the sample period.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Channel</th>
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<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.1.99</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>1635-1700</td>
<td><em>The Really Wild Show</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1.99</td>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>0755-0815</td>
<td><em>(Repeat)</em> <em>The Really Wild Show</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>25.2.99</td>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>This is Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.3.99</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>1635-1705</td>
<td><em>Wildtrack</em></td>
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Three of the four programmes were wildlife shows. *The Really Wild Show* visited Borneo, Southeast Asia, famous for its population of Orang-utans. In contrast to the other programmes, its main concern was conservation, for although Orang-utans were once common in Borneo, their numbers have been halved by a combination of deforestation and forest fires. We are told that Borneo is one of the Orang-utan’s last few remaining homes. The show featured the team of dedicated Borneo rangers who staff who one sanctuary working 24 hours a day, weighing, bathing and feeding the animals so that they can be rehabilitated back into the ‘protected wild’.

*Wildtrack*, another nature programme, followed two English children on a visit to South Africa’s biggest national park, Kruger, 650km east of Johannesburg. We are told that Isabel and Steven are about to get their first taste of the ‘African Bush.’ On arriving at the safari camp, Isabel remarks ‘It’s quite civilised really, isn’t it?’ The white game ranger introduces them to the manual staff who are all African. The two cooking staff are both Black, Frankie the chef and Poppy, ‘Frankie’s aunt...she’ll be doing the general cleaning for you guys. This is Moses...He’ll be making sure there’s hot water for your showers.’ The programme is permeated with references to what you should and should not do in a safari camp in Africa. The children are told for example, not to wander off the campsite in case of animal attacks and to be careful of scorpions, spiders and snakes. In this respect, Africa is obviously very different from Britain, but the programme is not negative. The children’s own assumptions are obviously challenged as we see in the comment on how ‘civilised’ it is.

A comprehensive three-month sample of the children’s programme *Blue Peter* was also recorded. Over the period of the sample the programme ran its New Future Mozambique Appeal. This aimed to collect a target number of aluminium cans from around the country and donate the funds raised to building and equipping a school in Mozambique. In practice, the coverage was focused more towards reaching the target set than in-depth coverage of development issues. Regular up-dates on the total reached so far on the Totaliser was a regular feature of the show. Of the 17 programmes which provided up-dates on the appeal, only 9 made any reference to Mozambique. These were mainly brief and only three contained visuals or short films giving the background to the appeal. Images of poverty permeate the text of these reports and we are consistently reminded that the money is for ‘three desperately needed schools’. In one programme,
discussions of the total so far achieved is followed by visuals of a Blue Peter presenter laying the foundation stone for one school in Mozambique. She states:

*We can turn this £200 into enough money to build and fully equip one brand new school in Mozambique. Now, you might remember I helped lay the foundation stone after school.*

The camera switches to visuals of her laying the stone with lots of African children standing behind her. She says that the money helps buy paper, blackboards and everything they need. Visuals of her planting the stone are followed by images of her preparing the classroom, putting a chart on the wall and taking chalks out of a box.

(15.1.99 Blue Peter BBC1 1710-1735). In another edition, an up-date on the Totaliser is followed with the statement:

*Yes, our New Future Appeal to raise money to buy three desperately needed schools needs a final push from you if we are to succeed.*

**Presenter:** Now, the children I met in Mozambique really need schools, without them the poverty of their lives is unlikely to change for the better. This is your chance to make a difference and give them their new future. Every little bit of Aluminum you collect helps, so please do take your collections to your nearest collection point. They’re at Safeway, Sasacentre, Asda, Securicor Omega Express or even your local Oxfam shop.

The focus switches back to children in regions across Britain, in Jersey and St. Clements who made a massive collection (3.2.99 BBC1 Blue Peter 1710-1735). This image of being part of a national collective effort is generated continuously throughout the reports and is used to encourage viewers and show them how they too can participate. For example, the episode shown on 1 February moved from a concentration on the targets set to the contribution made by a group of milkmen. The report began:

*Now 300 tons means that we’ve almost got enough money to build two schools, but if we reach the 500 tons mark, we’ll have enough money to build three schools in Mozambique for children who need them desperately. So please carry on taking your aluminum cans and foil to Oxfam shops, Securicor Omega Express, Asda, Safeway and Sasacentre as soon as possible.*

At this, the presenter then arrives in the studio on a milk float and we are told:

*Now, it has come to our attention that lots of milkmen and women are top people and we’ve had this letter here from William Edwards from Nutsford in Cheshire who told us about a great little enterprise being run by the milkmen at his grandad’s dairy. William whose brother Tom and their family suddenly hit on the idea after watching Blue Peter, they realized that while the Nutsford milkmen were out on their rounds they could pick up the aluminum collected by their customers. The milkmen all thought this was a great idea, so they put adverts in their local paper and printed notes on all their notebills and guess what? Each week they collect 3 massive bags of foil and cans...So, a very big thank you to all the folk in Nutsford and of course all those lovely milkies. (BBC1 Blue Peter 1710-1735)*

Similarly, a later episode told of what lollipop ladies were doing for the cause:

*Now the other day we heard from the lollipop ladies and lads of Nottingham who asked us if we’d like their old aluminum lollipops as they’re getting brand new ones. Well, of course the answer was yes and here they are all the way from Nottingham.*

The presenter continues:

*Why not find out what is happening to the old lollipops in your area. After all, it’s amazing to think that lollipops that have helped children in Britain can now help children thousands of miles away in Mozambique. (17.2.99 BBC1 1710-1735)*

The programmes are strong on the issue of collection but offer less in terms of understanding the nature of Mozambique’s problems or of identifying with its people. These are points which were made explicitly by the children in the audience study focus groups, who commented directly on these Blue Peter programmes.

C.3.2. **Documentaries, Current Affairs and News Features**

C.3.2.1. **South Africa**

There were three programmes in the sample which were filmed in South Africa. Each programme had a specific focus, presenting varying images of the country. GMTV visited South Africa in January. With a promotional emphasis, it presented very positive imagery of life for white residents of the country. Two other documentaries provided a stark contrast, with their focus on the lives of poor black South Africans living in townships. The first of these was *Snapshot*, which filmed actress Helen Mirren on a trip to South Africa, to witness the effects on women and children of living in a violent society. Secondly there was *Panorama – The Search for Cynthia Mthebe*, which involved a journalist returning to South Africa to see how a family he had met five years ago were living post-apartheid. The individual perspectives offered by each
programme will be considered first, before comparing them in the conclusion.

GMTV in South Africa
GMTV was recorded throughout each of the three sample weeks, to see whether developing countries were covered in this popular daytime magazine format. Following the early news section of GMTV from 0600 until 0700, the remainder of each programme, lasting from 0700 until around 08.50, is usually broadcast live from London. The programme is led by two regular presenters, with outside reporters covering features from elsewhere in the country. The typical content of the latter section of the programme includes celebrity interviews, features on issues prevalent in the media including health and family matters and entertainment. The programme is interspersed with regular news bulletins. Outside these regular news bulletins presented by GMTV, developing countries did not feature in the programme. However, the last day of the January sample, Monday 18 January, was the start of a week in which part of GMTV was broadcast live from South Africa. The extra four programmes were therefore recorded from 19 to 22 January. Around three quarters of an hour of GMTV each day from 18 to 22 January was from South Africa.

Introduction
The programme was presented from various perspectives within Capetown, including Table Mountain, the beach at Camps Bay and the expensively refurbished Victoria and Albert dock, renamed the Waterfront. Two other reporters presented features from a variety of locations, covering numerous activities and attractions, including trips to Sun City, games reserves, an ostrich farm, whale watching, shark watching and visiting townships.

Graphics on screen following commercial breaks informed that the programme was sponsored by South African Airlines. In many respects, the programme appeared to promote South Africa, as both a holiday destination, and as somewhere British people could relocate to. There were several enthusiastic references to the hot, sunny climate, with the main presenter coining the phrase ‘sunshine with your breakfast’ on the first day. On five occasions, British ex-patriots were interviewed briefly about their new lives in South Africa.

While much of GMTV’s week in South Africa focused on tourist attractions and the potential for British people to enjoy an improved lifestyle in the country, there were two features on the second day and fourth day which looked at what was described as ‘the other side of South Africa.’ The first of these alternative features, on the Tuesday, focused on life for the residents of townships. Two alternative presenters visited black people in townships and particularly with the feature on Soweto, discussed some of the difficulties – including poverty, unemployment and poor housing – faced by the residents. The programme begins with:

*We go to Soweto, where millions live in shacks. Martin Frizzell finds smiles and surprises where perhaps, you wouldn’t expect them.*

On the fourth day, the focus changed again, with a features on crime and violence in South Africa. Part of the discussion here was led by the central presenter who was based in the Waterfront complex for the day. Most of the discussion however was led by the second journalist, who visited Johannesburg and interviewed white residents who have been victims of crime.

First the good news about crime in South Africa – it has levelled off – it’s not getting much worse. The bad news is that it is still astonishingly high, and visitors to Johannesburg, its most cosmopolitan city, are more likely to be victims than anywhere else.

Luxury lifestyle
The main emphasis however throughout the week, remained the high standard of living, the leisure pursuits and tourist attractions of South Africa, particularly in and around Capetown. Through most of the week in South Africa, the country was presented as a very attractive place to which British visitors could move. On Monday, the viewer was invited to: “Share the far better conditions (compared to Britain) in South Africa with us.” There were frequent references to the better climate, preferable exchange rates and improved standard of living: “GMTV has followed the sun to bring broadcasts live from South Africa.”

Those interviewed on the beach on the first day agreed with the presenter that your money goes a long way as a British citizen in South Africa, quoting 10 rand to the pound as the current exchange rate. Reading from the South African version of TV Times, the presenter said: “TV presenters are treated like real stars here. I’m going to arrange a jobshare.” On day three (20.1.99) a white estate agent was interviewed about the cost of property around Capetown. They looked at typical houses along the seafront, and stopped a passing British walker who informed them he moved four years ago, bought his new house for £100,000, and now has ‘three bedrooms, a pool and a maid as well.’ The estate agent told the presenter:
We’ve had a number of Britons over the years – somewhere in the region of 10% of our sales are from Britain, and that number seems to be increasing.

Similarly on the fourth day (21.1.99) one of a group of British settlers informed that she had visited South Africa three years previously to shoot a television commercial. After spending three days in Capetown, she decided to emigrate. She bought a lovely house at a time when ‘the rand was particularly weak against the pound.’ Informing viewers that it is possible to get permanent residence of South Africa after two years, she concluded:

I love the lifestyle here. I’m living in the most spectacular place in the world.

In the London GMTV studio, the presenter there announced on the first day that: “We’re going to talk to all sorts of people, all shades of opinion and er, people. This is an evolving country – in a state of flux, with many stories to tell.” In practice, we found that the majority of people who were interviewed during the week in South Africa were white and affluent. During the course of the week, the main journalist spoke to the following people, most of whom were either on the beach or on Table Mountain: an ostrich farmer, ice-cream vendor, Miss South Africa, three reserve rangers, a vet, the manager of Table Mountain, the manager of the 5-star Table Bay Hotel, the manager of the Waterfront, the manager of the Dolphin Beach Hotel Complex, an estate agent, four golfers, three surfers, a banker, a sound engineer and five individuals or families who had moved to South Africa from Britain. All of these people were white. Even a white witch doctor was interviewed. White celebrities who happened to be visiting South Africa during the GMTV week were interviewed for the programme (comedian Phil Cool and Coronation Street’s Matthew Marsden).

Apart from the feature on Soweto, black people were interviewed only on rare occasions during the week. The Soweto String Quartet were asked about life in the township. The main presenter also spoke to the Whale Crier of Hermanus, a black South African who uses a horn to try to attract whales towards the beach for visitors. However, when no whales surfaced, the presenter turned to some local white women to ask for advice on the best times to catch sight of a whale.

On day four the programme was introduced from the beach, where a number of white people could be seen out walking. He commented: “People are out taking their morning constitutional – a Californian lifestyle.” This comment was particularly apt because in many respects, had the viewer not known the programme was from South Africa, it would be easy to assume that the venue was in fact Californian due to the lack of black people appearing on screen. The exception to this was that musical entertainment was provided each day by a variety of mainly black artists. On day one Ladysmith Black Mambazo played while the presenter introduced the programme. Zulu dancers also performed during this programme. The presenter introduced the Soweto String Quartet on the second day: “Perfect music, the perfect location.” On the third day, there was entertainment of a kind not seen on British television for many years, with the local minstrels (of the black and white variety) singing on the beach. These entertainers were introduced with the words “fantastically colourful music from the minstrels.” Ladysmith Black Mambazo again featured on day four, with the Soweto Street Quartet providing the final entertainment at the end of the week.

A further example of the luxurious lifestyle available included a description of the experience of a trip across South Africa on the Blue Train: ‘sheer, divine, unadulterated luxury’. There were shots of the luxury cabins available, showing a television, safe for valuables and a mobile phone mounted on the wall, which can be used to ‘call the butler’. However, it was this journey on the Blue Train which very briefly raised the question of contrasting lifestyles among South African citizens. On the last day Martin the cameraman was invited to comment on his experience of travelling on the Blue Train:

Martin: The one thing that struck me on our journey on the Blue Train which was absolutely fantastic – we were in the lap of luxury – sitting there eating five star food. We pulled into a couple of stations and looked out the window and here were people there with no shoes on and ragged clothes.

Presenter: You felt uncomfortable with that?

Martin: Very slightly yeah. Apart from that the place is mind-blowing.

Presenter: Of course, these are problems the world over – South America, India – goodness sake, in London! I know exactly what you mean. As for me I would say to anybody watching – don’t come because we don’t want anyone else to discover it.

At times like this, the main presenter on GMTV from South Africa demonstrated a buoyant approach to his host country. A reference to the adverse weather conditions on the East coast stresses how good the weather is where he is. On Monday 18 January, he commented:
On the Eastern side last night there was a tornado around by the Durban coast, but we’re in the sunshine – that’s the important thing.

On Wednesday 20 January, he referred again to the adverse weather conditions:

In Kwazulu Natal on Monday night a tornado killed 20... on the North East side. But this is all the Cape of Good Hope.

Townships

On day two GMTV moved away from the beaches and tourist attractions for part of the programme, to visit the township of Soweto. This edition also included the only reference by the central presenter to the history of apartheid in the country. Pointing to the stunning view from the Table Mountain, he referred to the view of Robbin Island, which he said has been described as the most notorious prison island, now a museum. “Nelson Mandela was to serve a life sentence; he served 19 years, as did most of the present government.”

Following from this, the female presenter took up her invitation to lunch at the home of a black South African woman. This item, which lasted approximately one minute, was sandwiched between a canoeing/abseiling trip and an elephant rescue park. The woman was described as:

One of millions of black South Africans living in townships – a legacy of the apartheid years. Many don’t have electricity or running water. But as times change, they’re inviting tourists home, to educate and build bridges.

Further discussion of life in the townships followed with the feature from Soweto, which was introduced as follows:

Twenty years ago I’d have been banned by the government from coming to this place – they didn’t even have signposts telling where it is. Add the populations of Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester, and the total is probably smaller: There are 3.5 million people in a place they call a township. It is in fact the biggest city in Africa. Every day there is an exodus of humanity from Soweto – people leave on Zola Budds for the office blocks of Johannesburg – the minibuses so called because of their speed. Just because they’re going to the office, most are not in managerial positions. Five years after Mandela coming to power, only 11% of managers are black people.

The presenter joined a Soweto resident, Isaac, who makes a living as a tour guide in the area. He informed that Isaac was involved in the student riots of 1976, which ‘led to Soweto’s name becoming synonymous with black unrest.’ Isaac commented on the job situation:

In terms of jobs, we’re seeing African being employed by other Africans, we’re seeing companies giving blacks an opportunity. We’re positive about changes.

Isaac took the presenter to meet his aunt Daly in a ‘typical township house’. In fact, she described it as good house by Soweto standards. Many don’t have electricity or running water, the children wear school uniform. This comment was accompanied by shots of smartly uniformed township children. He added that a lot of children get no education, describing them as ‘a lost generation of youth.’ This comment was followed by shots of young males playing football, when Frizzell informed: “Sport gets them away from carjacking and burglary.”

The visit to Soweto was concluded as follows:

Despite the violent reputation and the raw deal they’ve had in the past, the Sowetans we met were friendly. But more than that, they were patient, waiting for Mandela’s promises of five years ago to come true.”

While this report sympathetically portrayed the hardship faced by many of those living in South Africa’s townships, it remained the only significant representation of black South Africa.

Crime

Towards the end of the week, the focus of GMTV in South Africa shifted again, with part of Thursday’s programme devoted to the issue of crime in the country. The question of security had been raised on the Monday, as the presenter advised, “People have questions over security. The security forces tell us they’re on top of everything – we haven’t seen anything.” However, a presenter in the London studio said that viewers had contacted GMTV to ask for alternative information on the country:

Lots of people have been phoning wanting to see the other side (of South Africa). We’ve seen the sun, we’ve seen the wonderful sites.

The discussion on crime in South Africa was covered by both presenters, one in Johannesburg to discuss the impact of crime on residents who had settled from Britain, while the other interviewed the manager of the Waterfront complex, scene of recent terrorist bombings. The continuing promotional theme was referred to in
the introduction to the feature, with a specific reference to potential future visitors or settlers from Britain:

Would South Africa’s shocking crime statistics put you off? Martin talks to an English woman who’s had enough and is packing up to go home....The security situation concerns not only people who live here, but people who live at home, who wish to relocate here, or travel out here on holiday. We'll discuss this today, because we're going to look at all mixes, eh, of life out here.

The journalist in Johannesburg summarised the extent of crime in the area, including examples from his own experience:

Everyone has their own criminal anecdote. These minibuses for instance might as well have bullseyes on them because they’re prime targets for carjackers. Last time I was here a few years ago, I had one for one and a half hours before it was stolen. This time round, my hotel room was burgled last night...South Africa’s statisticians have discovered, of the 25 most civilised countries in the world, South Africa has the worst crime record.

The programme featured a promotional video of a recently devised anti-hijack device, consisting of two flame-throwers bolted to the chassis of a car. Following the statement on the crime crisis in the country, viewers were then shown the white suburbs of Johannesburg, where many of the houses are surrounded by walls 15 to 20 feet high:

With a murder rate ten times that of Britain, the residents have taken to compound life, protected by armed guards. High unemployment and low police wages are blamed, but crime has almost become endemic.

A Mancunian who moved to South Africa 23 years earlier, was interviewed as a victim of crime, having been robbed, mugged and carjacked. She had decided to return to Britain because of the crime rate. The presenter then walked around the suburb with another white South African victim of crime, until they came to Nelson Mandela’s house. He commented:

It’s gone too far for Mandela’s political opponents – every week now they protest outside his home. Mr. Mandela’s protection is upfront (as a security guard approaches)....Mandela’s at home just now in the house behind us – he’s not done enough obviously. What does he have to do to help people like yourself? Get the army on to the streets?

The journalist’s companion enthusiastically agreed with the suggestion of a military response to the situation. This concluded the discussion of crime in South Africa.

Snapshot

Snapshot was a three-part series shown on BBC1 in February, going behind the scenes with people in the public eye at ‘key moments in their lives.’ The first programme, screened on 8.2.99, accompanied actress Helen Mirren to South Africa to assess the effects on women and children of living in a violent society. The trip was organised by the charity Oxfam, to witness the human cost of gun violence. Helen Mirren was filmed in various locations in South Africa over a six day period. In contrast to the discussion of violence in GMTV from South Africa, which concerned only white people, the focus here was entirely on the black community, as victims, survivors and perpetrators of violence. In Snapshot there was some attempt to explore the roots of violence in the country, by setting it in the context of the extreme violence of the apartheid era. Secondly the viewer was informed of the conditions of hardship in which township people live, and the lack of resources available to stem the appalling level of violent crime there. Against this background, there were examples of black communities successfully organising against violence, with Helen Mirren visiting Mapela, a gun free zone, and talking to workers involved in self-help agencies, particularly POWA which assists rape survivors.

By talking to and forming relationships with a range of people in the townships, Snapshot presented a humanised view of black South Africa which witnessed the majority struggling to live a decent life against the odds.

The narrator introduced the programme by linking the ‘scars’ of apartheid with the grim crime statistics of current South Africa:

The bloody struggle to bring down apartheid has left terrible scars on South Africans. The legacy of this violence is a society where there are thirty murders a day and thousands of rapes, muggings and car hijackings every week....People in the townships have seen so much violence that it has spilled over into home life – aggression and guns are commonplace in families.

As Helen Mirren travelled around, visiting a variety of projects and villages, she heard alarming descriptions of the level of violence perpetrated by a minority.

There are more rapes at gunpoint in South Africa than anywhere else in the world.

Day four was at Kwamashu outside Durban, described by the narrator as a ‘sprawling and lawless township.’ Jenny Irish from Independent Monitors of Violence commented:

Kwamanshu is an incredibly violent area – the gangs are heavily armed and very well organised – operating in
almost every section of the area. They’ve been responsible for a number of killings in the area, but more than that, pensioners get robbed at pension points, school children get abducted from school, young girls get taken from school and raped at gunpoint... essentially the gangs have terrorised the community.

A student at the high school there had been shot the day before. One teacher, Nora Ngema explained to Mirren that pupils and staff are afraid. She had recently reported her own mugging to the police who informed her they had no manpower to respond to this crime. The lack of resourcing of the police force was referred to several times during the programme. The narrator summarised the situation:

Police officers are in the front line the fight against gun-related crimes. There are 13 million firearms in South Africa – 300 officers are shot dead every year. They are badly paid – police stations often have no vehicles and can be up to 50 miles from the squatter towns they serve.

There were also positive images of local people organising against violence. The third day involved a visit to one of South Africa’s first gun free zones called Mapela, 200 miles North of Johannesburg, where guns are banned. Helen Mirren visited a schools project in the high school there – Gun Free South Africa, which aims to reinforce the anti-gun message by encouraging pupils to consider how they would feel if a member of their family was to be harmed by a gun. This section of the programme was made more poignant when unexpectedly, one female pupil began to cry while she recounted that her mother had been shot dead while the family were out in for a drive in the car in another area. Mirren also visited an agency called POWA:

An organisation called ‘People Opposing Women Abuse’ or POWA is trying to change attitudes and provide support for local women.

POWA encourages rape victims to come forward and talk about what happened to them. They aim to raise funds as well as the self-esteem of women who approach them. POWA has also trained female police officers in how to respond to women who have been raped.

At each stage of her travels around South Africa, Helen Mirren appeared to enjoy and appreciate the hospitality and warmth she experienced. At the end of her first day of filming, from Soweto, Ms Mirren summed up her visit to a township shack:

In its intense poverty, it was also extremely well kept. The floor was immaculate, the ceiling was very brightly coloured. The immense, immediate welcoming nature of the people here is quite extraordinary – I expected a greater level of antagonism to weird white people wandering around...I didn’t feel antagonism at all anywhere.

On the sixth day of her South African tour, the media turned up for a press conference before the actress’s flight home. She gave a brief account of her tour, appearing genuinely moved by the people she had met, crying herself when she recalled the schoolgirl’s story of losing her mother.

Finally she commented on her view of the situation:

A country full of immensely courageous people – white and black – people who are confronting a huge change in their society, people who are creating their society as they go along and that’s what makes it so exciting is that you feel history right in your face.

In other sections of programming in our sample, particularly GMTV from South Africa, discussions of violence focused on white crime victims. This made the contrast with descriptions of black experiences of crime even starker.

**Panorama**

Fergal Keane was the presenter on ‘The Search for Cynthia Mthebe’, the Panorama programme screened on BBC1 18.1.99. Keane was formerly BBC Johannesburg correspondent. With Panorama he returned to South Africa to look for a mother-of-seven he had first filmed in 1994, when she was living rough with her children in a squatter camp. At that time she had been looking forward to the changes which the ANC, under Nelson Mandela, would bring. Through tracing Cynthia Mthebe and discussing with her how the lives of her family and friends had changed post-apartheid, Keane attempted to assess what had been done to improve the lot of black South African citizens. As the programme opened, Keane explained the purpose of his search for one individual South African woman, while aerial footage shot from a helicopter portrayed a bleak image of an endlessly sprawling expanse of scrubland scattered with shacks:

The squatter camp of Tambesi, on the edge of Johannesburg – it’s the second biggest township in the country. When I last came here much of this was empty grassland. Today it’s home to thousands of South African’s poor, who flocked from impoverished rural areas in search of housing. Somewhere in this wilderness I hoped to find Cynthia Mthebe. Would the new government have provided her with one of these houses, built since the last election, or would she be living beyond them where the squatter camps struggle towards the horizon.

Fergal Keane referred to the history of apartheid in South Africa throughout the programme, as was the case
with the question he posed at the end of his introduction:

As the country struggles to overcome the legacy of its brutal past, what has freedom delivered for Cynthia and for millions like her?

Early in this documentary, a distinction was drawn between the lives of the majority of black South Africans and the minority white population. While walking through the squalid township looking for Cynthia, Keane passed an obviously inebriated young black man:

This is a world where at least half of the people are jobless and alcohol is an escape route from the grinding poverty. This is the world where apartheid cast millions of blacks and from where the ANC promised to rescue them.

In contrast to this, later in the programme he visits Cynthia’s daughter Doris who was working as a domestic in a white suburb. While the area in which she was working was not one of the most salubrious of the white areas, Keane compared the relative comfort with the conditions which the Mthebes have to endure:

In South Africa wealth is still overwhelmingly in white hands. This isn’t ostentatious white wealth, but it’s a world away from the camps.

Keane found Cynthia Mthebe still living as a squatter, in a shack in an unnamed street, without electricity. The first section of the documentary focused particularly on the Mthebe family. While initial shots of the family’s shack automatically conveyed an image of poverty, it was also freshly painted and well kept. Against this, Cynthia explained the difficulties of trying to cook with paraffin and using candles for light. The accompanying comment from Keane indicated that where some progress had been made with the provision of basic utilities, others had not improved:

The arrival of a tap though represents a big advance even if it is shared. Providing clean water was one of the ANC’s key promises and has undoubtedly saved thousands of lives. But the lavatory is a hole in the ground – a health hazard in overcrowded condition.

Through the experiences of her family, the programme aimed to reveal ‘the reality of life in black South Africa today.’ Five years after the end of apartheid, Keane entered a world where the fight for survival appeared to have become even more desperate. Cynthia works at a rubbish dump, which Keane visited. He explained that Cynthia had begun working there when her husband walked out on her and their children seven years before. There, Cynthia had a ‘community of friends’ who ‘each collect different things but help each other.’

He also met Anna Requibe, a black female dump worker, who explained the necessity of working there to survive:

It would have been very difficult for me if the dump wasn’t here. Unemployment is very high, white people don’t want to hire anyone. Since I’ve been here, at least I’ve been able to put bread on the table.

Fergal Keane said that Cynthia’s working day extended well beyond that of most people:

For Cynthia Mthebe survival is a daily test of her endurance. After a long day on the rubbish dump she still hasn’t finished work. For in the dusk she becomes a farmer. On waste ground near her shack Cynthia has planted a vegetable patch. She takes care to be home by dark.

There was one scene in particular which highlighted the considerable weight of Cynthia’s family responsibilities. She had the extended family round for a meal. This included her two very young grandchildren, who live with her, her daughters who were visiting, and her three sons. The eldest son had an alcohol problem, the next had dropped out of school with no prospects and the youngest had learning difficulties:

Once a month Cynthia has a special family meal. It’s her way of trying to bind the family together.

The second half of this documentary focused further on the erosion of the social fabric of the townships. This included evidence of rapidly and dramatically increasing rates of crime, domestic violence, youth suicide and the rape of children. This section began with a comment on the changing role of South Africa’s police force:

In the old days they were the violent enforcers of white rule, but today they must serve the new democracy, and they have a new political crisis on their hands. It’s a crime wave threatening the promise of a better life on which the ANC came to power.

Keane found further evidence of desperate conditions when he visited a residential home for abandoned children. He interviewed the Director of Tembisa Child Welfare, Wilhelmina Bodibe, who commented on increasing rates of child abandonment, which she attributed to unemployment, poverty and homelessness. Keane commented on the alarming increase of sexual violence against children:

Their is a world of poverty and violence, where the rate of child rape has risen 375% in just 7 years.

The presenter joined Sergeant Freddie Malatsi of Tembisa’s police force as he carried out his night’s work. They visited a home where a young man had just attempted to hang himself.
Freddie and his men often find themselves acting as social workers and one problem they increasingly face is youth suicide. Once rare in the black community, it’s on the rise, particularly in Tembisa. Here a boy had killed himself the previous day. Now it seems his brother was attempting suicide.

In the third part of this documentary, Keane interviewed political figures in South Africa. He began by speaking to a senior ANC advisor in the grand government offices in Pretoria:

The government installed here in Pretoria still enjoys mass support. But among the impoverished millions like Cynthia Mthebe who invested so much hope five years ago, anger over crime and poverty is on the rise. We came to meet a veteran of the antiapartheid struggle — the Reverend Frank Chikane is a senior advisor to Tabo Mbeki who’ll succeed Nelson Mandela as president.

Keane asked Chikane about the source of ‘the rage and anger in this crime’:

If you’ve gone through the history we’ve gone through I think you would understand it — that if you move from a totally corrupt system — totally immoral — where you had the state itself being immoral in terms of its design etcetera — the outcome for the society becomes completely what you’re experiencing at the present moment..... The real challenge is to make sure that we deal with those conditions and make sure that a better life is experienced by the majority of people in this country.

However, another commentator, Professor Themba Sono, president of the South African Institute of Race Relations had a different view on this:

The ANC have made too many unrealistic promises and they have increased expectations and they are not going to fulfil these expectations and we’re going to reach a position of lawlessness in terms of housing because people are simply going to pitch their shack wherever they can find an empty space.... Unless we state things as we see it, people are going to go under great illusions that we have reached a nirvana.

The final section of the programme involved the presenter accompanying Cynthia to the housing department to see where she was placed on the waiting list, and to the school from which her middle son Amos had recently dropped out to find out whether he could be readmitted. The considerable odds against this woman’s fight to improve the lot of her family were highlighted by these visits. Regarding the visit to the housing office, it soon became clear that Cynthia’s name was not on any waiting list, even though she had proof of her registration for housing. At Ivory Park School, the director commented of Amos:

If he doesn’t come back to school he will definitely be involved in crime.

However, the obstacles to Amos returning to school were considerable:

There was no culture of learning in Amos’ home. His family had more pressing concerns like food and shelter. Cynthia couldn’t afford the bus fare to send him to school.

In contrast to GMTV from South Africa, the focus here was entirely on the black community. The images portrayed by these two programmes were in some ways very different. The impression gained from this documentary was of a deepening struggle to survive. The only comment on white South Africa was that on the marked contrast between the living conditions of the white woman who employs Cynthia’s daughter Doris as a domestic, and the conditions of her family in Tembisa.

Cynthia Mthebe, through her own actions and words, was presented as a woman of dignity, intelligence, resourcefulness and phenomenal strength. However, despite her continuous hard work, her family continued to live in poverty, with numerous dependants to feed, and little prospect of employment for her sons. The documentary highlighted a culture of despair in the townships. South Africa’s increasing crime rates have often been reported in the media in recent years. Here, the alarming extent of the escalation of violent crime and youth suicide in particular were underlined. In this edition of Panorama there was the beginning of a political discussion of why the end of apartheid has been accompanied by such deterioration of the social fabric in the townships. Two black political figures gave contrasting opinions on this situation. One governmental spokesperson saw the township violence as attributable to the history of apartheid and its violence. He maintained that the worst had already passed and that improved living conditions in the townships would solve these problems. However, this view was to an extent undermined by the evidence of the programme, which indicated very little improvement, and a great increase in despair. The second political figure made an important point about ANC promises of improved conditions and the need to be more realistic about what could be achieved and when.

Discussion

On GMTV from South Africa the most prevalent images were of sunshine, beaches, wildlife and leisure activities. The promotional atmosphere was enhanced by
numerous references to the improved lifestyles that settlers from Britain had enjoyed since moving to the Capetown area, thanks to lower house prices and the lower value of the rand. Clearly it is a matter of concern to the government of South Africa that affluent white residents of the country have continued to emigrate since the first democratic elections in 1994. Both Alex Duval Smith writing for the Independent on Sunday (23.5.99, p22) and Gary Younge in The Guardian (27.5.99, p18) have documented this steady exodus. Younge writes:

According to a recent report, the main reasons given for leaving are growing crime and violence.

GMTV presented two features during the week whose stated purpose was to demonstrate ‘the other side of South Africa.’ The four minutes devoted to township life formed the main representation of black South Africa. Here black residents had a limited opportunity to discuss their experience of living in the country post-apartheid. The presenter covered this feature sympathetically, making the point that of the many black people who leave Soweto each day to work in other areas, very few have managerial positions. However, during the main presentation from Capetown, no black managers were interviewed among the many successful businesspeople featured. The Soweto feature, lasting four minutes, formed the only section of the week in South Africa where black people were numerically well represented on screen. However, this conveyed a very restricted range of lifestyles of black people. The second feature on ‘the other side of life’ in South Africa focused on crime, but there was no mention of the experience of black crime victims.

Both of the alternative documentaries from South Africa focused on black communities living in townships. With Snapshot, a British celebrity was filmed touring the townships for six days. The audience study has indicated that although viewers do sometimes like to see certain celebrities present programmes, many remain sceptical about the motivation and commitment of those visiting developing countries. In this case, the celebrity presenter did appear moved by the people she met and the personal stories she heard. Although the focus of the documentary was on the devastation caused by violent crime within the black community, there were positive representations of the majority struggling to survive against escalating crime and corresponding unemployment and endemic poverty.

In The Search for Cynthia Mthebe there was some attempt to look outside township life to seek an explanation for the frustrations faced by the Mthebe family in accessing basic amenities and services. Government and opposition voices were heard in this discussion, which raised important questions about pledges made by the ANC to provide a decent standard of living for black people, and how the lack of delivery has resulted in an increased sense of hopelessness in the townships.

C.3.2.2. Asia, Africa and Latin America

Documentaries were recorded over a three-month period within the sample period: 11-17 January, 16-23 February and 2-9 March 1999. A total of 13 documentaries were collected between these dates and sub-divide as follows: Art/Culture, History, Current Affairs and Discovery/Adventure.

Coverage of the developing world focused on arts and cultural features in India, Africa and Mexico; historical pieces on China-US relations during the Cold War, Chile under the rule of General Pinochet, News at Ten coverage of the Biafran War 1968, Vietnam and South Africa 1990; current affairs in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Brazil, Sierra Leone, Indonesia; discovery features on snake hunting in Malaysia and archaeological finds in Egypt.

Arts and culture

Three of the four programmes in this section focused on artists of Indian origin and their work in post-colonial India. Presented in the first person dialogue of the artists themselves, they were often critical of British imperialism. In A Migrant’s Heart on BBC2, Juvinda Verma, director of Para Arts, London described the hypocrisy of British colonial rule:

“Eighty years ago during the first world war, many Punjabi soldiers gathered here in the barracks before being shipped off to France to fight for the British Empire. Some amongst these Punjabi who were wounded, were forced to convalesce in the British Pavilion. In order to restrict the relationships between the wounded soldiers of the British Empire and the local population of Brighton, a stockade was built, fencing off these Punjabi soldiers from contact with the local white population and of course, these were the heroes of the British Empire.

He perceives this to be the ‘systematic approach by Europeans to wipe out whole worlds, whole peoples in order to create a world in their own image’. Visiting the tomb of Caleb, he argues that post-colonial India is best summed up in Caleb’s own words as in that place where it has become a stranger to itself.’ He ends with the comment, ‘he was living in an era when one age was dying and another age was rising, the British Empire.’ (6.3.99 BBC2 A Migrant’s Heart 0610-0635).
The sculptor, Arish Kapoor, who migrated to Britain in the Seventies to study art was also critical of British rule and its after-effects. Brought up in India in a non-traditional Indian family with an Indian father and Iraqi Jewish mother, he describes how the Sixties and Seventies was pre-occupied with ‘a kind of notion of India looking for its own sense of itself, of course knowing that it was always there, but defining it within each family. In these terms, we were often the foreigners...I felt it to be a condition of my life all the way through,’ (ITV The South Bank Show 2330-0030). They discuss how their experience of being Indian migrants informs their work. In A Migrant’s Heart, Juvinda’s connections with India are with the theatre. The film looks at Neelam who runs the Chandigarh Theatre from her back garden; she connects rural and urban India through visiting performers such as the Nepals, a community of outsiders in India who tell the legends of the Punjab using female impersonators. Against visuals of the Nepals dancing in female dress, Juvinda parallels their form of work with his own life, ‘They have journeyed from one state now, Pakistan, to another...it’s one of the few times I say I wish I was an actor, I wish that all I was doing was to reproduce these millions of selves constantly because I think that is absolutely what a migrant is’ (6.3.99 BBC2 A Migrant’s Heart 0610-0635)

Cultural encounters are also an important theme. Distant Echoes: Yo Yo Ma and the Kalahari Bushmen, focuses on the cultural journey which Yo Yo Ma, a Chinese cellist, must undergo in his meeting with the bushmen. The programme begins with the artist exploring his own ‘fears’ of other cultures. Against the road sign ‘Bushmen’, the artist speaks of his ‘tremendous fears’ of the journey with ‘no telephone communications; fear of snakes’ and ‘fear of dying’, Yo Yo discusses the psychological ‘baggage’ which we accumulate in our attitudes to other cultures and peoples. Playing cello for the bushmen, he comments:

*I felt a little awkward, such a booming sound. Bach is so new here. I’m putting my own cultural values to the test...we accumulate baggage. My parents were of Chinese origin brought up in America. My fascination with music is a fascination with people. This is the greatest stretch I’ve ever made.* (6.3.99 ITV 0440-0540 Distant Echoes: Yo Yo Ma and the Kalahari Bushmen)

The programme shows how preconceived opinions are often based on ‘romantic notions’ that are out of touch or uninformed. The high point of the film focuses on the collective music-making of the bushmen and compares the transcendental state induced by their ‘trance dance’ which is a physical synthesis of their beliefs, medicine and music to the function of a Beethoven symphony. Whereas the Kalahari say ‘it gives us life’, both, he concedes ‘are nourishment for the soul’.

**History**

Historical documentaries too offered a radically different perspective of the developing world and its relationship with the industrialised west. These were often critical of western involvement in the politics of these regions and especially of US foreign policy and the Nixon-Kissinger period in diplomatic relations. The Real...General Pinochet, for example, shown on 16 January charted Pinochet’s rise to power from humble beginnings as head of a prison in 1948. The film shows how Salvador Allende originally rose as champion of the landless poor in the 1960s to be eventually elected President of Chile in 1970. Despite being a democracy, Chile’s relationship with Fidel Castro alarmed the United States to such an extent that the CIA was prompted into action. Peter Kornbluh, Director of the National Security archive explained the extent of American intervention in Chilean politics:

*Kissinger and Nixon decided this couldn’t be tolerated, and adopted a longer range strategy to destabilize the Chilean economy, bribing Congressmen, financing strikes and black propaganda against Allende. The CIA paid drivers to stay on strike. The country was paralyzed by 1000% inflation. There were strikes everywhere and the military was drawn in.*

The programme argues that the result was that Chile was thrown into a series of coups in June 1973 which enabled Pinochet to take control of the country. We are told that Pinochet’s reign was tyrannical; he exterminated members of opposition parties and disappearances were endemic, there were 13,500 arrests, tortures and disappearances under his command and 4,000 Chileans were either killed or disappeared during this period. We are also told that Pinochet was also a key player in Operation Condor, a secret alliance with South American dictators to destroy Left wing movements. However, the U.S. continued to provide economic and military support to his regime. Pinochet had other important allies in the West, the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, for example, was a ‘big pal’ and it was noted that were it not for Chile’s support in the 1982 war with Argentina, the outcome may have been very different.

BBC2’s Cold War Détente 1969-75 shown on 6 March, focused on the Nixon-Kissinger nexus in America’s Cold War policy of the 1960s. The Vietnam war had been extremely damaging, it had cost 30,000 lives,
public opinion was adverse to it and it was a major
distraction to other foreign policy initiatives. For this
reason, Nixon and Kissinger set up strategic summits in
Beijing and Moscow which aimed to open up China by
bringing it in diplomatically, improve relations with
Russia and hence put pressure on the Vietnamese to
negotiate a settlement. By interviewing key government
sources such as Winston Lord, Aide to Henry Kissinger
and Morton Halpern, U.S. National Secretary, the film
explains in a detailed but concise manner, the
importance of détente. For example:

Morton Halpern, U.S. National Security Council:
Nixon believed, I think correctly, that the opposition to
the war was mostly about the draft and the casualties and
not about the American presence there. Americans didn’t
care if we were bombing Hanoi, they didn’t care if there
were American planes around. What they didn’t like,
was the fact that young American men were being sent to
Vietnam, were drafted and being killed. (BBC2 Cold
War Détente 1969-75 2015-2105)

The film shows that in North Vietnam in 1973, peace
accords did not stop the fighting. In April 1975, the
South Vietnamese army was struggling, they could
expect little help from the Americans. Despite the South
Vietnamese besieging the U.S. embassy, the Americans
were bailing out.

In the piece on the history of the News at Ten, And
Finally: The End of the News at Ten, journalistic
contributors to ITN over the years are inter-cut with
segments from a disturbing piece of footage from the
Biafran War. It shows visuals of black soldiers tying the
hands of a prisoner, the voice-over runs:

Question: Can you ask him if he’s a Biafran soldier?
Answer: I am not a Biafran soldier, but I can show you
the place where they are.

Question: If you are not a Biafran soldier, why do you know
the places where Biafran soldiers are? (7.3.99 Channel 4
2000-2100 And Finally: End of News at Ten)

Sir David Nicholas, Editor-in-chief of ITN, 1977-89
explains:

David Nicholas: In the early days of News at Ten, there
was a war in Nigeria where one of the states Biafra, had
broken away from the central government. There were
stories around of alleged atrocities committed by the
federal troops.

Nigel Ryan, Editor and Chief Executive, ITN (1968-
77): This young man looked absolutely terrified. He had
his hands tied and he was pleading for his life. He was 17,
18 years old.

The reel continues:

Reporter: What will happen to him now captain?
Captain: We will take him to headquarters
Reporter: But, you’re not going to interrogate him? So,
you’re not going to be killed, you’re going to be all right.
Is that right captain, you’ll give him food?

Michael Nicholson: I said to him, relax you’re a P.O.W.
It shows how naive I was then.

He is shot dead. Nigel Ryan explains:

Nigel Ryan: It was a horrific piece of film. We spent a lot
of time wondering how to edit it. It became a very famous
sequence at the time. What we decided to do was end it
after the first shot. Within a few days that officer was
court marshalled by the Nigerian government and
sentenced to death and we were invited in to film his
execution by the Nigerian authorities. But, we declined
because we didn’t want to show a killing, but we showed
the first killing because it was news and it was evidence in
its own right. (Channel 4 2000-2100 And Finally: End of
News at Ten)

Current affairs

The current affairs documentaries can sometime offer a
very innovative perspective on conflict. BBC2’s
Correspondent ran a series of investigations into human
rights abuses in Guatemala (20.2.99) and conflict in
Indonesia and Sierra Leone (6.3.99). The report on 20
February was headlined the ‘Investigation into the bones
that bear witness to the abuses of the past’. In this,
Correspondent revealed how a war triggered by a CIA coup
against the elected government of Guatemala, spiralled
into a civil war that lasted four decades and claimed more
than 150,000 lives, most of them Guatemalan Indians.
Although three years ago an internationally-brokered
peace deal ended the conflict, it is only now that the
Church’s Human Rights project, REMHI is beginning to
unearth the extent of the human rights abuses carried out
in the war. The REMHI’s report Guatemala Never Again,
blamed 80% of the killings on the army. The Correspondent
report is structured around the evidence of these
violations and begins with a description of the violence:

Reporter: The army maintained that they were
earthquake victims, but now there is proof that these
villages were killed by men, who thanks to forensic
evidence, may be made accountable for their crimes. At
the end of the war, a law passed in the name of National
Reconciliation Amnesty War Crimes accepts genocide,
torture and disappearances. But, now the bones are
talking and can testify to some of the worst human rights
abuses the world has seen. The Catholic Church is
spearheading the campaign for justice in Guatemala, challenging the impunity that soldiers and guerrillas conferred on themselves when they made peace. Most of the victims of the war were non-combatants. In addition to the dead, 50,000 disappeared and 100,000 were driven into exile.

**Father Rigoberto Penez:** There are no words to describe the war. It was monstrous, it was like a wild beast that fell upon the people and devoured them, it was like a broom that swept away all life. Of every ten people who died in the war, two belonged to armed groups and 8 were children. Men, women and children... children torn from their mothers’ wombs and accused of being rotten fruit. (6.3.99 BBC2 Correspondent 1930-2015).

The report reveals the significant role played by the U.S. in the violence:

**Reporter:** In the mountains, Guatemala’s dirty war was supported by American Congressional funding until 1990 and by covert C.I.A. funding until 1995. It was a war the West ignored, a war whose worst abuses were committed out of sight. The Left Wing Guerrillas fighting military regimes cover in mountains like these and a state of siege was declared to enable the army to kill legally...In tightly nit communities like IL Puerto, men no different from Manuel were press ganged into village militias that were forced to torture and kill friends and relatives. A few did it willingly to settle petty squabbles or personal rivalries, most killed rather than be killed. Simple, God-fearing people became accomplices in their own destruction. Now, for the first time they are being encouraged to talk openly about an era so traumatic, that neighbour dared not talk to neighbour. Slowly, the talking is restoring much of the sense of community that existed before the war...Some of the greatest abuses were committed by village militias, dignified by the name of Civil Patrols. Juan Castro lives side by side with the men that murdered two of his family and a friend.

The level of violence parallels descriptions of the genocide in Rwanda recounted in Comic Relief, with ‘neighbour killing neighbour’.

Interviewee Juan Castro: They locked them up in this room and tortured them cruelly for 15 days. When they asked for food, they gave them excrement, to drink, they gave them urine. They destroyed Gustavo’s face and hacked him here with a machete, the same happened to Redro and Jesus, they died very difficult deaths.

**Reporter:** Almost everyone in this community of 32 families has lost someone, some of the people who ordered the killings, still occupy high office and can influence the course of justice...Reconciliation was a wiping clean of the slate. (6.3.99 BBC2 Correspondent 1930-2015)

The Correspondent report on Sierra Leone focused on a bar run by an elderly Englishman in the midst of a war zone. The report offered an unusual account of how the bar represents the struggle for normality in the midst of extreme danger. We are told that ‘this old fashioned Englishman with his kindness and cold beer, offers a blessed antidote to the pressures of war’ ‘at Paddy’s you can escape...for a while, you enter a different country.’ The report is structured around the viewpoint of frontline players themselves:

**Reporter:** Freetown in time of war. It’s five pm and the mercenaries in their choppers fly low over Paddy’s Bar. I’ve known a few war zone bars, but none like this place and its owner, Paddy Warland...The curfew begins in just one hour so drinking is done quickly...Among the drinkers, Nigerian soldiers who’ve spent the day on the battlefield and bodyguards from the British High Commission on a day off...Juliet and her friends, bargirls, young, poor, dreaming of escape. These are the doctors who tend the wounded and dying, but at Paddy’s you can escape for a while, you enter a different country.

Other reports offer a different perspective of developing countries which focuses on cultural difference and the ‘unusual’. On 6 March, Correspondent ran a feature on a two year-old boy thought to be the reincarnation of the former President, Premidasa in the ‘mystical island of Sri Lanka.’ The report notes:

**Reporter:** These monks are taught that our actions in our life determined whether we come back as a man or an insect in the next. The cycle of reincarnation only ends when we reach enlightenment. Almost everyone here believes in rebirth, the trick is to find out who has come back as what... Hanuranketha believes that it has won the reincarnation lottery and these people are here to meet the winning ticket. Sampad, the toddler in white is celebrating the second birthday in this life, but they believe that he’s been here before, not as a poor village boy, but as a former president. No-one here seems too concerned that Sampad’s previous incarnation was killed by an assassin. His last life ended on this funeral pyre in 1993, President Premidasa was killed by an unknown suicide bomber. With so many enemies, this reincarnation is more curse than blessing. (6.3.99 BBC2 1910-1955 Correspondent)

The report shows how the ‘inexact science’ of hypnosis is used to determine the authenticity of the young pretender. Yet, there is little authentic in the judgement, the monks, the people and the politicians all
have a vested interest in the judgement. For the monks, Premidasa was the ‘monastery’s principle benefactor’, for friends of the ex-president, their political careers ended when he was assassinated and for the urban poor, he built them houses and roads, we are told, ‘In a world of extreme poverty and blind faith, these people are prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt,’ (6.3.99 BBC2 1910-1955 Correspondent).

Features
Other films focused on images of underdevelopment, poverty and disease. BBC1’s Lifeline appeals programme, featured the charity War on Want and focused on poverty in Brazil. It encouraged donations by showing how money raised in the past has been used to make a difference and beyond this how the charity supports political action. Against opening visuals of squalor, street people living in shacks and houses made of black plastic bags, sewers, Africans digging a grave and a mother holding her starving baby and crying, the narrator focuses on images of poverty which are said to be man-made. It draws on images of children who ‘die every day from malnutrition and preventable disease’:

**Presenter:** Brazil is one of the most unjust societies on earth, it has the eighth largest economy in the world, yet 32 million Brazilians go hungry every day. An extremely unequal system of land distribution has pushed hundreds of thousands of landless peasants to the cities in search of a living. So it was, in the mid-1980s, that the MST, Movement of Workers Without Land was formed. It has become one of the most dynamic social movements in Latin America and encourages people to exercise their legal rights to occupy uncultivated land. They do this, despite opposition from armed thugs, and some have lost their lives.

Statements such as these are accompanied by visuals of violence, corpses on slabs and street urchins running along a country road with no shoes on. The report continues with an account of how the poor are reacting to social injustice:

In spite of the dangers, MST has now successfully resettled 600,000 people, War on Want is directly working with MST in Brazil. 120 families occupy this small stretch of road close to a large placenda or farm. They are ordinary men, women and children who share a common history of poverty, hunger and neglect. Just before Christmas, 600 fully armed shock troops tried to force them off the land, weaponless they stood firm and are determined to fight on. The Pattino children have learnt from their parents that they will have to fight for a brighter future.

The family share this makeshift hut, they have no clean water and no electricity.

The testimony of the people themselves is featured. Joao and Lurdes Pintinho, for example, have learned to read and write as a result of the project.

**Joao & Lourdes Pintinho:** Before we came to legal encampment, we were dying gradually because we had no health, no vegetation and no food. We were denied everything, so why would we fear one more form of oppression.

**Mother:** For the first time, we have some real hope. Thanks to MST, what we are doing is well organised. We are determined that our children will live with dignity and have a real chance to build something for their future. (21.2.99 BBC1 Lifeline 1650-1700)

We are told that in the state of San Carlo about 45,000 people in the landless movement, live on co-operative farms, other clips show the natural remedies store where 13 women work with Lucia, processing and packaging the herbs they grow on the farm. We are told, ‘with the help of War on Want, they plan to expand their business...War on Want plans to help the group increase its profits on the goods it makes and sells under its own label ‘Sabor De Campo’ which means ‘Taste of the Countryside’. The plan is to transport the produce from all of the farms and take it to a chain of shops and markets, cutting out the middle man and selling directly to the rural and urban poor at affordable prices. The enterprise will ensure the economic viability of the settlements. In the shanty towns of Brazil’s biggest city, San Paolo, there are 5000 rubbish recyclers, War on Want has been supporting the rubbish recyclers Association in San Paolo, in their work with the homeless and people living in the slums. These rubbish collectors have got together to form a co-operative and claim their rights as citizens. It focuses on the case of Almo, a rubbish collector who cannot afford rent and ‘so like so many others, lives with his young family in a derelict building.

**He’s really proud of his home, even though he has no security of tenure, at least his children have a roof over their heads and food to eat’, (21.2.99 BBC1 1650-1700 Lifeline).

Adventure
Other programmes were less sympathetic in their approach to developing countries. The programme To the Ends of the Earth focused on ‘Twigger’s’ quest to find a 30 foot snake for a $50,000 reward in Taiping, Malaysia. We are told, ‘there’s no chance of finding a 30 foot snake in Malaysia, not with all the hunting going on’ so heading
deep into the Malaysian Buru which is ‘famous for big snakes and no snake trade’, Twigger enlists the help of Mohammed Ali and a Malaysian poet as translator. Twigger reflects on his role: ‘Maybe I’m no different from a Victorian big game hunter, who employs local guides and skilled huntsmen, but I like to think of it as more like being an architect – you get somebody else to do the building.’ Heading deeper into Indonesia, Twigger is granted an audience with the King who agrees to assist him in his quest but only after he has made a religious offering. We are told that if the villagers have a good reason and an illness that needs a big snake, they might find one. The villagers use dogs and spears for hunting and Twigger states, ‘It’s a bit shocking to see a deer hunted down and then killed fairly inefficiently...I’m beginning to understand now one of Wallace’s main problems, which was securing live or undamaged specimens from the interior of Seram, because the first instinct of these people when they get an animal is to kill it.’ When the villagers eventually find a seven metre snake, Twigger complains, ‘there was nothing I could do to stop the tribe from killing and eating the snake’ and he states ‘I’d prefer that it was on the way to a zoo’ than being ‘munched on by a whole bunch of bloodthirsty tribesmen’ (8.3.99 Channel 4 2000-2100 To the Ends of the Earth).

Lagos Stories
In the week which ended with Nigeria going to the polls on 27 February, Channel 4’s Lagos Stories gave voice to five Nigerians from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. This short series of films was made by Nigerian Stella Orakwue. The ‘access’ style of this series resulted in a portrayal which was distinct from most programmes about developing world. In some sections of the sample, Africans were portrayed in stereotypical terms with reference to tribalism (in news coverage of tourists murdered in Uganda) and savagery (in wildlife programmes). However, in Lagos Stories each individual was allowed to give a personal account of his/her life and hopes, conveying quite a different image. There was no narrative or voice-over to detract from their stories. All five contributors expressed the wish for greater democracy and prosperity for Nigeria. Accompanying the series, a Channel 4 website described the political background and history to Nigeria’s elections (www.channel4.com/nextstep/lagos_stories/intro.html).

Channel 4 News ends at either 1950 or 1955. From then until the 2000 broadcast of either Brookside or a documentary, there is a five or ten minute slot each weekday. Throughout the first three months of 1999, a variety of week-long series were shown at these times. For example, during the sample of 11 – 18 January, there was a series called Gilbert and Sullivan: the Very Models which was an animation about the operatic partnership. The February sample (16 – 23 February) cut across two weeks. A series called Zoom focused on London Fashion Week, from 8 to 12 February. Lagos Stories was screened the following week, from 22 to 26 February. During the same week, Channel Four News reported from Nigeria on 25, 26 and Saturday 27 February, the day of the election. The Channel Four website which accompanied the Lagos Stories series summarised the situations of each individual as follows:

**Monday 22/2/99:** Doyin Abiola runs the Concord Newspaper Group in Lagos and is the wife of Chief Moshood Abiola, who won the last Nigerian presidential elections in June 1993. The military cancelled those elections and jailed Chief Abiola, which led to national chaos. Chief Abiola died last year still in detention. In her first interview for British television, Doyin Abiola talks about the man she knew as her husband, and attacks the military culture which she says has bastardised the country.

**Tuesday 23/2/99:** Beko Ransome-Kuti, a medical doctor, is the chairman of the Campaign for Democracy – a thorn in the side of the government. He was jailed for three years for allegedly masterminding a coup attempt and was released last summer. Dr Ransome-Kuti says it’s not elections that Nigeria needs but rather the removal of the stranglehold on the country’s institutions by people from the power-wielding north of the country. Dr Ransome-Kuti’s brother was the legendary musician Fela, who died in 1997 when Beko was still in prison.

**Wednesday 24/2/99:** Senator Kofo Buckner-Akerele has just been elected as the deputy governor of Lagos State. She was an active campaigner for democracy during the 1990’s. Now her attention is focused on improving the appalling infrastructure and social conditions in Lagos. She believes that attracting Western private enterprise is the way to jump-start the economy.

**Thursday 25/2/99:** Orlando Julius is one of Nigeria’s leading musicians – but he’s been living in the West for 25 years. Now he has decided to return to Lagos for good. His mission is to build a recording studio and to help young musicians. He believes Nigerians living abroad should return home to help their country go forward.

**Friday 26/2/99:** Amos Adetunji is married with two young daughters and lives in Lagos, but thanks to winning a United States visa in a lottery, Amos and his...
family are about to leave Nigeria for the USA. He blames his decision to emigrate on the economic state of the country. He still planned to vote in the presidential election.

This overview of the series indicates the range of backgrounds of those involved. The first two of these programmes actually fell in the sample week. Both Doyin Abiola and Dr. Kuti have lost family members who were in the forefront of the struggle for democracy in Nigeria. Each now continues to campaign for better conditions and democracy for their fellow citizens. Doyin Abiola spoke first, as the widow of the man who won the previous presidential elections of 1993, but was prevented by the military from leading the country. As the initial contributor she is the first to criticise the history of military rule in Nigeria. She comments:

…the election was annulled and that was the beginning of the present mess that we are still in. He was imprisoned and he finally died there. The greatest tragedy that has befallen Africa is the introduction of the military into government. (Lagos Stories: 22.2.99, 1950)

Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti continued the discussion of the difficulties caused by military rule in the second programme of the series. He described the origins of the Campaign for Democracy, which involved student groups, lecturers, unions and human rights organisations joining together in 1991, with the common aim of restructuring the country both geographically and institutionally. The film was shot in his redundant medical surgery, where he was surrounded by the clutter of books and medical equipment which he is forbidden to use because of his political interests. At the time Lagos Stories was filmed, Beko Kuti had been without electric light for four days. The lack of infrastructure in Nigeria means that many live without electricity and water. He was writing to the relevant authority to complain, but did not expect to see the situation improve in the near future:

We’ll see whether something will happen over the next day or week or month. That’s the frustration we face. (Lagos Stories: 23.2.99)

These two individuals, allowed to speak uninterrupted, presented as educated and dignified African people, struggling to live within an iniquitous military regime. They demonstrated a commitment to working for democracy for the people of Nigeria, despite considerable personal losses. Given the very brief time allowed each speaker in the series, information about the history and political background of Nigeria was necessarily limited. So while viewers had an opportunity to hear these stories, there was little explanation of how the circumstances of these people had arisen. The Channel Four News features which were broadcast the same week provided additional information about current conflicts in Nigerian society. However, for those viewers who had access to the internet, more helpful historical background and explanation were made available in Channel 4’s website. Limited numbers of viewers therefore would have been able to complement the series with a greater depth of information from the website.

Doyin Abiola’s criticisms of the military in Nigeria are backed up by the website’s description of the brutality of General Sani Abacha’s rule. Abacha seized power during the political crisis which ensued following the annulment of the 1993 election and Abiola’s imprisonment.

Throughout his regime Abacha showed a flagrant disregard for human rights, freedom of speech and democracy. Thousands of people were detained, many fled the country, killings and human rights atrocities were widespread. Minority movements that attempted to secure control over their environments and oppose the government were brutally suppressed.

The difficulties described by Beko Keta with his power supply and resulting lack of light could easily be perceived by viewers as the result of living in an undeveloped country. Viewers who also watched Channel 4 News later the same week would have had access to comments about the management of Nigeria’s oil wealth:

They found oil here in the Niger Delta in 1958. But since independence successive military and civilian governments have wasted all the money the country’s earned from it. (Channel 4: 25.2.99, 1900)

The irony of this situation also becomes clear with the information from the website:

Nigeria is the only oil-rich country in sub-Saharan Africa: oil accounts for 95% of the country’s export revenue.

Other media sources of information were available on Nigeria around the time Lagos Stories was shown. The candidate expected to win the impending presidential elections was General Obasanjo. An Observer newspaper article on 21/2/99 stated that Obasanjo was military ruler of Nigeria between 1976 and 1979. During Obasanjo’s period as military ruler, the army and police raided the compound founded by Beko’s famous musician brother Fela Kuti, who was responsible for founding the underground musical movement Afrobeat.
According to journalist Chris McGreal (1999) Fela suffered a fractured skull and several of his bones were broken during the raid. The 82 year-old mother of the brothers was thrown from a window and died of her injuries. It is not surprising then that Beko expresses doubt about any real solution resulting from these elections with Obasanjo the favourite, and the only opposition a finance minister in a former military regime. In Lagos Stories he comments:

“It’s not elections we need now. We have to sit down and work out how we’re going to relate to one another, or the strife will never end.

Without reference to this information, it would be less clear why Beko is so sceptical about what might otherwise be perceived by the viewer as the genuinely democratic forum of an election. This scepticism appears to have been shared by many Nigerians, given that less than 20% voted in the election. (The Guardian editorial, 26.2.99)

Discussion

Lagos Stories presented positive images of individuals inhabiting the most populous country in Africa, at a key moment of Nigeria’s history. The two who spoke during the sample period were Doyin Abiola and Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti. While each held understandable reservations about the potential benefits of the elections, they agreed with the other contributors to Lagos Stories on the deterioration resulting from long-term military leadership of their country. While both had suffered personal losses at the hands of military leaders, they described their own contributions to the struggle for democracy. Some of the themes raised here were echoed in BBC News and Channel 4 coverage of the elections. Dr. Kuti touched on the irony of the country’s oil wealth contrasted with the lack of amenities. His argument that the concentration of power needed to be removed from the north of the country was one of the issues covered in BBC News and Channel 4 coverage of the elections. Dr. Ransome-Kuti discussed his own contribution to the struggle for democracy.

Most of the documentaries, current affairs programmes and features in our sample offer clear accounts of issues in the developing world. Historical documentaries were particularly strong in giving well-structured and informed explanations. The strength of the documentary format is that it can combine a clear narrative and strong visual moments with well chosen interviewees who can provide key source material. The quality of such output comes from the resources which are devoted to it. It is a matter of concern if this quality is being downgraded by the growing commercial pressures of TV output. In our audience study we show how viewers value such productions, but they also comment on their relative infrequency and low profile on output as a whole.

C.3.2.3. Comic Relief

The BBC’s Comic Relief Red Nose Day 1999: The Record Breaker pledged to break records and it did. The £27.4 million total demolished previous fund-raising records despite the fact that charitable giving has actually declined in recent years.

Much of the appeal is generated by the humorous build-up to Red Nose Day. BBC1 featured a series of short programmes on cookery, comedy and documentaries, which slowly built momentum towards giving on the day. Each week, the cookery programme, Five Go Mad in the Kitchen paired up some of the nation’s favourite stars with well-known chefs to prepare their favourite dishes. Celebrities such as Jane Asher and Stephen Tomkinson, Ken Hom and Nick Hancock, Anthony Worall Thompson and Kathy Burke, appeared to endorse the cause. These five minute slots were buttressed by the Comic Relief Jukebox, a twice-weekly six-part comedy series presented by Zoë Ball in which a selection of comedy clips from the BBC archives were shown and money was raised from viewers telephoning in their favourite Comedy Genius Clip and Clip of the Night. Clips shown included: The Two Ronnies, French and Saunders, Monty Python’s Flying Circus, Only Fools and Horses, One Foot in the Grave, Not the Nine o’clock News, Morecambe and Wise, The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer, The Dick Emery Show, The Kenny Everett Show, The Les Dawson Show, The Fast Show, Harry Enfield and Chums, Absolutely Fabulous, Birds of a Feather and Victoria Wood.

Interspersed with the slapstick and laughter, was Comic Relief’s Great Big Excellent African Adventure, which featured television celebrities journeying across Africa to collect videotaped messages from the locals. The show highlighted the social and economic hardships which affect the continent and showed how money raised by Comic Relief has been used to support local development projects. Celebrity reports by Lenny Henry and Ewan McGregor in South Africa, looked at how Comic Relief had helped to win back land for families displaced by Apartheid. Stephen Fry showed how the fund-raising
had helped orphaned children in Uganda, Ruby Wax looked at the effect of world debt on disabled children in Zanzibar and Paul Bradley visited bereavement counselling groups set up in Rwanda with Comic Relief money to help the widows of the genocide survive the pain of loss.

This interplay of extremes is a key ingredient of the fund-raising. The juxtaposition of humour with pathos, glitz with destitution accentuate the contrasts between the developing and developed world in a way that suggests that imbalances in the world economy, political turbulence and conflict, even genocide can be rectified through the giving of money. Images of economic hardship, social injustice and poverty which had been alleviated by Comic Relief cash, permeate the glamour. A positive focus on negative issues is the key ingredient, with films that report back how the money raised in previous years has made a difference. Lenny Henry introduced the film by saying that Comic Relief cash is spent well because ‘all over Africa there are thousands of people who can genuinely call you friend. Here are some of their stories’.

The film began with Lenny singing a rap song that explains what Comic Relief aims to do:

Lenny Henry:

Every other year we start to get funny,
The Red Nose posse saying ‘Gimme your money’,
We make documentaries,
Sell cool merchandise,
We make you think once,
Then we make you laugh twice,
So if you wanna know,
What happens to your dough,
Just sit back, relax,
And watch this show.

The film then reviews how money raised by Comic Relief has been used to resettle African families on their land in South Africa, rebuild families split by war in Uganda and rescue childhood from the vortex of poverty in Ethiopia.

Ewan McGregor began:

For 30 years, a woman called Mrs Titus and an entire community in South Africa were only to look at their homes from across a valley because, in the 1960s, 200 families were forced off their land by the Apartheid system which gave all of it to one white farmer. 2 years ago, Comic Relief helped to fund a lawyer who won back this land and back hundreds of others and we made a film about it. In December 1996, Mrs Titus led her friends, family and neighbours back home into their valley...And slowly the wrongs of the last 30 years are being put right.

It’s a success. You have helped the people of Elandskloof build a future for the next generation.

The film switched to Stephen Fry in Uganda:

In 1990, Tony Robinson visited Rakai in Uganda and a young family whose father had died from AIDS. Their mother was also infected with the virus. Their mother died soon after our visit and the children were left alone in the world, but the money you gave in 1993 helped Save the Children Fund put a roof over their heads and the local welfare officer track down their aunt who moved in with them and brought them up. So now, Vincent, 15, Godfrey, 13, Emmanuel, 11 and Rose, 9 are doing pretty damn well. They’ve got a house, a pig, 2 goats and a bike...They’ve got a future...Vincent’s parents would have been really proud of him. But you should be proud of yourselves because here in this rural district of Uganda, your generosity 7 years ago, has made a real difference.

The film switched to Ethiopia:

Voice-over: Your money has certainly been well spent in Ethiopia. Comic Relief started here 14 years ago during the terrible famine. 2 years ago, Julie Walters met brothers Altayeh and Melissaih who were street children in Addis Ababa...Today, thanks to you all, we know that Altayeh, Melissaih, Johannes and hundreds of other children now have a place that’s safe to sleep at night and food enough to eat during the day. It’s your money that’s paying for these children to go to school. Altayeh is now in school and at the top of his class. Believe it or not, Melissaih is something of a natural on the football field. He’s been spotted by a talent scout and is having special coaching.

The film ended:

Comic Relief is making a real difference in Africa. Now, we’ve just shown you three examples, but there are literally thousands more. Before, there was danger, now there is real hope.

Ewan McGregor: Before there was injustice, now justice has been done.

Voice-over: Before there was a terrible past. Now there’s a real future.

The money-raising stunts of Red Nose Day are driven by the humour. The 10 hour telethon begins with the screams of the studio audience as they applaud the arrival of Lenny Henry and Davina McCall on stage, to present the first 40 minutes of the evening’s show. Wearing red outfits symbolic of Red Nose Day, Lenny
and Davina push a trigger and shout ‘Let the red noses blow’.

But more than this, the feeling of being part of something bigger than the individual, a national collective effort, generates the altruistic zeal. Throughout the show, live comedy, humorous sketches (The Vicar of Dibley and Dr Who) and a series of spoof record-breakers urge viewers to pledge their cash where angels fear to tread. The Great Big Record Breaking Gunge, The Most Naked People on TV Ever and The Biggest Red Nose in the World Ever, stimulate the giving. Presenters go out on location across the country showing what ordinary people in the regions have been doing and how they are rallying to the cause. Individuals are hauled from an indecipherable mass of waterproof red suits and asked how much they have been sponsored to be soaked in.

The key issue which has been raised about campaigns such as these, which elicit a response in the giving of money, is that they do not necessarily produce an informed populace. Although people in developed countries are shown being helped to help themselves, there is little discussion of complex issues such as world debt, or the origins of underdevelopment. Paul Hoggart, for example, argues that what is required is pressure on politicians to get at the root causes of problems:

It seems to me, most of the problems of poverty in the world have political causes basically and that people in this country and in all western countries don’t know enough about that...I would like to see people encouraged to actually apply pressure on politicians to actually get at the root causes of these problems and that could be done through charity shows or a whole variety of other methods. Comic Relief are doing that to a certain, but very limited extent at the moment. If the BBC is going to do a thing about starvation in Africa, why not follow that up with actual suggestions to people for ways that they could exert influence on their MPs to start working for political change that will get at the root of the problem. (7.3.99 BBC1 0930-1030 The Heaven and Earth Show)

In defence of Comic Relief, it might be said that it is addressing very serious issues and doing so in peak-time programming. The celebrity comic formats enable them to focus on ‘difficult’ areas even if they do not always explain the complex issues involved. On Red Nose Day, the comedy was interwoven with short films, and initially focused on projects in the:

Lenny Henry: Yes, people often forget that a third of the cash stays right here at home.

Davina McCall: Wherever you live in the UK, there’s been one of our projects within 30 miles of you. In 13 years, we’ve supported over 3,000 of them.

But a major focus of the evening was Africa. Powerful visual images of childhood fused with emotive speeches and music to personalise the often detached or complex issues of poverty. Thus, 13 of the 18 films encouraged viewers to identify with the children. By focusing on the lives and faces of children these films conveyed in universal terms the human face of poverty, war and social injustice. Some films were directed at specific audiences. For instance, Julie Walters, pictured sitting beside brothers Altayeh and Melissaiah, states:

I’d just like to have a special word with all the fathers watching tonight. This is Altayeh, he’s 10 and his brother Melissaiah, he’s 7. They’re completely alone in the world, so Altayeh is basically responsible for his little brother’s welfare and has been for the past five years. So, to all intents and purposes, he is his dad. He looks after him, he works for him, he makes sure he’s safe at night as best he can. So, I’d just like to say to any of the fathers watching, do you fancy showing a bit of solidarity tonight to help us help this little father figure do his job and make that job not so hard. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 1505-1735).

Western culture is sometimes employed to bridge the gap between the developing and developed world and so incite the feeling, as Lenny Henry puts it, that ‘these are your neighbours, this is your doorstep’. One film in particular depicts Lenny Henry surrounded by African children wearing Comic Relief T-shirts and red noses and singing the western chart song ‘Barbie Girl’.

Children: I’m a Barbie girl, in a Barbie world. Life fantastic, you’re fantastic

Lenny Henry: Come on Barbie, let’s go party

Superimposed is the subtitle:

Sub-title: Kids are the same all over the world... (12.3.99 Comic Relief).

A key feature of Comic Relief is its focus on how the money raised on Red Nose Day helps people to help themselves in projects for long-term sustainable development. Comic Relief featured four short films on Rwanda which were shown throughout the evening of 12 March 1999. These featured the work of local organisations which Comic Relief is supporting in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Three of the films feature the work of local women in setting-up bereavement counselling groups to help the widows of the genocide survive the trauma of losing their children, husbands and friends. The presenter Paul Bradley states:
There are 100,000 widows in Rwanda getting on with their lives, 12,000 of them are members of the organisation that Comic Relief is supporting. Every week, Ester brings groups of women together, each group needs a trained counsellor. Your money helps them to look forward to the future but also to deal with the past.

**Woman:** Photographs bring back painful memories. I lost all my children. It’s hard to look at other people’s children and know that mine died.

**Woman:** The only picture I have of my husband is his passport, it’s faded, is there anything I can do to make it clearer?

**Woman:** I am so frightened that this could happen again.

**Paul Bradley:** Nothing could have prepared me for the horrors that these women have lived through, but the fact is that they’re doing something positive to both heal their wounds and meet their daily needs. They’re so strong and yet so fragile. I know one thing that’ll keep them going is for them to know that people in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales will stand by them tonight. Please stand by them, give us a call. (Comic Relief 12.3.99 BBC1 1505-1735)

Other films focused on the enormous impact of small business loans on rebuilding lives, such as Katarina’s and her 20 children:

**Paul Bradley:** Through Comic Relief, Denise and many other widows of the genocide are being lent £50 each. It doesn’t sound much, but it means that they can run a business, support their children and try and get some sense of normality back into their lives and incredible as it might seem, find some happiness. If you gave us money last time, in a way you’ve got shares in a passion fruit business. This group buys loads of passion fruit to make bottles of juice to sell in the shops at Kigali, it means that Katarina can support her 20 children. They’re not all hers, they belong to her sisters, friends and relations who are now all dead. Katarina showed me her only photograph of her husband. He would be proud of her too. Your money has paid for Katarina to be trained and supported in setting-up her business making passion fruit juice. They have already paid back their loan. You might think that spending your money on small business loans is pretty boring, but in fact, it couldn’t be more dramatic. The situation here is the aftermath of total horror and these small loans are a lifeline to normality and a lifeline to a future, a lifeline for these families. So, please get on the line to keep this vital work going. Phone: 0345-460-460. (Comic Relief 1900-2300)

In the presentations on Rwanda, Comic Relief challenges popular images of Africa as a place of ‘people at war’ and ‘war mongers’ by focusing on the wives of ‘ordinary people’, ‘people just like you and me’. This became a key theme with 14 references to this. For example:

**Lenny Henry:** Usually when we see images of Africa on the telly or in the papers, it’s pictures of people at war, which could make you doubt the value of your support for Comic Relief; but the startling thing I’ve just found out is that 90% of the casualties from war here and civilians, people just like you and me and our families. Ordinary people not war mongers. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 1900-2300)

‘Ordinary people’ are depicted in universal terms as ‘friends’ and ‘family’. For example:

**Paul Bradley (Studio interview):** I met the widows of the genocide. There was a genocide in 1994 and they’re just the most amazing people I’ve ever met and they’ll be friends for life and they’re your friends too now. (Comic Relief 1505-1735)

In other films, the technique is highly apparent. Paul Bradley holds up a photograph of his partner and states:

**Paul Bradley:** This is Lynne, my partner, I miss her very much and I love her. I can’t imagine how I’d cope with the pain if anything happened to her. Think about your own family when you look at this film.

Clearly, some presenters were more proficient than others in dealing with such a highly sensitive area. For example, introducing a report on Rwanda, Zoë Ball states:

I’d like to introduce one of this year’s serious reports for Comic Relief. A few months ago Paul Bradley went to Rwanda. Now we couldn’t have known then that this country would be thrown back into the headlines with the news last week of the murders of the tourists on safari in Uganda by a group of rebel Rwandan soldiers. Now it is important to remember that your money is helping ordinary people in Rwanda, okay, peace-loving, hard-working people who have about as much to do with the act of terror as you or I do.

It might be, however, that in the absence of explanations for the conflict, violence appears all the more incomprehensible and intense, because we have been encouraged to identify with the victims. One film sets a highly personalised account of the suffering against archive news footage of the conflict. Violent visuals of dismembered bodies, an exodus of people walking along a road carrying possessions on their heads.
and scores of skulls in a field, are juxtaposed against phrases such as 'everyone has lost members of their family', 'these are real people, wives, children and fathers just like you and me'. For example:

**Paul Bradley:** Everyone has lost members of their family. This is the kind of place Comic Relief cash should be working and it is. You’re helping here because these are real people, wives, children and fathers just like you and me. This is Denise whose husband was killed on 9 April 1994.

**Paul Bradley:** On 11 April, the militia came for her and the rest of her family. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 1900-2300)

Denise then tells her story:

**Denise:** They were hitting me and they put us in a line. Myself, my daughter and our family who had come to visit us. They lined us up in the living room in front of the window, the killers went outside, opened the window and fired in at us. The first bullet hit one of the young boys in the head and I saw him die. I prayed that I wouldn’t see my daughter die, she was so young and really loved that boy. She crawled on top of his body calling out his name. Suddenly, there was another burst of gunfire, I threw myself in front of my daughter to protect her, I was hit in the chest, it went right through me. I fell on my daughter and she fell in the suitcase behind us and it closed. They kept shooting, I could feel the bullets hitting my arm. We were left for dead. Everyone was dead. All the children were dead except for me and my daughter. I spent days and nights hiding in a bush, my arm was rotting. There were maggots in it. In the end I pulled my own arm off, it was unbearable, so I twisted it and it just came away in my hand.

The analogy which Paul Bradley makes between Rwanda, Yugoslavia and the holocaust is important. It begins to explain the genocide in terms that a Western audience could relate to. But the brevity of the reference means that its power to explain is likely to be lost in the intensity of the personal account that precedes it.

**Paul Bradley:** When you think about the holocaust and the second world war and things that are going on in Yugoslavia and atrocities that are happening all over the world, you lose faith in humanity I think, and think that the world’s gone mad. But one thing about meeting Denise and Ester and the people here, they don’t have a shred of self-pity for what’s happened to them. They’re getting on with their lives and they’re very positive and I don’t know how they do it. I think they must be super-human. I don’t know.

**Paul Bradley:** And yet with your help, Denise and women like her are turning their lives around and are starting again. (Comic Relief 12.3.99 BBC1 1900-2300).

The word ‘genocide’ is frequently used in the films, but is not explained or contextualised by reference to the historical or political catalysts of the conflict:

**Paul Bradley:** There was a genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Thousands of women lost their husbands, thousands of children lost their parents, nearly a million people were killed. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 1505-1735)

**Paul Bradley:** Every street is a reminder of the horrors of the genocide.

**Ester:** And the road block was here, this is where they were killing people and putting them in trenches. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 1505-1735)

The personalisation of violence is of course important in the focus on the courage and humanity of the victims. For example:

**Example 1. Paul Bradley:** This is Denise whose husband was killed on 9 April 1994. On 11 April, the militia came for her and the rest of her family.

**Example 2. Paul Bradley:** These women are all widows and your money is helping them, because Comic Relief are supporting an organisation that’s working with thousands of widows across Rwanda. At the heart of this work is a woman called Ester who lost her husband in the genocide.

**Ester:** He was killed, he was killed during the genocide in April ’94.

In the case of the second example, over news footage of the conflict, the reporter states, ‘the horrific violence of this conflict beggars belief’. Ester delivers her personal account:

**Ester:** My husband was teaching in that school and we were leaving the compound of the school, so when the genocide started, we ran to hide into the school. One evening, the last day of April, they came in and they put two groups, men and boys in one group, women and children in another group. They took them outside the compound and they shot them. (12.3.99 Comic Relief 2300-0100)

There is no easy prescription for how such a desperate story as the genocide in Rwanda could be covered. The difficulty which faced Comic Relief and many other news and documentary programmes was how to convey both the enormity of the tragedy and the humanity of the
victims without engendering a total sense of despair in the audience about the problems of Africa and its future.

**Coverage of world debt**
The strength of Comic Relief is that it can use comedy and the high profile of its performers to present issues such as the debt crisis to mainstream mass audience. The difficulty is that the need to sustain audience attention means that there are limits to how much a complex issue can be explained. An attendant problem is that the need to summarise and provide shorthand explanations might mean that an issue becomes distorted or unclear and that the audience ends up understanding little more than when the programme started.

In this context the programme *Comic Relief’s Debt Wish Live* was examined, and the explanations given within it were compared with those available from other sources. This is not to suggest that all these explanations could have been included. But it is important to identify the gap which exists between what an audience is given and what it may need to know for an adequate understanding. In fact the audience study showed that while people were generally in favour of resolving the debt crisis, they had very little idea of what had caused it or what was involved in finding a solution.

The style and content of *Debt Wish Live* differs dramatically from established Comic Relief formats. The audience is given a bird’s eye view of three worlds; the stage show, the back-stage action and clips of poverty in Africa. Behind-the-scenes shots of the live show interject with paparazzi-style camera chases up corridors and performers who exclaim, ‘Lenny Henry spoke to me, he knew who I was roughly, he knew my name.’ The juxtaposition of showbiz melodrama against the very disparaging realities of life in the First World compared to the Third. The show opens with a lengthy satirical piece by Rowan Atkinson in his character sketch, the Vicar of Brixton, (five minutes forty-three seconds of banter). It is not until the show is substantially underway while people were generally in favour of resolving the debt crisis, they had very little idea of what had caused it or what was involved in finding a solution.

The programme shows the consequences of debt:
One of the reasons why countries are so poor is debt. For the last 20 years, the poor countries of the world have been trying to pay back their debts to the west. As a result they’ve had very little money to spend at home on all the things necessary to make a country work.

It shows images of an old truck with no wheels, a man placing a pane of glass in its door, men recycling slates for roofs, and images of a hospital with a rusty sink and scales. The graphic: ‘Debt keeps poor countries poor’ appears and the visuals close in on a patient’s face. Another graphic states: ‘And every year they are getting poorer.’ The causes of African poverty are little explored beyond familiar images of hospital beds, sick children and dying babies. We are told that Africa is ‘poor’ because for 20 years they have ‘been trying to pay back their debts to the west.’ But the graphics which accompany the visuals of poverty cut to the effects of debt rather than its causes. The causes of African poverty are few according to the show. They are attributed to African dictators described as ‘mad despots...who trousered the money’ and loans squandered on ‘armies...to suppress populations’. One sequence asks:

**Graphic:** How did poor countries get into such debt?

**Graphic:** Who lent them the money in the first place?

**Voice-over:** The bank balance of the Third World is so seriously in the red. Why? Because of a lending and borrowing spree in the 1970s. Some of it was good, but much of it was bad, for example, the west lent money to African dictators like Idi Amin who spent it on grandiose projects and armies to suppress their populations. They are still paying these debts today.

**Graphic:** Why should Africans today pay back the cost of their own suppression?

In another programme, Stephen Fry points out that it is African countries who are the donors and westerners who are the recipients (Comic Relief’s Great Big
Excellent African Adventure: 2). In an interview with President Museveni of Uganda, Stephen Fry comments that ‘aid is supposed to be about helping others, this country in a sense is helping us, they’re sending us money’:

Stephen Fry: Your excellency, the debt that cripples all African countries or many Third World countries, the particular benefit that you’ve described to me that could be accrued to Uganda, that if the debt were lifted, more money could be spent on social services, I was wondering if you could specify which social services and what the needs are.

President Museveni: Like for instance, education. By abolishing primary school charges, fees as they are called, we are able to push enrolment in the primary school from 2.9 million children to just 5.7 million just overnight… you can be able to transform the whole society from a pre-literate society to a completely literate society. Now on the side of health by doing just three things you eliminate 90% of the sicknesses: if you ensure immunization, you ensure hygiene and you ensure nutrition, 90% of the sicknesses are eliminated, they are all preventable. They are mainly diseases of ignorance.

We are donating money to the West. This is a donation because money was borrowed by these confused people like Amin, it was never used, now we’ve got to pay for it, it’s a donation, you could call it a donation, we are the donors.

Stephen Fry: A strong leader, an enlightened leader, it doesn’t matter what kind of political leader you have if they themselves have no power really to relieve this kind of poverty. I’m standing in here, this is where we see debt build up. £1 a year is spent on them, a lot more money is spent on debt by the Ugandan government which should be going here. This is where you see why debt really matters. Aid is supposed to be about helping others, this country in a sense is helping us, they’re sending us money. I really think it’s time we stopped it, I think it’s time that we said that this is a nonsense, because debt does far more than anything else to keep this country and other countries on its knees. What it wants to do is stand and that is my message from Africa. (Comic Relief’s Great Big Excellent Africa Adventure: 2) [Researchers’ enboldening]

This is a very powerful message, but it is not always made in accounts of Africa. A problem with the ‘shorthand’ versions of events is that they can fall quickly into stereotypes. For example, Africa may be depicted homogeneously as a single region, susceptible to political forces of dictatorship and corrupt regimes that are depicted as being endemic. Explanations such as these oversimplify the issue, by putting the blame on African dictators. They gloss over the role of the west as an accomplice in Africa’s decline. It was actually a British instigated coup that put Idi Amin in power in Zaire and the USA propped up Mobutu’s regime, even when it became apparent that he was appropriating money for his own personal use. The strategic interests of the west played a key role in the interventions of western governments in African affairs:

Africa was an arena of the Cold War: the US and the Soviet Union propped up regimes favourable to them, and the US backed terrorist movements. So, for example, the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa saw the Soviet Union backing Somalia while the United Nations stood behind Ethiopia in the 60s. In the 1970s, following the Ethiopian revolution, Moscow changed sides and backed Ethiopia in the war against Somalia, which then became an important American strategic asset. Moreover, the impact of the cold war spilled over into neighbouring states. Zaire was used by the Americans as a base for operations in Angola, which meant billions of dollars were squandered propping up the Mobutu regime.

The proxy cold war struggle of the 1970s coincided with the onset of a severe economic downturn in the west. Recession brought collapsing commodity prices and economic retrenchment… It takes two to party, and those western lenders who extended lines of credit when it was obvious that the poor nations were in no state ever to repay were complicit in the build-up of unpayable debts. (The Guardian, 12.6.99)

The ‘massive lending and borrowing spree’ referred to by Debt Wish Live began in the 1970s when Arab cartels pushed up oil prices and deposited their huge profits in western banks. The west loaned the money to developing countries to create new markets. As the Independent on Sunday put it:

Arms dealers engaged in what they call ‘missionary activity’ to entice virgin Third World purchasers to spend their new-found wealth. Corrupt African elites stole money and stashed it in their private accounts, often in the same banks who were doing the lending.

What did the money go on? In the early years much went to pay the higher prices for their oil imports. Around a quarter went on military spending. About 20% was stolen by kleptocrat leaders like Mobutu and Marcos. But the vast bulk of the ever-growing debt is merely accumulated interest: as the years passed, and interest rates soared, poor countries became unable to cover the
minimum payments and the totals mushroomed.
(Independent on Sunday 20.6.99)

The images of Debt Wish Live are powerful in their own right, but the intricacies of the issue are not explained in great detail beyond these, nor do the people involved tell their own story of debt. What we have is a series of emotive visuals that demonstrate the link between debt and death, but with limited explanation. Even so, the programme was identified by some in the audience study as helping them to understand the issue. The problem Comic Relief is wrestling with is how it is possible to go beyond this and produce programmes which entertain, inform and generate commitment yet still sustain a mass audience.

C.3.2.4. Comedy
THE MARK THOMAS COMEDY PRODUCT
This Channel 4 comedy series began its third, eight-week run on 13 January 1999, during the sample period. The Mark Thomas Comedy Product is quite distinct from any other comedy programme on British television. Current affairs are combined with practical jokes in order to highlight injustices, or to seek out the truth from political and corporate decision-makers. The show is broadcast at 2100, lasting half an hour.

While most of the subject matter of this eight-week run concerned domestic politics, the first two programmes focused on the arms industry and its exports to mainly developing countries. There were three main targets for Mark Thomas’s wit here. First of all, he targeted oppressive regimes which use imported arms to enforce domestic rule. At an arms fair in Athens in October 1998, he used a concealed camera to film a variety of stalls at the fair, including those of Algeria, Indonesia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Colombia. He commented: “All your top torturers there.” Secondly, he targeted the British arms industry. Having used concealed recording equipment in interviews with arms manufacturers, Thomas showed their lack of concern about the use of their products. Thirdly the British government was accused of leaving legal loopholes in arms export controls, allowing the arms industry to use overseas production to evade controls. He exposed various levels of deceit, or at least evasion of the truth, on the part of each of his targets.

The first programme involved Mark Thomas and a friend visiting the Defendory International arms fair in Athens. Thomas and his friend set up a public relations company called Mackintosh-Morley for the occasion, offering their services to the visiting arms companies and regimes. The organisers of the arms fair welcomed the pair, saying that they were the first PR company to take part. Mackintosh-Morley displayed advertising banners above their stall: ‘Who’s Winning the War of Words’ and ‘Are You Ready When Amnesty International Comes Knocking on Your Door?’

At the arms fair Mackintosh-Morley met the Serbian, Sri Lankan and Egyptian delegations. The Zimbabwean Minister of Information admitted that he ‘gets better at lying every year.” Doug Henderson, Minister of State for the UK Armed Forces was filmed wishing the company luck, hoping that they would get plenty of contracts.

The Kenyan delegation chose to accept a brief media training workshop from Mackintosh-Morley. As part of a demonstration of how best to deal with hostile media situations, they were questioned by Mark Thomas about their country’s human rights record and advised on the best ways of managing such an interview. Major General Njoroge, Deputy Commander of the Kenyan Army expressed his views of Amnesty International, arguing that the organisation does not understand Kenyan cultural views of child abuse, wife-beating and other human rights abuses, saying “wife-beating is a way of expressing love.” While this statement from Njoroge portrays a bleak view of attitudes towards human rights in the country, a later interview by Mark Thomas with Mrs. Kittony, a Kenyan MP, confirmed that wife-beating in Kenya is illegal and that the government does not condone it.

On the second day of the arms fair, Mark Thomas met the Indonesian delegation and invited Major General Widjojo of the Indonesian Armed Forces to complete a brief media training exercise. As a result of this, the Indonesian delegation asked Mackintosh-Morley to pitch for a six-week media training course to teach the Indonesian Army the skills of PR. This first programme ended with footage of the Dili massacre in East Timor, where the military was seen indiscriminately gunning down unarmed civilians. The statement was made that 271 people were killed on this occasion.

In the second programme of the series, Mackintosh-Morley met with the Indonesian Defence Attaché, Colonel Halim. The comedian uses this opportunity to ask questions about British arms in Indonesia. Halim hesitantly denies that the hawk jets sold to his country by Britain are used in East Timor: ‘No, yes, no.’ Responding to a more general question about British military equipment being used in East Timor, the Colonel replies: ‘Yes, we use some, but it is old equipment... for example Saracen.’

Mark Thomas switched his attention in the second half of this programme to the British arms industry, and
the role of government in this trade. He spoke to David Alton, of the All Party Land Mine Eradication Group, who confirmed that over sixty new licences had been issued to Indonesia since the New Labour government was elected. Pointing to the irony of this figure, given the governmental promise of a more ethical foreign policy, Thomas comments:

The unethical policy would be for Robin Cook to go out and kill the East Timorese himself... New Labour, new torture.

In this programme, Mark Thomas refers back to an interview at the arms fair he conducted with Paul Greenwood of Pains Wessex, a British arms company, which manufactures tear-gas which is exported to Kenya, and grenades exported to Indonesia. He replays part of the interview with Greenwood:

To be honest, I don’t care ‘cos all that happens is, you know, gradually we’ll back out of this and we’ll just get it made overseas and shipped in...... Yeah, no-one cares..... Yeah, we do a licensed production to various countries, the UK government doesn’t care. No, I’ve had the DTI down, I’ve had DESO down. I’ve spoken to them about it. I said “Can I take the order in Pains Wessex, but get someone else to make it and ship it.... Yeah, that’s fine... As long as I don’t ship it from the UK they don’t give a toss.

This programme ended with Thomas arguing against the arms exporters’ attempt at a defence of their trade: that if they didn’t do it, someone else would. To highlight the extent to which arms dealers rationalise their activities, the comedian played a second tape recorded interview with an unnamed dealer:

....We shipped this into some place in black Africa. We had them phone up, we were late, and they said because you didn’t ship it we had to shoot them. That was their words, so I’m the next best thing. I’m saving someone’s life.

In the final show of this series, broadcast on 3 February 1999, during the sample period, the comedian referred back to the initial two programmes on the arms trade. Mentioning specifically the use of UK equipment in East Timor, Mark Thomas reminded the viewers again that that the Labour government have approved 64 export licences for arms to Indonesia. A Labour MP had asked a question about how much all the contracts were worth, and had received a reply saying:

We can’t tell you as the cost of finding out this information would be a disproportionate cost to the taxpayer.

The comedian commented that he had held a benefit and raised £500 to pay a civil servant at the DTI to research the costs of the arms contracts. As he put it: “We’ve had cash for questions – can we now have cash for answers.”

Discussion
The Mark Thomas Product adopted a practical joke approach to political interviewing. High-ranking military personnel were basically tricked into admitting human rights abuses on film. Major Widjojo and Colonel Halim both expressed doubt about being filmed in these circumstances, but were sufficiently trusting of their ‘trainer’ to go ahead and compromise themselves. Thomas appeared to be lampooning the PR industry as well as individual representatives of oppressive regimes here, as the sole strategy employed by Mackintosh-Morley was teaching ‘trainees’ how to lie effectively.

The presenter himself appeared to feel very strongly about his subject matter. With the Mackintosh-Morley set-up, he managed to extract admissions of human rights violations from military representatives of developing countries. He also recorded British arms dealers denying responsibility for contributing to the abuse of human rights abroad. Thirdly, he questioned the governmental role in issuing numerous licences to Indonesia in particular, and criticised the reasons given for their failure to respond to questions on this. His incredulous responses to some of his discoveries enhanced the comic value of his material, and he raised issues in a manner rarely seen elsewhere on television.

C.3.2.5. Holiday and Travel

SAMPLE

The programmes in this section fall into two main genres: the holiday show and the travel/adventure programme. All five terrestrial channels have at least one holiday show, some running throughout much of the year. Most holiday shows cover a number of destinations per programme, and indicate the attractions, and costs, of each destination for potential holidaymakers. There were 19 programmes in this category of the sample. The travel/adventure programme tends to cover just one country or city, with a deeper focus on its people and culture. There were two such programmes broadcast during the sample weeks.

The table opposite indicates the content of the travel and holiday sample broadcast on the terrestrial channels.
BBC1 produces more holiday programmes than the other terrestrial channels. Holiday, once a 14-part series, has expanded into a year-round project, with a number of spin-off series. During the sample period, series of Holiday Guide and of Holiday on a Shoestring, were shown in addition to the Holiday programme, all with similar formats. Separate presenters cover each holiday venue, and celebrities or guests like Toyah Wilcox, Ulrika Johnson or Richard Wilson are invited to present an item, or to appear on several shows within a series.

BBC2’s Travel Show offers a similar presentation, as does ITV’s Wish You Were Here. Channel 4’s The Real Holiday Show, with its focus on the interaction within a family or group of holidaymakers did not cover destinations in developing countries during the sample weeks. Channel 5’s weekly travel slot Was It Good For You?, with the slightly shorter length of 25 minutes, covers one destination in each programme. Two sets of tourists in each programme sample different types of accommodation and activities. Mainstream holiday programmes are all broadcast between 1730 and 2100, peak viewing times. Where holiday programmes are repeated within a week, they tend to be broadcast at off-peak times. Was It Good For You is repeated on Mondays at 0900 and Scottish Passport at 0455.

Of the holiday and travel shows, 15 were broadcast during the sample weeks. Four additional holiday programmes were examined during the period 1 January to 31 March, where developing countries were featured. These were The Holiday Guide to Honeymoons (14.2.99) which covered several developing countries, Scottish Passport (19.1.99) providing an example of a regional travel show, and two editions of Holiday covering Mauritius (19.1.99) and Vietnam. (16.3.99).

The two travel/adventure series broadcast in the sample period covered countries which did not feature in the sample of holiday shows. The first was BBC2’s The Edge of Blue Heaven (14.4.99) a series which followed adventurer Benedict Allen on his 3,000 mile trek around the edge of Mongolia. The second series was BBC2’s The Rough Guide. The only relevant destination covered during the recording period was in The Rough Guide to Bolivia (22.2.99). Here the two regular presenters Edith Bowman and Dmitri Doganis guided the viewer around

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme title</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Destinations covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>12.1.99</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Edge of Blue Heaven</td>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>14.1.99</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Travel Show</td>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>14.1.99</td>
<td>Bali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish You Were Here</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>15.1.99</td>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was It Good For You?</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>15.1.99</td>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Guide to the Caribbean</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>17.1.99</td>
<td>Tobago, Dominican Republic, British Virgin Isles, Jamaica, Grenada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Passport</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>19.1.99</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Langkawi, Phuket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>19.1.99</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Metal Backpack *</td>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>2.2.99</td>
<td>Vietnam, Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Guide to Honeymoons</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>14.2.99</td>
<td>Bahamas, Lamu (Kenya), Las Ventanas (Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Passport</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>16.2.99</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>16.2.99</td>
<td>Malaysia, Himalayas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish You Were Here</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>19.2.99</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was It Good For You?</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>19.2.99</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Guide</td>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>22.2.99</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>2.3.99</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday on a Shoestring</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>3.3.99</td>
<td>Goa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wish You Were Here</td>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>5.3.99</td>
<td>Himalayas</td>
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<td>5.3.99</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Holiday</td>
<td>BBC1</td>
<td>9.3.99</td>
<td>The Caribbean</td>
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<td>Holiday</td>
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Bolivia, talking to local people and visiting a wide range of places of interest. The documentary *Full Metal Backpack* (2.2.99), made by Rough Guide presenter Doganis was also included, because it focused on the views and experiences of a group of travellers to Vietnam.

Each genre will be considered in turn, comparing the different approaches and assessing the types of information offered to the viewer. As well as referring to statements made on individual travel programmes, reference will also be made to alternative sources, including press reports, which indicate that a range of information is available on destinations covered by holiday shows.

**HOLIDAY SHOWS**

Many holiday show items follow a standard pattern. They usually start with a brief comment about the geography and climate of the area:

*One of the 13,000 islands that make up the Indonesian Archipelago, Bali is about the same size as the Isle of Wight.* (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.1.99)

*I’m in a world of superlatives – the highest sand dunes, the oldest deserts, the biggest animals but also the fewest people.* (Wish You Were Here [Namibia] ITV, 12.3.99)

*Come to a North African country blessed with 700 miles of coastline, and a reputation as a year round Holiday destination.* (Holiday [Tunisia] BBC1, 12.2.99)

Each item ends with the costs of flights and accommodation, and for any special activities covered. This information might include any special offers available, or compare prices between peak and off-peak periods. These facts are usually presented in the form of graphics against a background still, possibly of a beach or hotel featured in the item. The presenter does a voice-over which augments the information on screen.

**Wish You Were Here** from Mauritius (15.1.99) provided the following information:

- 7 nights half-board at the Sugar Beach Resort, from £1,149.
- Flights and transfers, watersports.
- Children aged 2-12 sharing with parents, 50%
- Kuoni Worldwide

The main content of the item tends to vary depending on the destination. Within the 19 holiday programmes in our sample, there were a total of 31 separate items from locations in the developing world. Part of the reason for the high number of items is due to the Holiday spin-offs such as *Holiday Guide to Africa*, which covered five separate developing countries in one programme. There were distinct ‘types’ of holiday covered across the channels, with the main emphasis of the feature varying accordingly. The numbers in each category were as follows: Beach (13), wedding/honeymoon (5), safari (5), city-based (3). A number of unusual holidays were also presented, with one each of the following types: charity bike ride, trip across South Africa on the Blue Train, trekking, cruise and sailing, most of these covered by the *Holiday* series.

The frequency with which locations were covered was also examined according to broad geographical areas. It was found that there were 13 features from Africa, nine from the Caribbean, eight from South and South East Asia and one from Central America. The figures for Africa and the Caribbean are partially augmented due to the editions of the Holiday Guide to these destinations. However it is noticeable that Central and South America barely feature.

While the main activity or attraction varies according to location, there were a number of themes which ran consistently through the holiday shows. Three key themes were analysed which were dominant in this genre of programming. The first theme was consumption, which includes information about food, standards of service, shopping facilities and bargain hunting:

- *Room service is pretty over the top too.* (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 41.1.99)
- *Lot 10 is a huge mall that I’m told has everything you need for a trendy lifestyle.* (Scottish Passport [The Far East] ITV, 19.1.99)

Secondly, there were frequent references to the level of development of the holiday destination. These included the extent to which the area is suitably ‘developed’ for tourism (or alternatively undeveloped enough for ‘travellers’), which usually refers to what extent facilities have been specifically designed for tourists:

- *The next port of call was the island of Phuket in Thailand. There are more tourists here than in any of the other islands. So you’ll find it’s pretty developed.* (Scottish Passport [The Far East] ITV, 19.1.99)

There were also many references to the influence of a colonial past:

- *It’s got a friendly Spanish colonial atmosphere.* (Wish You Were Here [Dominican Republic] ITV, 11.1.99)

Additionally, several programmes featured options for visits to traditional villages. These were largely featured as cultural resources which tourists could tap...
into. Little background information on local people’s culture and history was available.

I took up the offer of a subterranean tea break with one of the local Berber families. Although the tea wasn’t so appetising – the hospitality made up for it... And later they were happy to show me everything from the kitchen sink to grandma’s drawers, all for a small gesture in local dinar. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Tunisia] BBC1, 21.2.99)

Thirdly, there were instances where more detailed information on the destination and its inhabitants was given. Where such references were made, they most often referred to religion:

You have to visit a temple – they’re everywhere and play a vital part of the culture. Bali is predominantly Hindu, though the rest of Indonesia is Muslim. (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.1.99)

Beyond such fleeting references, there were also rare instances/cases where the political background or history of a destination were included in holiday shows. Each of these themes – consumption, tourist development and contextualising information – will now be examined in turn, with a brief additional section on health warnings within holiday programmes.

CONSUMPTION
Local people tended to be viewed as resources that can enhance or diminish the quality of the holiday experience. On one occasion in the sample, an impromptu visit was arranged for presenter Kate Humble to a village school in Lamu, an island on the Northern Kenyan coast. However, most of the interaction tends to be with tourist industry staff. The emphasis in these examples was on the high level of personal service available to the holidaymaker, whether from hotel and catering personnel, drivers or guides.

So I decided to hire a jeep. It was £16 for a car and a driver – a bargain. (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.4.99)

But it’s easy to forgive the occasional blip when the staff try so hard...A real fire lit, a candlelit table on the balcony looking onto the Atlantic – your own chef and waiter (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean [Mexico] BBC1, 14.2.99)

There’s nothing to carry but your camera. The sherpas deal with everything else. (Wish You Were Here [Himalayas] ITV, 5.3.99)

From the moment you step into your room, your personal butler is at your beck and call. How did I ever get by without him? (Holiday [Mauritius] BBC1, 19.1.99)

The last of these examples came from a feature which focused on the services provided by the black butler, Marco. While the white presenter moved around in his hotel suite, his every whim was attended to by the butler, who appeared mainly as a black hand at the edge of the screen. In the bath, the presenter calls for Marco, and a hand is filmed passing him a towel from the end of the bath. While the presenter lies on bed watching television, the hand reaches from below the bed and hands him the remote control. The hand also selects fruit from the fruit bowl, passes him a bottle of champagne while he rummages in the drinks cabinet and selects a shirt for him while he is standing in the wardrobe.

There appeared to be a tacit acceptance that the tourist should be able to visit a destination in the developing world without having to give up the familiar comforts of home, and in many cases enjoy the atmosphere of the British colonial lifestyle. This included an expectation that one should engage in traditional colonial activities like safari:

It’s simply not done to be in Africa and not go on safari. I was determined to see an elephant and an overnight excursion to the Shimba Hills reserve promised to deliver. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Kenya] BBC1, 21.2.99)

There were several references to the ‘British’ aspects of tourist culture which can be found in former colonies, even in new tourist developments which are modelled on colonial lines. This was notably the case with Mauritius which was covered by three channels during our sample:

After independence in 1948 and nationalisation in the 1970’s, the British planters left, but their old base of Nuwara Ekiya remains and still goes by the nickname of Little England. Hotels like the Grand and the Hill Club proudly display their colonial roots with jacket and tie required for dinner and afternoon tea served on the lawn. (Holiday [Sri Lanka] BBC1, 2.3.99)

Mauritius is a small island off the coast of Africa, just twelve hours flight from the UK, and luckily for us Brits it’s also very English. The official language is English, they drive on the left side of the road, they’ve got a football team called Arsenal, and they even have British plug sockets! (Was It Good For You [Mauritius] Channel 5, 22.2.99)

I was staying in the Sugar Beach resort – a new family hotel built in the style of a colonial sugar plantation. (Wish You Were Here [Mauritius] ITV, 19.2.99)

The hotel (The Residence) is a cluster of colonial plantation style buildings which recreate the style and elegance of the twenties. This could easily be Raffles by the sea. All I need now is a Singapore Sling. Marco! (Holiday [Mauritius] BBC1, 19.1.99)
In one example, the presenter joked that colonialism was inevitable in one Caribbean destination because of its beauty and the wealth of local produce:

*Now this is my kind of paradise, it’s a banana republic, it’s hot, it’s lush, it’s got palm-lined beaches. It’s people are beautiful and friendly, they know how to brew great beer and even better rum and they can roll a mean cigar – apparently on thighs like these. No wonder Christopher Columbus couldn’t leave without colonising it 500 years ago. Welcome to the Dominican Republic!* (Was It Good For You [Dominican Republic] Channel 5, 15.1.99)

Destinations in developing countries were sometimes portrayed as oases of luxury and chic, without reference to the conditions of the surrounding inhabitants.

*Can you buy luxury? Judging by the wealthy American clientele, it would seem so. If luxury is a status symbol, then Las Ventanas is the badge.* (Holiday [Mexico] BBC1, 14.2.99)

*The island of Mauritius is renowned for having some of the best hotels in the world, specialising in spoiling holidaymakers rotten. So will the new luxury five star hotel 'The Residence' maintain that reputation?* (Holiday [Mauritius] BBC1, 19.1.99)

*This hideaway is the epitome of luxury – it’s the ideal setting for our Comic Relief prize.* (Holiday [Caribbean] BBC1, 9.3.99)

*The Tower Cove Hotel was originally built by the daughter of a British newspaper magnate to entertain her friends when they flew to Barbados for polo matches. Now after several expansions and reservations, the 166 room resort on St. James’s Beach is one of the des. res. places to stay. Darling!* (Holiday [Caribbean] BBC1, 9.3.99)

There was also an almost obsessive interest in bargain hunting in most holiday output, right from the point of choosing a destination.

*If you’ve always thought of Bali as a lottery winner’s destination, then think again. Cheaper flights and packages now make it much more accessible.* (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.4.99)

*With the weather being so bad at home, we were flicking through Teletext and there were some unbelievable offers.* (Wish You Were Here [Dominican Republic] ITV, 11.1.99)

Advice may be offered on goods which can be bought cheaper than at home, or on how to save money on living expenses:

*I got advice from an expert picking up Balinese furniture to sell in her shop in Brussels... (looking at chest of drawers) So that’s about £60 back in England – that’s not expensive when you see the sort of prices you end up paying in the shops back home.* (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.1.99)

*CDs and electronics were especially good buys* (Scottish Passport [The Far East] ITV, 19.1.99)

*You’ll find the cheapest and often freshest food in some of these shacks along the beach. My fish curry has cost me just 59 rupees, which is less than £1. I’ve heard the local beer is the cheapest in India.* (Holiday on a Shoestring [Goa] BBC1, 3.3.99)

Reference was frequently made to the subject of haggling or bartering, whether with street traders, craftspeople or shop owners. Some of these comments involve cautionary tales of ‘harassment’ by vendors.

*Otherwise the street traders and hawkers will wear you out in seconds* (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.1.99)

*But the phrase ‘just looking’ does not exist in the trader’s vocabulary. You just have to cast a glance in their direction, and they’ll bombard you with a barrage of sales talk, some of it strangely out of context – ‘nice to see you, to see you nice’, ‘come on down, price is right.’* (Holiday [Tunisia] BBC1, 12.1.99)

The emphasis on maximising benefits to the tourist in holiday programmes, was often made without regard to the impact on local people. The following example involves a reference to recent difficulties experienced by people inhabiting a Caribbean holiday destination. A natural disaster, in the form of a hurricane caused hundreds of fatalities only months before the programme was made. Yet even in circumstances where hundreds of lives have been lost, there was a comment on how the aftermath of this catastrophe can benefit the tourist:

*Last Autumn, Hurricane George hit the island. The North was largely unaffected, but the South was devastated. The tops of palm trees were blown out, hotels were badly damaged, and hundreds of local people died. So it’s wise to avoid the hurricane season, which lasts roughly between July and October.* (Shot of presenter white water rafting) But one of the advantages of the bad hurricane season is the river runs really wild. (Wish You Were Here [Dominican Republic] ITV, 11.1.99)
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

There is a distinction to be made between the concept of a developing country and that of a developed destination. Most discussion of holiday resorts in the developing world emphasised the benefits of specifically developed tourist infrastructures. At the most ‘developed’ end of the tourist industry, the all-inclusive deal covers the holidaymaker’s accommodation, food and drink, entertainment and activities. The compounds which have sprung up to cater for this type of holiday, can be viewed as self-contained. Tourists have little incentive to leave the compound, partly because they have already paid for the facilities there, but also because they are isolated from the world outside. The father of one young family at Beaches resort in Jamaica, (a country described in the programme as ‘the birthplace of the all inclusive’) commented:

It’s great. We’ve not set foot out of this complex for two weeks, and we’ve not been bored. (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean [Jamaica] BBC1, 17.7.99)

Where less tourist-led destinations were covered, there were occasional comments from presenters which portrayed the destination in different terms.

From the minute I arrived in Mombassa, I knew I was in a foreign country, the noise, the smell, the crazy chaotic world that still exists. Here, you’re not just a tourist, you’re a time-traveller. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Kenya] BBC1, 21.2.99)

Less typically, presenters advised the viewer of the benefits of a specific area which has not been exposed to tourism as yet, and is therefore ‘less developed.’ These examples more closely resembled the agenda of travel/adventure programmes in our sample, with an emphasis on visiting areas which are less popular with tourists:

I don’t know exactly what I was expecting of Zanzibar, maybe a beach paradise on the Indian Ocean, a slick resort developed to meet the desires of modern longhaul tourism. In reality it’s like this, exotic but raw. It’s not been sterilised or scrubbed for tourists and it’ll be a long time before Zanzibar resembles the bland perfection of holiday brochure land. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Zanzibar] BBC1, 21.2.99)

Out of all the places you visit, Langkawi is probably the most underdeveloped. Although very much on the tourist trail, a ten minute taxi ride and you’ll find yourself in the small villages, where people have water buffaloes wandering around in their front gardens. (Scottish Passport [Far East] ITV, 19.1.99)

Where there was a stronger emphasis on the advantages of more ‘developed’ resorts, several of the holiday programmes covered organised excursions to see ‘traditional tribespeople’ whose villages and homes have in some instances become part of the tourist trail. Apart from contact with service people, these excursions to rural areas to see ‘natives’ in traditional dress, were usually the only point of contact between presenters and local people. The concern of one presenter here was that the local people were authentic.

But, it’s been worth it for the exotic people, because they are amazing, and most amazing have to be the Masai – they’re 6 feet, they can leap into the air. That’s rather impressive. (Was It Good For You? [Kenya] Channel 5, 8.3.99)

The locals churn this out several times a day for any passing tourist who might be tempted to purchase souvenirs (Was It Good For You? [Kenya] Channel 5, 8.3.99)

Well, this is Nongo Mongo, a park specially created to promote awareness of Kenyan tribal culture.... The people here are from the Bantu tribe. This would be a Bantu bed – they actually live here all the time, they actually sleep in this, they don’t just turn up for work here, they stay here all the time, it’s the genuine article. (Holiday on a Shoestring [Kenya] BBC1, 9.3.99)

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISING INFORMATION

However, there were also some references which considered the lives of the people who live in or around tourist resorts as more than just resources. Most of this information was given on the various Holiday programmes. Some of these references were fleeting, including information about local culture. These included mentions of the predominant religion of an area, or its main industry. In contrast to the theme of how to maximise consumption while minimising expenditure, there were occasional examples where presenters recognised the responsibility of the tourist to support local craftspeople and traders. There were also examples where, rather than focusing on the benefits of colonial culture for the British visitor, de-colonisation was viewed positively. Finally there were three examples where the political history of a destination was covered in holiday programmes.

The following provide typical examples of brief remarks made about the lives and circumstances of local people.
You have to visit a temple – they’re everywhere and play a vital part of the culture. Bali is predominantly Hindu, though the rest of Indonesia is Muslim. (The Travel Show [Bali] BBC2, 14.1.99)

Karawari is the holiest city in Tunisia, and the fourth holiest in the world for Muslims. The grand mosque dominates the town, visited by thousands each year. (Holiday [Tunisia] BBC1, 12.1.99)

The second group of comments relate to local industry, which in some cases indicate the extent to which a destination is reliant on tourism:

Tea is one of its biggest exports. Everywhere you look across the mountains, there are fields of it. (Holiday [Sri Lanka] BBC1, 2.3.99)

Before tourism, the island’s main income came from exporting nutmeg, mace and saffron. (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean [Grenada] BBC1, 17.1.99)

(Lamu) now relies heavily on tourism. (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean [Kenya] BBC1, 14.2.99)

Although references like these were fleeting, they acknowledged that there are people and cultures in developing world destinations, rather than focusing entirely on tourist facilities. They also acknowledge that tourism may have an impact on local economies. In contrast to the more usual emphasis on getting a bargain, there were some references to the responsibility of the tourist in developing countries. Again, particularly with the BBC’s Holiday programmes, there was a recognition that haggling is not always appropriate, and an occasional plea was made to support local traders:

No two carpets are identical. The 4000 or so women who make them work from memory. Haggling is all part of the deal here, and it’s tempting to beat them down to silly money – but don’t forget that some of the larger carpets actually take up to a year to make. (Holiday [Tunisia] BBC1, 21.2.99)

A day trip to Funzi Island gives the tourists a chance to give something back to the community. Tourism is the only source of income on the island, so be prepared to buy at least a few small mementoes. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Kenya] BBC1, 21.2.99)

Where most references to colonialism were about benefits to tourists, there were examples which indicated support for the now independent countries:

(Kuala Lumpur) is a mixture of very different architectural styles, and the heart of it all is the colonial district and Mardecca Square. Mardecca means independence and this is the most famous piece of grass in the whole country, because it was here in August 1957 that Malaysia was awarded its freedom (Scottish Passport [The Far East] ITV, 19.1.99).

This week I’m in Kenya, one of Africa’s most beautiful lands. The English tried to colonise it but the Kenyans have got it back and are busy trying to conserve all its marine and wildlife. (Was It Good For You? [Kenya] Channel 5, 8.3.99)

There was one direct reference to poverty in a holiday destination, made by a guest presenter visiting Puerto Plato in the Dominican Republic, on Holiday Guide to the Caribbean:

Despite being one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean, it’s virtually crime-free. Local culture is a blend of Latin American vitality and West Indian warmth. (BBC1, 17.1.99)

This comment is also unusual in its praise of local culture. Among the 18 mainstream programmes, there were three examples, all from the Holiday series, of discussion of the history of people living in the destination. Two were from countries which have recently experienced lengthy conflicts. The first however deals with the history of slavery:

You might like to learn about the island’s past – it was a centre of slavery, but there’s little to help you. Maybe Zanzibaris are trying to forget the shameful history because there’s no museum, no monument and no memorial to the slave trade, just this dark cellar, where apparently slaves were kept before being taken to the market. Even here there’s no hard information. (Holiday Guide to Africa [Zanzibar] BBC1, 21.2.99)

The above example was unusual in its acknowledgement of slavery. The following two examples referred to recent conflicts of which many British viewers would be aware:

Presenter: Crossing on the same boat which until seven years ago took prisoners to the island (Robben Island) – the looming image hits you hard. Nelson Mandela ended up spending 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment here. Lionel Davis, our guide and a former political prisoner himself, spent seven years locked up beside Mandela.

Guide: Initially we worked out in the yard here crushing stones with hammers and thereafter they sent us to the lime quarry. The worst experience is that the clay, you know from the lime actually hit your eyes, and it actually hit Mandela’s eyes.

Presenter: Would you say that what you and your fellow prisoners went through in the end was worth it?
The above example is also unusual in that the guide, who is a local person, had an opportunity to give his opinion. In the final case, the presenter briefly explained the recent history of Vietnam, connecting historic events with buildings and features in and around Saigon.

Sanka Guha: Over two million men, women and children perished in what is known here as the American War and they can hardly forget it. There’s plenty of very obvious reminders. The Vietnamese are very keen to point out to anyone who’s listening, we’re a country, not a war... After the war, America slapped an economic embargo on the country which left Vietnam crippled, but things are looking up now. The American are back and one of the first things they’ve done is pull down their old embassy buildings, famous for the scenes of panic when they scrambled out of the country in 1975. But, there’s no shortage of war souvenirs..... People sometimes forget, the French were also here. They built the general post office just over a century ago. Now, under the watchful gaze of Ho Chi Min, you can write your postcards. He was the Vietnamese patriot who led the war of independence first against the French, and then the Americans. An hour out of Saigon, a secret 250km network of tunnels, used by the Vietcong right under the noses of the American forces. I wonder how they missed it. From here, the Vietcong took on the mightiest military power in history. The Americans threw everything they had at this area.... At the other site, tourists can even play their very own Nam war games, for a few dollars..... Not perhaps in the best possible taste. (Holiday, [Vietnam] BBC1, 16.3.99)

Tourism Concern is a London based organisation concerned with promoting ethical tourism. The website (www.ncmedia.co.uk/tourism/html/tourism_in_focus.html) lists their aims as promoting tourism that is just, in terms of fairly distributing benefits, participatory, in recognising the rights of local people to be involved in developing and managing tourism, and sustainable, by prioritising the long term environmental health of holiday areas. The debate about ethical tourism has been increasingly aired in some sections of the media recently, particularly in newspapers. While this debate appeared to have limited impact on the holiday shows broadcast during the sample period, one holiday programme broadcast in June 1999 did seem to reflect these concerns. While The Travel Show programmes in the initial sample had similar form and content to other mainstream holiday shows, the programme appeared to have changed since then:

This summer, The Travel Show is devoting more time to each destination. That means we can dig deeper, and of course as ever bring you our honest views of the pros and cons of the places we visit. (The Travel Show, BBC2, 14.6.99)

For example, the programme broadcast on 14.6.99 included a feature on Ghana which demonstrated a comparatively radical agenda. In a departure from the itinerary of bargain hunting and seeking luxurious surroundings and service, the viewer was informed about the history and culture of this West African country. While recognising the country’s economic need to develop its tourist industry, the presenter Jim White commented on the potential for the tourist to become an intruder on local people’s lives.

Throughout the item, Jim White was surrounded by local people, with a number of shots of him playing football and other games with young Ghanaians. Later in the feature, the presenter stayed at a hotel near Cape Coast, called Hans Cottage Boatel, based directly above a lake. Here again he was filmed laughing and joking with a group of Ghanaian women and children.

In a feature lasting around twelve and a half minutes, three and a half minutes were devoted to an organised tour of the slave warehouse at Cape Coast Castle and discussion of the history of slavery in the area. While many of the mainstream holiday features celebrated the benefits of colonial culture for the western tourist, glossing over the historical devastation of indigenous people and cultures, White gave a frank account of the brutality involved in the slave industry:

The Europeans who developed this area grew rich trading in gold and then even richer selling slaves. What draws visitors to the Gold Coast now is not just its tropical beauty but reminders of a brutal history. Cape Coast Castle was the seat of British colonial rule in Ghana. From here and other coastal forts, millions of Africans were shipped overseas as slaves. Now there are regular guided tours of this former slave warehouse....The thing that strikes you here is not just the inhumanity of this place and its roots, but the fact that there were some business systems analyst brains thinking about how best to treat the slaves, and so they kept far too many of them in the dungeons as a kind of filtration system – kill off the weak, get more of the strong. And in that sense it’s very like the Nazis. Its the sort of bureaucracy of cruelty that really, really hits home.
What was striking about this section of the feature, unlike the guided tours featured in our sample, was that Jim White was the only white tourist in the group visiting the castle. Recognising that the history of slavery might have a different impact on the other members of his group, he asked a Jamaican woman called Eugenie for her views. She commented on the incongruity of the suffering of the slaves below ground while the colonial population would have attended the church which was built directly above the dungeons:

*The slaves were underneath groaning, in agony, in pain, and someone was up there telling somebody else about Jesus. How do you equate both? I just don’t see it.*

Travelling inland for a further two hours, White visited a national park in a rainforest which has been opened up to tourists. He was led by his guide across a rope bridge suspended across the forest canopy. What was unusual here was the departure from the agenda of many holiday features on African wildlife, which focus on ‘bagging’ or catching sight of as many endangered species as possible. Remaining within the national park, White stopped to enjoy a musical show, where, unusually, he commented on the destination of the proceeds raised from the tourists:

*These performances by the bamboo orchestra are part of a traditional art form that’s been revived by young people from villages around the park. It’s all part of the conservation project. Profits go back to the performers’ communities.*

Towards the end of the feature, the presenter visited the stilt village of Mzulezo. In the rainy season he would have travelled by boat, but in the dry season he had to wade through shallow muddy water, and was only allowed to visit accompanied by a guide.

*Mzulezo is an extraordinary place. I must admit I felt a bit uneasy when I arrived – I thought I was going to be an interloper – looking at the place as if it was in a goldfish bowl..... The welcome was so effusive that you soon get over those initial nerves. They are so keen to attract tourists that they’re building a hotel here. And the chief seems very certain that it’s not going to change the way of life. I think I may have met one of the world’s great optimists.*

Again, White demonstrated here an alternative agenda in his concern for the future of the village as a tourist development, while recognising the need for the village community to generate income from tourism. This feature resembled many other holiday programme items in that it presented the country involved as an attractive destination, with beautiful scenery and interesting places to visit. However, in its inclusion of local people, *The Travel Show* progressed beyond the limited agenda of most mainstream holiday programmes. Through expression of concern about the impact of tourism on Ghanaian people, the debate about ethical tourism entered the holiday show genre.

**HEALTH WARNINGS**

References to potential hazards which might be encountered while travelling abroad were most unusual in the holiday programmes examined. Participants in the audience study focus groups had specifically commented on this, stating that they would like more information about potential pitfalls. While the following examples are fairly mild, they were exceptional in indicating problems which holidaymakers could come across:

*At the moment the infrastructure is pretty ramshackle so if you like things to run smoothly, maybe this isn’t the place for you. (The Travel Show [Ghana] BBC2, 14.6.99)*

*But it’s hot and you’ve got to remember that you might well get dehydrated and if you’re travelling anywhere like on a safari excursion, then allow a lot of time because Africa is so huge, the roads aren’t that good. (Holiday [Kenya] Channel 5, 8.3.99)*

There were two programmes where potential pitfalls of holiday destinations were covered in greater depth. Interestingly, the first of these examples, on ITV’s *Wish You Were Here* (11.1.99) involved a report on a destination which had previously gained a bad reputation for food poisoning. The presenter in this case was returning to assess whether the infrastructure in the Dominican Republic had developed and recovered sufficiently from Hurricane George to prevent a recurrence of food poisoning in the island:

*The Caribbean was always known as a pricey holiday destination. So when the Dominican Republic started offering all-inclusive holidays from around £500 a person, business boomed. But rapid tourist expansion strained public services. The complaints rate was fifty percent higher than anywhere else in the Caribbean. Tourists became ill, tour operators dropped hotels and holidays were cancelled.*

The presenter proceeded to say that new hygiene and inspection systems had been introduced and that the government was investing millions of dollars in sewage and water systems. Reminding the viewers of their own responsibilities in avoiding stomach upsets, he then offered the following cautionary advice:
For many visitors this is their first time in a Third World country. So you do have to take certain precautions. Eat only in the hotel restaurants, or if outside, somewhere recommended by the tour rep. Use only bottled water, even for brushing your teeth. Don’t have fruit unless it’s freshly peeled or peelable. And don’t have ice in your drinks unless you’re absolutely sure the hotel uses purified water to make it. It’s all pretty basic stuff really.

This was an unusual case in that here was a destination which had received bad press in the British media following several cases of British visitors to the island suffering from severe food poisoning. So while this report included nearly three minutes’ discussion of how the situation in the island had improved, and practical food hygiene tips for holidaymakers, the feature indicated that the previous concerns were no longer valid. The presenter concluded on an encouraging note:

It looks like the Dominican Republic is back on course for becoming the bargain of the Caribbean.

The second example, which includes three separate health warnings, was the BBC’s Holiday Guide to Africa (21.2.99).

Although Capetown is probably the least dangerous of South Africa’s big cities, you do have to be careful at night. If you’re going down town where Momma Africa (nightclub) awaits, take a taxi.

Most of the advice given on the programme covered health and hygiene issues:

The continent of Africa covers a huge area and specific health requirements apply to each country. Our Africa Survival Guide looks at some of the more general points that you need to bear in mind. Always get the necessary vaccinations for your trip...

The viewer is then advised to visit the GP or travel clinic six to eight weeks prior to departure, and to be particularly aware of malaria. Suggestions on how to avoid the disease are given, followed by food hygiene tips. As previously noted, such health warnings are relatively unusual, but they may have an influence in creating or reinforcing views that the developing world is a potentially unhealthy place.

TRAVEL/ADVENTURE

A distinction is sometimes made on holiday programmes between travellers and package deal tourists. The view is that some destinations are ‘discovered’ by travellers, who move on when ordinary tourists arrive. Travellers or backpackers are perceived as viewing themselves as superior to the package deal tourist. Examples of this distinction from Holiday included:

Lamu was a prosperous trading port in the 17th and 18th centuries. Things fell away until the place became Kenya’s Kathmandu and part of the hippy trail for the East. (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean[Kenya] BBC1, 14.2.99)

These days Goa... is very much on the beaten track, although it’s been accused by more hardened travellers of being a diluted version of India proper. In Calangut, one of Goa’s more developed resorts, you’ll still see cows on the roadside and rickshaws swerving past.... Calangut beach used be the only beach all self respecting hippies beaded for. Now they’ve moved on and the package holidaymakers have moved in. (Holiday Guide to the Caribbean [Kenya] BBC1, 14.2.99)

In our sample there were three programmes about travel which offered alternatives to holiday shows. One of these was Full Metal Backpack (2.2.99). While this was a documentary rather than a holiday or travel programme, it is relevant to this discussion in that it portrayed the motivations and attitudes of British travellers to Vietnam and Cambodia. The other two programmes were shown as part of travel/adventure series broadcast early in the year. These were The Edge of Blue Heaven (14.1.99) which centred on Benedict Allen’s journey round Mongolia, and The Rough Guide to Bolivia which offered an alternative view of travel in a developing country.

Dimitri Doganis, presenter on The Rough Guide series, made the documentary entitled Full Metal Backpack. This was shown as part of a series entitled Short Stories, billed as documentaries made by up and coming filmmakers. The title is a play on the name of Kubrick’s movie Full Metal Jacket which explored the experiences of American GIs in the Vietnam War, and on the term backpacker, another word for traveller.

Doganis follows the experiences of two young male friends, their interest in visiting the country clearly motivated by their fascination with Hollywood movies about the Vietnam War. As one of them explains:

There’s war souvenirs everywhere. Places like these – theme parks almost. I’ve always wanted the GI helmet. It’s the coolest thing to come out of Vietnam... Travellers are looking to go to different places now – new places, possibly because Vietnam’s becoming too much of a tourist trap, and I think maybe new places such as Cambodia could well be the next one. It was Thailand before, then Vietnam, possibly Cambodia next – just because it’s got that element of danger with it. At the
moment it’s slightly dubious as to whether it’s safe to travel there, and I think that’s what’s going to attract a lot of people there next, all your hard worn travellers. I mean Cambodia had the Khmer Rouge all the way through the seventies, so ooh! Bit more danger there, you know that’s a bit more up to date. There were killing fields there more recently. That possibility of kidnap in the mountains – oh what a thrill that would be. (Full Metal Backpack, [Vietnam and Cambodia] Channel 4, 2.2.99)

Having explained their interest in thrill-seeking and the desire to experience an element of risk on their travels, there was a moment in the war remnants museum in Saigon where the two men are stopped in their tracks by a black and white photograph of a GI holding a Vietnamese child upside down by the feet:

I find it frankly very disturbing. It makes me feel quite guilty in many ways when I come over here and treat it all as a laugh... think it’s a great joke to wear a G.I. helmet and pretend I’m a soldier. But it wasn’t fun. (Full Metal Backpack, [Vietnam and Cambodia] Channel 4, 2.2.99)

Following this moment of reflection, they entered the next room in the museum, where guns are displayed. The two travellers immediately resumed their previous attitude:

Having said all that about how serious the war is, you come in here and just want to pick up the guns and play with them again. It’s irresistible... You just want to pretend that you’re shooting down helicopters and you are Charlie Sheen. But when you get here you’re still just you – you can’t suddenly transform yourself into a star from one of the Vietnam war films and it’s slightly disappointing to come all this way and still be yourself. (Full Metal Backpack, [Vietnam and Cambodia] Channel 4, 2.2.99)

The fleeting reflection on the reality of the horror of the war does not interrupt the agenda of trying to recapture gritty Hollywood images of GIs on the edge of existence. While sitting on a boat getting stoned with an older Vietnamese woman holding a large pipe, they commented on their surprise at how different it all is from the movies:

...in Vietnam nowadays it’s just party city all the time. I’d no idea. Everything’s been geared towards keeping the tourists drunk, who’ll spend lots of money. It’s hardly Full Metal Jacket. (Full Metal Backpack, [Vietnam and Cambodia] Channel 4, 2.2.99)

Others who appeared in the documentary had a slightly different agenda. One lone traveller was waiting for his girlfriend to arrive in Saigon. He was sitting on a small boat with other people planning to go to a nearby night-club. There was a close-up of two clear packets containing brown substances on the boat. A young woman’s voice could be heard asking if anyone has got any ‘Charlie’. Commenting on the activities on his travels thus far, he said:

I’ve done nothing really mate. I’ve been here for four days and all I’ve really done is sit on my backside and just drink. I’m really waiting until my girlfriend gets here and then I think we’re going to explore a bit more of Vietnam.

Warren who is a night-club entrepreneur had travelled to Vietnam with his girlfriend Ali, a bar manager. Again, this couple spent most of their time in the country getting drunk. Warren and Ali’s one attempt at a cultural experience resulted in disappointment. They took a boat to Angkor Wat to visit the Buddhist temple:

Without proper guides this is almost as nonsensical as drinking ourselves stupid every night.

None of the people on this programme mentioned the word holiday; they all viewed themselves as travelling, and as having a separate agenda from holidaymakers. Each of them referred to their cultural expectations from the area. The two male travellers had clearly chosen Vietnam because of the Hollywood movies on the war there. They initially expressed disappointment that the reality is at odds with their expectations of experiencing risk and personal challenge. However, they later appeared very content to join the drink and drugs culture of the traveller community there. The other contributors to the programme had a concept of ‘exploring a bit of Vietnam’ or ‘having an intense cultural experience.’ However, again alcohol and drugs featured more in their activities. While travellers have been viewed as more adventurous and culture seeking than holidaymakers, Full Metal Backpack suggested that there is little difference in reality. Full Metal Backpack focused on travellers rather than on the destinations to which they travelled.

By contrast BBC2’s The Edge of Blue Heaven, (14 January 1999, 20.00) was not simply about ‘travelling’, but more about exploration of both territory and the self. In the series of which this episode was a part, adventurer and presenter Benedict Allen made a 3,000 mile trek around the edge of Mongolia. Allen chose to journey around a country relatively untouched by the tourist industry. He did not have fixed preconceptions about what he would experience on his journey. At the beginning of this episode, he summarised his progress so far:
I was a third of the way through my trek around the edge of Mongolia, filming the expedition myself. With Khurmet, an expert herdsman, I’d reached Ulgii in the Altai Mountains just in time for a festival..... But in only four days, all three of my original horses and TC the strongest camel, had been bitten to death by bloodsucking flies. I needed a break. I’d been travelling since the middle of June. It was now mid-July.

Allen and Khurmet decided to rest at a village called Dayan Nuur and stay with a herder Allen had met during the Winter. What was initially striking about this film, compared to any of the other destinations covered was the isolated setting among the Altai Mountains. For the first time, the presenter was the only tourist, surrounded by local villagers. He lived in the herder’s family tent. The herder introduced his teenage niece, who’s learning English at school. She explained that they are celebrating an annual festival of horses, and that the various adults present are related to her. Allen commented here on the warmth of the welcome he received from the villagers:

What a tonic this is -suddenly to be included as a stranger amongst such a tight community.

At the point of moving on from Dayan Nuur, he again expressed his gratitude to the local people:

The stay with the family gave me the strength to look forward, not back.

With a new team of horses and camels, Allen and Khurmet approached the edge of the Gobi desert. The presenter maintains his original plan of crossing the Gobi Desert alone. The two men share a bottle of vodka in what Allen describes as the ‘last supper’:

Life’s not going to be the same without Khurmet. We’ve been virtually married for the last three months, sleeping side by side.

As he says goodbye to his companion, he asked the translator to thank him for he has ‘done so much for him.’ The Edge of Blue Heaven stood in marked contrast to the holiday shows in the sample, which rarely covered activities, exchanges or relationships which were outside tourist zones. The most striking difference with Benedict Allen’s experience was the level of intimacy he enjoyed with Mongolian villagers. He felt privileged to be included as the only outsider in a festival and a wedding in Dayan Nuur. The Edge of Blue Heaven provided a further contrast with mainstream holiday programmes. It was in a way the opposite of programmes which emphasise consumption. By following his own personal odyssey, Allen gave an idiosyncratic portrait of travelling across Mongolia. There was little in the way of background information on Mongolian society, culture or politics.

On BBC2, The Rough Guide series fits somewhere between mainstream holiday programmes and the kind of personal odyssey encountered in The Edge of Blue Heaven. Unlike the latter programme, The Rough Guide is a series which aims to provide information to potential visitors to the country covered. However, in terms of format, the focus on one destination with two regular presenters during a half hour programme allows for greater depth of discussion than with most holiday shows. The presenters, Edith Bowman and Dimitri Doganis also talk to ordinary people on their travels, unlike most holiday shows.

The Rough Guide to Bolivia was the relevant destination in the sample period. Interestingly, it covers a country in the continent which was not visited by the holiday shows, South America. Early in the programme, Doganis stops at a stall selling magic charms, and asks the vendor in Spanish about them. This was the only occasion, apart from the occasional ‘buenos dias’ in the mainstream programmes, when a presenter attempted the local language. It also deals with areas which were largely ignored by holiday programmes: colonialism, history, industry, economics and contemporary politics. This contrasts with the glossy, more superficial magazine format of the majority of holiday programmes, where the agenda is dominated by maximising the gains the tourist can obtain from their trip.

The presenters explained that Bolivia has experienced many coups and wars since it declared its independence from Spain. They comment on the legacy of colonialism:

The skyline may be modern but Bolivia is regarded as one of the most traditional Indian of South American countries. Pure Amerindians make up more than half of the population. Despite this, indigenous people were treated as property by the land-owning elite until 1952. Yet there are very few Bolivian families that don’t have some Indian blood.

And later in the programme:

La Paz is the administrative capital: Sucre the legal capital – that’s where independence was first declared. (They cross the bridge to Potosi). Potosi was once the biggest city in the world. it was also so rich that the Spanish would describe something valuable as being worth a potosi.

Visiting a mine at Potosi, the presenters comment that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the silver from the mine was exhausted. Currently, the miners dig for less valuable minerals – zinc, tin, copper and lead.
which were ‘ignored by the Spanish.’ They speak to a guide in the mine, Eduardo Garnica, himself a former miner. They comment on the appalling heat and working conditions inside the mine. One of the presenters, Edith Bowman has to resurface because of the lack of oxygen below ground.

Doganis and Bowman visit Vallergrande, to see the burial site of Che Guevara. They interview Don Mario, a former intelligence officer for Guevara, who gives an account of the revolutionary’s aims for Bolivia, and the involvement of the CIA in his death. They also interview street children, who explain what their lives are like, and about the work they do to avoid destitution. While commenting that Bolivia makes more money from coca than all its other industries put together, and that its biggest export is cocaine, the presenters explain the difficulties for farmers to find alternative crops. Again, they interview a local person, in this case Don Alexandre, a farmer:

With one hectare of coca, one can live but if I plant citrus fruits, I couldn’t make a living.

While The Rough Guide to Bolivia presented the country as an attractive and colourful place to visit, it also informed viewers about the country’s history, politics and people. Bolivians from a variety of backgrounds were treated as individuals with important stories to tell, rather than as resources to entertain and service holidaymakers. Where there was interaction with local service providers, such as the woman charm-seller, there was no comment on bartering or on cheap deals.

DISCUSSION
The key to understanding the agenda of most holiday programmes is the underlying attitude of ‘what’s in it for us?’. In programmes made in developing countries, the agenda does not alter. There is a strong emphasis on getting a bargain at every stage of the holiday, from the purchase of the discount package deal to haggling over the price of souvenirs. Meanwhile, references to poverty in these destinations are usually absent from mainstream holiday shows. Yet there is often a price to pay for local communities, in terms of the tourist industry’s damage to the environment, local livelihoods and culture, as well as the exploitation of cheap labour.

Tourism is the biggest industry in the world. Watching holiday programmes, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that developing countries benefit greatly from the increasing interest of western tourists in more ‘exotic’ locations. Local economies should be booming due to the presence of rich tourists. In fact, little of the income generated by tourism filters through. Writing in the Guardian Travel Section (5.6.99), Sue Wheat observed: “Most of us search out cheap holidays with a missionary zeal. But while the prices are great for us, the profits that local people might enjoy get shaved away.” This applies equally to travellers and tourists. It’s the tour operators who take the majority of the profit from this industry. George Monbiot also makes this point in the Guardian travel section (15.5.99): “Tourism makes some people extremely rich, but most of them live in the places from which tourists come.”

Contact between holiday programme presenters and local people was very limited. While this is likely to be true in most holiday programme venues, there are specific factors relevant to developing countries. Local people mainly appear as resources within the tourist service industries, or as salespeople. Inhabitants of developing countries tend to be represented in menial roles: waiters, maids, even personal servants. As salespeople, locals are often portrayed in negative terms, as a harassment to the western tourist. Another main area of contact with people living around tourist resorts was through organised excursions to see indigenous locals or ‘tribes-people’. This allows holidaymakers, whose accommodation might keep them apart from local people, to experience what is marketed as ‘genuine traditional culture.’ The concern of the programme presenters here was with the authenticity of the experience. With few exceptions the lives of people living in holiday destinations were not considered. Rupert Isaacson has discovered another side to the story behind visits to traditional ‘tribes’: “At two white-owned reserves – Intu Afrika in Namibia and Kagga Kama in South Africa, I found “display” Bushmen brought in by the reserve managers from areas where encroaching cattle herders had made it impossible to live traditionally. Both these groups said that the reserve owners had reneged on their terms of employment, had withheld pay, and said that they would abandon the reserves within the year.” (The Independent on Sunday [Travel], 14.2.99, p7) But such information did not feature on the prime-time holiday programmes in the sample.

Travellers are shown as distinct from tourists in seeking low-budget trips which avoid highly developed resorts, and in their desire to experience local culture. Full Metal Backpack gave a different insight into the travel culture, indicating that many travellers have distorted or limited views of their destinations, and that they tended not to venture outside tourist zones. The travel/adventure programmes in this sample operated an alternative agenda. Benedict Allen’s The Edge of Blue Heaven offered an insight into the lives of people
inhabiting an isolated Mongolian village. Here there were attempts by the presenter to develop meaningful relationships with local people, and an appreciation of the hospitality afforded him. He viewed his Mongolian guide Khurmet as the ‘expert’ on the trip and developed a close and apparently equal relationship with him. There were no insights like this into the lives of local people in the holiday shows.

The Rough Guide to Bolivia, like mainstream holiday programmes, covered places of interest, activities and accommodation for tourists. However, here viewers had several opportunities to hear Bolivians talk about their lives, which gave deeper dimensions to the programme. Rather than the mainstream focus on getting the most out of a destination, there was an alternative agenda of looking at factors which affect the lives of local people, which included offering background information about politics and industry. Most references to colonisation in holiday shows imply that the remnants of colonial culture are an advantage to tourists in providing familiar comforts and elements of luxury. The Rough Guide, by contrast, made several references to the lasting damage and impoverishment caused by colonisation to Bolivia.

It appeared that some effort had been made, particularly by the Holiday series, to encourage consideration of the lives and livelihoods of local people, with references to local culture, particularly religion and industry. There were also reminders that local people’s livelihoods may depend on tourist purchases and it is not always appropriate to barter. Finally, on three occasions, the Holiday series discussed the recent history of destinations covered. However, there was a considerable gap between the two genres covered in the sample. The travel/adventure programmes, which form a far smaller section of the sample, tended to view local people as integral to the experience of travelling. They recognised local people as individuals with needs and rights, and included direct contact with local people from a variety of backgrounds. The edition of The Travel Show (BBC2, 14.6.99) which covered Ghana appeared to bridge the gap between the two genres.

C.3.2.6. Wildlife

This section contained 16 programmes, making it the second largest category in the sample, after holiday and travel programmes. Most of the wildlife programmes appeared on Channel 5 which broadcast 10 compared to two on BBC2, 2 on BBC1 and two on Channel 4. These mainly appeared in evening slots at peak viewing times, in only four occasions were they broadcast during the day: BBC2 broadcast two daytime programmes, the children’s programme The Really Wild Show on BBC1 was aired 1635-1700 hours and Defenders of the Wild on Channel 4 was broadcast early in the morning between 0455-0530 hours. The list below contains a breakdown of wildlife programmes in developing countries shown in the sample period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>Channel 5</th>
<th>1930-2000</th>
<th>Champions of the Wild</th>
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<td>0930-1030</td>
<td>Chimpanzee Diary</td>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>2000-2100</td>
<td>Call of the Wild</td>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>1930-2000</td>
<td>Champions of the Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>1930-2000</td>
<td>Champions of Nature</td>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>2000-2100</td>
<td>Call of the Wild</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>0455-0530</td>
<td>Defenders of the Wild</td>
</tr>
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<td>1930-2000</td>
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<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>1635-1700</td>
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<td>Natural Passions</td>
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The wildlife programmes in most cases focused on one species of animal per country. There were only three exceptions to this rule. In March Natural Passions on Channel 5 focused on a scientist’s breakthrough in studying the animals of the Costa Rican rainforest, The Really Wild Show routinely featured lots of different animals in countries across the world. On 9 March for example, it featured the mannequin birds of Central America, the Asian elephants of Costa Rica, dolphins and kangaroos in Australia and mountain parrots in New Zealand (BBC1 1635-1700). Finally, Champions of Nature on Channel 5 on 18 January focused on a vet in a wildlife park in Africa.

Collectively, the programmes provided one-off discussions on a wide range of animals from the foxes of the Kalahari desert to elephants in Tanzania, lions in Namibia, the mountain gorillas of Rwanda, giant pandas in China, leopards in Sri Lanka and tigers in Taiwan. But the species most often featured were the primates of Central America, Africa and South-east Asia. These mainly appeared on Channel 5 where they were featured four times compared to once on BBC2. Champions of the Wild remarked that they focused on primates because ‘the similarities attract people. It is a good way of getting people to be more concerned about conserving them’ (12.1.99 Channel 5 1930-2000).

Conservation was a key theme in the sample, with 11 of the 15 programmes focusing on this. Six in particular discussed the threat of habitat destruction where a combination of population pressure and market demand for natural resources in the developing world have pushed humans and animals to compete for land. For example:

Uganda was once known as the pearl of Africa. Time’s taken its toll on Uganda’s forest lands, like so many other tropical countries. Its been exploited for timber, for tea plantations and cut down to make way for farms for the country’s fast-rising population. (13.1.99 Channel 5 Champions of the Wild 1930-2000)

The mountain gorillas are struggling to expand their numbers. But the biggest problem is the population explosion of another species just beyond their domain. almost all of Rwanda’s six million people eke out a life of peasant drudgery on tiny 2 acre farms. The last thing on these farmers’ minds is the survival of the gorillas that take up land that they could be using to feed their families. (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of Nature)

On 7 March Wild Encounters focused on the orang-utans of the Indonesian rainforest:

The rainforests of Sumatra and Borneo, the only places where this ape now exists are being chopped down at an incredible rate, usually for the timber but sometimes to clear ground for rubber plantations and rice paddies (7.3.99 Channel 5 2000-2100)

The background to this situation was then reviewed: 40 years ago this part of Northern Sumatra was covered with thick rain forest. Then came the timber boom, Japan was buying building timber in vast quantities. The axe and the chainsaw moved in to supply the market. The fact that the man of the forest, the orang-utan is being deprived of a home, is only one aspect of a natural disaster. What the tree fellows are also doing is changing the climate in a way that could drastically affect their own lives. Rainforests like this actually create the rains that fill the rivers, that irrigate the rice paddies that feed the growing population. The gradual disappearance of the orang-utan is perhaps a vision of our own future. (7.3.99 Channel 5 2000-2100 – Wild Encounters)

This was a theme which Champions of Nature developed, occurring outside the February sample week but within the three month period of the sample as a whole, the programme focused on the work of Dr. Veruti Goldiguss an eminent primatologist who is striving to conserve the orang-utans of Borneo, South-east Asia. The narrator describes her quest as follows:

Every day the wholesale destruction of Borneo’s forests gets closer to the Tanjo Putti reserve and Camp Leekie. Every day Veruti Goldiguss witnesses the very guts being ripped from the vital forest habitat. Seemingly unstoppable forces are at work. The world’s insatiable demand for rare and exotic hard woods, the lure of gold that lies beneath the river beds and that is why Veruti knows that her life must continue here in Borneo, the very survival of the orang-utan depends on it...In 10 years the wild orang-utans have halved in number. The expendable flotsam of what Veruti sees as a global economy that creates greed but no satisfaction and desire but no happiness. (26.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000)

Primates are not the only endangered species. Nine of the programmes focused on animals which were endangered by hunting. Call of the Wild focused on the jungles of India and Sri Lanka, where the leopard is hunted for its fur:

The beautiful spotted coat has too often been the leopard’s death warrant...It is a protected species, yet because of the premium put upon its fur by illegal hunters, the distribution of the leopard is gradually shrinking. Today, its reign still extends across much of Africa and the East. 100 years ago it existed across most of North Africa as
well as its Southern tip. It was widespread in Manchuria and Magnolia. The leopard fights a losing battle against an ever growing human population in Asia. (21.2.99 Channel 5 2000-2100 Call of the Wild)

The programme focused on Dudwa National park in India and the renowned work of the conservationist Billy Argen Singh. The film showed his efforts to release Harriet, a leopard who was orphaned at a few weeks old when her mother was killed for her coat:

The magnificent spotted fur was prized for years by the fashion industry. It takes from five to seven leopards to make one coat. The trade in leopard skins is now banned internationally, but illegal hunting still goes on for the black market... As a leopard raised in human surroundings, her life in the jungle would be full of hazards with which truly wild leopards are better equipped to deal. She might for instance, be too trusting with human beings. Whatever the laws protecting them, leopards still carry a price tag on their coats for the unscrupulous hunter. (21.2.99 Channel 5 2000-2100 Call of the Wild)

Champions of the Wild also developed this theme, it noted that:

(3.3.99 Channel 4 0455-0530 Defenders of the Wild)

Wild Encounters on Channel 5 focused on orang-utans who are kept as pets because they are status symbols in Indonesia and the work of rehabilitation centres like Bohorok to conserve the species:

One of the problems that the Swiss scientists face is that many illegal orang-utans are kept as status symbols by high Indonesian officials... Monica Borner would say that the work of rehabilitation centres is very worth while, not only because they supplement shrinking wild populations, but because the attention they have attracted has made the illegal trading in captured orang-utans much harder and this arguably is their greatest achievement for conservation... It is up to the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia and the outside helpers they seem to welcome to ensure that the man of the forest will have a forest left to live in. (Channel 5 2000-2100 Wild Encounters)

One programme examined conservation at a more explicit and perhaps distressing level. Unlike the other programmes this was broadcast very early in the morning. Defenders of the Wild shown on Channel 4 in March looked at the trade in tiger products in Taiwan.

Taiwan is one of the world’s wealthiest nations, it is also the centre of the world’s traffic in tiger products. One restaurant does soup with tiger penis from China and Thailand. Few people can afford it. £250 soup for 8, 2 tiger penises for 14/15 people – £500. No evidence that it is a true aphrodisiac. Within 10 years, tigers will cease to exist in the wild if this continues. (3.3.99 Channel 4 0455-0530 Defenders of the Wild)

The trade has cultural implications, for the programme claims that in every city where there is Chinese medicine there are tiger products:

Taiwanese think tigers are beautiful. Symbol of strength and power – products used to increase health condition. Tiger bone and penis... three ways to make medicine powder for soup, tiger bone wine, paultis for aching joint. Scientists prove it has no good effect. Since 1989, Taiwan’s laws forbade sale of tiger products. Some Chinese pharmacists deny even though products on display. Some pass off deer bone as people don’t notice. (3.3.99 Channel 4 0455-0530 Defenders of the Wild)

The programme referred to how even a zoo was prosecuted for selling tiger cubs illegally to Taiwan. Thailand’s law enforcement agency have launched a major operation to resolve the crisis. One law enforcement officer was sceptical about the status of the tiger:

Sarasit (Law Enforcer): Taiwan authorities are doing nothing. My people don’t realise or care about endangered tiger. They care about money. (3.3.99 Channel 4 0455-0530 Defenders of the Wild)

Other programmes focused on elephant and rhino hunting. In Born to be Wild the narrator states:

The high price of ivory has meant that elephants have paid dearly with their lives over the years. These days it’s Rhino horn that fetches the highest rewards and has forced conservationists like Tony to go to extreme lengths to protect animals.

Tony: The only way to save Rhinos is to put them in fenced areas and then guard them day and night. (17.1.99 BBC1 2000-2100 Born to be Wild)

The programme reviewed how ‘ivory trade restrictions were relaxed last year in three African countries, making it again tempting for poachers’.

The emphasis in many of these programmes is on eco-tourism. BBC1’s film Born to be Wild was about the chance to release Nina, a captive elephant back into the wild. She had been cared for by a game park in Arusha, Tanzania since a baby when her mother was shot by a farmer. Nina has become a mascot of Tanzanian conservation. Her
release attracts the local press and District Commissioner to attend:

**Presenter:** How do you feel about the release of Nina?

**District Commissioner:** Today, actually is a great day because I happen to have known Nina when she was still staying in the sanctuary. So today, releasing Nina is just indicative of opening up Tanzania for the future of tourism which same time the benefit the people accept.

**Presenter:** Everyone around the edges will benefit from it

**Commissioner:** Yes it’s like independence (17.1.99 BBC 2000-2100 Born to be Wild)

The high profile event is just one step towards a more daring plan. The sanctuary plans to build a conservation lodge for tourism, for as one interviewee notes, conservation ‘has to sustain itself and sustain a profit’.

Scientist Don Perry received financial assistance from numerous foundations to install a unique cable car system that glides silently between the rafters of the rain forest:

**Don Perry:** And I think from our point of view what’s especially exciting is that we put the people in the cage and so the animals are free to come and look if they want. (8.3.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Natural Passions)

Attitudes to conservation vary culturally as February’s Champions of Nature notes:

**Narrator:** Today, the panda is a symbol of endangered wildlife but until 10 years ago no Westerners had ever seen one...To most of us, the idea of these young pandas spending their lives in captivity is less than ideal. Although, that's not a sentiment shared by most Chinese...

**Dr Sue Menka:** It’s interesting that during my time here I’ve learned very much. The Chinese people do not understand why a wild animal wants to be wild. Why would you want to be out there in the forest where it rains, where it snows, where you got to get your own meal when your option is to have three meals a day and a roof over your head. They think that doesn’t work, so there is a cultural gap there that we westerners have to learn to deal with. And if we want to help the Chinese conserve pandas, we must also accept their point of view, especially in light of the fact that captive management is going to be an important part of conserving species........The panda is Chinese, extremely Chinese, it’s elusive, it’s mystical and it lives with 1.2 billion Chinese people. Although, perhaps we could provide some idea and suggestions that may help them, ultimately the Chinese people will have to save the panda. (19.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of Nature)

Africa was the region most often focused on in this sample. It appeared seven times compared to south-east Asia which appeared four times and to central and south America which appeared four times. In four of the programmes, the animals were depicted as being ‘endangered’ by the political turbulence of the continent. In Champions of the Wild we are told:

**Narrator:** Uganda once had the richest tapestry of wildlife. But it suffered terribly under dictator Idi Amin. Elephants were killed by Amin for ivory. As the regime crumbled, the invading Tanzanian army killed everything left to feed themselves – chimps and monkeys included. (13.1.99 Channel 5 1930-2000)

In Call of the Wild the survival of Namibia’s lion is said to be connected to the ‘uncertain’ geo-politics of the region. For example:

**Narrator:** The young male (lion) has finally grown up, he can not only kill, he can also defend his spoils. This is only a fraction of Etosha’s lions. There are at least 500 of them in Namibia’s vast National park. Their future should be secure, but as Namibia approaches independence, conditions are bound to be uncertain. Etosha lies only 75 miles from the Angola border and there is always the chance that guerrilla warfare will erupt in this part of Africa. As so often, the future of the lions as well as that of all the other animals of Etosha, depends on the territorial ambitions of the human species. (17.1.99 Channel 5 2000-2100)

Channel 5’s Champions of Nature: Gorilla Tactics places a discussion of ‘defending our endangered cousin, the mountain gorilla’ (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000) at the centre of a discussion of the political situation and the civil war in Rwanda. The programme opens with the statement:

**Narrator:** In the heart of darkest Africa, mysterious Rwanda is the land of a thousand hills, where tribalism and hate have become a way of life and death and yet in the midst of this madness, half of the world’s endangered population of mountain gorillas is trying to survive to the 21st century and beyond. An end to the horrors of the civil war is far from certain, yet Dr. Pascal Scocat has put her own life on the line, returning to Rwanda to ensure the safety of these, the rarest of our primate ancestors.

These comments are juxtaposed against the opening visuals of Rwanda’s scenery, hundreds of white crosses on graves and the mountain gorilla. It is then that the title: Gorilla Tactics appears. Against a visual of refugees walking along a road, the narrator states:
Six million people are crammed into Rwanda, the smallest and one of the poorest countries in Africa. Add to that one million returning refugees and space to live and grow food is at a premium. Volcano’s National Park is the home of Rwanda’s 350 mountain gorillas and yet their forest habitat is under siege. Humans and primates are locked in a struggle for survival, both desperate to keep starvation at bay. Dr. Pascal Secot is returning from Canada to the Karasoki Research Centre to find out how the animals have survived the chaos of the civil war. Pascal’s PhD was building on the legendary work of Diane Fossi. Dr. Pascal was captivated by the species and no wonder, along with the chimpanzees, these animals are the nearest the human race has to a living ancestor. We cannot but acknowledge how in so many ways we resemble them. The world could not allow the mountain gorilla to perish and that’s why Pascal who had been evacuated during the civil war, risked her life to return to Rwanda as a director of the Karasoki Research Centre. (Visuals: Procession of Rwandan people walking through the jungle with bundles on their heads).

Phrases such as ‘in the heart of darkest Africa’, a ‘land...where tribalism and hate have become a way of life and death’ and ‘in the midst of this madness’ conflate the political complexities of a continent into a series of general statements about the Rwandan civil war, which explain the conflict as the manifestation of ‘tribalism and hate’. Africa is depicted as a place of ‘madness’, ‘land...where tribalism and hate have become a way of life and death’ and ‘in the midst of this madness’ conflate the political complexities of a continent into a series of general statements about the Rwandan civil war, which explain the conflict as the manifestation of ‘tribalism and hate’. Africa is depicted as a place of ‘madness’, ‘tribalism’, ‘chaos’, ‘horror’ and ‘hate’, a place where a ‘brutal war’ has spilled over into the animal population:

Narrator: Pascal is happy to be back with her old colleagues but soon she will learn of the legacy of the brutal war. Land mines have been planted in the forest and already one young silver back’s been killed. There’s still tension between the tribes, refugees are still filtering back and understandably the trackers and their families are apprehensive. (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000)

In the midst of this we are told, ‘Dr. Pascal Secot has put her own life on the line, returning to Rwanda to ensure the safety of these, the rarest of our primate ancestors.’ In this way, the programme creates a dichotomy between barbarism and civility, depicting a western biologist ‘defending our endangered cousin, the mountain gorilla’ against the ‘brutal’ ‘chaos’ and ‘madness’ of Africa. For example:

Dr Pascal Secot: It’s really heart-breaking to come up and to realise that all the work that’s been put in here is gone. But really, I must say that these whole events that happened in the past two and a half years in the region, the civil war here, all this could have been so much worse for the gorillas, all this could have been so much more dramatic in terms of the loss of gorillas, that in a sense losing Kam of course it’s dramatic, but Kam can be rebuilt and that’s what we’ll do. (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of Nature)

The narrator points out that Dr Pascal Secot ‘convinced the new government that these rare mountain gorillas were worth...more alive than dead’:

Dr Pascal: The new government has been very helpful in letting the researchers resume their work. This willingness to help the researchers shows how important the gorillas are in the economy (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of Nature)

The programme depicts Africa as in a dependent relationship to the ‘west’ even in terms of conservation. For example:

Narrator: The new Rwandan govt with the help of conservation groups such as the Diane Fossi Gorilla Fund, are desperately trying to keep these square miles of rain forest intact and to ensure that the park can remain a safe haven for Rwanda’s gorillas. Educational campaign money from the gorilla fund has helped to put an end to the poaching of these intriguing animals, for the last 30 years, a large portion of the salaries of armed trackers and anti-poaching patrols working in the forest has been funded by international donations, but, perhaps the greatest source of hope is that the new govt continues to encourage eco-tourism.

Dr Pascal: The single most important thing that needs to be done to save the gorilla is to maintain its habitat, for that tourism has to start again so that money comes into the country, so that money is available to fund anti-poaching patrols, money is available for the people living around the forest as well, so that they do not have to cut down trees. There are only about 600 mountain gorillas, so this is a population that obviously needs protected because it is so small. I think it has all the chances in the world to survive given that the habitat is there to support them. (17.2.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of Nature)

This impression is heightened by the recurrent image of white western scientists working to conserve African wildlife. Of the six programmes which focused on Africa, five were structured around the efforts of particular zoologists, biologists and primatologists to conserve African animals, all of whom were white westerners. For example, Channel 5’s Champions of the Wild: A Good Vet in Africa featured a European vet working as an eco-system doctor at a wildlife sanctuary. Although the leading role
is performed by the vet, all of the manual work which appears in the background is carried out by local Africans. We are told that part of the park’s job is to spread the conservation message to the many Africans who ‘never see the animals for which their land is so famous...At Oljoege students from the local school get a hands-on encounter...It’s a long-term project that will take long-term patience’ (18.1.99 Channel 5 1930-2000 Champions of the Wild). Channel 5’s Natural Passions featured an episode called Dr Rhino and predictably Dr Rhino was white (12.3.99 1930-2000). Such programmes perhaps give the impression that Champions of Nature are normally white.

This was a theme explored in Horizon: Elephants or Ivory, which looked at why the International Convention had agreed to lift the 10 year ban on the ivory trade in some African countries. The programme depicts a different picture.

Narrator: For centuries Africans have hunted wildlife without endangering its survival, but all this changed when the Europeans arrived...The colonisers barred Africans from hunting, while they shot everything in sight. [Graphic: Between 1830 and 1930 more than 1 million elephants were killed by white hunters.] By the 1940s elephants had become an endangered species in Africa, but the solution again excluded Africans....Historically, Kenyans used to co-exist with wildlife until about 50 years ago, when the first national park was created. It was created from the misconception that the local people are the threat to the wildlife.

The situation got drastically worse:

Narrator: Managing elephants was an expensive business, but inside the parks tourists always paid to save and protect them. This situation was to last for decades. Local people had no say in elephant management while elephants were treasured but things changed in the 1970s when the price of ivory rose. The tusk of an elephant was worth so much that poaching and trading in ivory became a profitable business. The consequence for Kenya’s elephants was catastrophic. Their numbers were devastated by poaching.

Now faced with the situation that elephant numbers are increasing and devastating the countryside, the locals are once again taking control of their conservation with positive results:

Narrator: This is Geruvay in Zimbabwe where elephants belong to the local people, they make the decision when and how many elephants should be killed and half of the money the hunter pays will go to the community. The scheme is called Campfire and by making elephants a valuable resource, the people are encouraged to protect them...

Dasta Chisung: If a safari operator shoots an elephant he’ll pay us about $11,1000 which we can use in our development projects and also when there is drought we can take part of the money and channel it to maize so they can survive (11.2.99 BBC2 2130-2220)

Other images of Africa focused on the continent as culturally exotic and different. Channel 5’s Natural Passions featured a programme on 11 March entitled The Snakemaster. The programme was constructed more in the style of an anthropological documentary than a wildlife show in the way it juxtaposes a detailed taxonomy of snakes with visuals of African tribesmen in tribal dress dancing in a ritual frenzy with the snakes. The camera zooms into a close-up of the snakemaster, Mona Cowa dressed in animal skins and dancing with a snake in his mouth. The narrator states: Today is a big day, long and eagerly awaited, peasants from all the surrounding villages hurry to be present at the ritual ceremony of the snakemaster. Knowledge of snakes handed down to him by his father when he was a small boy. Half healer, half sorcerer, Mona Cowa is respected by all.

Many of the themes examined here have a strong resonance with the groups in the audience study, particularly those related to conservation and the relationship between local populations and wildlife. C.3.2.7. Cookery

INTRODUCTION

The thing about cooking – the way I look at it is that for a long time people have regarded chefs like me as being somehow tremendously imaginative and artistic...but I look at myself as a bit of a magpie. I’m going all over the world and taking ideas from everywhere else, which is what the British have done forever, and bringing them back. (Rick Stein’s Seafood Odyssey [Goa] BBC2, 16.2.99)

Rick Stein’s comment from Goa expresses a view of the developing world as a source for new and exotic recipe ideas. This approach reflects the representation of developing countries in cookery programmes, as positive resources for British viewers. In this respect they resemble holiday programmes. However, it is also refreshingly honest for a presenter to admit to having a
Cookery programmes follow a variety of formats. \textit{Ready Steady Cook} is a game show. \textit{Dishes} is similar to \textit{Blind Date}, with a focus on food. Sophie Grigson takes a more instructive approach in her cooking programme. These programmes appear on our screens throughout the day and on into peak viewing times in the evening. During the sample period, a variety of food and cookery programmes were broadcast across the five terrestrial channels. On Channel 5, Nancy Lam had the earliest cookery programme shown at 0900 on Fridays. Channel 4 had a daily mid-morning slot for \textit{Here’s One I Made Earlier}, as did BBC1’s \textit{Can’t Cook Won’t Cook}, shown on Mondays. \textit{Ready Steady Cook} was broadcast daily at 16.25 on BBC2. Others were shown during peak evening times: BBC2’s \textit{Sophie Grigson’s Herbs} was shown at 1930 on Wednesdays, and \textit{The Food and Drink Programme} on Monday at 2030. Channel 4 offered the new programme \textit{Dishes}, at 1800 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the cookery programme which was shown at the latest time in the sample, \textit{Ramsay’s Boiling Point}, at 2100 on Thursdays.

Matthew Fort argues in \textit{The Guardian} newspaper that the proliferation of cooking on television is symptomatic of the rise of cheaper factual programming, driven as much by the economics of production as it is by audience demand. He comments:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The viewing figures for virtually all TV food programmes are actually dropping, even for perennial favourites such as Ready, Steady, Cook and \textit{Can’t Cook, Won’t Cook} and the \textit{Food and Drink programme}... Prestige series such as Rick Stein’s latest (his fourth) are no exception.} (\textit{The Guardian}, 4.3.99 p.17)
\end{quote}

With diminishing audience shares, new tastes and ideas are constantly required to add variety to such a widespread television genre. The developing world has long provided opportunities to try alternative cuisines. Ken Hom’s former Chinese cookery series being an earlier example, Nancy Lam arriving later with the ‘oriental cookery series’ \textit{Nancy Lam} on Channel 5. For the most part however, recipes from developing countries are sprinkled intermittently across cookery programmes. During the sample period for example, a number of programmes were advertised as including recipes originating from developing countries: Antony Worrall Thompson cooked a Thai chicken curry on BBC2’s \textit{Food and Drink Programme} on 11 January, while Sophie Grigson’s \textit{Herbs} on BBC2 on 17 February the recipes included Vietnamese-style pork.

\textbf{SAMPLE}

Where individual recipes have come from developing countries, they are usually demonstrated without any additional reference to the country of origin. So this study was limited to series which combined food with travel. For the purposes of the sample, \textit{Rick Stein’s Seafood Odyssey} was the only relevant programme. This series visited the places and flavours that have influenced the chef’s cooking over the years. However, given that the audience study indicated that cookery programmes are an important source of images of the developing world, this research also included \textit{Ainsley’s Big Cook Out}, which was broadcast in August and September 1999. In this series, Ainsley Harriot travelled across the Americas, starting in Canada and the US, then continuing through Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. The last three episodes were therefore included here, providing an unusual opportunity to analyse portrayals of South American countries. One of the appealing aspects of these programmes combining travel and cookery is that they provide the viewer with a visual feast combining enthusiastic presentation, sumptuous cooking, stunning scenery and in the case of \textit{Ainsley’s Big Cook Out}, an interesting and varied selection of musical accompaniment.

\textbf{RICK STEIN’S SEAFOOD ODYSSEY AND AINSLEY’S BIG COOK OUT}

Part of each of Rick Stein’s programmes was filmed in his restaurant back in Cornwall, where he would demonstrate recipes based on ideas he had collected on his travels. Stein would continue the programme from his foreign destination, linking the source of his inspiration to the dishes presented at home. The travel section of \textit{Rick Stein’s Seafood Odyssey} on 12.1.99 was from Goa, where the presenter prepared prawn caldene and spicy Goan lobster. On 16.2.99, he was in the coastal resort of Hua Hin in Thailand. Both Goa and Thailand were portrayed as exotic, with shots of beautiful beaches and colourful market scenes. This quirky chef commented enthusiastically on the appeal of each country, with particular reference to the differences he perceived between these developing areas and home.
In The Odyssey, Odysseus was blown from island to island, and found himself stuck in the land of the lotus eaters, where his crew simply lost the will to go home, because they fell under the spell of the lotus plant. Goa has that sort of effect on me, with all its heady scent of spices and its abundance of fish.

Similar descriptions were included in the programme from Thailand:

It’s so exotic and so different, it’s almost like arriving in another world and of course the food only goes to back those feelings up.

Indeed, he spoke of Goa in particular with affectionate familiarity:

This is Seyum in Goa – a place I’ve known and loved for the best part of eight years.

In the introduction to the first of the two Rick Stein programmes in the sample, the presenter had described himself as a magpie, going around collecting ideas to take home with him. Similarly, while on his travels, he did not attempt to pass off the recipes on offer as his own. Sitting outside an open-air bar on the beach in Goa, he demonstrated how to make a delicious spicy snack called papads, which he acknowledged were made by local people. In the fish market in Thailand, he indicated the value he placed on the knowledge of the traders there:

You can learn so much just walking round the market and talking to the traders.

Rick Stein visited local fish markets in both Thailand and Goa. Straight off a boat, he walked into a bustling harbour market in Goa, where mainly women sit close together on the ground with their seafood and fish for sale in front of them. He commented on the benefits to the visitor of the lack of modern conveniences in developing countries:

We’re really lucky – I said with a cynical emphasis on lucky – in the west, to have refrigeration and to have health inspectors – to have everything superclean and hygienic. But isn’t there something wonderful about coming to somewhere like this – a dusty old street and buying fish that are stiff fresh – it fills you with joy. If they had all the refrigeration, if they had all the health inspectors, you wouldn’t get fish like this any more, because they’d be saying, like we say, that’s good for three days... and you’d never get it like this.

Even a rat doesn’t put him off:

It wouldn’t be a Thai market without a rat.

This series crosses the cookery and travel formats and as with holiday programmes, the subject of haggling was discussed. Visiting the fish market in Goa, the chef described how a colleague had advised him he should barter because it spoils it for everyone if you don’t. However, pointing to the inappropriateness of haggling for its own sake, Rick Stein added:

To buy food here is a joy – the variety of seafood, spices, vegetables – it’s quite staggering and it’s incredibly cheap.

I think one is expected to barter here, but it’s really difficult to put your heart and soul into it because everything just costs a few pence.

On BBC2, Ainsley’s Big Cook Out involved a continuing journey from the north to the very southern tip of the Americas. Given that each programme in this series was based entirely in one country, this allowed more time to discuss the countries visited. There were more references to local culture, history and even wildlife in this series.

Again here, enthusiasm was the significant feature of the presenter’s approach to the countries involved:

Just look around here – glorious mountains, beautiful lush green valleys and me standing on top of a petrified waterfall. (Mexico, 20.8.99)

Walking in the rainforest, it’s difficult to get your head round the fact that this covers one and a half million square miles – just one acre of which can contain up to 179 species of tree. (Brazil, 27.8.99)

Buenos Aires is so chic, so sophisticated, so cultured, it’s often compared to Paris. It even boasts the widest boulevard in the world. (Argentina, 3.9.99)

There was one point in Ainsley’s Big Cook Out which resembled the glossier images presented in some holiday programmes. The presenter began the South American leg of his journey in Acapulco, Mexico. Here, he was met by a glamorous restaurateur who took him to her rooftop restaurant, with a fabulous view of the beach. He asked:

What is it that attracts the rich and famous to Acapulco?

His hostess responded that the beautiful beaches were the primary reason, and proceeded to list Hollywood stars who either visited or wanted to live there. However, leaving ‘flamboyant Acapulco’ for the more rural setting of Oaxaca, the images changed to local villagers going about their business. There was also an interview with a female weaver who demonstrated how cochineal is made. The cook also gave an appealing description of Mexican culture, while he prepared a mouth-watering dish to contribute to the celebrations for a local festival. He subsequently joined in with the street dancing:
Fiestas in Mexico have a unique exuberance, and none more so than Los Muertas – a jubilant celebration of the dead, who are honoured in music, pageant, dance and food. (Mexico, 20.8.99)

During the course of his South American travels, Ainsley met and chatted to a range of local people from various walks of life connected with the food industry – a fishmonger, a restaurateur, chefs, street vendors. These connections all helped to put the recipes in context. In Brazil, he also commented on the diet of local people: You know it’s not surprising – being so close to the river – that fish is a stable part of the forest people’s diet here, and I’m going to show you the perfect dish to accompany some of the marvellous ingredients that you can get from around here. (Brazil, 27.8.99)

Beyond the references to food were numerous references to local culture and history. This was particularly true of the programme filmed in Brazil. In the country’s former capital of Salvador, the presenter celebrated the vibrant and cosmopolitan nature of the culture:

For over 200 years Salvador was the capital of Brazil, and next to Lisbon it was the most important city in the Portuguese empire. It was also Brazil’s chief slave port. And today fifty percent of the population is black. In fact, the African culture is everywhere. (Brazil, 27.8.99)

Walking through the streets in Salvador, he came across a group of local people performing a cross between a martial arts display and a dance. He explained that this form of dancing was devised by slaves in the city: As you can see it’s basically foot fighting cunningly disguised as a dance. (Brazil, 27.8.99)

He also touched on the territory of holiday programmes while travelling up the Amazon River in Brazil. Here he used a term which did not appear in mainstream holiday shows – ‘eco-tourism’. Coming across what he described as the largest tree-top lodge in the world, he commented:

Perched at the level of the tree canopy, seven towers rise from the creeks, to accommodate eco-tourists looking for adventure. (Brazil, 27.8.99)

Travelling further south, the presenter ended the series in Argentina, moving from Buenos Aires to Patagonia, where he met a Welshman who spends half of each year in the area, living with local people as a cowboy or ‘gaucho’:

The people here are a mixture of native Indian, Spanish descendant and the Welsh, who came here in their numbers in the late nineteenth century. My guide spends half the year in Cardiff and half on horseback in Patagonia. (Argentina, 3.9.99)

He finally arrived in the town of Ushuaia, ‘the southernmost town in the world’ which he described as ‘freezing,’ and was seen barbecuing local delicacies wearing warm clothing. Before the series ended there was a summary of the entire series, with flashbacks from the high points of his travels. His comment indicated which features of his travels had greatest significance to him: It’s left me with wonderful memories of great food, marvellous people and stunning scenery. (Argentina, 3.9.99)

DISCUSSION
In this section, comparisons have been drawn between cookery programmes and holiday shows, where each genre features travel to developing countries. In some respects the basis of the two programme types is similar with a focus on consumption and maximising the potential gains for British viewers from these countries. But many holiday programmes were filmed in tourists complexes, or areas with highly developed tourist infrastructures. Local people tended to appear only in limited roles, particularly in the provision of services such as catering, cleaning and attending to the needs of western tourists. In contrast, the cookery series were filmed amongst local people, and heard from those with some connection to local food industries.

Both cooks approached their destinations with considerable enthusiasm, commenting positively on their experiences while travelling. However there were differences in their presentational styles. Rick Stein focused more on the exotic and the ethereal in both Goa and Thailand, explaining the title of his series by references to ancient mythology. His visits to these destinations appeared fleeting, as each programme was partly presented from Cornwall. Discussion of local life was limited. He did however, acknowledge the skills and abilities of local people, acknowledging that he had ‘taken ideas’ home from his destinations. Ainsley Harriot’s series resembled more the travel/adventure approach, with his continuing journey through the Americas. The images presented of South America were vibrant and inviting, while celebrating local culture and providing comments on the history, and occasionally ecology, of the countries.
C.3.2.8. Discovery Channel

INTRODUCTION AND SAMPLE

One week of programmes on Discovery Channel was recorded for this study, from 2 – 9 March.

Discovery Channel broadcasts from 1600 to 0200, seven days a week. During the sample week, there were no relevant programmes shown at the weekend, but there were ten programmes during the week which focused on developing countries, mostly travel/adventure series. They included a range of styles of presentation, and varied in the depth of discussion of their destination. Compared to holiday shows on the terrestrial television channels, there tended to be far less interest in opportunities for consumption, seeking a bargain holiday, or attracting potential visitors to the countries. The Discovery travelogues covered one destination in each programme, and mainly involved one or two personalities presenting an entire series. In these respects, the agenda resembled that of the BBC2 travel/adventure series in the sample. Although Trailblazers on Discovery was presented by a different personality each week, it most closely resembled The Rough Guide series on BBC2, in that the presenters approached their travels with a spirit of adventure and enthusiasm. They spoke to and formed relationships with local people and discussed the history and politics of their destination. The extent to which these travelogues are personality-led is indicated by some of the series names, such as Walkers World, presented by Anna Walker, and Nick’s Quest, presented by Nick Baker.

Two of the programmes in the sample were historical documentaries which offered greater depth and quality of explanation than was available in most other programmes in the sample. Pinochet and Allende (5.3.99) was a reconstruction of the 1973 coup in Chile. The Lost City of Zimbabwe (4.3.99) was an archaeological programme, introducing the historical arguments about who had built Great Zimbabwe. Both programmes examined the history of specific developing countries – Chile and Zimbabwe – in a global context, linking key events in their history to the interests of the west. Rather than simply replicating the typical imagery of disaster/war/violence in the developing world, each viewed the country covered against a background of imperialism and geopolitics. With The Lost City of Zimbabwe in particular, the viewer was presented with evidence of how our knowledge of the past can be distorted by western economic interests.

Of the 10 programmes, six were from Africa, two from South America and two from South East Asia:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 2.3.99</td>
<td>8-8.30pm: Great Escapes: Into the Death Zone</td>
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<td>9-10pm: Trailblazers: Peru</td>
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<td>Wednesday 3.3.99</td>
<td>4.30-5pm: Walker’s World: Namibia</td>
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<td>Thursday 4.3.99</td>
<td>5-5.30pm: Time Travellers: The Lost City of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>1.30-2am: Time Travellers: The Lost City of Zimbabwe (repeat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 5.3.99</td>
<td>4.30-5pm: Walker’s World: Zimbabwe, Botswana</td>
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<td>8.30-9pm: The Danger Zone: Uncharted Africa: The Kalahari</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10-11pm: Pinochet and Allende: The Anatomy of a Coup</td>
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<td>Saturday 6.3.99</td>
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<td>Sunday 7.3.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 8.3.99</td>
<td>4.30-5pm: A River Somewhere: Bhutan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8-8.30pm: Nick’s Quest: Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 9.3.99</td>
<td>9-10pm: Trailblazers: Namibia</td>
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TRAVELOGUES

The style and content of the eight travelogues varied considerably. The first programme in the sample, Great Escapes: Into the Death Zone was an adventure tale of man surviving against the odds. Nick’s Quest visited an elephant reserve in Uganda, where his main concern was to discover how one species of elephants had adapted to survive, following near extinction at the hands of poachers. Two different editions of Walkers World were screened during the sample week. The focus of both was on safari, first in Namibia, and in the following programme, in Zimbabwe and Botswana. On both trips Walker travelled some distance, tracking wildlife. Trailblazers, which also screened twice during the sample week, had a different emphasis. Each one-hour programme had a separate presenter, one a television personality, the other a travel writer, and the personalities of the presenters had a strong impact on the style of the programmes. Both presenters spent time with local people, discussing local culture and lives, largely avoiding tourist traps. A River Somewhere was part of a series loosely based on fishing, presented by two quirky Australians. Again this programme had a travel/adventure feel, beginning with a lengthy train journey through India, arriving in Bhutan, a country otherwise uncovered in the overall sample. Uncharted Africa was one of a series of programmes presented by a white African, Ralph Bousfield. This particular episode
concerned the hunting skills of bushmen, who Bousfield and his guest followed and observed.

In Great Escapes: Into the Death Zone, shown on 2.3.99, the climber Alan Hinks informed the viewer of the difficulties and dangers he has faced in climbing in the Himalayas. The programme focused on his quest to conquer the five summits of the Himalayas that he had not yet climbed. The scenery was dramatic, with occasional shots of local people on the paths on the lower mountain sides. But there was limited focus on the countries surrounding the Himalayas.

The Walkers World programmes were broadcast at 1630 on 3.3.99 and 5.3.99. Although visually striking, these were the least informative of the four different travel/adventure programmes. Both programmes centred around safari expeditions, with the focus on opportunities to see the ‘big five’ mammals which are sought after by safari enthusiasts. In the second of the programmes, expert guide James Barden explained to presenter Anna Walker:

*We have four of the so-called big five – which are elephants, buffalo, lion and leopard. Unfortunately there are no rhino.*

While Ann Walker was unable to see black rhino in her safari to Zimbabwe, the search for this animal was central to the programme from Namibia.

*This is the only place they can be seen in the wild. There’s not many black rhino left. The numbers in the desert area are around one hundred.*

In Namibia, the guide arranged for Walker to visit the Himba people, as he explained to her:

*This is Himba land. The main mission here is seeing the Himba and their culture. They’re one of the last traditional tribes in Africa. We’ll go out when it’s a bit cooler and see what they can teach us.*

In response to her question about the red clay the Himba women wear on their hair and skin, Walker was informed that the mixture protects their skin against the sun and mosquitoes. She was then treated to an application of the mixture on her legs, which seemed to cause her some consternation. Appearing increasingly alarmed, she made the following comments:

*Does this stuff ever come off?... This wasn’t supposed to happen..... What’s Himba for Can you stop now please?.... Timo, please translate... (To woman) I know, you think this is hysterical don’t you?*

Walker completed her journey at a permanent camp, which greatly impressed her. As she arrived, two black members of staff greeted her, taking her bag, and handing her a wet cloth and cool drink.

*This is smarter than what I’ve become used to. I need to relax a bit and be spoiled. These permanent tented camps seem to be springing up all over Southern Africa – with running water, bathrooms ensuite, a kind of luxury alternative to roughing it in the bush. This camp’s built on the edge of Etosha National Park to give you the maximum chance of seeing a lot of game.*

At the end of the second programme, Anna Walker summed up:

*When you go on safari in Southern Africa you’re almost guaranteed to get really close to the game. Whether it’s the excitement of riding an elephant or sheer terror of being charged by a hippo, or simply the romance of canoeling down by the Zambezi, or just watching the game from the safety of your hotel balcony, it really is an exhilarating experience and I can recommend it to anyone.*

Nick’s Quest was broadcast on 8.3.99 at 2000 for half an hour. This programme was similar in many respects to Walkers World, in that the presenter’s main focus in visiting an African country was on the wildlife and safari. One difference was that the presenter Nick Baker was also interested in insect life. The programme also concentrated on conservation and protection from poaching, with the tuskless elephant the central feature of Nick’s Quest in Uganda.

*I’ve come to the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda to find a pretty special population of elephants. By 1980 over 90% of Uganda’s elephants had been wiped out by poaching. But these here survived – that’s why I’m here – to find out exactly how they did it. In the last 30 years Africa’s population of elephants has been decimated for the trade in ivory and Uganda is no exception.... Civil unrest in the seventies and early eighties meant the country and its wildlife suffered... But now that political stability has returned the parks are being revitalised by being divided into zones – some exclusively for wildlife conservation, some for tourism – carefully managed, and local industry.*

The guides and experts in Walkers World had tended mainly to be white. Nick Baker explained that his quest in Uganda was to track down a local expert, who was black. While he appeared bemused by the fact that she was not instantly available to appear on his programme, he accepted this delay with good humour:

*What I really need to do is talk to someone who knows these elephants personally and that’s Eve Abe. She’s the woman who found the remaining 150 elephants. What is quite unusual about this quest is normally I find an expert who introduces me to the animals. What she said*
was (laughing) 'You find the animals first – then I’ll come out and meet them,’ because she’s a very busy lady.

This acknowledgement of the role of a black African in such a significant elephant conservation project was important. Eve Abe caught up with Nick Baker towards the end of his trip. She explained that the biggest tusked elephants, particularly males, were a target for the poachers, and that tuskless females usually have tuskless female calves. So poaching led to a situation where tuskless elephants had better survival chances, and the tuskless population has grown as a result.

Uncharted Africa started on Friday 8 January at 2030, and ran for 13 weeks. The white presenter Ralph Bousfield was born in Tanzania and is now resident in Botswana. He grew up in the bush and formerly studied conservation. According to the Discovery website on the programme (http://home.iol.ie/promos/discovery/synopsis.html) the film crew completed six expeditions to four countries; Botswana, Namibia, Kenya and Tanzania to make the series: ‘It is certainly not the classic wildlife documentary approach and not the sometimes depressing current affairs angle; but something far more personal’. The series included episodes covering a range of themes, including The Last River Bushmen, Kenya Conservation and Bush Larder. The title of the programme shown during our sample was Hunting which was filmed in Nyae Nyae, in Namibia. Here, Bousfield was joined by the artist Peter Beard in Bushmanland, to join a Bushman hunting expedition. The two white men spent some time with the bushmen, observing their methods of tracking and preparing weapons. Commenting that each time they rested, the bushmen produced their tobacco for a smoke, Bousfield explained:

Tobacco is the one necessity which you can’t find in the bush. It’s brought in by the occasional visitor.... Shoes are also hard to get hold of out here...They basically have to wear western shoes or go barefooted.

After many hours without success, the bushmen decided to progress alone:

We’ve been walking for about eight hours on and off and it’s been decided that the hunters should go on ahead. They’ve got a far greater chance of success without having us amateurs crashing along behind.

When the hunters did have success, Bousfield explained the value of their catch:

The hunters have worked hard to kill this animal, and once its been airdried its meat will feed the settlement for the next month.

Peter Beard concluded towards the end of the programme that the bushmen’s lifestyle was enviable. While his comments venture into the territory of the ‘noble savage’, he did genuinely admire the considerable skill involved in hunting and surviving. However, there was little indication of what the bushmen themselves thought as they did not speak. Their lives were interpreted as follows:

It’s our fear of connectedness with nature, and our fear of being related to animals that scares us. These bushmen are more admirable than us – they’re much more honest, they’re more skilled at survival. Their activities incorporate a huge diversity which we no longer possess. They are in so many ways superior to us... Hunting is a way of survival for these people in the Kalahari, and I’d say life without activities like hunting is a fake life, and a life unlived. I guess we’ve lost sight of the whole thing. We are now suburban supermarket shopping people, hunched in front of computers in dark rooms. I just would love to say that the bushmen tell us how dishonest we are in our claims.

There were two programmes from the Discovery series Trailblazers broadcast during the sample week, one presented by travel writer Martin Buckley in Peru, and the other by television personality Mariella Frostrup in Namibia. Trailblazers in many respects resembled the type of travel programme which had been broadcast by the BBC2 during our sample period, and the programme from Peru demonstrated many similarities to The Rough Guide to Bolivia where presenters set out to explore a South American country in some depth, talking to local people and considering various aspects of their day to day life. In Trailblazers, individual presenters approached their destination with enthusiasm and a spirit of adventure. Lasting an hour, each programme covered a variety of settings within either Peru or Namibia.

Both presenters stated at the start of each programme that they had begun their travels by visiting the Royal Geographical Society in London. The first comment was made by Buckley and the second by Mariella Frostrup:

My journey began in London, where the Royal Geographic Society has one of the finest collections of maps.

I decided there was only one place to plan such a challenging journey, the Royal Geographic Society, one of England’s most prestigious societies.

Moving beyond the tributes to the Royal Geographical Society, the presenters explained the background to their destinations. Buckley explained his interest in
traditional Peruvian culture and in finding out how much of it had survived Spanish domination:

Just over 450 years ago, a rough and unscrupulous Spanish soldier landed here, at what’s now the remote North Western corner of Peru. He was dreaming of gold but the only gold here is these endless sand dunes. Francisco Pisarro must have been sorely disappointed. But within weeks he’d discovered the fantastically rich empire of the Incas. Within years, he’d looted it and utterly destroyed it.... But there must have been something left of South America’s greatest civilisation.... This journey’s something I’ve long wanted to do: to find out what remains of Peru’s ancient culture.

Buckley showed a particular interest in discovering to what extent shamanism had survived, visiting three shamans throughout his travels, and taking part in two shamanic rituals:

By combining Christian imagery and beliefs with its own traditions, Shamanism seems to have survived the domination of the Christian church. Many Peruvians have little access to Western medicine, and they rely on Shamans who blend herbal medicines with what we’d probably call psychiatry into a belief system that includes spells and spirits of the dead.

After his first Shamanic ceremony, he claimed that he felt much improved, ‘internally clean and intensely calm.’ He explained how this contrasted with his experience the next day:

That calm came in useful the following day. As we drove East into the Andes, we travelled mountain roads that had been all but destroyed by the El Nino floods a few months earlier. Here narrow roads had been cut into the sides of precipitous cliffs. As the worst floods in twenty years deluged this valley they swept everything before them, destroying bridges and tearing away roads.

As the presenter prepared to leave the ancient Incan capital of Cusco, the viewer could see tearful adults embracing around him:

Today sons and daughters are leaving the countryside to find work in the cities. Tickets are expensive and return trips can’t be made very often, so many tears were being shed around me as I waited for the plane on to the next stage of my journey.

Buckley then visited the salt pans, where he explained the hardship for the families working there:

The pans have been in continuous use since the Incas, they told me, owned for generations by hundreds of individual families. They get paid....about sixty pence for a hundred pounds of salt – not a particularly easy way to make a living.

After a long journey crossing the Andes, Buckley reached a small town called Balsas and was much relieved to find accommodation. The camera then followed the presenter as he left the building and started walking towards an open air tap and well where he proceeded to wash himself:

Well, the bathroom’s not actually on the premises. It’s about half a mile away. This is what it’s really about. It’s great. Nobody will believe me when I say I’d rather be here than in a five star hotel. But it’s true.

Summing up his travel experiences in Peru, Buckley concluded on the extent to which Incan culture had survived Pisarro:

The journey had taken me through thousands of miles of desert, mountain and jungle. I’d been shown great kindness and had experiences I’ll never forget. It seemed to me that Pisarro’s conquering army had not destroyed Peru’s culture or magic.

The second edition of Trailblazers in the sample portrayed a very different landscape from that seen in Peru. Fewer local people appeared in the programme from Namibia, which with two people per square mile, is sparsely populated. As with the holiday programmes in the sample which covered Namibia, much of the focus here was on the wildlife of the country, and its nature reserves. However, background information was made available to the viewer about the conservation policies in the country, and some of the implications of these developments.

Travellers have been drawn to this remote part of Africa since the Portuguese first landed here over 500 years ago.... Relatively unexplored until the mid-fifteenth century, Namibia only obtained independence in 1990, having previously been under the grip of first German then South African colonial rule.

Mariella Frostrup visited Kaokoland, a remote and rugged area of North West Namibia, where she commented on how difficult it must be to survive in such a bleak landscape. She then spent some time, with a translator, talking to some Himba women about their lives and the difficulties of the landscape. She admired their grace and appearance but did not attempt to emulate it:

The only people who’ve been able to survive are the Himba – a semi nomadic people continuously on the move with their cattle. There are only 8000 left. Tall and graceful, the women protect their skin by rubbing in a mixture of red ochre, butterfat, aromatic herbs and bark – a practice central to their identity.
Frostrup then veered south to visit Damaraland where she was thrilled to see desert elephants, stating that ten years ago their numbers had reduced to 70 due to poaching, but that thanks to the successful conservation policies of the government, there are now 300:

*But the conservation of this once threatened species is an example of the current spirit of Namibia – the first country in the world to include protection of the environment and sustainable utilisation of wildlife as part of its constitution.*

Frostrup then arrived at a permanent camp in the area, where she was greeted by a Namibian woman, whose offer to carry her bag to the tent was refused. Instead she chatted and joked with the local woman, much as she had done with each local person she had met. The presenter then enthused about the principle on which the camp has been based:

*It’s a really fine example of compromise between tourism and conservation. It’s a partnership between local community and big business in the form of wilderness Safaris. Indeed, in ten years time the camp will belong solely to the Damari people. Everything has been designed with low environmental impact in mind. The tiniest detail is taken care of – there’s no waste. There’s solar power, there’s no waste of water. If you picked up these tents tomorrow and left, I think there wouldn’t be a dent on the landscape.*

On the last stage of her Namibian journey, Mariella Frostrup travelled by air to Etosha, which she described as:

*Africa’s oldest National Park, founded in 1907 and the first destination for most tourists. Since its foundation, more than 20 national parks, game reserves and resorts have been established in the country, a total of 30% of the land area has been given over to these conservation areas. Unlike the colonial days, Etosha now prospers as an incomparable wildlife retreat, where the camera not the rifle reigns supreme.*

A River Somewhere was screened on 8.3.99. This half-hour programme follows Australian presenters and fishing enthusiasts Tom Gleisner and Rob Sitch as they travel in search of rich fishing grounds. In this edition of the programme, the two men visited Bhutan, a country which did not feature elsewhere in the sample.

After a brief introduction the two presenters were filmed in an Indian train station, checking a typed list of passengers for their names, then boarding and setting off on their rail journey.

*It was still pretty early in the trip so we bought safe food like unpeeled fruits and baked cakes. Yes, we were very disciplined although I’ve got to say it’s pretty hard to sit next to the pantry car while they cook the most beautiful smelling curry and eat a tin of almonds.*

The train took them to the north of India, passing through tea plantations, with shots of a group of women carrying full sacks on their backs. Rob Sitch explained how they planned to travel on east to Bhutan:

*From here we’d take the bus East. (Visual of bus passing with at least 20 passengers sitting on the rood) Not that bus – couldn’t get on it.*

Visiting Paro, they also commented on the local religion, whose influence is evident in the landscape all around them:

*Paro was one of the cradles of Buddhism – Tibetan gurus introduced it many centuries ago. The influence is everywhere. They valley was dotted with temples and impressive fortresses.... At the top of this path, the high Himalayas, and beyond that Tibet.*

Again with this programme, the presenters spent time with local people, rather than avoiding them, or viewing them simply as service providers. Joking that he excluded one boy from his informal fishing lesson for local children, because he was better at it than himself, Rob Sitch commented:

*And everywhere there would be kids. Teaching the kids was more fun than the fishing... And there’s no better smile in the world than that worn by Bhutanese children.*

Towards the end of the programme, the presenters believed they had worked out why the local people were so relaxed:

*Onwards up the valley – this has been the way through to Tibet for centuries, and the way for Tibetan armies to invade Bhutan. When you think of the neighbours – China and India and Bangladesh – hectic, crazy paced lifestyles, Bhutan’s really laid back and I guess a lot of that’s to do with the Buddhist culture... you never hear the phrase ’Buddhist extremist.’ But there may be another reason... (holds up leaves) Yes, you guessed it – marihuana. It actually grows wild right throughout the hills and rivers here.*
Pinochet and Allende: The Anatomy of a Coup was shown on Discovery on 5.3.99. The screening of this documentary was timely in that Pinochet, former dictator of Chile, had featured heavily in the media at the time. Pinochet had been detained in Britain at the end of 1998, accused in Spain of using extensive torture while he was in power. At the time this programme was screened, an appeal decision was awaited from the law lords which would determine whether Pinochet enjoyed immunity from extradition.

The documentary concentrated on Allende’s political career and the period leading up to the coup, and to a lesser extent on Pinochet’s part in this. While the programme did not therefore cover the period of military rule under Pinochet, and the reasons for the current case against him, it did introduce him as a key player in the period leading up to the coup, and gave some insight into how he obtained power. The main purposes of the documentary were to reconstruct the events of the coup on 11th September 1973, to provide background information on Allende’s political history and in particular, the determination of the CIA and right-wing elements within Chile to undermine his leadership. The narrator introduced the programme:

On September 11th, 1973, in Santiago, Chilean President Salvador Allende died in the palace of La Moneda while the army was shelling the building. The military coup brutally suppressed the first socialist experience to be rooted in an electoral process. This documentary reconstructs the history of that day.

Anatomy of a Coup used a combination of archive footage, radio interviews and photographs, as well as contemporary interviews with friends and relatives (including the president’s widow and his daughter Isobel Allende). The narrator emphasised the significance of Allende’s electoral victory:

In November 1970, the socialist Salvador Allende becomes president of Chile. He declares ‘Along with me, the people are entering into La Moneda.’ His victory at the head of the left-wing popular unity coalition struck like a thunderbolt in the Chilean political landscape, throughout the Americas and even in Europe.” (footage of great celebrations in the streets) For the first time, ballots not bullets seem to have won, allowing an overt Marxist to become president of a Latin American country.

Viewers were informed that the United States had intervened in the previous elections of 1964 to prevent Allende standing against the Christian Democrats. Edward Korry, who was US Ambassador to Chile from 1967-1970 was interviewed about the level of financial backing from his country:

Edward Korry: A total of 2.7 million dollars was spent through the CIA for the election and many millions more were given by people contacted by the US in Europe and in the private and public sectors. So the Christian Democratic Party of Italy, the Vatican, the royal households of Belgium, of the Netherlands, the German C.D.P. and many others were contacted so that enormous sums of money were funnelled in... funded an enormous propaganda campaign.

Further to this, the narrator stated:

President Nixon released the funds needed to destabilise a government whose example could be contagious. He ordered an unofficial but efficient blockade against Chile. The CIA backed several strikes, such as those of the truck drivers and the retailers. Prices began to soar. The country was paralysed. As promised, wages had been raised, but to buy what....?

The narrator explained that despite the hardship experienced by the Chilean people under these circumstances, Allende maintained popular support, so that the right wing, Christian Democrats and the CIA saw that it would be difficult to dislodge the president by democratic means. Edward Korry claimed that the Nixon government was leaning on him to pressurise the military for a coup. His military attaché was then ordered to report direct to the CIA instead of him. He recalled how furious Nixon became when he discussed the situation with him, banging his fist on the desk and declaring that ‘Allende had to be smashed.’

Pinochet did not feature greatly in the documentary. Prior to the coup, he had had an unremarkable career in the army, though steadily progressing to the rank of General. The programme indicated that he had worked to secure the trust of Allende, who had made him Commander in Chief only 18 days previously. Allende had named 10 September as referendum day, to resolve the country’s growing political crisis. If he’d lost, he would resign. It was Pinochet who persuaded him to delay the referendum until the 11 September. It was never announced. Pinochet had been so successful in gaining the president’s trust that Allende specifically asked for him on the morning of the coup, fearing he had been jailed. He was however, informed of Pinochet’s betrayal some time before he felt compelled to take his own life, at the point of certain defeat.

The second historical documentary in the Discovery sample was Time Travellers; The Lost City of Zimbabwe which was broadcast twice on 4.3.99. This documentary lasted
half an hour and was shown at 1700 and 0130. While the focus of the programme was the archaeology of the Lost City, much of the discussion concerned the level of destruction caused by colonialists over the past century, and the reasons for their attempts to claim the city as a western construction. The programme included interviews with archaeologists, film of the Lost City and stills of paintings. This documentary began by explaining that ‘racist colonisers’ had claimed the city had biblical or European origins, in order to justify its plunder and their savage treatment of local people. The narrator John Rhys-Davies introduced the programme:

A mysterious ruin in the heart of Southern Africa, proclaimed by racist colonisers to be the work of an ancient white civilisation. Stripped by ignorance and prejudice of its priceless artefacts, is it too late to unlock the secrets of Great Zimbabwe.

The white archaeologist who appeared throughout much of the Time Travellers explained further:

The fact that the ruined complexes in Southern Africa were supposed to be of biblical origin was very convenient to the Afrikaaners. It gave the historical precedent for colonisation, and in a sort of double whammy gave them also a biblical sanction for the colonisation and exploitation of Africans.

Of Cecil Rhodes’ determination to prove Great Zimbabwe was the capital of an ancient Venetian settlement, he commented:

And he did so because he was interested in establishing foreign origins for these sites, again as a justification for the use of Africans as cheaper mine labour, which was his main objective because he now controlled the original gold mines in the area. The interesting sideline to this was that the African miners had been far too efficient, and the gold deposits in that area were largely exhausted by the time the whites got control of the area.

What is significant about the documentary is that it exposes the extent to which positive concepts of African civilisation were suppressed and distorted so that negative images could be promoted, in the interest of colonisation. The other important feature was that black Zimbabwean archaeologists began to feature in the latter part of the programme. The white archaeologist who had explained the archaeological history of Great Zimbabwe commented:

What is important is that now, for the first time in the last ten to fifteen years, a body of African students are beginning to learn archaeological techniques and apply their own intimate understandings of African culture for African archaeological sites, not only in Zimbabwe but also in surrounding African countries.

Black African archaeology students were filmed examining the site and inspecting stonework from the site under microscopes. One black archaeologist in particular was interviewed about white attitudes towards the Shona people who inhabited old Zimbabwe:

This was a time when people had a very backward view about African civilisation. What is surprising about even during the UDI days – the days of Ian Smith – we find that they try to discredit the connection between Great Zimbabwe and the Africans.

The head of Rhodesia’s antiquities department resigned in 1971, after receiving a diktat from Ian Smith’s breakaway white government, forbidding any mention of the true origins of the ruins in the official guidebook. A picture of the old guidebook was shown on screen, depicting a black African bowing before the foreign power.

In 1980, after a bloody civil war, the government of Rhodesia came under black majority rule. Finally the people of Zimbabwe were free to search for their past among the ruins from which the newly independent country had taken its name.

DISCUSSION

Most of the programmes on developing countries in the one week sample of Discovery were travel/adventure series. These travelogues were similar in the type of imagery they presented, particularly in Africa, where safari or the tracking and killing of wildlife featured in all five programmes. However there were variations in the style and content of these programmes, ranging from the picturesque but less informative travelogues such as Walkers World to the more adventurous and pioneering style of Trailblazers. Most of the travelogues relied on spectacular depictions of scenery and/or the closest possible views of wildlife, the rarer the better. This was true of Walkers World, Nick’s Quest, Danger Zone and Great Escapes, where there were limited references to the social context of the countries, or to the lives of local people. Having said this, local people who featured in these programmes were at least introduced by name to the viewer and Nick’s Quest involved the search for a black African conservationist and expert, which was rarely the case elsewhere in our sample.

Compared to mainstream terrestrial holiday shows, they generally presented more positive images of local people in developing countries. This was particularly true of A River Somewhere and the two editions of
Trailblazers where to varying extents the viewer was offered a range of information about the history/politics/living conditions of the countries covered. Interestingly the two most informative travelogues covered firstly Bhutan which did not appear in any other section of our overall sample, and Peru in South America which rarely featured on terrestrial television.

South America was again covered in the documentary Pinochet and Allende: Anatomy of a Coup. This informed the viewer of the global context of the events surrounding the coup, rather than simply reinforcing images of this developing country as being volatile and chaotic. Interviews with former members of the United States government clearly indicated that America’s fear of democratic socialist revolution in South America led to a systematic campaign by the CIA and right-wing European elements to destroy Allende’s government.

The second of Discovery’s historical documentaries in the sample, Time Travellers included a frank discussion of the exploitative elements of colonialism. Some of the holiday programmes on terrestrial television in this study demonstrated an unquestioning acceptance of colonial history in developing countries, and in some cases they portrayed this as beneficial to western visitors. But in contrast, Time Travellers demonstrated the deliberate concealment and distortion by western colonialists of the fact that the impressive African civilisation of Great Zimbabwe came into being nearly a millennium ago. It informed viewers that as recently as the 1970’s the Rhodesian government continued to publish misinformation in an attempt to justify their assumption of superiority over black Africans. When the narrative reached the point where black majority rule was achieved in 1980, the white archaeologist handed over to black Zimbabwean archaeologists, one of whom commented on the ‘backward views’ which people had had towards African civilisation. The truth of this statement was well evidenced in the documentary and it was exceptional to hear an alternative case so clearly put.
D. Audience Study

There were two key purposes in this audience study:
- to identify patterns of understanding and belief and to trace the origin of these, in, for example, media accounts or from other sources such as schooling or peer groups.
- to examine how media products work to compel audience attention, to entertain and create lasting images.

D.1. Method and Sample

Focus group methods were used to investigate how media messages about the developing world are received and understood by the public. The groups chosen were ‘naturally occurring’ (people who knew each other through work, school, friendships or family connections), in order to preserve elements of the social context within which people actually receive media messages. Twenty-six groups were convened in England and Scotland (14 in England, 12 in Scotland) each involving between 6-8 people. There were a total of 165 individuals, aged between 10 and 74. The sample was 56% female and 44% male. These included groups of 10 year-olds, 15 year-olds, low income, middle class, ethnic minority and retired people. Each of the groups was involved in a series of discussions and exercises which were designed to pursue the specific themes of the project. Each focus group session lasted between one and two hours. The sessions were audio-taped and transcribed. Within each session respondents were required to:
- fill out a general questionnaire.
- complete a ‘news exercise’ or be shown video material.
- participate in a ‘focused’ discussion.

D.1.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire asked for general biographical details and TV consumption patterns.

D.1.2. Exercise

Following the completion of the questionnaire respondents were asked to participate in an exercise. Five separate exercises were designed, and the 26 groups were split into four sets of five groups and one set of six groups: one set of groups for each exercise (see diagram below). Each set of five included one group of 15 year-olds, one low income, one middle class, one from an Afro-Caribbean, Asian or Chinese background, and one group of retired people. One group of 10 year-olds was also interviewed to explore issues in children’s television.

In each exercise, group members were either shown highlights from a television programme about the developing world (Comic Relief or Shanghai Vice) as the basis of discussion, or they were invited to construct their own television item using photographs from actual programmes. These photographs were taken from television news items, wildlife, holiday and adventure travel programmes. The images were selected to represent major themes in the specific programmes (established through content analysis) and also to highlight key issues which were pursued in later discussions. It was then observed how they interpreted the stories and what sources of information they used to construct their own items.

Each exercise was chosen to highlight different parts of the developing world, specifically: China, Africa, Latin America and Asia. One exercise was devoted to Comic Relief as this was identified as potentially a key source of popular imagery in this area. Comic Relief and Shanghai Vice were also chosen as the basis of discussion because of their innovative content, to see how this might affect audience responses.

The types of group and exercises carried out were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of groups and exercises carried out</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Africa</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ugandan tourist killings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5 Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class Ethnic Minority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D.1.3. Group discussion

Once the exercise had been completed each group was asked to participate in a focused discussion. There were a series of specific questions which were addressed to all of the groups. These included

- What does development mean? What comes to mind when people hear the words developing world or third world?
- Do the audience groups distinguish between disasters in the first world and in the developing world?
- What difference do presenters make?
- Do the audience groups remember any appeals? If so, which? Which formats and approaches compel attention and entertain?

D.2. Results

D.2.1. Profile of the Audience Groups

- The sample consisted of 165 individuals
- Ages ranged from 10 – 74.
- The sample was 56% female and 44% male.
- 87% of the sample watched at least one news bulletin daily.

D.2.2. Group Exercises

The results of the five exercises are as follows:

D.2.2.1. Images of Africa

Groups were given photos taken from a television news story about the killing of tourists in Uganda. The photographs used included a map of Uganda, a newscaster presenting the Uganda story (Edward Stourton), a picture of a safari homestead, a military-style meeting, as well as other images such as animals in the wild and Africans at a border-point in grass skirts. On the basis of these photos, each group wrote a television news story. The group then discussed the stories and were asked to assess the differences in the information they included, why it was included and the source of their own accounts.

Some of the stories in this area related to the issue in terms of tourism and wildlife. Some as in Example A, led with the theme of ‘conflict’ in Uganda and its effect on tourism. It is interesting how closely these accounts parallel many of the themes which have already been seen in the examination of television content. The issues of poaching/conservation are highlighted in examples A and C, while example B draws the same conceptual links as the news between the kidnapping, attempts at rescue and questions of safety.

EXAMPLE A

The African tourism industry has been badly effected by recent conflicts in Uganda. Recent figures released show that Africa is no longer considered a safe option and people are looking elsewhere for safari breaks. Wildlife is also suffering due to the fact that authorities are no longer able to afford to police the massive national parks as efficiently as they would like and poaching has significantly increased as a result. The government is planning on releasing funds for advertising in the vain attempt to bring back those tourists who are staying away. (Low Income, Bath)

EXAMPLE B

Reports are just coming in that a number of Western tourists have been kidnapped and killed in Uganda while on safari. It is thought that the attack took place at the camp where the travellers were staying. While we have no firm information as yet, it appears that the kidnapping may be the work of rebels in this area. The Ugandan authorities have made a statement saying that they will do everything in their power to rescue these people. What is clear is that questions are now being asked about the safety of travelling in this sensitive region. (Retired, London)

EXAMPLE C

As the politics of Uganda continue to add to the country’s problems people carry on as normal with their holidays and safaris. But this doesn’t pull the attention away from the poachers that are taking the tusks and skins and feet of animals that are becoming extinct such as elephants, crocodiles or gorillas. It is believed that a blind eye is turned as some members of the political parties’ pockets are lined. (Low income, Bath)

In other groups we can see the reproduction of key themes in the original Uganda news story, such as the death of western tourists and the accountability of tour operators. The importance of the wildlife theme is evident; and the impact of tourism on local populations is also referred to.

EXAMPLE D

Today the Prime Minister of Uganda called for a crackdown after two American tourists were killed. The huge rise in popularity of Africa for tourist destination has led to an increase in tour operators and have no regard for customer safety or the natural habitat. The extent of development of tourist accommodation is destroying national parks and forcing wildlife closer to human habitation. Attacks by animals are increasing.
and two tourists were killed last night. In an attempt to protect their parks, the Prime Ministers have agreed to collaborate with the environmental agencies for tourist developments. (Middle class, Glasgow)

EXAMPLE E

The government in Uganda is torn between promoting tourism and protecting nature species as a traditional way of life. Tourists are attracted to the country by its natural beauty and by the industry but developers are destroying natural habitats to build leisure facilities and accommodation. Government recommend additional revenue generated by tourism but pressure groups are concerned by disruption to tribes traditional home lands and the number of people moving away from traditional life to work in the tourist industry. (Middle class, Glasgow)

Analysis of the events, however, centres on the effects, especially the effects on wildlife conservation: on ‘poaching’ and the ‘ivory trade’, ‘elephants’, and ‘vegetation decreasing’, of which this group clearly had knowledge. There is no discussion of developing trends in global terrorism or the political dynamics underpinning such incidents which were explored on specialist news programmes such as Channel 4 News at the time. These issues are dealt with more fully in the group discussions, in the next section.

D.2.2.2. Images of the Caribbean

The groups were given photographs of the Dominican Republic, taken from a news item and a holiday programme. The photographs included images of holiday pursuits such as people relaxing by a pool, hotel complexes, restaurants, children playing and people indulging in water-sports. To these were added photographs of damage caused by the hurricane (flooded homes, collapsed bridges) to see how respondents might use these very different images of the region. The groups were asked to write either a news story or an item for a holiday programme based on the photographs. The groups then discussed the stories and were asked to assess the differences in the information they had included for the two types of programmes.

The news stories within this category centred on a number of issues, mostly to do with the effect on holidaymakers of the hurricane, and holiday companies warning people not to travel to this particular region.

EXAMPLE A

During the summer holidays disaster has struck many British tourists who have been stranded in the Dominican Republic because of a torrential downfall. There has been 330 inches of rain and wind speeds of up to 20 mph. We haven’t got the exact figures yet but we think 45 people have been killed. Many are still unaccounted for. We will bring you more details as we receive them (15 year-olds, London)

EXAMPLE B

Tourists are again being warned that any holidays booked to the Dominican Republic will probably have to be delayed if not completely cancelled. The devastation caused by storms has meant that holiday companies can offer no guarantees of safety to people planning to travel in this area. Until such times as the damage has been cleared up, companies are suggesting that tourists choose an alternative destination and they have assured those who have already booked holidays that they will be fully refunded. (Middle class, Glasgow)

EXAMPLE C

Latest reports from the Dominican Republic suggest that the havoc wrecked by the recent storms is affected the tourist industry. News that at least one tourist is still missing has meant that those there are attempting to leave the destination and holiday companies here are reporting a number of cancellations. For those concerned either about booked holidays or relatives, help-lines have been set up. We will give you the numbers at the end of this bulletin. (Retired, Glasgow)

EXAMPLE D

British tourists are being brought back from the Dominican Republic following horrific storms which have caused total devastation to the area. Companies are desperately trying to get hold of more aeroplanes in order to ferry people back home as quickly as possible. Known as a very desirable holiday destination for many the Dominican Republic authorities are attempting to reassure those who remain that the will be entirely safe. (Low Income, Bath)

The ability to reproduce both the style and content of news items with such accuracy is very striking. While the TV news reports all followed similar lines, those asked to write a holiday programme item did go into a little more detail on certain issues and used different types of holiday programme styles (those which they themselves watched) to produce a story.

EXAMPLE E

Holidays From Hell from Watchdog with Anne Robinson. This family booked their ideal holiday at the
Dominican Republic for 14 nights all inclusive at the hotel. They were tempted by the brochure which described amazing facilities including 4 star room service, fine dining, bar, pool games, a kids club and a crèche. The Caribbean weather was supposed to be glorious. On arrival they were shocked to discover that road leading to the resort had collapsed due to floods and torrential rain. They were forced to take shelter. This misfortune was not the end and was accomplished by the flooding of their newly acquired holiday home. When they contacted the hotel a spokesman said the hotel was not responsible for the change in the weather and would gladly offer them a complementary stay next year for all the family. The Smith’s reaction was ‘we want our money back because our nights have been ruined by this holiday’. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow)

One group discussed the problems for the Dominican Republic, stressing the damage caused to the country by the ‘monsoons’.

EXAMPLE F
The Dominican Republic has felt the full force of the monsoon. The infrastructure of the already impoverished country has been severely damaged with large areas of the Republic underwater. Rescue teams have already been dispatched being helped out by nearby police. At the moment the numbers killed have not been known however one British tourist is believed to be missing. Government authority of the Republic believe this will effect tourism. A government spokesman is advising tourists not to visit the area. The Dominican Republic has recently become a popular holiday resort and this natural disaster has followed on from recent allegations on food poisoning and inadequate toilet facilities. A government spokesman is advising tourists not to visit the area. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow)

Other exercises in this category engaged with the countries at a consumer level, focusing on what was on offer for the tourist. Others glossed over the ‘devastation of the floods’ to say that holiday makers were returning to the area.

EXAMPLE G
The Dominican Republic tourist board reports holiday-makers are returning to the storm hit country and once again enjoying the sun and water sports for what it was so famous. Pictures from last year show the devastation of the floods which caused loss of lives and the locals livelihoods. Tourists are feeling confident and enjoying the hospitality which the natives are famous for. (Middle class, Glasgow)

EXAMPLE H
Here we are at the Neonman Hotel in the Dominican Republic. This hotel offers luxurious rooms, meals and drinks fully exclusive. Also, there are plenty of activities for both children and adults, including a whole range of water sports like white water rafting and scuba diving. The hotel is only five minutes from this beautiful secluded beaches. There is entertainment offered most night, BBQs by experienced chefs is only a small example of the wonderful cuisine on offer. The best weather conditions are from July and January as this country is prone to rainy seasons, thunder storms and flooding is a way of life. The locals are friendly and polite and only too willing to assist tourists. For anyone who does not want to leave the hotel, there is plenty on offer including a large swimming pool, good food and exotic cocktails with a friendly service. (Retired, Glasgow)

These constructed accounts highlight very clearly two key and perhaps contradictory images of the developing world, which are reflections of actual television output. In one, the developing world is seen as a place where disaster is ‘a way of life’. In the other, it is a potentially luxurious and exotic resource for western visitors.

D.2.2.3. Images of Latin America/Asia
For this exercise each group was divided into two sub-groups of three people each. One of these reconstructed a natural history programme and the other a travel/adventure style programme. They were given appropriate photographs from television programming. The travel/adventure photographs were from Latin America, specifically from The Rough Guide to Bolivia. The photographs used included a map of Bolivia, landscapes, tourists shopping in markets and travelling, local people working in mines, local musical entertainment and night-life in La Paz and billboards showing Che Guevara. The photographs from natural history were taken from a programme on the Indian sub-continent. (Land of the Tiger). These included images of animals in their natural environment, local village scenes of people working and also images of humans interacting with both domestic and wild animals.

TRAVEL/ADVENTURE
Some groups used the images to make often critical points on economic disparities within developing countries. Example A, for instance, contrasts the city
which is ‘industrial’ and ‘built up with lots of bright lights’ with images of poor people.

EXAMPLE A
The two backpackers travelling through Latin America started off at Bolivia. They are doing research for the Rough Guide and they are going from Santa Cruise which is a big city travelling to the country. The city is industrial and very built up with lots of bright lights etc. This contrast in the city where you see images of poor people who are obviously locals judging by how they are dressed and their skin colour. Then you see images in the country which is quite barren, dry and desert like. There is images of soldiers etc. showing that behind modernisation and industrialisation of the big city there is actually quite a lot of civil unrest that normally tourists would not see or choose not to see. (Middle Class, London)

Adventure travel stories looked at not only the benefits of such travel but the costs to the country itself and local economies in particular.

EXAMPLE B
Bolivia, one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Would you like to travel there? If so, keep viewing as we have a report from the country itself. While it is not to some people’s tastes this country has a lot to give to the traveller. Beautiful scenery, excellent food, cheap accommodation. It is certainly an experience that should not be missed. But, a word of warning for the potential traveller. Be aware that this is a very poor country which is in need of much help. Abuses by western tourists, some of whom have suggested that to travel there is becoming more expensive, cannot be allowed to carry on. Local economies are becoming ever more dependent on money raised from tourists and it is essential that this not be destroyed by greedy tourists eager for bargains. It is clear that the success of tourism in this country is dependent on the respect with which travellers treat it and its people. (Retired, London)

EXAMPLE C
And next. If you want to be adventurous why not try a holiday in Bolivia. While you won’t get the luxury of ensuite bathrooms and pool-side services, you will get to experience a beautiful and exciting country with a rich and varied culture. Travelling is basic but comfortable as is most of the accommodation in this region. We should stress that this is not a holiday for the faint hearted, as Bolivia is a remarkably poor country in need of a lot of rejuvenation. Any traveller cannot fail to take notice of this fact. As with other countries Bolivia is beginning to see tourism as a beneficial way of helping local economies rebuild themselves. What they are striving to attract are discerning travellers who will appreciate the culture while not trying to exploit a way of life which has existed for centuries. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

Similarly, some comment on global marketing and the pervasion of western brand names in developing societies, noting, ‘even in this remote area you still have things like Coca Cola.’ Other groups could not engage with this area of programming at all. The 15 year-old group were unclear how to set their stories out and wanted to know what the programmes were like generally because they had never really viewed them. The stories they presented reflected this lack of knowledge.

EXAMPLE D
Jake got sacked from the mines because he had too much dynamite in him. So depressed he goes to the local bar and gets slaughtered and dresses up in his army clothes with his gun hidden in his coat. He gets on the bus. Two miles down the road he tries to hijack it but he runs out of petrol. So he steals a Mercedes and drives to the dock and sees a sign that says Vegas, he goes there. When he puts the news on he was on it. So he went for a pee behind a bush and the llamas came and ate him. He came back alive as a llama his wife gave birth to a llama. (15 year-olds, London)

EXAMPLE E
We were on this Island and we got rescued by some boats. We got picked up by the boats and we tried to get into a hotel for the night but there was no room so we had to sleep on the streets. There was a drought so some people were making tea and juice. A bus came and we hijacked the bus and lost. We had our shoes cleaned and went to a pub and watched the entertainment. (15 year-olds, London)

It seems that programming in this area draws a very distinct audience who relate to the ‘discerning traveller’ who ‘appreciates culture’. Amongst the groups who do not watch this type of programme (as in the 15 year-olds), it is interesting to see how readily their descriptions involve references to ‘drought’ and ‘getting slaughtered’. Though it must be said that these appear in the midst of an extraordinary jumble of images of what the world may look like.
Most respondents tended to take the same line, writing about the danger to natural habitats and animals from man. This theme was also discussed fully within the other groups when asked about wildlife programmes. Examples of this type of story were:

**EXAMPLE A**

_Reporter:_ Basically the biggest problem is the natural habitat. The elephants are large animals and humans are pushing them out further and further and they are actually going out into the mountains. Crocodiles are endangered species and they are still being used for ladies handbags and shoes etc. The gorillas are exactly the same scenario and that goes back to all the factors of man that do all the damage. When we talk about the ozone layer, why are there more droughts now? It all goes back to what man has done to the environment. All these things, the vegetation, elephants and gorillas are all affected by us. If we had left them alone we wouldn’t have that problem. (Low income, Bath)

**EXAMPLE B**

A number of different species of animals are now in danger of becoming extinct because of the destruction wrought by man. The removal of natural vegetation, forests, the effects of ozone depletion and the use of animals for food and luxury products have all meant that animals need to be properly protected. These species are an essential part of the earth’s eco-system. It up to us to ensure that they are looked after in their natural environments. (Retired, London)

Another way of interpreting the pictures was used by one group who all remembered watching a programme about tigers in India (_Land of the Tigers_). While none of them could remember the name of the programme, they all remembered that it had been about the impact of the tigers on villages. The local inhabitants were afraid of the tigers and some way had to be found to resolve the situation before the tigers were all killed.

**EXAMPLE C**

Now a short item on the plight of local villagers in rural India. In this area tigers are seen as being dangerous by the local population. They come into the villages at night looking for food and have been known to kill human beings. The local population, while attempting to protect themselves have started to capture and kill these endangered animals. Animal protection groups have been called in to see what can be done about the situation. While they are aware of the threat to humans posed by these animals, they are also very concerned to ensure that no more animals get destroyed. A plan has been decided on which involved high barriers being erected around the villages which will keep the animals out. Local interpreters have also been brought along to explain to the villagers that they cannot kill the tigers and why. Let’s hope it is successful. We’ll let you know how they get on in our next programme. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

Other groups also discussed this programme when asked whether they watched wildlife programmes. A number of respondents discussed _Land of the Tiger_ in particular, because it was seen as being ‘a really powerful way of showing how animals and humans affect one another’ (Ethnic minority, London) and also that ‘it made you want to watch to see what happened, you couldn’t wait for the next programme to come on’. (Retired, London).

Wildlife programmes were generally liked by the majority of the respondents. This cut across all of the age groups. Some in the groups stated that these were their favourite type of programme:

1st: I love them. Absolutely love them.
2nd: I could eat them.
3rd: I think the way they are done is excellent.
1st: It is just seeing how they live.
2nd: I think because we don’t see that type of thing. I just love it. (Middle class, Glasgow)

The reasons given for this were varied. For example, respondents said that they liked seeing animals in their natural habitats, and that these programmes, more than any other, showed the effects of environmental damage or the impact of the destruction of species:

You might see a programme dedicated to lions. They just say about their hunting and the fact that sometimes they can’t get things to eat. My colleague over there is right in what he is saying. I think humans are basically knocking everything down just for beef cattle and things like that. These animals are really suffering. I think all in all they are not really emphasising the fact because of the ozone layer or because of man. Now and again you do get programmes and they do say that if it wasn’t for us they would have a happier life. (Low income, Bath)

A number of respondents also stated that it was their love of animals which meant that they enjoyed this type of programme. There was a feeling within most of the groups that wildlife programmes were well made and were informative. There was also sense in which
respondents became involved emotionally with the animals, and concerned for their welfare. As such a number of people gave money regularly to animal charities (a few even stating that they would give money to animal charities before human ones).

Discussions also centred on the need to see animals in their natural environment because respondents had no other access to them. A number of respondents had visited zoos to see for themselves how animals lived, and ‘what they actually looked like in the flesh’ (Retired, London). It was interesting though that respondents did not comprehend certain aspects of animal life, particularly eating habits in this environment (even though it was completely acceptable on the television programmes):

1st: I went to New York and the second day we were there and we had a free afternoon and I said I wanted to go to the zoo in Brooklyn.

2nd: She went to Jersey and went to the zoo.

3rd: I couldn’t do that and I love animals.

1st: But they are both very wild life, they are not like zoos here. Jersey zoo is acres and acres and so is Brooklyn zoo. You’d go in and see the owls and you look at the owl’s ground and there is all wee yellow dead chicks. That is what they feed the owls on. Do you know what I did, I saw that. I can’t remember if it was Jersey zoo, I went on the way out and I said that there was something wrong with the chicks and they said that was how they fed the owls and that was how I knew. (Middle class, London)

Wildlife programmes were also seen as an important vehicle for ensuring that animals were being protected, particularly from humans:

We have to know how these animals are living, we have to be shown how they exist, how they have families and rules and habits, just like us. I think we need to see that so we can care what happens to them. If they stopped these programmes for all we know they could be killing everything in sight, and we wouldn’t know anything about it. When you do see them and then hear about people killing them for fur or tusks or whatever, then I think something can be done about it. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

Like the Cookery format, this type of programme was seen as offering a positive image of the developing world. Some respondents also stated that they would like to see more programmes such as Land of the Tiger which showed the interactions between animals and humans.

COMIC RELIEF

Groups were shown sections of the Comic Relief programme from 1999. They then discussed the material in relation to possible changes in attitudes or beliefs. We also asked specifically whether the act of donating gave the audience a stake in the programme i.e. were audience members more interested in the programme and the issues which it raised because they were involved or had given money. All of the groups were asked the same questions on Comic Relief and this section will examine the responses of those who viewed the Comic Relief video as well as those who did not.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO THE PROGRAMME

There were a number of different responses to viewing Comic Relief and to other programmes like it (i.e. charity appeals). Some of the respondents enjoyed the programme, particularly the younger groups. The respondents who actually watched it were mainly the 15 year-olds and a group of 26-8 year-olds. These groups had been involved in Comic Relief at some level – the children within the school context, and the 26-8 year-olds all had given money (via credit cards) on the night the show was on. Most of this age group had ceased to watch the programme itself (although continued to give money annually) because they felt that while they were growing up and moving on the programme format wasn’t. These respondents all watched Comic Relief’s debt campaign programmes and saw these as more relevant to them at this time.

The main reasons given for viewing were for comic entertainment and for watching people collecting money for ‘good causes’:

1st: Comic Relief has to appeal to 90 years olds and 9 year-olds. I think the format works because it is so much variety. They do Boyzone and was it last year or the year before they has The Spice Girls when they were really big. They seem to be able to attract the big names ...

2nd: I think it is quite good because you get all the countries and people from all over. You know of all the really big names coming in for charity and all the snippets of people doing their own charity thing.

3rd: I tend to watch it just for the comedy aspect.

1st: I always find it quite emotional actually. You get caught up in the atmosphere. (Middle class, Glasgow)
**Moderator:** Do you like Comic Relief?

1st: Yes.

2nd: I like watching the people raise money.

**Moderator:** What do you remember most about Comic Relief, after you have watched it?

3rd: How people have fun when they try and help other people. They raise money by having as much fun as they can. They don’t make it into something that is boring and that the can’t do.

2nd: The bit when they go to foreign countries sticks in your mind sometimes like if it’s Billy Connelly and goes off and talks to people. That sticks in my mind because I am interested in what goes on there.

3rd: In school they have different events and they come and collect money and you get a ‘dress as you like’ day. (15 year-olds, Glasgow)

1st: It’s a good programme because everyone can get involved in it. I mean, you have to appeal to a great deal of people to be able to get as much money as they do. I think they do very well.

2nd: Yeah, you find out a lot of things if you watch it. I know there was a lot about Rwanda this year because I caught a glimpse of it. It was really quite harrowing watching that. But then, where else would you see stuff like that, only a programme like Comic Relief would be able to do it, I think. (Low income, London)

The formats and approaches which compelled attention and entertained people differed between age groups. Comic Relief was seen as a programme for young people by many respondents.

1st: I don’t watch it but the kids do. They have all this stuff they do at school and they get involved with it all.

**Moderator:** Do you think that’s good, that they get involved

1st: I suppose so, it can’t do any harm can it. They are raising money for good causes after all. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

1st: It’s a young person’s programme, I wouldn’t have a clue who any of the people are on it, but my kids watch for all their favourite pop stars and comedians and such. (Low income, Bath)

1st: The kids go for it, don’t they. They see all their favourite personalities and get to stay up late. I don’t think there’s much there for anyone over thirty to be honest… (Middle class, London)

Those who did not watch stated that they did not like the format, it was ‘too long’, and more specifically, they did not accept the programmes way of attempting to make them give money:

1st: here is so much money floating around, maybe they could help in some ways.

2nd: It obviously works because they gain, whatever it is twenty million, I don’t know how much they get. They wouldn’t get that if they didn’t do that programme. I don’t watch it but people think been there and done that and maybe if they were to change the format they might be able to raise awareness and...

3rd: One thing that made me a little bit annoyed was when people were phoning up and said they will donate such and such amount, it was big companies and they were dishing money out. Do you know what I mean?

1st: It puts them in a good light though doesn’t it. You never see a poor person pushing themselves out to a grade A do because they haven’t got the money to do it. Elton John, he earned millions and he can now sit back and cry and say I am a poof and come out with all these things and people accept it because he is rich. He can put himself on all these charity boards and look good. (Low income, Bath)

2nd: I like the funny bits but I always switch it off if a bit about poor children comes on

**Moderator:** Why’s that?

2nd: It just makes me feel sad and a bit guilty. I can’t bear to see that suffering going on

3rd: I don’t watch it all, its for kids really, isn’t it? I mean, I would give money to people for it, but that type of programme doesn’t really appeal to me

1st: The pictures are there just the same.

2nd: That is what it is for. It is to make you feel that way, guilty.

1st: To make you give money, I do agree that they do need money. They are desperate.

3rd: It makes money don’t get me wrong. If they want to make money from Comic Relief or make money with whatever they decided to do. They do it and it works. You can’t deny that. It is not my cup of tea. (Low income, Glasgow)
It should be said that this line of argument was not simply to do with the programme itself but more generally to do with the nature of charity. A number of respondents said that they disliked being made to feel guilty (which they believed this type of programme did). Others claimed that they could not watch because it made them feel too sad:

**Moderator:** Do you watch the bits where they go into the different countries?

1st: No.

2nd: No. I would switch it off.

**Moderator:** Why is that?

1st: Sometimes it makes you sad.

2nd: The families are all split up and it is awful (15 year-olds, London)

1st: I can’t watch anything like that because it makes me upset. I feel really bad about not being able to do anything about it and then get angry knowing that it really going on.

2nd: So you just switch it off then and pretend it is not happening

1st: Yes, I’m afraid so, its easier not to know anything about it really. That might sound really cruel but its true of a lot of people I would think. (Retired, London)

Some respondents did not like Comic Relief, most notably because they felt that they did not see the results of the fund-raising:

**Moderator:** What about television programmes that raise money like Comic Relief, does anybody watch Comic Relief when it is on?

1st: It is a gimmick.

2nd: You don’t see any results. You see big sums of money up on the screen that they have raised but not where it all goes to?

3rd: They get all of these millions of pounds in one year and before you blink they are looking to double that the next year but where has the money gone? It has got swallowed up and you don’t see anything constructive.

4th: It has probably spread between so many countries.

2nd: There is so much going to be spent on administration. Your Mary gave £20 or something, you know that is going on administration.

3rd: A lot of people say your donation is 98% to the people and only 2% is for admin and things like that. I have heard that said, I don’t know where or when but that has been said for the donations. (Low income, Glasgow)

Another criticism of the programme was that the choreographed images detracted from their engagement with it, and that on occasion it was too ‘scripted’:

**Moderator:** Is there anything that would make you watch it?

1st: Maybe more entertainment in it.

**Moderator:** What kind of entertainment?

1st: Maybe comedy sketches and stuff. More of them.

2nd: I think it is false.

3rd: That is what I was going to say.

2nd: Very false.

**Moderator:** In what way false?

3rd: Using music and songs like that and the way he is talking (Paul Bradley). It is not him. It is not real. It is all scripted. (Low income, Glasgow)

Another element which ran through discussions was the idea that problems in Britain needed to be dealt with first before other countries. All of the respondents (except the 10 and 15 year-olds) claimed to give money to at least one charity, some as many as four or five. Which charity benefited from their money depended on a number of factors such as: which came to their workplace, personal experience of a particular illness or disability, concern for environmental issues, love of animals etc.

There was also some discussion about the nature of using comedy to highlight such serious issues. For some respondents this was seen as being tasteless.

A number of respondents had watched Comic Relief at one time or another but now found the format ‘tired’. While the messages concerning how the money was used were seen as worthwhile there was a clear sense in which familiarity bred – certainly not a lack of concern – but an attitude that there were too many problems in the world and what impact could one particular small contribution make:

1st: I don’t feel as though me giving a few pounds makes that much difference in the whole scheme of things to be honest, not when you see how many different causes there are that you could contribute to. It’s like you go ‘what’s the point?’, because you know you don’t have very much money yourself and you think, well, what I can afford to give can’t possibly help anybody so I won’t bother. (Low income, Glasgow)
1st: There’s only so much you can do with this type of work. Here are so many charities about that is isn’t too surprising to find that people get fed up being asked to give money constantly. You see it everywhere. Where Comic Relief was once novel, it now seems very dated in the way it does things – just because it has been doing the programme for so long. There needs to be a fresher approach to doing these things.

2nd: Yes, I agree with that. They should be doing more educational and informative programmes now; not the same old thing every year. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

We might note that although some of the older people may see the programme as ‘the same every year’, this is obviously not true for the younger viewers, who are coming to it afresh. Its role with these viewers is probably crucial given their lack of response to other programme formats.

**IMPORTANCE OF PRESENTERS**

Presenters were seen as an important element of the Comic Relief programme. Some were seen as being successful in the role while others seemed less credible in the role. What was clear from the groups was that the most successful presenters were those who were seen as being ‘credible’, who were perceived as taking the causes they were highlighting seriously. Quite frequently Paul Bradley and his reports from Rwanda were mentioned as being moving and emotional.

1st: That boy, the one from Eastenders, he was good. You could really tell that he was completely overcome with what he was seeing there. He just looked so upset the whole time.

**Moderator:** Did you watch those sections on Comic Relief?

1st: No, I saw him on Richard and Judy (Retired, London)

1st: It was Nigel from Eastenders doing it and it was really uncomfortable. He was speaking to people and saying the family was murdered in front of him and it was quite wrong and it was really quite uncomfortable to watch. They were showing it in the middle of all this funny stuff so it was quite odd.

2nd: I thought it was quite effective. Probably that was to get you into it. It just seems a bit of a contrast. You were sitting one minute talking about what was happening in Eastenders and then Rwanda and then ...

3rd: It is an awful thing that was happening and it does actually make you get up and go to the phone. (Middle class, Glasgow)

At the same time some of respondents found the same piece of film ineffective because they did not believe in the sincerity of Paul Bradley. They believed that he was ‘putting the emotion on’ because he was an actor, and this meant that they could not engage with what he was saying. It might be simply that the sharp contrast in the programme between the comedy and strong emotion was simply too much to take and was seen by some as being ‘constructed’ or ‘artificial’. The intensity of Paul Bradley’s experience and what he was describing perhaps needed more of an introduction. It is interesting that the more relaxed and apparently ‘open’ format of Richard and Judy was seen as showing that he was really ‘overcome’.

Some presenters were criticised as being ‘annoying’ or ‘worthy’. We found great variations in responses to the same presenters. It was commented in one of the middle-class groups that Tony Robinson was ‘over-exposed’. Yet he was apparently very popular with younger viewers. As one 10 year-old from Glasgow commented ‘he has that kind of TV personality, he’s funny and quite nice and kind’.

Lenny Henry was most commonly cited as the main ‘face’ of Comic Relief. Attitudes to him as a presenter varied between the groups:

1st: Is Lenny Henry still presenting it?

2nd: I think he is still on the go.

1st: Because I haven’t watched it for a couple of year so ... I think the last time I saw it was when I was in Scotland. I think he is quite a good character because he is quite fun loving and ... I think he has quite a lot of sympathy towards the under developed world as well.

**Moderator:** So you think he has got a genuine commitment?

1st: Yes, that comes across. Because he has been doing it for so long he just gets more and more involved and each year he has got this commitment for doing it and you associate Lenny Henry with Comic Relief now. (Middle class, London)

While a number of the groups commented on how well Lenny Henry worked for the programme, others felt that his presence did not help the programme. Interestingly, it was the older respondents who suggested this was the case. The younger respondents identified
with Lenny Henry and saw him as being vital to the programme and always clearly committed:

1st: Lenny Henry has just been doing it for years and it is overkill. I don’t think he can look sincere over so many issues so often and then just switch over and do comedy. Nobody is that cold … nobody can be that genuine about it and then just switch from one to the other. That takes away from it.

2nd: There is not too many new personalities getting involved in it, you do tend to see the same ones. In 5 or 6 years time you will just see French and Saunders doing it and Lenny Henry because I think a lot of new ones are going through. So people our age will still be watching it but in 5 or 6 years time it will still be people our age watching it. It is just going to lose its appeal.

3rd: If he believes in it passionately and there is room to dedicate so much of his life to that then who is to say no he is too old and get out of it?

2nd: I am not saying no he is too old. I am saying it should be a bit more contemporary otherwise it is going to lose all its effect. (Middle class, Glasgow)

Central to all discussions about particular presenters was the issue of their commitment. Certain people were not seen to be appropriate for this type of programme.

REPETITION

For some respondents the format of the programme was seen as being repetitious both in relation to the content and the yearly format.

1st: It is because it is crap and they never get anybody new in. Comic Relief is going to be exactly the same. Children in Need was starting to die but at least they are bringing people from current TV programmes. A few years back they brought people in from London’s Burning which at the time was one of the main programmes and people from The Bill and that sort of thing, it is the only way to keep it going. Comic Relief is still the same ones.

2nd: I don’t know how but I just think these things are all dated. It is the same thing each year. I know you have to do something to raise money etc. but after a while people switch off, well I certainly switch off. (Middle class, Glasgow)

1st: It’s too much of the same thing, it just keeps repeating itself all the time. If it was on for a shorter space of time then they wouldn’t have to do that would they. I can’t watch things like that at all.

2nd: But that’s probably because it’s for kids and they must like that kind of thing, I mean, they want you to give money so they have to keep telling you the same thing in order to get you to give it.

1st: OK, that might be the case but I don’t like things being told to me time and time again. I don’t believe there’s a need for it at all, and I think if I was going to give money I would give money with or without a, whatever it is, ten hour TV programme. (Retired, London)

Moderator: What do you think of it?

1st: I think out of all the things like that, that would be the one I would donate money to rather than Pugsy Bear or anything. I think they broaden peoples view of things, maybe you wouldn’t watch a programme about Africa you probably would because it is on Comic Relief.

2nd: They play the same clips over and over again and you get bored seeing the.

3rd: The African clips

2nd: Yes. They use the same ones each year as well. I have noticed that.

Moderator: And you find that dull?

2nd: Yes. I don’t want to see the same clip every ten minutes.

3rd: If they followed the story in more depth or something else. (Middle class, London)

Some of the respondents preferred other formats such as the Comic Relief debt programmes which they saw as more informative, and which had made them attempt to give money:

1st: I saw the programme on the Debt campaign and thought it was very good. It went through all the arguments and for once you understood what it as all about and how it would actually affect people here. They should be making more programmes like that instead of having awful celebrities screaming a people to hand over cash for something they don’t have the first clue about. (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London)

1st: Yes, phoning up … What was the one, remember we watched it and it was on quite late at night. I am sure it was a Comic Relief, you didn’t pledge any money, you had to phone up and …

2nd: It was the world debt.

1st: That was it. It was the thing on world debt. When we watched it, it was really like oh god yes, you just phone up and give your name and that was to add your name to the petition to cancel world debt. We tried for about three
quarters of an hour to phone and there was no way you could get through.

2nd: The lines were just chock a block.

1st: Yes. The fact that you were just doing something there and then was really ... even although we didn’t actually do anything.

2nd: It was really well done as well. They had some guy saying all the negatives and there was quite a straight-laced guy saying that is not the case. The criticism everyone had at home would be heard by coming straight back. It was just so well done. (Middle class, Glasgow)

In relation to charity itself there was a wide set of views expressed. It became clear that a number of respondents resented the way they felt they were being pressurised into giving money through ‘guilt’:

**Moderator:** Has anybody else ever given money to Comic Relief, like made a pledge or used credit cards?

1st: I used to do a thing with Textile World and the garages, that was about it.

2nd: Just folk at work and that kind of thing.

**Moderator:** More like people in the streets and that kind of thing?

1st: Yes, that is the only thing I would give to, I wouldn’t send money away.

**Moderator:** Why not?

1st: Because it annoys me when they keep asking you, they keep saying you have to do this, you have to help people (Working class, Glasgow)

**Moderator:** In relation to Comic Relief and the fact that they are actually collecting money and all the rest of it, has anybody actually got involved or watched any other programmes about appeals for money?

1st: No, they all seem the same to me. They are all dying, give me some money. (15 year-olds, London)

1st: It wouldn’t make me give money anyway. If you are going to give money you will give it anyway, you don’t have to watch the programme. (Working class, Glasgow)

What emerges from these discussions is that the giving of money does not necessarily involve or increase commitment. It was a ritual for some while others simply turned away. It was, however, clear that understandings of the issues was linked to commitment of views. This was seen in the positive response to the debt programme, that ‘it was just so well done’ (Middle-class, Glasgow) and ‘for once you understood what it was all about’ (Ethnic minority, Afro-Caribbean, London). It is important to note that without understanding, the charitable events can become ritualised and actually generate negative responses, as was indicated by the comments of these schoolchildren:

**Moderator:** Have you as a school or as an individual ever done anything for Comic Relief?

1st: No, they don’t do it because when Comic Relief is on its our Lent Campaign

**Moderator:** What is that about, the lent campaign?

1st: We have got sponsored walks coming up.

2nd: It is just several people do sponsored walk and the money we raise doesn’t come to the school but it should do.

1st: Yes. The school up there, they have this whole activity week and they go to these parks and holidays and everything.

**Moderator:** Are they raising money for it though?

1st: Yes. We don’t even get to go.

2nd: We get a little walk.

**Moderator:** So you all have to do sponsored walks?

3rd: Yes, we have to raise £10.

2nd: If you don’t raise £10 they have a go at you and start shouting.

1st: If you don’t raise £10 or don’t do it they still expect you to pay.

2nd: And you can’t keep asking your grandparents

3rd: It is every bloody month. (15 year-olds, London)

This would suggest that to force children into such activities, without explaining their wider meaning and purpose, is counter-productive. Instead of generating a positive response to others in need, the reaction is that ‘you get shouted at’ and that it is ‘every bloody month’!

**IMAGES OF CHINA**

This exercise involved showing each group three separate pieces of video which offered very different images. The first was a news item showing the student demonstrations following the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by Nato during their 1999 offensive. The second extract was from Channel 4’s Shanghai Vice and shows a group of Chinese people who go ballroom dancing and sing western songs. The third
extract was also from _Shanghai Vice_ and showed the impact of an earthquake on a local community. Each video extract was followed by a group discussion. There were six groups involved in this exercise. The ethnic minority group was Chinese and we also showed the material to the group of 10 year-olds.

Following each section of film shown, respondents were asked questions. Few people within the groups doing this exercise had actually seen the programmes (although a small number of members of other groups had).

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES**

The 15 year-old group had no interest in the programmes and all claimed that they would not watch this type of programme on television. Interestingly, the ten year-olds were very interested in the section on drugs. They also saw China as a rich country because that was where their toys came from. But, overall the groups of young people had little comprehension of China at any level. Having been shown the film report on students rioting they could not give any valid or clear explanations as to why it was happening.

_Moderator:_ Does anybody remember that piece of film from the TV news?

1st: No.

_Moderator:_ What do you think they are doing? What are they protesting about?

2nd: Rights.

_Moderator:_ Where do you think that is taking place?

3rd: China.

2nd: They were wanting the British Emperor to get rid of it because they were burning the flag.

_Moderator:_ They were burning the flag, right. What type of people do you think that are?

1st: Just people.

_Moderator:_ Do you think you would be concerned if you lived in that country with something like that going on?

3rd: Yes.

_Moderator:_ Why?

4th: Violence. (15 year-olds, Glasgow)

In general this group had some quite general ideas about what they thought China itself might be like. Although participants could offer descriptions, their understanding of the country was limited. It was clear though that the ideas and images they offered had originated from the media:

_Moderator:_ What do you think when you think of China—what people in China are like or what’s China like?

1st: Crowded.

2nd: Not too many cars, they go about on wee bike things.

3rd: Modern. Big crowded cities.

4th: No freedom of speech. There is rioting and doesn’t seem as if they are listening. The people don’t seem to be listened to at all.

2nd: You are controlled a lot by the government.

_Moderator:_ Those kind of images, where do you think you would get them from?

4th: News.

3rd: And films. (15 year-olds, Glasgow)

1st: When I think of China I think of Tiannamen square, of Hong Kong being handed back, of old age communism I suppose.

2nd: And the Killing Rooms

3rd: What’s that?

2nd: There was a programme on about all these homes where they keep all the little girl babies that nobody wants. It was totally horrific the conditions these children were being kept in, in that country. It was because they were all only allowed one child and everyone wanted that child to be a boy. So, they just dumped them if they were girls and they ended up in these awful homes.

_Moderator:_ Do you think that is common in China?

2nd: I’m not really sure, it’s just that I saw that programme and it was very disturbing. I know you do see lots of things about China, like it being industrial and modern and that, but I always think of those children, I can’t help it.

_Moderator:_ What about anyone else?

3rd: Its like everything else, you only see what the news tells you so we will all remember the rioting or the student demonstrations, or the children in homes. But you don’t have real idea of what its really like. It’s like Russia, so big, how could they possibly tell you all that is going on there. (Middle class, London)

1st: We would remember hearing about Communism and poverty from years ago, but its not the same now. I
think of China as being quite an industrialised place with a huge workforce.

2nd: Is that not Japan?

1st: No, I don’t think so. Look at half the things we still buy, they all say made in China on them. I mean they could potentially be one of the most powerful forces in the world, the West is afraid of them now.

Moderator: What makes you think that?

1st: I was watching one of those, it wasn’t the World at War, but one of those long history of the twentieth century programmes and it was talking about the growing power of China. I can’t remember what channel it was on but it was very good. It looked at all these countries in relation to each other and how the world order was changing.

3rd: Yeah, I suppose you must be right. You see loads of Chinese people here now, here to get educated and they’re all doing medicine and law and the like. That country must have money to be able to send those kids all the way here. (Retired, London)

There were differences between those respondents who saw China as a ‘poor’ country and those who viewed it as being highly industrial. What was common though was that none of the respondents really ever mentioned China as a developing world country (in the same way they clearly did with Africa). Within these groups there was no substantial knowledge about the political and cultural history of China, apart from references to communism. The respondents found it easier to discuss China in relation to fictional programmes or films (rather than factual news or documentaries which they stated there were not many of). As such, references particularly to (unnamed) war films or films such as The Last Emperor were made to discuss what they thought China may have been (or may still be) like.

It was only the Chinese group who differed in their opinions on this area and who highlighted the fact that many of the images shown of China were perhaps dated. They did not think viewing British media images was conducive to understanding. This view was perhaps supported by the fact that none of the other respondents in this section could discuss China, its problems or potential solutions in the same way they could about other countries:

1st: Having come from China, in China we saw some propaganda and the other side. Here it is all the other side. Join them together and we will understand what is really happening. (Ethnic minority, Chinese, Glasgow)

While in China they were being offered mainly positive images of life, here it was felt that the media coverage centred on disasters and political unrest with no historical context. They did, however, have a very positive response to Shanghai Vice.

THE INFLUENCE OF SHANGHAI VICE ON IDEAS ABOUT CHINA

The Chinese group believed that Shanghai Vice was a well made programme which was good even though it had chosen to show selective images of Chinese life. They stated that the people involved were at least ‘normal’ everyday people, something which you did not see in other types of programming. The remainder of the groups had a varied response to the programme. As has already been stated the 15 year-olds showed no interest in the programme’s content, apart from a section showing the consequences of an earthquake on a village. Their interest in this stemmed from a general liking of ‘natural disaster’ programmes which they stated they commonly watched.

Other groups claimed to have liked the format and were interested or amused at some of the clips they viewed For instance, the retired group related to a section of the film which showed a group of middle-aged Chinese people singing western songs:

1st: Oh yes, we know all those songs, we used to sing all the time before there was TV and that. I used to love that song Mona Lisa

2nd: Oh don’t start singing now, please...

1st: Very funny, but really, I didn’t realise they weren’t allowed to sing western songs though, that’s quite sad really.

2nd: Well they wouldn’t be would they, I mean they were under communist rule then and everything from America or here or wherever was seen as bad, like Russia. It’s amazing though that they still got hold of all the words and kept on singing.

3rd: But we did that as well. That’s just a human thing. In times of strife people always pulled together like that. They still do all over the world, that will never change.

Moderator: Having seen these sections of the programme if you saw something like that advertised would you sit down and watch it?

1st: I probably would I think. There was a lot to do with history, but it was all about normal people, not politicians or diplomats or whatever. They were just people like us, ordinary people just trying to get by.
2nd: It shows you a different picture from the one we are used to... That programme you showed us proves it, those people were just like us, ordinary working people. (Retired, Glasgow)

This does indicate that this type of programme, with its focus on ‘everyday life’, can surprise and inform people. As one commented, ‘it shows you a different picture from the one we are used to’, and that Chinese people are ‘just like us’ (Retired, London).

D.2.3. Group Discussions

D.2.3.1. Introduction

The developing world was perceived very negatively in almost all of the groups. Most of the respondents used words like ‘poverty’, ‘famine’, ‘drought’, ‘wars’ and ‘disasters’ in relation to the third world and began initially to speak about Africa.

Most people said that their impressions came from the media (though school children said libraries and school were more relevant to them). A small number of people had been in developing world countries either on holiday, to live or work for extended periods of time. There were differences in the attitudes of those who had experienced different cultures first hand. Those who had been on holiday (independent holidays as opposed to a package holiday) had a desire to ‘experience’ different cultures and had watched relevant programmes and read about the countries they were planning to visit.

Respondents were less clear how to define ‘developing world’. On a number of occasions it had to be stated which countries were deemed to be part of the ‘developing world’. Those respondents with an active interest in international development (most notably a group of 26-30 year-olds and a group of active trade union members) were people who joined organisations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace. These were the only groups who spontaneously discussed issues about world economies, debt, and both international and environmental politics. When asked where they would get information on development, all of the 15 year-olds said the library or the Internet. Only a small number stated that they would intentionally watch a television news bulletin or documentary to gain information and very few claimed to be interested in development issues.

Respondents said that television coverage enhanced notions which they held about certain problems being ‘too far away’ to be concerned about. This was reflected in a number of areas from natural disasters to wars. Television in general was not seen as offering enough insights into the outside world. While described as a ‘window on the world’ there was agreement within most of the groups that in-depth contextualisation of situations did not really exist. In general television was seen as being dominated by certain programme types – most commonly soap-operas, sport and game shows. To some extent this coloured respondents attitudes to television viewing. It was not commonly seen as performing well as a vehicle for information or education (at least in main-stream programming). Respondents on the whole claimed that television was not helping them to understand complex issues. While it may present certain information on ‘what was going on at the minute’ it did not offer fuller explanations of why certain events had taken place. The vast majority of respondents stated that they would go to a newspaper first if they wanted to understand a particular issue more fully. There was general consensus that television could offer better programmes for audiences if it tried.

Most respondents watched at least one television news bulletin a day. Television news was seen as a major source of information on certain aspects of the developing world – most notably on wars, famines, droughts, political unrest or natural disasters. It was generally agreed that in relation to the developing world, news was predominantly ‘negative’, highlighting problems and tragedies. The early evening bulletins on BBC1 or ITN were seen as being too short and treating the viewer as though they had some background knowledge of an issue. On the whole it was agreed that if people wanted full explanations of any given issue from the news they had to watch Channel 4 News or BBC2’s Newsnight. A number of respondents referred to the usefulness of BBC1’s Newsround as a way of getting simple background information on issues. This programme was seen as offering the viewer an explanation that did not assume background knowledge of an issue. The ‘5 points’ bullet system of Channel Five News was also commented on favourably.

The majority of respondents believed that documentaries could be both informative and interesting but there was not enough of these programmes. Dislike of documentaries centred on how ‘dry’ or ‘boring’ their presentation could be, and discussion centred on how formats could be altered to make programmes more watchable. Some suggestions were offered such as mixing political situations with the reality of that situation for ‘normal’ people. Voice-overs on programmes were seen as ‘getting in the way’. There was interest in allowing local people to speak and in featuring their ‘normal lives’. But documentaries were also criticised in the same way as news for being too
selective (in relation to the issues they covered and explanations given) and for assuming that people had prior knowledge of events or their history. They were also criticised for not making connections to help viewers engage with other nation’s problems. It was frequently said that programmes were too far removed from everyday realities to be engaging. But if the viewer was offered ‘a version of themselves’, people with the same problems, hopes or fears as themselves, they would watch.

It was also clear that documentaries were a format that respondents viewed differently from other programmes. Whereas people knew that you saw the news at 6pm every day or Eastenders on particular days, documentaries were something ‘you just happened upon’ while channel hopping. This may also reflect the fact that major documentary strands have now lost their regular prime time slots. A few people mentioned that a programme such as *Shanghai Vice* had been ‘happened upon’ half-way through in this way, and that they were annoyed they had not known it was on. Other programmes of this type were seen to be on too late for a number of respondents. And if they were better advertised then they would be more inclined to watch.

D.2.3.2. Images of the Third World/Developing World

In the initial stages of the discussion, group members were asked ‘What comes to mind when you hear the words ‘developing world’ or ‘third world?’’. Their replies focused largely on poverty, natural disasters and war with a strong emphasis on the problems of Africa. A member of a retired group described her experience of watching television:

> Well every time you turn on the TV or pick up a paper there’s another [war] starting or there’s more poverty or destruction. It is all too much. (Retired, London).

And as two 15 year-olds commented:

> They wouldn’t focus on something good that has happened. They would only ever tell you about something terrible that has happened. (15 year-olds, London)

Other negative views expressed included familiar images of corrupt governments and the opinion that nothing ever changes in such countries:

> The trouble is the government in these countries change like we change our underwear and they go off with the money, send their kids to private schools and have their private houses in London, in Bow Street and places like that and they live a life like us first world country people... What we are doing is giving them false hope because their land is never going to change... We are giving them clothes and sending books and money but what are they doing with it? They are not doing anything with it so we are creating a false environment for them. (Low income, Bath).

In some groups there was criticism of what was seen as the constant flow of negative images from television. One group member used her experience as a voluntary worker with Oxfam to develop her own critique:

> I do some voluntary work for Oxfam so I hear a lot about things from there. I mean, you wouldn’t believe half of what is going, really positive things I mean, that you wouldn’t hear about anywhere else. I watch the news sometimes and think, oh yeah, here we go again, why don’t you tell us about the people who are trying to change things and the huge advances that are being made. But no, I mean I saw on the news a while back that they’d found what might be a cure for some cancer, and it was done in, oh I can’t remember now, one of the Latin American countries, Brazil I think. Anyway it was a huge breakthrough and it was reported but if that had’ve happened in America we’d never have heard the end of it. As it was I just saw it on once. That’s not good, we have to be told that these people are more than just poor starving peasants because they’re not. They’re just victims of hideous circumstances I think and there is a lot of skill and ability just waiting to be tapped if it were allowed to happen. (Low income, Glasgow).

The ethnic minority groups also pointed to the absence of positive stories from the developing world. As one group member noted:

> I think that certain countries get totally noticed [by] America and Britain ... India has got the biggest building history in the world and it still doesn’t get noticed (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow).

The ethnic Chinese people who we interviewed believed that the British media focused on out of date images of China (including old and ‘wizened’ Chinese faces). They pointed out that there are now large numbers of young people in China with high incomes and who have the same tastes and aspirations as middle class westerners. Interestingly, another group in our sample who shared this view of China as a fast developing, wealthy country was the 10 year-olds. They believed this because China was where their toys came from.

Another criticism was that the media’s focus on disasters in the developing world led to a constant flow of images in which one catastrophe followed another, but without any sense of what had happened before or
after each one. There was a desire to have stories followed up as is shown in this exchange between two group members:

1st: I think Bob Geldoff made quite an impact. I think that he saw that they had good land to grow on and they had water and things like that. I don’t know how long it lasted.

2nd: We never hear. We don’t know. (Low income, Glasgow).

Mass media were the key source of information for most respondents but some also used information drawn from schooling or holiday experiences. A small number of people had lived in developing countries or been there for long periods of time because of their profession, for example serving in the British Army. In one case we found that the negative perceptions of a former serviceman led him to agree with negative media images. But more commonly we found that direct experience of the developing world led to sharp criticisms of media representations. For example, a woman with extensive experience of India commented on the ‘huge’ generalisations which are made in the media:

It is such a huge country, it changes from region to region and city to city and because of that it is difficult to compare what you see on television with what the country is like. It is so diverse and all the states are managed differently. I don’t think you really get the impression of that when people talk about it on TV certainly, unless it is a documentary about a specific region ... Huge generalisations are always made about religion and things like that. (Middle class, London).

A group of Asians described their responses to media coverage of the recent coup in Pakistan. One had actually phoned his father in order to get an alternative view:

1st: I was watching the news at 5 o’clock, 5.30, 6.30, 7, to see what was happening. Because I get the ethnic minority newspapers it was so weird comparing that to what the newspapers here say, like this is a coup and it is terrible and a democratic process has been violated and this that and the next thing. The newspapers were saying, but the people want that.

2nd: I couldn’t understand it, I actually phoned my dad and said what is happening?

1st: As soon as you hear the term coup you think blood shed and violence. The following day you still see the guy ... There was no violence. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow).

But it appeared that for many in the groups, the constant flow of negative images had a strong influence on the development of some beliefs. For example:

The trouble is African states are at war constantly, they are never not. It is the only place in the world that has never stopped warring with each other' (Low income, Bath).

It was also clear that children’s attitudes had been influenced very strongly as for example in this exchange on why it would not be worth having travel programmes about India:

Moderator: Do you think there are many travel programmes on countries like Asia and India?

1st: Not on India.

2nd: No-one goes there so why do they want to.

3rd: It is not a popular tourist attraction because in India they have always got problems.

2nd: It would be a holiday nightmare if someone went to India. The houses are full of bugs.

Moderator: So it doesn’t sound appealing to go there?

2nd: The swimming pools are full of cockroaches and stuff.

3rd: There is always terrorists over there anyway. (15 year-olds, London)

The extraordinary mixture of ideas which children gather about development is conveyed in this exchange between 15 year-olds in London, who are discussing the issue of third world debt:

Moderator: Does anybody know anything about or seen anything on TV about the debt campaign?

1st: The what?

2nd: Yes.

Moderator: Removal of third world debt.

1st: No.

3rd: Is it 50p a month and you can help them?

2nd: We pay them and they don’t pay us back.

4th: You get to help a child and all that stuff.

5th: Pay 50p a child.

2nd: Do they owe us?

6th: They owe us twice the amount.

2nd: We will never get it back.
1st: They haven’t even got an economy.

**Moderator:** Certain people are suggesting that all of that debt in all of these countries should just be abolished.

1st: You have got to help them out I suppose.

2nd: It is millions and millions.

3rd: We don’t really need it...

2nd: I saw famous people talking about it.

**Moderator:** Like who?

2nd: I don’t know. Some campaign and they were just talking about it.

5th: You get things in the door asking to give to the government. (15 year-olds, London).

The problem is that without factual knowledge or explanation children put together ways of understanding from other resources. These could include overheard commentaries from adults or peer groups or imagery drawn from films, television or computer games. Some of this is likely to be false or even racist. In the following conversation a child explains his own theory of what should happen in the debt crisis. He suggests that we [the British] should take half of the land from the poor countries in exchange for the debt, because “half” of the people from these countries are already in Britain. The imagery probably owes more to a computer game such as Command and Conquer than to any real analysis of the developing world.

1st: Half of them are already over here anyway so...maybe if we didn’t take half the money we could say that is half our land.

**Moderator:** That is half our land?

1st: Yes, we could take half the land and...

**Moderator:** Surely then if we do get rid of the debt ten years down the line the economy... do you think that is a good thing?

1st: No, because then they could overpower us.

2nd: Yes.

3rd: Who are we talking about as in us?

1st: Britain against them.

3rd: Who is them?

1st: The third world. If we let them off they will get bigger and more power.

3rd: Are we talking about all the poor countries here? (15 year-olds, London).

**D.2.3.3. Explanation, context and the ‘half way through’ problem**

Television and other media were a strong source of beliefs and impressions about the developing world, but it was also clear that there was a very low level of understanding in this area. It is very significant that group members themselves realised this and frequently commented upon it. The view was very strongly expressed that television should do more than show emotionally compelling images:

1st: I have a constant sense of not being properly informed about background to issues and things like that. I do feel with a lot of things like Comic Relief I am being emotionally blackmailed.

2nd: Definitely.

3rd: Yes.

**Moderator:** Does everybody feel that?

4th: Yes.

3rd: Yes.

2nd: Totally, yes.

1st: You look at this little black person who is crying and covered in flies and you can help, you can help. They never talk about the background issues of how they got in that situation and wider economic perspectives and the political issues. They are just saying look at all these poor people, they need your money. I don’t like that feeling of being emotionally blackmailed into it. I would rather learn more about it. I am happy to give money to it but I want to know more about where it is going and where exactly the money is going and what it is being put into. (Middle class, London).

In other groups it was commented that television presumes an understanding which may not exist. One person spoke of his experience in watching news about East Timor:

*Sometimes with the East Timor thing, it is assumed you know exactly what is happening sometimes and you will think I know what is happening, but I don’t know what is happening.* (Low income group, Bath).

The strength of television news was its immediacy, but its weakness could be that it is superficial. This is expressed well in the following exchange:

1st: I like watching Sky News

**Moderator:** What do you like about Sky News?
1st: It is just really up to date and gives you everything that is going on. You always have the top updates going on at the bottom of the screen.

2nd: The thing is with Sky is that you don’t really get an in-depth analysis. You will get 2 or 3 minutes of the same news story. OK, you might get it every half hour or whatever but ...

3rd: They skim over it.

4th: The Channel 4 7 o’clock News, I think that is the best one if there is an issue and it is being discussed in all the topics that is the one you will tune into and you will find everything out, and it is debated as well. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow).

We also asked questions in the group discussions about the understanding of major institutions such as the International Monetary Fund which are frequently referred to in news bulletins. We found that there was almost no knowledge at all about what these institutions were or how they operated. These are typical exchanges:

**Moderator:** Do terms like World Bank mean anything to you?

1st: Yes, but not very much.

**Moderator:** International Monetary Fund?

1st: Yes, IMF. They always say the same sentences but there is never much explanation about who controls them or whatever else and how they operate as a body...They don’t go into background knowledge of those terms in particular. They talk about them as though everyone knows what they are. (Middle class, London).

1st: I have heard the initials IMF but I couldn’t tell you what it is or what it does.

2nd: It’s to do with money, something to do with trade and economics or something. (Ethnic minority, Afro Caribbean, London).

1st: The IMF is something to do with currency, isn’t it? It lets you get money in another country easily. I don’t know anymore than that.

2nd: I thought it was about lending people money who need it.

3rd: No, that’s the World Bank that does that. The IMF is an economic thing, it sets rules and standards for trading. (Retired, London).

1st: Yes, the economics.

2nd: It involves politics and it involves industrialisation ...

**Moderator:** They don’t seem to mean very much to anybody?

1st: No. (Middle class, London).

There was much discussion in the groups about why television news offered very limited explanations about events in the developing world. The short length of some bulletins was pointed to as a possible issue and these were compared with the longer and more in-depth coverage of programmes such as Channel 4 News and Newsnight. These programmes are however shown at relative marginal time in the television schedule and only a minority of people watched them. Some in the groups commented on the strong focus in news programmes on stories from Britain and America, which lead to viewers not getting a ‘proper’ look at the world:

**News is selective and you get the feeling that some of them are only interested in us and as far as Europe – as well as what America is up to too obviously. There are only a few that give you a proper look at the world.**

(Middle class, London).

In another group the point was made that stories from abroad are very likely to feature British people:

**The news is all bad, bad, bad, all the time. You never get to hear anything in its proper perspective I don’t think. I mean, take that stuff we were just doing on the tourists in Uganda. I bet you’d hear a completely different version of what went on from Ugandan News, like what started it all. But here you just hear about it at all because they were British people it happened to. If it were Americans you might get a bit, but see if it was Ugandans or Latin Americans or whatever, we wouldn’t have got any news at all about it.** (Ethnic minority, Afro Caribbean, London).

This group member suggested that there was an element of racism to the framing of such news stories:

**There’s also an element of racism I believe because we can’t have these horrible nasty black people murdering white people. I think you get that kind of thing in the news all the time about Africa, it’s all unstable and they are out of control. You never find out why certain things have started.** (Ethnic minority, Afro Caribbean, London).

In another group the issue was raised that the selectivity of news might have a political dimension:

**But TV is too biased. I don’t think they want us to know about other parts of the world because then the**
government would have to really get up and do something as opposed to saying they're thinking about it. If we're not told there's a problem then we aren't going to be overly concerned, are we? (Retired, London).

Another group discussed what they saw as the culpability of the west in the problems of the developing world and suggested that the media were effectively shielding their audience from this:

1st: I just want to say one thing about third world countries which is probably quite irrelevant to your topic but... There are some communities I think who have lived quite happily in harmony and they have survived for generations and generations and we have gone in or other people have gone in and...

2nd: Spoilt it.

1st: Destroyed it all.

2nd: And spoilt their life and brought in diseases and viruses and all sorts of things.

1st: And corruption.

2nd: Yes.

1st: We milk these countries.

2nd: Then they disappear and leave them.

1st: They strip it all.

2nd: They do a lot of harm.

1st: I don't think that is highlighted enough.

2nd: Oh no, because then we are blaming ourselves and we don’t want to.

1st: And the media don't want us to blame ourselves because you are paying for sitting watching that. (Low income, Glasgow).

But in another group it was suggested that at least as far as holiday programmes went, their main purpose was escapism and there was no need for them to 'inform'. As this group member comments, for her they are just like watching Dallas.

The holiday programmes aren't so much there to inform people or even to try pick a holiday. It is just escapism. So you can sit and think I wish I was there. It is like watching Dallas or something. Because the majority of people watch them and probably can’t afford the holidays, cruises to Barbados or whatever, they are looking, think that looks great but... they are there for that purpose they are not there to inform. (Middle class, London).

The same group also raised a more critical point about holiday programmes with the suggestion that they effectively operate as a branch of the tourist industry:

They want to pull tourists. They want to attract people so they are going to sell all the positive points... I think that is what holiday programmes [do] because they obviously get a certain amount of commission. (Middle class, London).

Some of the groups also identified a key issue in the organisation of television journalism, which might be termed the 'half-way through problem'. This is when journalists covering a long-running story tend to assume that their audience has watched the full sequence of reports, and so they do not need to repeat background issues mentioned in earlier reports. But in practice audiences come into stories at different points in the sequence. If they have missed the explanation that may have gone out two days before, they will have difficulty following the next series of reports. As this group member comments, the critical issue for him was to catch a story when it was 'young':

It is whether or not you catch a story young, like the first time it has been on or whatever, then you will follow it through. If you hear about it and you haven't seen it on the television you tend to not know much about it. (Low income, Bath).

This may well indicate the need for some modifications in journalistic practice, at least so that background information is included on a more regular basis.

D.2.3.4. The debt issue and public understanding

In the initial groups none of the respondents knew anything about the campaign to cancel third world debt and claimed to have seen nothing about it on television. In later groups this changed as a number of programmes and news items appeared which could then be discussed. On the whole the attitude of all the respondents was that they really did not understand what the issue was about, but they agreed that writing off debt was a good idea, if particular conditions were attached. The cancellation of debt could only be done once, and the institutions that controlled loans would have to change so that certain countries were never allowed to get into extreme debt again. It should be noted that only in a small number of groups was there any discussion of the historical or political reasons why countries were in such a serious economic position.

This was undoubtedly linked to a clear lack of knowledge of the issues involved and of the basis of
international economics. It was also felt in the groups that there needed to be more discussion, in all kinds of media formats, of the implications of writing off debt. This was necessary for the respondents to make more informed judgements. Some participants commented that if debt relief was going to cost them individually a lot of money then they would have to rethink their position.

This raises important questions about how the current debate on debt relief is reported on television. For example, it was reported recently that ‘cancelling the debt will cost British tax payers £640 million over 20 years’. (BBC1 1800, 21/12/99). To a great many people with little knowledge of how the national economy or international finance works this may sound like a significant personal cost. But another way of expressing this amount might have been that it will cost each person in Britain around 50 pence a year for the next 20 years: not a great deal of money when spread over a long time period.

Broadcasters should be encouraged to think more carefully about the presentation of a complex issue like debt relief, especially given the public concerns identified in this study and the evident capacity of the media to influence viewers’ opinions.

D.2.3.5. Cookery
This programme area seemed to bring out the most positive comments about the developing world. Respondents who watched cookery series particularly liked them when they were about the food of different cultures. Some respondents suggested that this was probably the only time they saw ‘good’ images of other countries. They also felt that these programmes could be used to offer more information on cultural or political aspects of a particular country. It was also mentioned that this programme area was the only one apart from holiday and travel programmes where viewers saw regions of the world like the Caribbean or Latin America.

D.2.3.6. Conclusions
A broad range of interest in media coverage of development issues was expressed in this study, ranging from people who were literally switched off from the subject (about 20% of the whole sample) to those with a very active interest (about 15% of the sample).

The response amongst children, for example, was varied. This exchange shows some level of interest:

1st: Sometimes I watch [television] because I think it might help me, but other times I watch it because I am interested in what it is talking about.

2nd: It gives you information that shocks you sometimes and you think ‘oh, I didn’t realise that before, if it is things about the developing...’

Moderator: Like what? What would that be?

2nd: I don’t know, like the conditions that people have to work in or live in. (15 year-olds, London)

The following exchange shows a more negative attitude to television as a source of information:

1st: It’s better to get things from books I think. You can learn certain things from like, Newsround or Blue Peter but not much else.

2nd: Yeah, TV is for game shows and soap-operas and things that will entertain you. I don’t like it when its gets all serious ‘cause we get enough of that in school. (15 year-olds, London).

There was discussion in the groups about how television coverage of development issues might be improved by making it both more interesting and more informative. The need to give more context and background information has already been dealt with extensively. It was also suggested that the people of the developing world should play a more active role in stories. They should speak more (preferably in English) and should be seen to be actively helping themselves. Some group members who had already seen stories on these lines gave a very positive response to them:

I also remember watching a programme about Rwanda and it showed you this woman who had seen her husband getting killed by the Tutsis or the Hutsis or whatever they were called ... What she then did was instead of crumbling she actually set up a rape crisis centre basically for other women ... She set it up all on her own and she was doing brilliant. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow).

It was also suggested that television might show positive images of lifestyles in the developing world, which people in Britain could learn from:

I like to sit and watch the programmes and think, they are not worried about their mortgage. I don’t mean poverty stricken people ... They are not worried about their car passing its MOT or anything. It does appeal, they have got a lot more contentment that we have. (Working class, Glasgow).

Some participants also noted a need to follow up stories, to show what happens in the aftermath of a story such as a disaster. This might include the process of rebuilding and reconstruction. In the absence of such coverage people were left with a view of the developing...
world as not much more than a series of catastrophes. As one group member put it, the sense of it happening so often, without any follow-up leads to viewers being desensitised:

Whenever there was anything on the news, it catches your attention for a couple of days and then something else happens and they don’t cover it anymore. Then you feel a bit desensitised to it all because it happens so often. I would like to know more about what happens afterwards but you just know that there is other things going on and you don’t get to hear about the consequences and what happens afterwards and the aftermath. (Middle class, London).

The same applied to Comic Relief. It was argued that for support to be sustained, there should be frequent updates about the positive effects of raising money:

I don’t think they really tell you what they have done with the money until the next year just before the preview of the next campaign that they do... I think it would be quite interesting if they kept you informed with what they were doing as it was happening rather than leaving it to the very end just before the next Comic Relief. (Middle Class, London).

It was clear that a good presenter was very important to viewers:

1st: You will actually watch something you don’t want to watch because of the character.

2nd: Maybe if there was a good presenter with a good personality then I think I would certainly take in more about that country if they were presenting it in an interesting way. (Low income, Bath).

A key point raised within the groups was the need for sincerity and commitment on the part of the presenter. There were negative remarks about ‘smug presenters’. Bob Geldoff was cited as an example of someone who ‘meant everything that he said’:

He was over there and you could see the pain on the bloke’s face, you could see that it really meant something to him. (Low income, Bath).

It was frequently mentioned in the groups that people would like to see more of what they termed the ‘normal lives’ of people in the developing world.

Some of the best programmes I have seen are actually people there living with the actual people that stay there. They show cameras and stuff but it is actually the way they live and what it is that happens from when they first wake up in the morning and in the afternoon what they get up to. I think that is interesting. I think it is really, really interesting. (Ethnic minority, Asian, Glasgow).

They went into one of the towns just outside Joberg and were showing families. These focused a lot on mothers...they talked about the children. There was one boy, he was clever enough but he just refused to go to school. Another boy that she felt was maybe going to get into so many shootings and she was really concerned that she was going to get drawn into this. She was just such a wonderful person. I could see in her myself, just the concern for her children. She didn’t want them to get into trouble. She wanted them to be educated and she wanted them to get on. It was a really good programme. (Low income, Glasgow).

The 10 year-old children wanted to see what it would be like to be in a school playground in Africa and what sorts of games were played. Some said that they wanted a programme like Blue Peter to spend longer showing what a country like Mozambique was really like.

**Moderator:** What would you like to hear about then?

1st: Hear about how they are getting on because they just say things like we are collecting the stuff for the school then they go on and say something else and...they say that all they do there is play football and stuff like that. They probably don’t, they have probably got to work as well. On Blue Peter they say they are living quite well and they are just playing football all day but they are actually working.

**Moderator:** You mean they just give you a wee tiny bit of what it going on and it is not enough?

1st: Yes...They should actually do at least one full show. (10 year-olds, Glasgow).

If viewers can identify with people in the developing world as having ordinary human lives, then it may be easier to sympathise and identify with them when they are subject to the catastrophic circumstances in which they are more usually featured. But identification is not enough without context and explanation. If the problems of the developing world are seen as having political and economic causes, then it can be understood that new policies and new approaches may improve the situation. Without such understanding, the developing world is likely to be seen as a suitable area for our sympathy, but still a hopeless and inexplicable mess.
E. Recommendations

1) Broadcasters should continue to examine closely the issue of audience understanding and how this relates to the current structure and content of news output. The audience study shows that there is a serious problem relating to viewers’ comprehension of news items about the developing world. For news to be informative and to make sense to audiences, broadcasters may need to rethink their approach. They are already aware of this and some changes are being made.

2) Some programme formats have shown that it is possible both to attract audiences and to go beyond the negative and limited images of the developing world which are frequently offered. These include cookery, travel, comedy and arts programmes. Some, like Comic Relief, have shown that relatively complex issues can be explained in innovative and attractive ways. Broadcasters should further explore and develop these innovative formats.

3) There should be clearly identified strands for global documentary programming with regular and accessible slots in the schedules. Documentaries were widely judged to be the most informative of all programme formats. But viewers complained that such output is inadequately promoted, and is often stumbled upon by chance. Continued marginalisation of documentary programmes on the developing world will have serious consequences for public knowledge and understanding.
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Production Study (3WE)
G.1. Introduction

G.1.1. The Purpose of the Production Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct interviews with key decision-makers within the British television industry in order to understand the industry perspective on television coverage of the developing world.

It is widely assumed that television helps inform and shape public understanding of world affairs. But the commercial, multi-channel climate that dominates British television today has raised questions about the role of television in adequately fulfilling this role. In a ratings-led market the requirement to entertain and attract as many viewers as possible can appear to elbow out those other traditional Reithian concerns: to inform and enlighten the public.

This study therefore asks policymakers and programme-makers responsible for television output (mostly factual and news programmes) what type of window on the world television is providing or seeking to provide, with particular reference to its coverage of the developing world.

The term 'developing world' is used here to cover the least developed peoples and nations of the world. This was generally assumed by most interviewees to include much of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

The study was commissioned by the Department for International Development to complement audience and content research conducted by the Glasgow University Media Group, also focusing on developing world output.

G.1.2. Method

The study selected 38 interviewees from the five British terrestrial channels and four satellite/cable channels (Sky One, Sky News, Discovery, National Geographic). A full list of participants follows this Introduction.

The interviewees include decision-makers from Directors of Programmes and Channel Controllers down, through Heads of Department and Series Editors, to programme makers and news correspondents. This represents a range of levels in the programme-making hierarchy, but the majority were in the upper commissioning levels, since these have the most influence on programme output.

For purposes of collation the interviewees are broadly divided between policymakers/commissioning editors and programme-makers. The latter grouping includes programme providers like the controllers of programmes for Granada and Carlton TV as well as producers and journalists. Where appropriate news staff are sometimes differentiated from non-news staff.

Interviews generally lasted for about an hour, and invited the interviewee’s thoughts on the following areas:

1) The nature of their output about the developing countries – broad questions including quantity and positioning of programmes in the schedules.
2) Detailed examination of the criteria used in pursuing programmes/news items on the developing world – and the rationale behind the relevant criteria.
3) Features associated with successful output on the developing world (such as style, scheduling, content, finance).
4) Representation issues: interviewees’ perception of the accuracy and fairness with which their programmes depict the developing world, and problems relating to this.
5) Personal programme preferences and opinions, including beliefs about television’s role to inform and the protection of public service ideals.

It was stressed that the research project is open-ended, with no hidden agenda, and additional points or new research avenues were welcomed.

In addition to the 38 broadcasters and producers interviewed, the survey also included interviews with five directors of programme sales and advertising directors, so that the broader commercial context could be considered.

G.1.3. Context

While reading the findings of this survey it could be helpful to recall some of the current debates and events taking place in the broadcasting industry in the first half of 1999 when the interviews were undertaken, and which may well have influenced some interviewee responses. These include:

- The ITC putting pressure on ITV to meet its news and current affairs obligations, especially as ITV rescheduled its evening news programmes
- The BBC’s licence under independent review
- The BBC seeking a new Director General, giving rise to much debate about the BBC’s public service role and its future
A report by David Graham Associates highlighting the insularity of the British Television Industry and its focus on the domestic programme market rather than the international export market.

A Campaign for Quality Television report on the decline of the serious-issue documentary on ITV.

Debate about the public service obligations of Channel 4.

In addition it was an exceptional period for television news. The Nato offensive on Kosovo put the newsrooms on a ‘wartime’ footing, absorbing foreign programme resources and unusually eclipsing domestic output. This coincided with both the BBC and ITN overhauling their daily news programmes, as ITN lost News at Ten, and the BBC launched new viewer-friendly studio sets, titles and newsreaders in response to extensive audience research.

Shortly after, the untimely death of Jill Dando was a personal shock and loss to a number of interviewees, and drew news bulletins away from Kosovo to a story exceptionally close to home.

A further influence on interviewee responses can be the research process itself. Some participants referred to the fact that this was not an area they normally focused on, and some of the questions were not ones they had ever addressed. This is not to suggest that their contributions are any less valid, but it is a reminder of the well-acknowledged fact that the process of research can in itself influence the outcome.

G.1.4. Note on Audience Research

Interviewees made extensive reference to audience research, but two points should be noted in this connection.

1) In the majority of cases these are general references. People were unwilling or unable to quote particular research. Where specific ratings or research were quoted, these are given.

2) Audience research, though much-quoted, seems to cause some confusion.

While Barb ratings are undoubtedly the major gauge used in assessing the popularity of programmes, interviewees repeatedly expressed their scepticism about audience research in general as a reliable means of assessment. A senior executive at ITV admits to being “completely cynical about audience research”.

It is widely considered that, while viewers can be trusted to accurately say which programmes they are watching for Barb ratings, they are not to be trusted in other areas of audience research. It is thought that people are more likely to say they watch news and serious documentaries than they are to put BLIND DATE at the top of their list of favourites. It has apparently been documented that on one factual series, more people told researchers they watched than were recorded by Barb as actually watching.

However the experience of Discovery Channel’s audience research has been that people do not go for ‘aspirational’ answers, and freely admit to finding documentaries too dull and gloomy. As a result the channel has re-positioned itself as a ‘factual entertainment’, as opposed to a documentary, channel.

Several interviewees express concern that so much weight is given by policy-makers to such an imprecise science.

G.1.5. Acknowledgements

This report was made possible by the generous support and assistance of television executives, producers and news correspondents who agreed to be interviewed in spite of their demanding schedules. The ready co-operation of all levels of decision-maker, from producers and reporters to directors of programmes and controllers, greatly facilitated the research process and meant that a particularly comprehensive range of experience could be drawn upon.

Particular thanks should also go to the Information Department of the Department for International Development for launching the project, and to their Steering Group of senior broadcasters from the BBC, ITN, Channel 4, Channel 5, and Discovery Channel, with the ITC, for their support and advice.

G.1.6. Participants

G.1.6.1. Policy-Makers/Commissioners (25)

ALL PROGRAMMES

Alan Yentob, Director of Television, BBC
Peter Salmon, Controller, BBC-1
Jane Root, Controller, BBC-2
Adam MacDonald, Head of Scheduling, BBC TV
Bill Hilary, Head of Independent Commissioning Group, BBC TV
David Liddiment, Director of Programmes, ITV Network
David Bergg, Director of Planning and Strategy, ITV Network
Peter McHugh, Director of Programmes, GMTV
Tim Gardam, Director of Programmes, Channel 4
Rosemary Newell, Head of Programme Planning and Strategy, Channel 4
G.1.6.2. Programme-Makers (13)

G.1.6.3. Programme Distributors
Jane Balfour, Jane Balfour Films
Paul Sowerbutts, Director of Progs, ITEL

G.1.6.4. Advertising/Advertising Sales Directors
Bjarne Thelin, Planning Director, Carlton UK Sales
Tony Hopewell Smith, Head of Audience Research, Carlton UK Sales
Graham Hinton, Chairman, Bates UK

G.2. General Trends

G.2.1. Figures

Does television still have a role in informing people about the developing world?

Response from 25 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If so, where should that role be played out: mainstream popular channels or niche channels?

Response from 25 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream and niche</th>
<th>Niche only</th>
<th>Should be mainstream, and niche only but I expect it will all move to niche channels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there a place on your channel/in your output for programmes made in or about the developing world?

Response from 25 policymakers and commissioning editors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Very occasionally</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there a place for hard development topics/issues in your output?

Response from 25 policymakers and commissioning editors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Just possible</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do people want to watch output on the developing world?

Response from 25 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No/probably not</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
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</table>
How is this output generally positioned in the programme schedules (excluding news)?

Response from 23 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 12 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prominently</th>
<th>Marginally</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[mostly news and Channel 4]

Would more programming about the developing world engender more public interest in these programmes?

Response from 24 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Possibly</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[if done well]

Do you think there are more programmes on the developing world in your output now than 10 years ago?

Response from 26 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More now</th>
<th>Fewer now</th>
<th>The same amount</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breakdown of these figures between 10 news staff and 29 non-news staff:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More now</th>
<th>Fewer now</th>
<th>The same amount</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-news</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is your channel/company likely to increase or decrease coverage of the developing world in the next 5-10 years?

Response from 23 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 11 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase now</th>
<th>Decrease now</th>
<th>Same amount</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Regulation: How long will the ITC and BBC charter continue to protect public service ideals in this type of area of programming?

Response from 20 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 11 programme-makers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indefinitely</th>
<th>Gradual erosion</th>
<th>ITC 5-10years/ BBC longer</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representation of developing countries on British television: is a fair picture presented?

Response from 24 policymakers and commissioning editors, and 13 programme-makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasonably balanced</th>
<th>Not balanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 (8 policymakers, 3 programme-makers)</td>
<td>26 (16 policymakers, 10 programme-makers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1 news staff, 10 non-news staff)</td>
<td>(9 news staff, 17 non-new staff)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 26 who feel the picture is unbalanced some feel this is inevitable whilst others feel the balance could and should be redressed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inevitably imbalanced</th>
<th>Imbalanced and the balance should be redressed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 (11 policymakers, 8 programme-makers)</td>
<td>7 (5 policymakers, 10 non-news staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5 news staff, 14 non-news staff)</td>
<td>(4 news staff, 3 non-news staff)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G.2.2. Summary

G.2.2.1. Mainstream TV is the right medium for developing world coverage

The consensus is that, in a commercial, multi-channel age, television is still the appropriate medium for informing people about the developing world.

And a clear majority of interviewees feel that it is still the mainstream (that is, the main terrestrial channels) as well as the more specialist niche channels that should be doing this. The great majority of policymakers/commissioning editors interviewed, for the most part from the mainstream channels, claim there is a place for coverage of the developing world on their channels, even hard, issue-based output.

This outlook could partly be explained by the fact that public service ideals/regulations are still widely adhered to according to this survey. Of the 25
policymakers/commissioning editors interviewed, including the cable and satellite channels, 24 expressed some form of commitment to public service obligations, whether following corporate policy or personal inclination. Some of the strongest expressions of this came from the commercial sector:

“Well are a public service. ITV is the most regulated of all. Being the most-viewed channel in Britain gives us a responsibility to our audience to reflect and debate the world we live in.” David Liddiment, ITV

“We have a public service remit to balance with our commercial purpose”, Steve Anderson, ITV

“Journalists have an obligation to tell people uncomfortable, important things”, Peter McHugh, GMTV

“Commercial interests have to be balanced with diversity and alternative views”, Rosemary Newell, Channel 4

“TV has to lead rather than follow its audience” Nick Pollard, Sky News

BBC comments included:

“I don’t accept the BBC is obsessed with audience share and ratings. We can provide a portfolio of services that can engage everyone – with space for difficult projects.” Alan Yentob, BBC

“We have an obligation to inform a wide-ranging UK audience, and to bring to people’s notice what many think they don’t care about” Richard Ayre, BBC News

“I see myself as an internationalist. I have always felt committed to programmes that bring the world to people” Peter Salmon, BBC

“Serious-issue programming is part of the BBC2 remit – like EEC ‘set-aside’ quotas” Jane Root, BBC

“BBC1’s getting much more backing from the government and everyone else to turn up the volume on the public service climate. Before there were privately-voiced concerns about audience share, but now everyone from Chris Smith downwards is saying the channel won’t be judged on quantity but quality. So we’ll take them at face value and go for this with the programming we offer” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

Only one of the 25 took a contrasting line: “We can’t afford to have a public service ideal... We have no particular obligation to cover development... the traditional notions of broadcasting ‘what’s good for you’ have changed” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

Some programme-makers feel that if output on the developing world were only to be found on specialist niche channels it could be detrimental to this whole area of programming.

“Niche roles could easily mean that dull stories are permitted. It’s important that producers are making these programmes for the mainstream channels where they not only get the audiences but are made well too” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“We don’t want developing world ghetto programming on niche channels. It has to be mainstream too.” André Singer, Café Productions

G.2.2.2. Doubt that people want to watch developing world output

At the same time, a clear majority in this survey also believe the greater part of the viewing public do not actually want to watch output about the developing world. This is largely understood from ratings and audience research. As a result, this area of programming is constantly described as “difficult” and “challenging”.

“There is no evidence of a vast untapped thirst for developing world coverage” Nick Pollard, Sky News

“Only the very upmarket and well-educated audience say ‘We’re really interested in issues in the developing world’. Most people don’t say that. They say ‘I like decorating, gardening, or really good drama’” Alan Yentob, BBC

“People want domestic stories” Peter Salmon, BBC

“Is the developing world important? Yes. Will it get big audiences? No” Adam MacDonald, BBC

“The aspirational research answer to ‘Are you interested in the developing world?’ is ‘Yes’. The real answer is ‘No’”. Vin Ray, BBC News

“I suspect the general public don’t want these programmes and therefore I’m going to make them want them. We work hard to get people sucked in. People won’t bother to watch unless they are led to it.” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

“Ratings indicate there is a more limited interest in international programmes” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“Our USP is to deliver big audiences. These programmes are a risk, they get small audiences” Steve Anderson, ITV

“The developing world is not of general interest unless there’s a very British angle. If a domestic docuseries can attract 8 million viewers why make something on the
Tamils and get 10% that size audience? “Chris Shaw, Channel 5

Some feel that people have been conditioned to feel this way by the television industry itself.

“People don’t know what they want until they see it! Programmes are supply-led not demand-led. Decision-makers in the television industry are drawn from the same small social world, with the same world view. At the very heart of producers and broadcasters is the belief that the general audience is not interested in foreign stories. You could say it’s a failure of the education system.” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“People are conditioned not to want this output, just as they are conditioned not to be interested in politics” Ian Stuttard, BBC

G.2.2.3. Marginal positioning of developing world output in the channel schedules (excluding news programmes)

The apparent lack of audience interest has resulted in what many see as the marginalising of non-news output on the developing world in the schedules.

There are various differing perspectives on this. ITV points to the fact that serious documentaries can now go out at 10pm (since News at Ten has gone), so they can, potentially, be more prominent than before, and Channel 4 and BBC2 say they want these programmes to be a part of their mainstream output.

But many on the commissioning side of the fence agree that it does not matter where this type of output goes, its audience will find it.

“The same numbers will watch it wherever it is: they’ll watch it three hours later if it’s moved three hours later”. David Lloyd, Channel 4

“Return to Wonderland got 0.7 million viewers at 11.30 pm. It wouldn’t have got more at 7.30 at night. Remember, these days prime scheduling doesn’t automatically deliver an audience – people are far more choosy about what they watch. Comic Relief programmes go out centre stage because that is what BBC1 wants to do, but it doesn’t guarantee a good audience share.” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

But producers tend to feel that late-night slots hide their programmes from sight, and that even when they go out earlier on Channel 4 and BBC2, they tend to go in the “Saturday night death knell slot” (8 or 9pm), not midweek.

G.2.2.4. Greater interest can be cultivated

Five of the policymakers say emphatically that the real issue is to improve the quality of this type of programming, not increase the quantity.

“Good and innovative programming will engender greater interest, not more programming” Bill Hilary, BBC

“More programmes could cultivate interest? I don’t think that is necessarily the case. It’s all about attracting people to key, quality programmes – television events. Otherwise you’ll end up with a declining spiral of default programming which no one would care very much about.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

But a large number of both the policymakers and programmemakers believe that more coverage of the developing world could engender greater public interest in the subject area. Most of these did, however, specify that the coverage would have to be attractive.

“More coverage will create more interest. And if we stop reporting the developing world, people will stop thinking about it.” George Alagiah, BBC News

“More programmes that are imaginative and interesting could make people interested, but more of the same dull programming won’t.” Alex Holmes, BBC

“It must be interesting, or people will switch off. But interest breeds interest. Just as garden centres have boomed as a result of interest in gardening programmes” Anne Morrison, BBC

“Naturally people become more interested. HOLIDAY has this impact on audiences – people want to go to the places we show. Our story on Sri Lanka was an example of this.” Jannine Waddell, BBC

G.2.2.5. Quantity of output on the developing world – no consensus

As to interviewee perception of the amount of this programming now offered compared to ten years ago, there is no clear consensus at all. Roughly the same numbers of interviewees consider there to be more coverage of the developing world now as those who think there is less.

Similarly, there is no common perspective on future quantitative trends. The largest ‘group’ (14 out of 34) consider there will be no change in the quantity of coverage in 5-10 years time.
G.2.2.6. Belief in regulatory protection of ‘public service’ output
Quite a high proportion of interviewees (16 out of 31) express the belief that regulation (by the ITC and BBC Charter) will continue “indefinitely” or “for a long time” to preserve the traditional public service ideals of British television. Some see this as a positive factor, protecting diversity and minority interest areas against ratings-driven commercialism, and therefore underpinning coverage of the developing world. Others see this as a constricting obligation that archaically bucks market trends. But many interviewees from both ‘camps’ feel regulation is here to stay for a good while yet.

G.3. Commissioning Criteria
G.3.1. Directors of Programmes’, Commissioning Editors’ and Department Heads’ Criteria
The main criteria by which directors of programmes, commissioning editors and department heads judge programme proposals concerning the developing world are as follows:
- Audience interest
- Corporate policy
- Editorial values
- Genre and format trends
- Press coverage/reviews/peer feedback
- Other channels’ output
- Budget
- Producer quality
- Moral or regulatory obligation

G.3.1.1. Audience interest
The major concern of all 25 policymakers/commissioning editors. In the new age of multi-choice all TV channels are competing to hold viewers’ attention and keep their fingers off the remote control buttons.
“In the end people watch television for value for time. Broadcasters are competing for their time” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

While all 25 refer to Barb ratings and audience research as the main guide to what audiences want, 12 say personal experience and instinct is just as important, if not more so. One scheduler claims to be entirely cynical about audience research, since “audiences never say they dislike serious programmes – but then you find out from the ratings that they never watch them!”

Serving audience interest of course means different things for different channels. For the BBC2 and Channel 4 it does not necessarily mean achieving a large share of the audience. So if developing world material is perceived to draw small audiences, this is less of a problem.

“We want the best maximum audience for the subject, not necessarily the highest ratings” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“Two million viewers, or 9% of the audience, is entirely respectable for last night’s World of Survival documentary about the Australian aborigines” Jane Root, BBC

News editors say they try to keep the balance of satisfying viewers while avoiding being ratings led.
“We doubled our ratings over Kosovo, but we don’t plan our news agenda according to ratings.” Nick Pollard, Sky News

“There can be a healthy tension between balancing ratings and our public service goals” Vin Ray, BBC News

For ITV low ratings are a more pressing problem.
“We are less able to ignore the commercial imperative than ever before, although we’re not running an audience delivery service for advertisers. Our job is to provide a service for viewers that serves the advertisers at the same time” David Liddiment, ITV

And BBC 1, without the commercial imperative, still feels a public obligation to satisfy a big audience.
“Our role is to satisfy big audiences” Richard Ayre, BBC News

“Programmes must be relevant, accessible and potent for a BBC1 mainstream audience” Peter Salmon, BBC

The fact that material concerning the developing world is perceived to be a high ratings risk does not simply mean that it is written off. But in both commercial and public sectors, it clearly can mean that certain programmes are ruled out.

“About five years ago we saw that social issue programmes were not commercial, the ratings were not strong enough, so we don’t do them any more” Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

“We backed off international cookery series because it was too expensive for the low amount of interest they were attracting” Anne Morrison, BBC

“If we do well at maintaining our audience scale, that will protect our ability to go with the lost leader programmes. Without that, developing world output is not absolutely secure” David Liddiment, ITV

However, generally the logic is not that clear cut, and the ‘ratings risk’ factor means not dropping the programmes altogether, but seeing how to make them interest the audience.
"We are ratings led, but it’s a cop-out to say that dependency on ratings excludes us from doing Third World stories. It’s the hardest part of the job to get people involved in important issues like development. But people should sit down and think: how do we get more people to watch? Numbers are important, we must face this. There’s no point having BBC or Channel 4 people making programmes for themselves and their mates and getting Brownie points if no one watches!" Peter McHugh, GMTV

"The first concern (in considering a developing world proposal) is how to create audience interest. You apply the same editorial judgements as you would to any other type of programme, except that maybe the audience has less tolerance here because they have less knowledge about it than other areas. They won’t bother to watch unless they are led to it." Jeremy Gibson, BBC

"Audiences don’t say they want to watch programmes about the developing world, so we need to find interesting ways to draw them in" Alan Yentob, BBC

"On BBC1 the big challenge is: how on earth do you tell stories that reach the lives of millions of people?" Peter Salmon, BBC

The international cable/satellite channels included in this survey refer to the fact that British audiences appear to be more parochial than their European counterparts.

"Recent focus group research indicates that the British are more insular than other Europeans, which is disappointing for us since Britain is a most important territory for us" Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

But on the news side, the developing world is not always viewed as a ratings risk.

"There is no evidence that a domestic agenda, or ‘dumbing down the news’ brings in bigger audiences. In fact the opposite is true. We don’t court the tabloid approach. Why should the public service remit mean fewer viewers?" Richard Ayre, BBC News

"People don’t distinguish between domestic and foreign news – but between what is interesting and not interesting” Nigel Dacre, ITN

"Our News Review showed that people want foreign news as long as we tell them why a far-away story matters and how it links to them. They want solutions rather than problems. And they like follow-ups on ‘old’ stories." Vin Ray, BBC

G.3.1.2. Corporate policy

To most interviewees this point is so self-evident that it is not singled out. But for the purposes of the report it is worth noting that each policymaker/programme commissioner works within the context of a particular corporate brand identity and policy, shaped by a broadly public service remit, or commercial remit, or mixture of the two, which naturally influences his/her approach to potential commissions.

G.3.1.3. Editorial values

These are of course very much dictated both by the concern to grab the audience and by the particular remit of the channel concerned.

Feature and documentary commissioners refer to the importance of:
- a good, engaging story
- human interest, relating to viewers
- a well-told narrative
- something new, or presented in a new way
- timeliness
- suitability for a particular, available slot in the schedules
- ability of a producer/director to deliver
- ability to gain credit for the channel even if not high ratings

“A vision of a programme should contain a new way of seeing life: it must provide some new insight” David Lloyd, Channel 4

"Everything must be surprising, whether it’s applying wild comedy to the developing world, or crossing genres like Into Africa” Jane Root, BBC

"Does the story unfold a mystery? Does the presenter or characters pull us in?" Joanna Clinton Davis, BBC

"Human, personal stories work. Issue-led ideas don’t work on ITV” Grant Mansfield, ITV

"We want programmes that leave a stamp of the year on the schedule, with a reason for going out now” Tim Gardam, Channel 4.

The satellite/cable channels stress the need for programmes to be enjoyable, pacy, upbeat, not dealing with problems and gloom.

“The beaty, straightforward documentary on famine or economic problems head-on doesn’t work for us. We might do a science programme on desertification, but it would be upbeat, on the fascinating new technology that is beating the problem, not human distress. Our viewers tell us they don’t want ‘documentaries’ because they assume documentaries are serious, academic and
gloomy, so we call our programmes 'factual entertainment’ Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

“Ratings show our viewers want positive stories from us, showing the world and its people as it is through high-quality productions. As part of the National Geographic Society we must be non-controversial, avoiding politics and social comment” Giselle Burnett, National Geographic

The main popular channels stress the Big Idea. “It’s got to be a blockbuster piece if you’re going to get the developing world on. When did a documentary on the developing world last make news?” Grant Mansfield, ITV

“We have to have the biggest and best ideas” Peter Salmon, BBC

News editors naturally see their role as distinct from that of general programme editors responsible for documentaries and factual features. And yet one can see similarities of approach when they stress:

- the new and the important
- relevance to a UK audience
- same editorial judgements as for any other news story

“It’s always a combination of what’s important and what’s interesting. The trick is to combine the two. Our best developing world output, on First on Five, is all about animals, children, beautiful scenery – or it involves Brits” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

However, the news editors put more emphasis than their general programming colleagues on the need for:

- impartiality and fairness
- accuracy

“We must build up audience trust, even if we have to be worthy and dull on occasions to get this right. We are helping people make sense of the world, helping people sift information and make choices” Vin Ray, BBC News

“We want to be both authoritative and accessible at ITN…..We tend to target the major breaking stories rather than the twists and turns of ongoing stories” Nigel Dacre, ITN

G.3.1.5. Press coverage/reviews/peer feedback
17 of the 25 consider this – especially press coverage and good reviews – very important, and therefore a factor in commissioning.

“The best programmes get noticed regardless of audience ratings. We only got a million watching The Valley, on Kosovo, at 9pm on a Thursday, but the waves it created made it well worthwhile. There’s no point making a programme, however worthy, that doesn’t get noticed.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“If a programme doesn’t pull in the audience it must attract critical acclaim. It’s important to know our programmes are cutting the mustard elsewhere” Steve Anderson, ITV

“Press coverage of programmes about the developing world is part of our cultural fabric and can add to the impact of a programme” Joanna Clinton Davis, BBC

Good press coverage is considered less important by news editors, and by Channel 5 and GMTV.

“Most journalists or peers hate GMTV! The important thing is that viewers love us!” Peter McHugh, GMTV

G.3.1.6. Other channels’ output
All interviewees say they are mindful of other channels’ output, if only to sharpen brand awareness, help position their own output, and avoid overlap.

A small minority say they are influenced by strong output from other channels and sometimes decide to develop a genre or style themselves as a result.

“Television events can change the whole TV scene” Peter Dale. Channel 4
“I avoid what others do. But I also sometimes admire and pursue other people’s successes, like Channel 4’s landmark programme Shanghai Vice.” Jane Root, BBC

The outlook of news editors on this appears to relate to the size of the news organisation. The smaller the organisation, the more they look to the competition. While the largest (the BBC) claims to be less concerned.

“We follow what the others are doing. But ITN’s less important to us now that News at Ten has gone” Vin Ray, BBC

G.3.1.7. Budget

The general feeling appears to be that while budgets are always a key factor, if a specific project is really wanted the money will be found to do it. In this way the BBC chooses to fully fund Comic Relief, and ITN and other news organisations threw themselves into Kosovo coverage despite their limited foreign news budgets. However there clearly are limits.

“There’s only a limited number of big, landmark programmes that we can afford each year. We can also make an impact with low budget projects, but they have to be done very differently” Jane Root, BBC

“We have a tight budget. The average programme costs £22,000 per hour for everything (we have no uncosted infrastructure). But I managed to do 5 X 45minute slots from South Africa for £8,000 each, so we can find ways to afford foreign programming.” Peter McHugh, GMTV

“Budget’s a big factor, it can influence where a programme is made” Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

“We’d probably do more of our programmes abroad if it could be done more cheaply” Anne Morrison, BBC

In news, it is thought that the technology for international coverage will be getting cheaper in the near future. Reporters can already send audio via the internet, and will soon be able to email video, which will be cheaper than satellite. However, for the time being foreign stories can be prohibitively costly, especially for the smaller organisations. Foreign bureaux are expensive to set up and run, and the lack of these inevitably reduces access to stories and increases dependency on television news agencies. (The BBC has 41 overseas bureaux. ITN has 6. Sky News has 6).

“After Kosovo there will be no developing world coverage for a while” Nick Pollard, Sky News

“It’s expensive to send reporters abroad, but we do occasionally” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

For documentaries and features pre-sale or co-production deals can be crucial to programmes made abroad, particularly at the BBC and Channel 4.

“It’s important because the full cost is prohibitive, so we can only make them if we get co-production interest” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“It may not be crucial, but it certainly ups the viability of a project if a developing world topic appears to be ‘saleable’ and not just worthy!” Joanna Clinton Davis, BBC

“It’s vital for all our international output apart from the fully-funded Comic Relief programming” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

“Co-production or sponsorship can swing a project for us” Giselle Burnett, National Geographic

G.3.1.8. Producer quality

On documentary/feature output there is a natural concern to know that the producer is right for the programme and will deliver the right product at the right time.

In the case of output about the developing world there is a particular concern that producers should bring with them a real understanding of the audience and what it wants to watch. There is a perception among some commissioners that this type of programming has traditionally attracted producers intent on pursuing their own private interests and agenda, oblivious to the audience.

“There’s a tradition of producer that thinks Channel 4 only means making what they want to make, and this is in itself public service broadcasting. I believe the most ambitious programming encourages the audience’s public interest by trying to identify those places where people’s private interests and the wider world interconnect. That doesn’t mean dumbing down and pandering to people’s narrow self-interest, because everyone believes they are capable of being serious when they want to be. But making arresting television isn’t the same as making duty television.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

At the same time programme commissioners say they do want to encourage ‘producer passion’, that traditional driving force behind good documentary and feature programmes, as well as a greater flow of new ideas in this area.

“We constantly get asked what we want, so we give out prescriptions. But actually what we don’t know we want is just as important – and we want producers to tell us what it is!” David Lloyd, Channel 4
“There may be more caution about this area, but we want to encourage passion and enthusiasm in producers and call for strong ideas to breathe fresh life into the genre. Good heads of department will have the courage of their convictions and get projects through.” Alan Yentob, BBC

“We need the good programme-makers to come in with the really good ideas from Asia and Africa. There’s always room for the unthought of, an idea someone is passionate about. I’d be delighted to do more on the developing world if possible. But we’re buyers not sellers. Are enough programme-makers engaged in this area?” Grant Mansfield, ITV

Some senior executives acknowledge a structural difficulty (raised later in the report by producers) whereby commissioners and producers have little spontaneous contact or interaction. Where broadcasters and production used to operate in fairly close proximity, they are now formally and physically separated, both geographically and in terms of layers of management.

“Production are more separate from broadcasters now everywhere, and there’s less space for ‘producer passion’. We try to build relations with producers who fit us well, but it’s true, we are more distant” David Liddiment, ITV

G.3.1.9. Moral and regulatory obligations

Although couched in many different ways, the great majority of interviewees express some sense of obligation – whether personal or corporate – to present the wider world outside Britain in their programming.

“We can’t call ourself a 24-hour world news service if we only give a Euro-American view of the world” Nick Pollard, Sky News

“There’s still a sense at Channel 4 that we should be covering the developing world, although it wouldn’t justify a commission per se. But I sometimes read a proposal twice just to make sure it’s not for us!” Peter Dale, Channel 4

“We have an obligation to reflect the world in an educative and accurate way” Bill Hilary, BBC

And from Channel 5 with its largely domestic agenda: “Morally these programmes should be made, but Not In My Back Yard: not on my channel!” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

A few balked at the very idea of any sense of obligation in this area.

“Moral obligation is exactly what we don’t need!” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“I try not to have any sense of obligation. I’m a journalist not a charity worker” Nigel Dacre, ITN

G.3.2. Programme-makers’/reporters’ criteria in proposing programmes/stories on the developing world

Many of the criteria supplied by programme-makers echo those listed in the previous section. But the biggest difference, of course, is that their major concern is to get a commission. Factors influencing the producers’ choice of programme ideas include:

- Pragmatism: the need to interest the commissioning editor
- A good story
- Audience interest
- Budget
- The reliability and availability of good programme source material
- Regulatory/moral obligation
- Producer passion

G.3.2.1. Pragmatism: the need to interest the commissioning editor

This clearly applies in documentaries and features.

“My proposals are based on pragmatism. I self-censor because I know what stands a chance of a commission. We have to second-guess the department head and controllers all the time. Personally, I’d like to be making issue-led programmes colourful and involving. I’ve got an East African story that could be as compelling as any domestic docu-soap, but it’s not acceptable without British people and celebrities in it. One commissioning executive said to me “We don’t want programmes about little black people who live far away and don’t speak English.” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“We’re commissioning editor-led. They won’t take developing world projects unless there’s a Unique Selling Point, like an irresistible human story.” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“Stories about development are difficult to sell. You have to gear to channel requirements, and get the story and characters right”. George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“We have great difficulty getting this type of programming through. ITV tells us not to bring a current affairs idea unless it will get 30% of the audience share or it will make a big stir. They make excuses like ‘We decided not to commission so much after all’ or ‘We’ve decided to go on docu-soaps’. Sometimes the high-profile reporters like Jonathan Dimbleby or John Pilger can get things through, but even they haven’t got things through recently.” David Boardman, Central
“We work to broadcasters’ requirements. Our company’s expertise is international (travel, archeology, anthropology). But we’ve been driven to the international channels with our output, as British commissioners want domestic stories.” André Singer, Café Productions

In news, too, it can be difficult to get developing world stories into the bulletins. They have to suit the slot and the programme editors’ requirements.

“Anything can be made into good TV – that’s the craft – but editors get into a safety area. Stories like ‘banana wars’ have to fight their way in. We {correspondents} have no power over what we do. A programme editor can always say ‘That’s not our type of story’. Even for a designated Development Correspondent it is difficult to get items on until you’re established. I had to cut my teeth on disaster reporting before I could sell the deeper issues.” George Alagiah, BBC News

“We have to accept that the domestic agenda is at the forefront, we are vying with that, and the length of our bulletins is very limited. You instinctively relate to the requirements of the organisation you’re with – you pick up on what the senior editors want.” Al Anstey, ITN

G.3.2.2. A good story

This is overwhelmingly the first editorial consideration for both news and documentaries and features.

“There must be a compelling story. We specialise in the big breaking news story. Sometimes we can use an event – the Algerian elections, say – to get stories from a less accessible country. If its visually strong it’s likely to go higher up the programme than if it’s visually weak.” Robert Moore, ITN

“It must have good pictures. This is crucial. If I can’t see the pictures in my head, I won’t go and do it.” George Alagiah, BBC News

“It’s got to be a good story, with human beings at the centre. We can’t comprehend global economies, Eurocrats, the global arms trade – but we can identify with individual people whose lives are affected by these things.” Ali Rasheed, Real Life

“Viewers want a story with good characters that people care about- but it must be more than a ‘still frame’ story. It has to have different levels, and unfold like a drama.” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“We need human stories, reflecting the world back to people, with strong narrative” Alex Holmes, BBC

G.3.3.3. Audience interest

Perhaps not such an abiding concern as that of the commissioners, this still comes very high up the list for most of the producers interviewed.

“The culture of this building (ITV Network Centre) is such that we won’t be running stories that have no resonance with the audience. We decide what will interest the audience on a basis of ITN experience and newsroom discussion.” Robert Moore, ITN

“We have 8 million loyal viewers and we want to appeal to more, younger viewers too. We find out what people want from audience research, tourist industry research and viewer feedback. We want to be fun, happy, and informative so that viewers want to go the places we show.” Jannine Waddell, BBC Holiday

“Audience interest is very important, second only to a good story, but we don’t know exactly what people want. I imagine what they want. It’s blissfully unscientific on Modern Times!” Alex Holmes, BBC

“I know from past experience that programmes about the developing world don’t bring in the audiences. They’re not about us, and they’re not usually about things we can do anything about. Only Northern Ireland and Bosnia have worse ratings than developing world material. So although it’s important it’s harder to get commissioned.” Steve Hewlett, Carlton

“W’e’re past the days of giving audiences what they should have – now it’s all about what they want. We do minute-by-minute analysis of Tonight and we know that the audience dived last week when the item on treatments for Russian drug addicts came on, and that’s a problem for ITV which has to have a good share of the audience.” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“I try and guess what the audience wants. Most people switch on to be entertained, not to get a message. Instinctively I feel domestic stories will be more interesting than foreign ones.” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

A few think that programme-makers should not be over concerned with pleasing the audience.

“To some extent I should be thinking ‘Can I make the audience interested in this?’, but that’s not a key issue. People don’t know what they want until they see it. Some of these programmes will get low ratings, but they still need to be made.” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“I suspect commissioners’ decisions are based more on personal or corporate style rather than research. But whatever their logic, we assume broadcasters will know
what their audience wants and we leave audience preferences to them.” Andre Singer, Cafe Productions

“Programme editors are driven by audience interest, but this can lead to a fixation with home, leisure and consumer items instead of the broader agenda” George Alagiah, BBC News

G.3.3.4. Budget
Budget constraints are seen as a problem in coverage of the developing world.

“Big foreign stories like Kosovo can limit our ability to cover other foreign stories” Al Anstey, ITN

“The expense certainly doesn’t help us get foreign ideas through. Video and crew costs may be cheaper but there’s still transport, accommodation, translators and so on” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“It does make producers self-censor foreign ideas they might otherwise suggest for Tonight” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“Research abroad can be the first thing to be sacrificed on a low budget; causing producers to fall back on sloppy Third World clichés and stereotypes” George Carey, Menthorn Barraclough Carey

“We get some help from the travel companies or airline companies to help us travel widely, but we can’t accept too much as we have to keep our editorial freedom at the same time” Jannine Waddell, BBC Holiday

On the other hand, most non-news producers now assume as a matter of course that they will need to find co-production funding for programmes made abroad. And some feel there has been too much of a tendency for commissioners to seek big budget ‘event’ television where simpler use of new technology and ‘verité’ filming approaches could be just as effective and may actually bring the audience closer to a subject.

There is a feeling in some quarters that budgetary limits can be used as a scapegoat to avoid doing more in the developing world.

“It’s sometimes used as an excuse, as it’s never a constraint when there’s a major foreign news story. The BBC seems to have more to spend on foreign news than anyone else.” George Alagiah, BBC News

The BBC Holiday staff are heavily dependent on the tourist industry for consumer trends, research and programme material – as well as material help in getting to the destinations. They are also increasingly mindful of pressure groups like Tourism Concern campaigning for ethical tourism.

“We cancelled an item on Montenegro after discussions with Tourism Concern, and we are very aware of the need to reflect places and people accurately and sensitively” Jannine Waddell, BBC Holiday

ITN and Sky News staff refer to the importance of the news agencies.

“The major news agencies are very influential in breaking news stories. We also rely on our correspondents, and also UN and aid agency sources.” Al Anstey, ITN

“We’re heavily dependent on Reuters TV and APTN, but we’ve also got our bureaux abroad.” Robert Moore, ITN

“We’re very reliant on Reuters, and will get APTN soon. If they miss something important they’ll get it in the neck” Nick Pollard, Sky News

A former Development Correspondent at the BBC has a different perspective.

“Newspapers are an important source on development stories. Some campaigning charities like Oxfam, or some of the church agencies that recruit locally are also very helpful. The big news agencies {Reuters, APTN} are irrelevant on development stories. In fact they are a negative influence because their agenda influences the programme editors and can militate against development stories.” George Alagiah, BBC News

G.3.3.6. Regulatory/moral obligation
11 of the 13 programme-makers interviewed claim a sense of moral obligation to this area of programming, and 5 a sense of regulatory obligation.

“For me there’s a huge moral obligation to support this area. It’s the driving force in my journalism” George Alagiah, BBC News

“It’s part of being a journalist” Al Anstey, ITN

“It’s a factor in our coverage of the war {Kosovo} – the story needs to be constantly told” Robert Moore, ITN

“We feel obliged to be honest. We don’t dig out problems like poverty, but we don’t hide it” Jannine Waddell, BBC Holiday

G.3.3.5. Reliable programme sources
Those programme-makers dealing constantly with developing world countries refer to their need for reliable sources of information and programme material.
“Yes, but unfortunately moral imperatives don’t work in television these days! They worked strongly in the ’70s and ’80s.” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“Most current affairs people come into television to change the world don’t they?” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“I want our programmes to make a difference to the viewers and the people we’re filming.” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“Yes, I have a deep desire to get into areas where something important is going on or is being ignored.” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“I occasionally feel a programme should be made, and go for it.” André Singer, Café Productions

Of the two who reject this line, one is quite satisfied working on a predominantly British documentary strand, and the other describes himself as a producer rather than a commissioner, having no control in this area.

G.3.3.7. Producer passion

Although several commissioning editors use this term as a positive, and a few programme-makers refer to it as an ideal, only one puts this as a prime criterion in pursuing a programme proposal.

“It must be of interest to our producers. We have to want to make them!” André Singer, Café Productions

G.4. Representation of the developing world on television

Interviewees were asked whether they consider coverage of the developing world on their channels, in general, presents a fair or an imbalanced picture of these countries to viewers. Is there, for instance, a tendency to cover only the wars, disasters and problems, and dwell on stereotypical images? Is enough background context given to explain what is going on in these countries?

- 11 interviewees feel the picture given is reasonably balanced
- 26 interviewees feel the picture is not balanced
  Of those who feel the picture is unbalanced:
  - 19 feel the picture is inevitably not fair
  - 7 feel the picture is not fair, but are trying to redress the balance

[There is a fuller breakdown of these figures in J. GENERAL TRENDS]

G.4.1. ‘Reasonably balanced’

Roughly a third of the interviewees feel their portrayal of the developing world is reasonably fair.

“Comic Relief couldn’t have given a more positive view of Africa and its people.” Peter Salmon, BBC

“We do too few programmes to claim to give a fair depiction overall. But each individual programme is made fairly, with integrity.” David Liddiment, ITV

“We’re fair, but we’re not afraid to be tricky. Channel is there to be edgy and dangerous, not to be representational.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“We are fair because we don’t do ‘problem’ programmes focusing on disasters and corruption. If anything we provide too upbeat a view, at the risk of glossing over existing problems.” Nick Comer-Calder

“We aim at a positive but realistic and objective picture. If we show problems we put them in context and show what is being done about them.” Giselle Barnett, National Geographic

“I wouldn’t sleep well at night if we didn’t show the world as it is. It’s not perfect, Channel 4 can’t completely reflect the whole world in an average week. But even our news doesn’t dwell on war and disaster, and is very strong on providing context for developing world stories.” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“I think we mostly get it right – 80% of the time. We get a lot of pressure both from the travel company PRs and the local tourist boards who want to keep us to their agenda, but we try to resist this. We tell producers to ditch the PR and go down the backstreets and show the countries as they really are.” Jannine Waddell, BBC Holiday

G.4.2. ‘Unbalanced – inevitably’

However, most interviewees feel the picture of the developing world presented on television is not balanced, and most of these think there will always be an inherent imbalance in this area.

This is generally attributed to universal journalistic values that focus only on the big, negative events in far-off places and prefer to report the local and familiar, and is applied to both news and general programming areas. This imbalance is not generally seen as resulting from a paucity of programming in this area, nor from a reliance on needy or exotic stereotypical images of people from developing countries. The imbalance is broadly assumed to be culturally inevitable and so not a general concern.
“Problems and issues have traditionally been the main angle taken by programmes about the developing world”
Adam MacDonald, BBC

“There’s a problem of imbalance throughout the industry. News is short, and drawn to the negative. And with feature or documentary programmes people have to do the war and corruption stories to sell their ideas. There can still be humanity and encouragement in these stories though” Bill Hilary, BBC

“What’s the alternative? Like newspapers that sell more when there’s a scoop, we go with specific stories, and these tend to be about problems. More general information about how ordinary people live in Africa is fine, but not on ITV. It’s impossible to conceive of any of the general interest channels devoting much airtime to the Third World if there isn’t a particular story or point or journalistic coup.” ITV Executive

“It’s inherent to news to be driven by conflict and suffering, especially ITN which is less issue-driven than others. A more erudite, political story will struggle to get on a broad-appeal ITN programme. That’s the culture we work in. The stronger the visual element, the more dramatic the tale, the more likely it is to get on. Conflict and famine are going to play a bigger role than political evolution in Africa” Robert Moore, ITN

“No one gives a fair picture. Some countries are never covered unless dramatic news events take place. The negative is the news norm.” Al Anstey, ITN

“We’re story-led, and the nature of the stories is that they are about problems, the abnormal. But even a story about a problem can be full of positives. For instance, our film about the aftermath of the Nairobi bombing last year was full of the triumph of the human spirit taking over in a terrible situation.” Steve Anderson, ITV

Most take this to be what viewers want and expect.

“Television rarely reflects life as normal, because there is less interest in normality. So the imbalance is natural.” Charles Tremayne, Granada

And some are clear that ‘balance’ is not what they are here to provide.

“We’re not here to give a balanced view, or offer insights into ordinary life in the Third World” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

“I don’t have a duty to developing countries to balance negatives with positives” Steve Anderson, ITV

“We don’t set out to be balanced. We’re led by the programmes: our appeals (10 x Lifeline appeals, plus emergency appeals) have to focus on problems; Holiday focuses on pleasant or interesting holiday locations for the British tourist.” Anne Morrison, BBC

Some programme-makers feel their programmes are the better for not seeking to present balance and context.

“I’m satisfied with what we do. But you can’t include everything, and there will always be those who feel it’s not right. Comic Relief has been criticised for not showing a bleak enough picture of Africa. But over-contexted material can be less emotionally involving, and we want to engage people in what’s going on” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

“We’re not trying to give a balanced picture. Uncharted Africa is an upbeat travel series following a Botswanan journeying round Africa. This isn’t a balanced view of Africa, but nor is it unfair. It engages people because it is not didactic and balanced” André Singer, Café Productions

Others are resigned to, but less comfortable with, the fact that an imbalanced portrayal of the developing world arises from conventions arising from within the television industry itself.

“The whole angle is wrong. We look at the results of things most of the time instead of the causes. Wars rather than the arms trade is an example of this. So we’re conditioned to think of the developing world in a distorted way because we don’t look behind the scenes. It’s a challenge because viewers are less politically aware (this isn’t helped by television!), and because ‘causes’ are not always very visual. How do you film money-laundering and arms deals? But it can be done!” Ian Stuttard, BBC

A number of practical factors are suggested as further conspiring against balance especially on news, in particular the brevity of news bulletins, the distance for correspondents to travel, limited budgets.

“We try to give a fair picture. But these stories are always told through white Western aid workers, and the local people always end up being portrayed as victims. Lack of pictures, or journalists in the right place, can be a problem too. As can our parochial news values (the ‘dead Belgians don’t count’ syndrome)”. Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“ITN – and even larger organisations like Reuters – don’t have people everywhere in the world. Time is a problem too – we can’t give much context when our stories have to be brief.” Al Anstey, ITN

“Lack of our own correspondents to offer high quality journalism from, say Africa and Latin America, can be a problem. But if I got another correspondent it would be more likely to be in Brussels since Europe has to be the major preoccupation.” Nick Pollard, Sky News
As already quoted on page 25, George Alagiah also identifies the British newsrooms’ reliance on Reuters and APTN agencies as a source of imbalance. Since no newsroom can adequately cover the world with its own correspondents alone, journalists depend heavily on these two principal agencies to inform them and provide stories and pictures, especially from the further-flung parts of the world. Alagiah maintains that these London-based agencies promote Euro-American agenda which ignore development stories and influence programme editors against them.

A couple of interviewees go behind the practical issues to consider how their own outlook comes to be shaped. One notes the paradox that, since television is his main source of information about the developing world it is hard for him to judge whether the balance on television is right or not! Another points to the fact that the senior policy-makers in television all come from the “same small social world” and share the same world view, which inevitably influences the outlook of the whole industry.

G.4.3. Unbalanced – but trying to redress the balance

A small minority of interviewees feel that the imbalance they perceive in coverage of the developing world should be redressed.

“We do have to fight hard to do this better. So we try to have travel and music programmes to show these countries’ complex cultures. And we need to see problems solved by the people themselves. It was important to have a black Afro-American presenter on Into Africa” Jane Root, BBC

“When we went to South Africa we tried to cover a bit of everything: the violence, the holidaymakers, but also the middle way, where we chatted to ordinary people on the beach. It wasn’t all problems. But “context” is middle-class bollocks. People won’t watch anything at all about these countries if it’s not made engaging and related to them in some way” Peter McHugh, GMTV

“We’re not as good as we should be. I’m always saying to our team ‘Where are we showing people helping themselves?’ Lack of airtime to explain things properly has been a problem, but with the development of the internet and News 24 space is less of a problem.” Richard Ayre, BBC News

“TV news, though powerful, is a very inadequate means of portraying a whole picture. We make a fantastically good stab at it. But we usually get more flak for trying difficult stories, like coverage of the IMF, and ‘oversimplifying’ than we do for not covering them at all!” Vin Ray, BBC News

“News doesn’t give a fair representation of these countries. Current affairs and documentaries probably do better. There should be more news items like the ones we’ve done on GATT, democratisation in Zambia, urbanisation in Nairobi and the story of sheer human resilience in Mali” George Alagiah, BBC

“We’re conscious of this problem. We try to cover other more positive stories too. But we are mainly covering major news stories rather than ongoing trends. We also try to cover the ‘Why?’; the background, to a story, but there is never enough time in a bulletin to do as much as we’d like” Nigel Dacre, ITN

“Developing countries have often been portrayed as victims, even arts programmes are tinged with this. AFRICA EXPRESS was an attempt to move right away from the usual stereotypes and slants and show other aspects of Africa’s very varied countries and people”. George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

G.5. TV Coverage of the developing world

G.5.1. What works against it?

The overwhelming perception of most policymakers and many programme-makers is that TV programmes about the developing world are dull, depressing, unpleasurable and therefore unpopular. This poses a dilemma since, as this survey has already shown, the majority believe that this to be an area that should be covered, and that it should be covered on mainstream channels.

This section outlines the principal reasons given for why this coverage is thought to be dull, and then lists other practical, cultural and technological reasons why this can be regarded as a ‘problem’ area of production. Since the views expressed on these points predominantly reflect the policymakers/commissioners’ perspectives, this section concludes with the comments of programme-makers.

G.5.1.1. Dull viewing: the perceived causes

THE DUTY FACTOR

Programmes have been made because the subject is important, not because it makes good viewing.

“Programmes about the developing world have been demoted because they have connotations of obligation. We can no longer do subjects because they are important, whereas five years ago we could” André Singer, Café Productions
“You still need substance, but nowadays people come to a programme because they’ll enjoy it” Peter Dale, Channel 4

“The One World seasons on BBC had some good programmes, but the overall quality was inconsistent and some of it was dull. There was too much of it, and even the programme-makers were exhausted by it. It was hard to follow up.” Alan Yentob, BBC

DIDACTIC
Programmes have been made to put over a message.

“There’s a tendency to do messagey and information-led developing world programmes. But most people switch on to be entertained, not to get a message” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“People don’t want to feel hectored. Nor do they want to be told what they already know” Jane Root, BBC

“People don’t want to be lectured to” Peter McHugh, GMTV

ISSUE-LED
Programmes have been based on issues rather than stories, events or characters.

“Issue-led programmes don’t work on television. Personal stories do.” Grant Mansfield, ITV

“Our viewers don’t want hard social or economic issues head-on” Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

“Our research shows us what turns people off: complicated politics, diplomatic issues, economic trends and certain foreign stories that don’t involve violence or conflict” Chris Shaw, Channel 5

“They don’t want big economic themes, they need individual stories to get them involved” Peter McHugh, GMTV

In news the issue-led nature of much coverage of the developing world is mentioned as a particular factor. Long-term developments or trends are perceived as harder to fit into the conventional news agenda.

“Developing world output tends to be issue-driven and therefore gets pushed lower down the bulletins, after the ‘immediate events’” Richard Ayre, BBC News

“What doesn’t work for us? Erudite issues, and the lack of conflict, famine or the ‘big event’” Robert Moore, ITN

“What you want to tell people is not always seen as a classic news story, today’s news, with a peg to hang it on. Certain stories, like child soldiers in Sierra Leone, go right up to the top of the bulletin. But stories that set out to explore the relationship between the rich world and the poor world often end up in the ‘Drop Zone’. You feed it into the satellite with a wish and a prayer, but if anything more immediate happens you know it will get dropped” George Alagiah, BBC News

OLD-FASHIONED/POVERTY OF IDEAS
Some associate this area of output with tired, unimaginative programme-making.

“There have been too many long, turgid documentaries trying to deal with complex issues – or at the other extreme, wacky author pieces – and too little innovation in this area” Bill Hilary, BBC

“Much of modern television is about formats: finding new ways to bring an area of experience to an audience. In many areas – children’s programmes, youth programmes, leisure programmes – this has happened. What has not happened is that producers have found a successful format to bring international material to a decent-sized audience. This is a challenge beyond that of making striking documentaries which will always demand attention.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“There is an astonishing poverty of developing world programme ideas, and a lack of invention. They all come with the idea that, just to describe the current state of Nigeria will immediately cause the British public to switch on their television. There’s a real paucity of people who want to think about television form and how it attaches to the coverage of such issues.” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“This area needs a high bench mark when it comes to new programme formats and approaches. People watch to find out something new. We have to guard against being boring” Steve Anderson, ITV

“The old ‘genre’ of developing world programmes became seen as a simple, predictable and therefore boring area. We need surprises and challenges.” Jane Root, BBC

One commissioning editor wonders if enough contemporary producers know enough about the developing world to offer good new ideas.

“Perhaps mainstream programme-makers don’t get enough exposure to what’s going on in this area. Maybe normal news briefings by, say, DFID should include not just news people but documentary-makers. Are enough programme-makers being engaged in this area? After all, we [commissioners] are buyers, not sellers, we respond to the ideas that come to us” Grant Mansfield, ITV
PRODUCERS PURSUING THEIR OWN AGENDA
On the other hand there is some sensitivity about producers who appear to put their personal agenda first and foremost.

“Some producers in this area pursue their own agenda without thinking how to make it palatable to a general audience” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

“There’s always been a pretty consistent North-South agenda, done in bits and pieces. But most of the producers who make these programmes make them out of a sense of commitment that they ought to be made. That conviction is vital, but the trouble is they don’t think very hard about who might want to watch them, and how to get people to watch.” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“This is the most blinkered of all the debates about television. There’s a whole raft of people who think they have the right to make programmes on development issues without any reference to the audience. And by developmental issue they don’t mean an issue at the core of the survival or advancement of a developing country. They mean that tension between the developed and developing world. That’s what they are on about. Only. I was shocked to find there were people who would not see that Africa Express was an attempt to modernise coverage of the developing world, people who continue to exist within their own laager, way back in decades past, when the only thing that mattered was this tension between the First and the Third World.” David Lloyd, Channel 4

G.5.1.2 Practical problems

SHORTAGE OF AIRTIME

News staff are particularly aware of the airtime limitations of a news bulletin, and the competition to get a story on.

“We are always vying with domestic news stories, so there isn’t usually time to do features” Al Anstey, ITN

“There is always so much to report, so no single type of story is going to be covered comprehensively” Nigel Dacre, ITN

“We couldn’t fit in many more foreign stories, with news programmes only about half an hour long. Time is the biggest problem when it comes to explaining complex stories” Vin Ray, BBC News

COST OF FOREIGN PROGRAMME-MAKING

As discussed under Commissioning Criteria: Budget (G.3.)

SHELF-LIFE

“Most cable and satellite channels look for a long shelf-life for their programmes – around three years – so can’t afford to take anything too topical” Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

PERSONAL DANGER

A factor for the BBC Holiday team who pulled out of Turkey and Croatia when advised these would not be safe for tourists. It can of course be an issue for news staff too.

PHYSICAL DISTANCE

“Physical distance can be a deterrent on developing world stories. Sometimes it’s impossible to get to distant locations on the same day as the story breaks, and that can influence your judgement on whether or not to send a correspondent.” Al Anstey, ITN

“It can be difficult to get around when you don’t have the same journalistic networks you have over here” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

GLOBAL CHANGES/BRITISH INSULARITY

Some interviewees see television’s apparently diminishing interest in world affairs in the context of certain global changes.

“My personal opinion is that in the ’70s and into the ’80s there was an appetite for certain international coverage, like environmental programmes. But after the collapse of the Berlin Wall foreign budgets moved into Eastern Europe, away from the broader global scene” Tim Gardam, Channel 4

“Twenty years ago there were many programmes about the Third World, partly through a paternalistic interest, the legacy of empire, and partly because it was the ideological battleground of the Cold War. Now there’s much less interest” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“Somehow the world has got more ’global’ and yet individuals have gone more domestic and inward – looking, perhaps because they can’t cope with the scale of the change.” Ali Rasheed, Real Time

Several other interviewees speak of the insularity of the British audience...

“Our focus groups show that the British are more insular than other Europeans” Nick Comer-Calder, Discovery

“We have to link to the audience zeitgeist, and the developing world is not a general interest area to a UK audience” Chris Shaw, Channel 5
“The programmes aren’t of interest because they aren’t about us, and they’re about problems we can’t do anything about” Steve Hewlett, Carlton

“The audience is unfamiliar with the subject and not knowledgable. This area of programming breaks with their habits and expectations of ITV. There’s possibly some racism in this resistance too” ITV executive

... and of the insularity of journalists and editors themselves. Particular reference is made to the rarity of Latin American coverage.

“Traditionally British journalists have only shown interest in Latin America if there’s a disaster or the football World Cup is on.” David Boardman, Central

“South America is one area in which we have to admit we haven’t got the balance right. Programme editors don’t want it, unless someone like John Simpson goes there, and the senior correspondents are more interested in the more trendy places – which Latin America is not” Vin Ray, BBC News

During the interviews, the use of a hypothetical programme proposal about Bolivian tin miners was viewed by some commissioning editors as the ultimate challenge.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

Some interviewees think current technological changes are undermining coverage of the developing world. They feel that the increase of specialist digital channels will draw this coverage away from mainstream television. Others think that the immediacy and ready availability of news from around the world will discourage other types of factual programmes from abroad, like documentaries.

Multi-channel structures will encourage niche and brand specialism

“Specialist channels like Nat Geo and Discovery have undiscovered gems on this subject area, and can devote 24 hours to it. That’s a better solution than forcing it into mainstream popular schedules” ITV executive

“Our news channel covers serious world affairs substantially and significantly, while we concentrate on the fun and entertainment perspective” Mo Joseph, Sky One

“Serious international documentaries are principally done either by current affairs departments or by specialist international cable/satellite channels now” André Singer, Café Productions

Television news will become the dominant medium for this area of coverage

“In the 1960s, documentaries from Vietnam were all very new to us. But now that information can come live and immediate on news programmes there is less that is new to viewers. News has really taken over now in informing us about the world.” David Liddiment, ITV

G.5.2. The programme-makers’ perspective

While some of the points above are endorsed by programme-makers, it should be recorded that a number of programme-makers view the issues of ‘dull’ programming and viewer insularity quite differently.

G.5.2.1. ‘Dull viewing’: An alternative view

“It’s just not true that this output has to be dull, and has been ‘left behind’. It depends on the skill of the programme-maker. I’m convinced that programmes can be made in this area that are as compelling and colourful as any British docusoap.” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“Whether programmes ‘work’, and whether commissioners want to find a space for them are two separate questions. A lot of these programmes did ‘work’, but were clearly not regarded as audience-catching” André Singer, Café Productions

“The critics who generalise that programming about the developing world tends to be old-fashioned and dull are misinformed. Investigative programmes like the ones I have worked on with John Pilger and Jonathon Dimbleby are not dull, and the feedback we get shows this, even if the ratings are not high” David Boardman, Central.

“Anything can be made to work. That’s our craft. If people are just talking ‘issues’, it’s my job to see what I will film. There’ve got to be pictures. So if the issue is debt relief, what pictures are we going to see?” George Alagiah, BBC News

“Anything can be made to work if enough imagination is used. Debt cancellation could be tricky. But even then, a good film relating debt to village life could work” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

“No subject is off limit. Even international debt. There’s nothing that can’t be made into good television with the right approach” Charles Tremayne, Granada
G.5.2.2. Viewer insularity: An alternative view

“How can we assume that people are not interested in foreign output? It may be that we haven’t been telling it properly” George Alagiah, BBC News

“I’m personally puzzled when domestic broadcasters turn down a good international idea on the grounds that the audiences want domestic stories. I’m assuming that’s backed up by audience research. But it always puzzles me because I’d have thought, partly from my own tastes, that people don’t particularly want so much navel-gazing, they’d rather TV took them into areas they don’t have access to” André Singer, Café Productions

“The public don’t know what they want until they see it. They didn’t know they wanted Coronation Street and other hits before they came on. Programmes are supply-led not demand-led.” Ali Rashid, Real Time

“Substantial numbers of viewers really are bothered by what’s going on in the world. In January 1999 after The Timor Conspiracy, reported by John Pilger, there were 80,000 attempted calls in the first three minutes after the programme finished. 200,000 attempted calls were logged. The audience was ‘only’ two million, but ten per cent of them were so involved with the programme content that they phoned in. Who said people don’t care about faraway places any more?” David Boardman, Central

G.5.2.3. The developing world is a ‘no-go zone’ for commissioners

Many programme-makers see their main deterrent in this area as the creation of a kind of ‘no-go zone’ by commissioning editors.

“Producers do not put forward proposals concerning the developing world because they know the commissioners will turn them down. I’ve made several attempts in the past. But this year I didn’t put up a single one for this reason. I gather from colleagues at ITV it’s even worse. They’re told the requirement for factual output is domestic docusoaps and docusoaps and docusoaps.” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“We are controller-led. If they wanted more, we’d follow. They tell us what they’re looking for and we follow that very closely” Anne Morrison, BBC

“The feedback from British broadcasters is that they don’t want foreign programming.” André Singer, Café Productions

“Trying to sell development stories has not been a very positive experience. Commissioners only want British participants. This programming will only work if there is a willingness on the part of the commissioners to feel it should be made” Ali Rashid, Real Time

“We’re commissioning editor-led, and they won’t take developing world projects without an irresistible selling point” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“I resent the idea that a domestic transport story, however badly it’s told, gets in [the bulletin], but a developing world story, however well it’s told, has to fight its way in and nudge its way round the ‘drop zone’” George Alagiah, BBC News

G.5.2.4. Structural divides in the industry

The ‘no-go zone’ factor is exacerbated by the structural separation of production from commissioners. Many programme-makers feel frustrated that commissioning decisions have become ever more centralised at the most senior level, with several layers of ‘commissioners’ between them and the actual person making the final decisions.

“We have to guess what the department head and controllers want all the time, but we don’t ever meet the top decision-makers. We don’t even get cross-fertilisation of ideas with our peers, there’s no forum for that. So we never hear the controllers’ instructions directly, or get the chance to knock ideas around or argue a case” Ian Stuttard, BBC

The structural divides are acknowledged at senior levels of both the BBC and ITV.

“Production is more separate from broadcaster now, everywhere, so yes, there is less space for ‘producer passion’” David Liddiment, ITV

“We must rely on good heads of department to have the courage of their convictions to get things through on behalf of producers. There is more caution around now, but we don’t want this. The controllers do want to encourage passion and enthusiasm for good projects in all areas.” Alan Yentob, BBC

In news, blocks in the commissioning process are identified lower down the hierarchy.

“There’s an institutional divide between the programme editors who are becoming increasingly parochial under pressure to compete with the other mass channels, and the producers and correspondents with important foreign stories to tell” George Alagiah, BBC News
G.5.3. What does work on television?

Strong television output: no different from other areas of programming

The industry decision-makers’ responses already noted indicate that:

Coverage of the developing world should in principle be a naturally integrated part of mainstream television. But in practice this has not been achieved as it has tended to lose audiences.

But, while important in general, as part of television’s role as a ‘window on the world’, individual programmes can no longer be made simply because they cover a topic that is deemed important. It is not a specifically ‘protected’ area, like news or religion. As part of the mainstream, they must be judged on the same basis as all other programming.

The criteria for all programming include:

- The ability to draw an audience (judged by ratings)
- If not, the ability to win plaudits or get noticed
- Affordability
- Timeliness
- Use of current (if not trend-setting) formats and styles
- Providing something distinctive to the channel remit
- Suiting regulatory requirements

“Coverage of the developing world should not be seen as a separate subject area. Stories are judged alongside everything else. The key thing is impact not minutes, occasional but impressive” Jane Root, BBC

“If you flag this type of programming as a zone, people are put off. Seasons and theme nights are not the answer here, you wouldn’t keep up the interest.” Rosemary Newell, Channel 4

G.5.3.1. Distinctive features necessary to make coverage of the developing world work well on television

There are, however, certain features that the majority of interviewees (both policy-makers and programme-makers) regard as necessary requirements in the current climate for this type of programming to work well.

AN UNPREDICTABLE APPROACH

Twenty interviewees stressed the need for new angles.

“We have to approach the subjects in an unpredictable way and breathe fresh life into this area. We have to touch people in ways they least expect – like COMIC RELIEF did” Alan Yentob, BBC

“These programmes should be full of surprises and challenges. One way we are trying to do this is to cross genres, because some traditional genres have become too predictable on their own. For instance, INTO AFRICA combined archaeology, politics and history with travel. Pleasure for BBC2 audiences involves thinking and being challenged, not giving them what they already know” Jane Root, BBC

“On GMTV we might put the Spice Girls on first to catch people’s interest before an item on Soweto. When we went to South Africa we deliberately mixed it in with LE and wacky domestic stories, because there’s no point doing South Africa at all if people don’t watch.” Peter McHugh, GMTV

“The best output has a surprise element, it’s not widely known, and it forces people – and governments – to address the issue” Richard Ayre, BBC News

“We need novelty and invention. It took a genius to make a programme like the Modern Times programme Mange-Tout, to see there was a way of making a witty documentary which related to a sizeable British audience by unpicking what was on their dinner plate – not in a preachy way – and demonstrating something about the interdependence of food provision in the world. It’s a great example of how wit and imagination transformed something from a sterile topic to something that made great watching. Lagos Airport is another example of this.” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“It may take greater ingenuity to present these programmes in a popular way, but it can be done. We’ve done it with anthropology, which once was hugely popular. With our Forbidden Rites series we decided to find a tabloid label for it, to shock people into being interested, but make the films as serious anthropology. So the first three programmes are on human sacrifice, cannibalism and headhunting! Yet it’s actually turned into one of the most interesting anthropology programmes I’ve ever been involved in, and takes us inside societies in Latin America, the Middle East and Indonesia in a serious way. You have to sell yourself in a Hollywood style to get the issues across.” André Singer, Café Productions

Being unpredictable, for some, includes the idea of being more upbeat in this area.

“People expect gloom and hopelessness. But the best programmes bring the unexpected glimmer of hope among the problems, like Jonathon Dimbleby’s An Ethiopian Journey” Grant Mansfield, ITV
“You can distance the audience with a programme that is too emotionally draining. The True Stories on Kosovo overcame this because it wasn’t just about hopelessness. It was possible to see problems in more than one way, life’s not black and white, it’s more complicated than that.” Peter Dale, Channel 4

“Africa Express was a brave experiment by Channel 4 in moving away from the usual stereotypes and slants on Africa to present a mixture of stories from an African perspective, using local producers. Why not look at fashion in Zaire for a change?” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

Others point to the fact that, at a time when so much has ‘been done’ on television already, there is a wealth of new programme material to be tapped in the developing world.

“It’s virgin territory. With the right ideas and energy we could do so much more” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“There’s a wealth of good stories out there that are engaging and compelling as well as informative if we allowed ourselves to see it’s there” Ian Stuttard, BBC

“I’d like to offer more because it’s a rich area that is changing fast” George Carey, Mentorn Barraclough Carey

AN ENGAGING PERSONALISED HUMAN STORY...
This was stressed by 31 interviewees.

“A good programme will demonstrate that the differences are less great than people think. It offers human links” David Lloyd, Channel 4

“The best way to understand the developing world is to connect viewers to the subjects of the programme – like Storyville did in its soap-style story of a family in China. Bill Hilary, BBC

“A good story can provide analysis through personal experience, not expert-led analysis” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

“We try to use human stories to bring events home to people. In Sudan last year we followed three particular Sudanese people, and we went back six months later to follow up” Nigel Dacre, ITN

“The Modern Times programme Minders about Iraqi security officers was extraordinarily engaging on a human level. We had an unusually strong response from the young male audience, so there was a particular resonance there.” Alex Holmes, BBC

“It’s the story that sold the Nairobi bombing film, not the fact that we ought to be doing something on the developing world” David Liddiment, ITV

...OR SOME OTHER LINK TO A BRITISH AUDIENCE
21 propose this, while 4 do not think it important.

“We try to get people to project themselves into a place. Our hook for our South Africa programmes was ‘Have you ever thought of going to South Africa?’” Peter McHugh, GMTV

“My piece on the banana wars started off ‘Why should we care where our bananas come from so long as they end up in our fruit bowls?’ You have to turn the story into something of personal interest to the viewers” George Alagiah, BBC News

“Certain countries are in people’s mass psyche at certain times – maybe Indonesia at the moment, and we can link into that” Jeremy Gibson, BBC

THE PRESENCE OF A CELEBRITY OR WELL-KNOWN REPORTER
26 think this important, 5 do not.
On news and current affairs well-known reporters are generally seen as an advantage in this area of programming, on all news channels.

On some feature and documentary programmes the celebrity involvement is seen as important too, although naturally dependent on the particular programme.

“We sent Eamonn Holmes to do our South Africa programmes so that the audience would relate to someone they know” Peter McHugh, GMTV

“On World In Action when the religious programmes presenter Larry Hollingsworth went back to Rwanda viewers knew him and identified with him and it worked very well seeing it through his eyes” Charles Tremayne, Granada

“Benedict Allen and Henry Louis Gates have travelled to the Third World in peaktime schedules. It tends to remain presenter-led territory” Jo Clinton-Davis, BBC

STRONG PROMOTION OF PROGRAMMES
27 think this is highly important for this area, 4 think not.

“it’s well-researched that on-air trails are the single most important factor to boost a programme” Grant Mansfield, ITV

“On-air trails are important, less so general advertising” Peter Dale, Channel 4
“Pre-trailed news stories are becoming increasingly important in news” Vin Ray, BBC News

“We don’t promote and trail specific news stories, but we should” George Alagiah, BBC News

“We don’t make enough use of this because last-minute scheduling changes are so common now. We used to do a lot more and it’s very important in getting programmes noticed” Ian Stuttard, BBC

G.5.4. Examples of successful output
“Successful” television output on the developing world as selected by survey interviewees (Bold type denotes a programme put forward by at least three interviewees)

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<th>BBC</th>
<th>ITV</th>
<th>CHANNEL 4</th>
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<td>Comic Relief</td>
<td>John Pilger’s films on East Timor, S. Africa and Burma</td>
<td>Ends of the Earth</td>
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<td>BBC News: Michael Buerk’s Ethiopian reports, George Alagiah’s films on Africa, GATT &amp; banana wars, David Loyn on Kosovo Oct.98</td>
<td>True Terror – The aftermath of the Nairobi bombing</td>
<td>Face of Debt</td>
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<td>Under The Sun</td>
<td>Children of the Sewers (Buenos Aires) with Desmond Wilcox</td>
<td>Bombay Driving School</td>
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<td>Correspondent</td>
<td>GMTV 5 programmes from South Africa</td>
<td>Lagos Airport</td>
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<td>International 7-ups</td>
<td>Tonight: Viet Nam’s Irish ‘Mother Theresa’</td>
<td>Shanghai Vice</td>
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<td>Panorama films on Rwanda</td>
<td>World In Action: Larry Hollingsworth visits Rwanda</td>
<td>Jamaica ER</td>
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<td>Into Africa with Henry Louis Gates</td>
<td>ITN: Reports from Sudan ‘98, Mark Austin in Albania, China series</td>
<td>Channel 4 News features</td>
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<td>The Full Circle with Michael Palin</td>
<td>Disaster Appeals (1998: Sudan, Bangladesh &amp; Honduras</td>
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<td>Storyville on a Chinese family</td>
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<td>Vets in the Wild</td>
<td>The Unknown Famine (1973) Jonathan Dimbleby</td>
<td>Ten Plagues of Egypt</td>
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<td>Lifeline charity appeals</td>
<td>Latin American Trilogy (1979) Jonathan Dimbleby</td>
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<td>Modern Times: Mange-tout, Minders</td>
<td>An Ethiopian Journey – Jonathan Dimbleby’s Return</td>
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<td>Holiday reports on Malawi and Viet Nam</td>
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<td>James Furlong’s Asian reports</td>
<td>Queen of the Elephants</td>
<td>Natural Born Killers</td>
<td>Caribbean Uncovered</td>
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G.5.5. Commercial Considerations

G.5.5.1. The Advertisers’ Perspective
As part of this study Graham Hinton, Chairman of Bates UK, Bjarni Thelin, Director of Planning at Carlton UK Sales and Tony Hopewell-Smith, Director of Audience Research for Carlton UK Sales contributed their view of how commercial pressures influence programme output, in particular output on the developing world. Bates UK handles corporate clients that advertise on television, as well as promoting Discovery Channel. Carlton UK Sales sells ITV advertising space to advertisers.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVERTISERS AND TELEVISION COMPANIES
The interviewees describe the influence of advertisers on television programmes as indirect but powerful. ITV, as the largest commercial channel, is arguably under the greatest pressure of all from advertisers. In recent years the advertisers have criticised ITV for producing a diminishing audience share and have called for increased advertising minutage. The ITC has turned down this proposal, but the advertisers have kept up pressure on ITV.

“ITV is volume-driven because the sales agenda is volume-driven. It can’t afford to alienate part of its key audience. News at Ten was moved because half the population never watched it over a four week period. Next year’s target for ITV is to achieve a 40% share of the peak time audience” Carlton UK Sales directors.

This makes for an atmosphere where programming risks are avoided and the principle concern is programmes that draw an audience. Hence the trend in ITV for factual programmes to focus on docusoaps. However, Carlton UK Sales directors say commercial influences do not always prevail.

“There is plenty that goes out that we, or rather our clients advertising, don’t want to go out. For instance, TONIGHT. When Carlton did trials we found viewers didn’t want current affairs with upsetting negative stories at 10pm.” But they recognise that ITV has other considerations as well, notably the ITC obligation to protect news and current affairs output.

THE AUDIENCES ADVERTISERS WANT
Audience volume, providing consumers en masse, is crucial to a commercial channel.

“TV is still the most powerful medium available to advertisers. Everything is changing; in the future TV will be fragmented, viewer choice more eclectic, programmes not channels will become brands, and advertisers will become programmemakers. But advertisers don’t know how to address those changes yet and TV still provides a mass audience which keeps advertising costs down” Graham Hinton, Bates UK.

“Our key target is young, upmarket people, but we want a mix of people too. ITV peak ratings are four times more valuable than any other channels in terms of shifting product. So we are not interested in the quality of response from, say, hundreds calling in after a minority interest programme. Light, fluffy documentaries tend to attract a big upmarket audience who are likely to be informed anyway. Serious documentaries tend to attract small, downmarket audiences. More serious advertisers go to Channel 4” Carlton UK Sales directors.

HOW AUDIENCE TASTES ARE ASCERTAINED
“We don’t know for certain what people want before they’ve seen it. We minimise risk by extensive research (quantitative studies and focus groups) plus a huge dose of intuition, plus a huge creative leap. People do depend on research all the time as a crutch, but research is no substitute for judgement. It can only tell you where you’ll get it wrong, but not where you’ll get it right!” Graham Hinton, Bates UK.

“We check the overnight ratings daily and work out the trends. We rely on Barb ratings and do our own research in the London area. We don’t know for certain if people are telling the truth. Men always say they watch documentaries and news even if they don’t. Women tend to say they watch soap. What you can do fairly reliably is spot flops, and predict successful formats – until audiences have had enough of the format and the figures drop again” Carlton UK Sales directors.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTPUT ON THE DEVELOPING WORLD
All three interviewees agree that programmes about the developing world are not watched in large numbers, so they cannot be placed at peak times in the schedules on commercial channels.

“A big analysis was done years ago that showed foreign programmes led to a ratings drop. For instance, when THE COOK REPORT went to East Europe it did far worse than the rest of the series which was made in the UK. If advertisers see a heavy documentary coming up we get them ringing up saying they don’t want to be involved. We are very reluctant to try anything in this area, even new ideas, because traditionally we know it doesn’t work. A programme about AIDS in Central Africa would just be a foolish risk “ Carlton UK Sales directors.
“It seems that documentaries are a turn-off, while entertainment and involving, accessible programming is a turn-on” Graham Hinton, Bates UK

The prospects for future output on the developing world
“Developing world output should be on the BBC or niche channels, apart from news. People are not interested.” Carlton UK Sales directors

“The onus is on the programme-makers. It could be that it’s the way the programmes are made that is the problem – too serious, not entertaining enough – or that they are inadequately promoted. It could be that it is the perception of foreign programmes rather than the programmes themselves that is the problem. If there is no change here, and these programmes cannot be popularised they will not stay in the mainstream but will have a future on niche channels” Graham Hinton, Bates UK

SUMMARY
Commercial channels are driven ultimately by the sales agenda of their advertisers, who finance the channels and who demand mass audiences or ‘volume’. The ITC regulators provide a sometimes conflicting pressure in their efforts to protect programming in the ‘public interest’ like news and current affairs, but the commercial pressures predominate. Output on the developing world gets low ratings and is not desirable in this climate. It is seen as the preserve of the BBC, Channel 4 and niche channels – unless a way is found of making them involving and accessible.

G.5.5.2. The Distributors’ Perspective
Paul Sowerbutts is Director of Programmes for the television distributor ITEL, and Jane Balfour runs the distribution company Jane Balfour Films. ITEL distributes mostly factual programmes for UK and US producers to all countries. Jane Balfour Films distributes factual, drama and feature films made both in the UK and world-wide. Their opinions were invited on the British television industry attitude to programming about the developing world.

QUANTITY OF PROGRAMMING ABOUT THE DEVELOPING WORLD
Overall, both agree there are fewer British programmes made in this area than in previous years, and fewer bought in. The only exception might be certain current affairs strands like Despatches or Correspondent which could be making more.

WHY THERE ARE FEWER PROGRAMMES
“The world has become smaller, so the rest of the world is not so mysterious and interesting as it was. And people don’t like subtitles. Broadcasters have made the developing world something of a ghetto area by marginalising or cutting the slots. It’s now mainly found on the niche channels.” Paul Sowerbutts, ITEL

“British television has managed to brainwash the government and our whole culture into thinking that ratings are everything. We have trained ourselves into thinking that the only justification for a programme is its ratings. Even the BBC which should be leading, informing, educating, is caught up in this.

“It’s a very serious problem because unless you have an informed audience this is self-progressing. You eliminate audiences by not educating them. Ten years of showing no foreign language films reduces the audience for them. Foreign language and subtitles have come to be regarded as “intellectual” – that’s why we’ve become cut off from Europe.

“Britain has become insular and only wants to see the world through our own, British eyes. We used to laugh at the Americans for this, and now we’re nearly there too! We have the technological means to cover the world, but the content and vision has declined to almost zero.” Jane Balfour

SALES POTENTIAL FOR OUTPUT ABOUT THE DEVELOPING WORLD
This is potentially a strong area for sales.

“Television, globally, wants more world programming, but British broadcasters and producers are not tuned into that. We can sell as much developing world programming as anything else, but we can only sell what broadcasters are making. Into Africa is saleable everywhere; Baby It’s You, with its multi-cultural approach, sold everywhere. But these are rare. The last UK anthropology co-production we did was Nomads, seven years ago, but the market’s changed so much there’s no chance of our getting a series like that now.” Paul Sowerbutts, ITEL

“Hard-hitting international current affairs films like John Pilger’s ones always sell well, but there aren’t many made now. And films that tug at the heart-strings also do well, like the one about Chinese orphans, or Thai child prostitution.” Jane Balfour
THE FUTURE

There are no signs of change, although major broadcasters may sometimes try to redress the balance. Niche channels will fill the void, but their output does not compare with mainstream output: their view of the world is only partial.

"Terrestrial neglect has led, both in the UK and the United States, to the growth of the niche channels like Discovery and National Geographic. The main channels in Britain will probably oscillate between realising the balance is wrong and trying to redress the balance, just as the American networks have. There are not enough windows on the world. People want to have more exposure to the world than they are getting." Paul Sowerbutts, ITEL

"Has the opportunity for good global output gone forever? The main channels still have the opportunity to surprise an audience with programmes the viewers didn’t realise they would like- as they did in the past. But the niche channels don’t tell the tougher, more difficult stories, and unfortunately the main channels seem to be following them. Travel, Discovery, Nat Geo – all these channels’ need for branding tends to lead to programmes which are bland, non-controversial and geared only to consumerism.

"Should DFID help set up funding for programming made in the developing world, as an incentive for change?" Jane Balfour

SUMMARY

Few programmes about the developing world are now made and wanted by British broadcasters, outside news and current affairs. Broadcasters have marginalised this output, driven single-mindedly by the ratings imperative, and are eliminating audiences for international output. Britain is getting increasingly insular and the television industry is not in tune with the international marketplace which wants more global, universal output. Niche channels are flourishing but not filling the void left by the mainstream output.
Television output that portrays the countries of the developing world does not constitute a programme genre, and never has done. It has a place in news, current affairs, drama, documentaries, discussion programmes, appeals, and occasional ‘events’ like Comic Relief. Yet it is sometimes treated as a genre of its own for two main reasons:

1) It is associated with a certain style of problem-based, sometimes campaigning, factual programme familiar on television of the ‘70s and ‘80s on strands like World In Action, This Week, Global Report, First Tuesday, Panorama, The World About Us, and many individual series besides.

2) It is an area of programming that in the ‘90s has come to represent something of a puzzle.

H.1. The Puzzle

This puzzle is clearly summed up in the findings of this survey. All the 38 interviewees believe television has a role in informing people about the developing world, as a natural part of its ‘window on the world’ function. Almost all the interviewees (33 out of 38) feel this role should be played out on the popular mainstream channels, not simply the specialist niche channels. All interviewees claim there is a place for this programming on their own channels/output, and almost all include a place for hard development issues.

However, the majority of interviewees do not believe the public want to watch programmes about the developing world, and therein lies the puzzle. In the days of the old BBC-ITV duopoly, programmes could be commissioned regardless of mass audience interest if the subject was deemed important. It was seen as acting in the public interest to do this. But now, in the multi-channel era, with a vastly-increased choice of viewing options available, the balance of power has shifted to the audience. Channels that don’t fiercely compete to win an audience will fail to justify their existence.

This study indicates that the traditional public service ethos of British television is still strongly present in the thinking of industry decision-makers, and the developing world is high up on the “ought-to” list. But in the current battle for audience share and survival this area of output has come to be regarded as a high ratings risk and therefore a problem.

Is there a way to fulfil television’s perceived social responsibility and satisfy a present-day audience at the same time? That is the conundrum.

H.2. The Pressures

If the overriding concern for senior decision-makers must be audience share, the programme-makers’ central concern is getting ideas commissioned in the first place. And a number of factors in the commissioning process are perceived to work against output on the developing world, especially in non-news programming.

Developing and researching ideas in developing countries can be costly to a producer, but without this process there may not be enough substance to make a programme proposal convincing or tangible, especially if a commissioning editor is unfamiliar with the country concerned.

The commissioning process has become more centralised at the top, and producers feel frustrated not to be able to communicate directly with the final decision-makers. Some of the topmost commissioners express dissatisfaction with the quality of ideas they are offered, and admit there is little opportunity for spontaneous, creative discussion about projects across the ranks of middle-commissioners. Areas of programming considered risky, like output on the developing world, are the first to be squeezed out in this hierarchical system.

The very fact that stories about the developing world are seen as risky leads to self-censoring among producers. Some for whom this was once a speciality have moved right away from this area and no longer maintain contacts in these countries. Producer passion in this area has not been encouraged.

Commissioning structures apart, there are certain cultural assumptions prevalent in the television industry, and apparent in interview responses, that do not favour output on the developing world. These assumptions do not appear to be based on conclusive research. They include:

Most British viewers only want to watch domestic topics. This fact is disputed. BBC News claim their research finds this is not the case. Carlton TV points to research that claims it is. While a senior advertising director considers that “maybe it’s the perception of foreign programmes rather than the programmes
themselves that is the problem...we don’t know for certain what people want before they’ve seen it.”

Most British viewers are interested in celebrities, so celebrity involvement can ensure the success of a programme. Of course the vast majority of favourite celebrities are British or American, not from developing countries.

If ordinary people are shown, viewers like them to be ‘larger than life’: doing something unusual, wacky, heartrending or exceptionally revealing.

Factual programming is made more viewer-friendly by borrowing from entertainment genres: snazzy packaging and music, entertaining characters, startling storylines.

Even news programmes, which by their nature operate within a more global and public service framework than most other areas of programming, can be seen to be influenced by these assumptions.

The survey indicates that, amidst the relentless pressure of commercialism and the requirement to please domestic viewers, it is easy for television decision-makers to lose sight of the essentially global dimension of life in today’s Britain. Most participants focused on a narrow domestic agenda, with little reference to programming that might reflect how people’s lives are now intricately linked to countries around the world.

### H.3. The Possibilities

This has been designated a difficult area of programme-making, and responses to the survey present plenty of pitfalls. A few at policymaker level have yet to be convinced that the developing world will ever be better represented on commercial channels than it is now. As one ITV commissioning editor says, “This is as good as it gets”.

But the survey also indicates that this could be a time of new opportunity in this area. Despite the commercial pressures, participants still recognise social and cultural obligations in this area. All the commissioning editors and policymakers interviewed here endorse the idea of television as the medium to inform people about the developing world, and claim a place for this on their channels.

The general consensus on this output is that it should ideally be:

- Engaging, probably through human interest stories that strike a universal chord, through British connections, or presented by a familiar reporter or presenter
- Strongly promoted

The commissioning editors and policymakers look to the programme-makers for fresh inspiration, to break out of the dull-depressing-and-plain-difficult aura that has come to surround this area.

Most programme-makers, for their part, look to the commissioners for greater encouragement and open-mindedness, and the chance to occasionally let programmes and producer passion lead bravely, rather than presumed audience taste.

Television has long claimed to be a window on the world, and the world has never been more accessible or interrelated. One interviewee senses that people have turned inward because they cannot cope with the scale of global change. This could perhaps be a pivotal time for television to throw light on the changes in new and arresting ways.
I. Recommendations

It could therefore be timely to consider the following:

- Encouragement from senior commissioning editors for those producers interested in this area. This could, for instance, take the form of creating an experimental strand for films with a global perspective, a showcase for new and arresting approaches. Commissioning editors could also recommend specific, existing slots or strands that could be targeted with global ideas. They could encourage training seminars. There could even be a well-publicised cross-channel initiative, in which commissioners from various channels agree to address a more global agenda. If producers are being called on to be unpredictable and innovative perhaps commissioning editors need to demonstrate their support in surprising, new ways too.

- A series of discussion and training seminars for producers specifically designed to interest new talent in this area and encourage some inventive approaches and angles. The seminars could include: global perspectives and networking for producers, how to access and develop good ideas abroad, the practicalities of filming in developing countries, and questions of narrative interest, production style and packaging, critical analysis of previous output in this area, and exchanges of ideas between newer producers and ‘pioneers’ like John Pilger. These would be geared to documentary and feature producers, but separate sessions could be designed for news producers, to encourage attractive, inventive approaches to the coverage of development issues.

- Research to explore additional indicators to ratings for measuring a programme’s worth. What other ways could be used to measure the value and impact of programming identified as important, but not drawing the mass audience? The television and advertising industries still gear themselves to mass and volume, but in an increasingly fragmented future this will become even more of an issue. It is already an issue for the public service channels.

- The encouragement of interaction between media policymakers and producers in the UK, and those from parts of the world beyond Europe and the United States, so that new areas of programme-making interest could be identified. Greater use could perhaps be made of existing forums, such as MIP, the Edinburgh International TV Festival or Newsworld, to expand discussion of programme content in the global age. Where commercial, technological or regulatory issues can predominate, an additional focus on global information flows, representation, or the tension between global and local cultural interests could perhaps stimulate the fresh approaches to international coverage that are called for in this report.

- An occasional, informal forum for British producers interested in this field to meet, in response to producers who feel there is little chance to exchange ideas now that few producers are in-house. It would provide an opportunity to network, maintain broader global perspectives and perhaps occasionally encourage new production partnerships.

- Development funding to help with the researching and planning of documentary and feature projects – or special news features – from developing countries. This would encourage producers to explore fresh ideas from less-covered parts of the world, and improve the quality of these programme ideas. The funding process would need to be structured so that funds could be accessed either by commissioning editors for particular projects, or producers whose projects have been ‘rubber-stamped’ by a commissioning editor. There needs to be some certainty that funding goes to programmes with a strong chance of being commissioned.

- A bursary to enable mainstream British programme-makers to work in the television or film industry of a developing country. This would give journalists or producers the opportunity to have first-hand knowledge of a country, experience the media industries of another culture, make contacts and collect programme ideas. It could build up a core of producers with heightened awareness of international and multicultural issues, and with direct access to ideas and fellow programme-makers around the world.
Research documents and reports relating to this study include:

TV and the Third World: A British View, J.M. Wober, October 1987, ITC
Research commissioned by the IBA (shortly to become the ITC) into people's perceptions of the Third World and their interest in television programmes on these countries. The highest interest was found to be shown in programmes on countries that appeared to affect the UK in some way. Countries seen on television most often were considered to affect the UK most, and therefore were the most interesting. The research concluded that television's influence is linked to viewers' interests, it is not an unsought influence. There is an opportunity for television to both satisfy existing interest and stimulate new interest.

Interviewed 330 people working in regional television and local radio newsrooms across the UK. Over half thought there was too little programming currently linking Third World issues to local and regional audiences. Broadcasters were generally more optimistic and radical than the public at large.

A brief summary of the findings of the BBC's major News Review, conducted 1996-1998 and including surveys of 2000 adults, focus groups, detailed audience research, research by the Henley Centre into social change and an analysis of competitors' performance. The research showed that the audience wants to know about events and issues in other countries, and positively wants complex subjects and unfamiliar stories from abroad to be reported. This summary also presents the priorities and aims of BBC News as a result of the Review's findings. Part of the renewed commitment to strong international coverage is the repositioning of the Nine o'clock News as a showcase for foreign news coverage.

The Young, October 1998, BBC
An internal BBC report analysing the tastes and aspirations of the 16-34 age group in Britain, which constitutes 16.7 million people and is identified as a crucial section of the potential BBC audience. While this report contains little of direct relevance to coverage of the developing world, it does include the fact that in 1995, environment and world issues are among the top six concerns of this group, after Work, Money, Family/relationships, Travel and Health. However, this is lower down the list than it was in 1985 when it came fourth, after Family/relationships, Work and Travel. [Source: Life Trends, 20/20 Vision Survey]

News Production at WTN: An Analysis of Television News Agency Coverage of Developing Countries, Dr. Chris Paterson, 1996 (doctoral thesis)
Paterson, currently at the University of Leicester, combines a political-economic analysis of the international television news system and ethnographic analysis of television agency news production to explain distorted and infrequent coverage of the developing world.

Reports from the conference of that name, held on 27th May 1998, with contributions from George Alagiah, Jane Standley, NGOs and others on the news reporting of Rwanda, Zaire, Sudan and Somalia.

An overview of global broadcasting, with recommendations to UNICEF and development agencies on their approach to the media. The report underlines that television remains the world's most influential medium, and that many dominant trends apply world-wide. For instance, the pattern of primetime viewing is similar throughout the world with its emphasis on entertainment, sports and news; public service broadcasting is "on the wane throughout the world"; and audiences are drawn to home-grown programming.

World out of Focus: British Terrestrial Television and Global Affairs, Samantha Lay and Carolyn Payne, 1998, 3WE.
The fourth in a regular series of reports monitoring the quantity of British terrestrial television output on international issues. This report found that, despite a halt in the downward trend in international factual output, this output remains at a substantially lower level across the channels than at the very beginning of the 1990s.

Bringing the World Home: A Newsroom Handbook, 1999, American Society of Newspaper Editors Suggestions for (print) news editors on how to make international news coverage more engaging and extensive, in collaboration with The Freedom Forum. Although aimed at newspaper
editors it has been pursued with interest by at least one news participant in the present study.

_Serious Documentaries on ITV: An Endangered Species._

1999.

A report by the Campaign for Quality Television.


A study for the Campaign for Quality Television.