bond

CHANGE THE RECORD

EXPLORING NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE THE UK PUBLIC IN TACKLING GLOBAL POVERTY

SEPTEMBER 2014

Bond is the membership body for UK international development organisations united by a common goal to eradicate global poverty and inequality. We have more than 420 members ranging from large development and humanitarian agencies with a world-wide presence to smaller, specialist organisations working in certain regions or with specific groups of people. Together we influence publics, governments and policy-makers, develop the skills of people and improve the effectiveness of organisations, and provide opportunities to share information, knowledge and expertise on a broad range of issues.

For more information please visit: bond.org.uk

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FOREWORD

Being the Chief Executive of Bond is a real privilege. Daily I am inspired and motivated by the work our members do to tackle poverty and inequality. I am also attuned to the challenges our members and their partners face – both immediate and long-term. One of these challenges has persisted throughout the two decades I have worked in this sector: the challenge of public opinion and support for development.

Effectively engaging the public is critical to our success. We need the public to give their voice, time and money to drive ambitious social change forward. With decreasing public support for the aid budget and increasing attacks on international development from journalists, politicians and other public commentators, Bond members are facing a fierce set of communications challenges.

As the representative body of more than 420 international development organisations, I wanted Bond to get under the skin of this issue and understand what we can do collectively, as a sector, in response.

In 2013-14, Bond undertook a research programme that involved analysing 2,000 media articles about global poverty and tracking 24 members of the UK public for 5 weeks to better understand their attitudes and opinions towards aid, poverty and development. We then spent 5 months presenting this research to various groupings of Bond members – drawing upon the wealth of insights and experience that exists in our sector – to devise ways that we together can respond to the challenges identified.

The product of this work is this report. It is designed to be a useful contribution to the continuing dialogue and debate about how to build public support for development. I hope that it stimulates continuing engagement and importantly action. I am very much looking forward to working with our members as we face this challenge head on and, change the record.

Ben Jackson
Chief Executive, Bond
September 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, and the research that fed into it, were commissioned by Bond. Bond managed the stakeholder workshops on the research findings, and developed the recommendations in this report. Cara Bevington, Campaign Adviser, led this work for Bond.

The overall research programme was designed and overseen by Joe Barrell, Director of the communications agency Eden Stanley, who also drafted this report.

Many thanks to the Bond members who participated in one of the stakeholder workshops or who commented on and contributed to drafts of this report.

For more information about Bond's work on public support for development:
bond.org.uk/public-support

Published September 2014.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The international development sector has a long and successful history of inspiring the British public to take actions in support of communities who are largely 'on the other side of the world'.

Through mass public engagement campaigns international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have played a significant role in shaping the British public's perception of global poverty. While the international development sector has moved forward in its understanding of and approach to global poverty in recent years, much of the press and UK public have not. Despite extraordinary progress in poverty reduction, relentlessly dire and outmoded representations of developing countries mean that efforts to eradicate poverty appear to many members of he public to have failed, and scepticism about the effectiveness of aid and global development initiatives has risen. On top of this there has been increasingly frequent and hostile commentary about aid and development from the media and other public figures.

Recent research by YouGov[i] (see endnotes, page 39) has shown that public support for overseas aid is increasingly fragile, and many INGOs report that they are finding it increasingly expensive to raise money from the public and muster support for their campaigns. These trends are in line with previous research and point to the fact that although many in the international development sector have been aware of an erosion in public support to date, there has not been much collective action to address this.

BOND'S RESEARCH PROGRAMME

In order to support INGOs to develop strategies to reverse this trend, in 2013 Bond commissioned research (funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) into how global poverty and aid are covered in UK newspapers and how this is reflected in public attitudes. The findings were later shared with representatives of Bond member organisations and other stakeholders[1] at a series of workshops.

The **media research** looked at articles about poverty in developing countries published in 30 UK national and regional newspapers and their websites. For the **audience research**, 26 members of the UK public were tracked over a six-week period, and asked about their attitudes to global poverty, their knowledge of it, and their responses to media coverage of the issue. We focused on people who were neither enthusiastic advocates for, nor active rejecters of, international aid as these are the audiences INGOs will need to engage in order to build and deepen support for action on international poverty. The research found that, while media reporting differs significantly across different media sectors, on the whole the press tends towards negative reporting on global poverty and international development, with a focus on Africa and Asia. The research also found that broadsheets account for more than two-thirds of all coverage about global poverty, with *The Guardian* accounting for half. But in terms of potential influence, the *Daily Mail* enjoys almost five times the readership of the *The Guardian*.

Across the research, three core themes emerged:

- **Theme I: There is a great deal of confusion in the public's mind around the causes of and solutions to poverty in developing countries.**

  Causes cited in the media and audience research included natural disasters, historical and ongoing relationships with the 'developed' world, overpopulation, corruption and lack of resources among others. Solutions cited in the media research included multilateral and bilateral aid, political reform (including tackling corruption), economic reform and public donations, while audience research participants offered a scattergun list of contrasting, unconnected solutions. Poverty and inequality are complex and multi-faceted and of course generate a degree of confusion, even among those who have worked on these issues for decades. However, the problem identified by Bond workshop participants is that in the absence of an overarching and shared story from the development sector that enables the public to 'make sense' of global poverty and inequality, widespread public confusion has proliferated. Allowing space for simplistic and often problematic narratives like corruption and critique of aid to middle-income countries to dominate both the public discourse and the public's attitudes towards development. Furthermore, most participants in the Bond stakeholder workshops linked public confusion with declining support and pointed to the wide range of issues and solutions promoted in the media and in INGO communications.

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[1] For more details about the workshop participants, see Appendix 3.

- **Theme II: Government 'corruption' in developing countries (especially in Africa, which was often seen as a whole rather than as separate countries) came across strongly as both a cause and a consequence of poverty in both the media (particularly in the mid-market press) and audience research.**

The audience research made clear that for many participants 'corruption' was the dominant narrative by which they understood poverty and that it had become the *de facto* argument for both the cause and consequence of poverty. Corruption was the main story used by audience participants when they were asked to discuss both the causes of and solutions to poverty.

Some Bond stakeholder workshop participants raised the fact that INGOs have failed to publicly address corruption – which has become a taboo word – for fear of jeopardising support or appearing racist.

For most audience participants, the solution to poverty was to bypass national governments altogether and give resources and finances to 'the people who need them'. Poverty reduction was portrayed and seen as something that is done *to* developing countries rather than done *by* them, partly because not enough visibility is given to domestic actors within the INGO sector itself.

- **Theme III: Aid to India and other middle-income countries created hot debate, with both the media and audience participants questioning the need for and legitimacy of aid to countries with booming economies.**

This of course is an important discussion and one that Bond and many of our members have engaged with. In the context of this research project, Bond stakeholders felt that this purported misdirection of aid was actually part of a wider anti-aid agenda and enabled members of the public to use their critique of aid to middle-income countries to question *any* commitment from the UK government or INGOs to international development initiatives. A number of audience research participants saw aid going to countries like India (the most frequently mentioned country during the research period) as wasteful and a distraction from more urgent domestic issues as well as a distraction from other countries that were deemed to have 'greater need' than India. As more developing countries transition to middle-income economies, part of the solution may be a stronger emphasis from INGOs on communicating inequality *within* countries and issues of social justice. Some stakeholders suggested that the rise of middle-income countries could also be used as evidence of success in tackling poverty.

Discussion among representatives of Bond members at the stakeholder workshops led to the following recommendations for the sector as a whole:

1 Develop a clear and compelling overarching narrative to counterbalance negative perceptions of aid and development.

2 Adopt a collective approach to tackle fragile public engagement. Bond, working with members, should trial approaches that enable INGOs to respond rapidly to myths or attacks published in the media in a way that resonates with target audiences.

3 Promote visibility of a more representative and diverse range of development actors. Mindful of the fact that they are one of the dominant 'development actors' in both the media and the public's mind, INGOs should increase efforts to identify and support other key development actors – including partner NGOs in the global South, diaspora organisations based in the UK, and officials and government representatives from developing countries.

4 Work together to develop strategies to tackle perceptions of corruption by drawing on the experience and knowledge of INGOs that regularly communicate on issues of transparency, accountability and governance.

5 Agree a common set of target audiences, and together develop strategies to reach those audiences we want – and need – to engage in order to strengthen support.

6 Make a greater commitment to learning from available research and each other. There should be a greater commitment to proactively share and discuss new approaches, best practices and emerging insights.

Bond is committed to supporting these efforts to ensure that the international development sector's individual and collective communications help build long-term public support to tackle global poverty.

> RECENT RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS AID IS INCREASINGLY FRAGILE.

1 INTRODUCTION

THIS REPORT OUTLINES THE FINDINGS OF A PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH INTO UK PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL POVERTY

Public attitudes to global poverty are changing. The international development community needs to change how it engages with the British public to get across its message – that global poverty is still a pressing problem but through appropriate actions we can work together to reduce poverty and inequality.

While individual giving appears to be holding up,[ii] supporter recruitment and engagement is becoming increasingly expensive with a greater number of actors in the market and donor fatigue making it ever tougher to persuade the UK public to give their money to INGOs' various causes.

UK PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO EFFECTIVENESS OF AID (PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS)
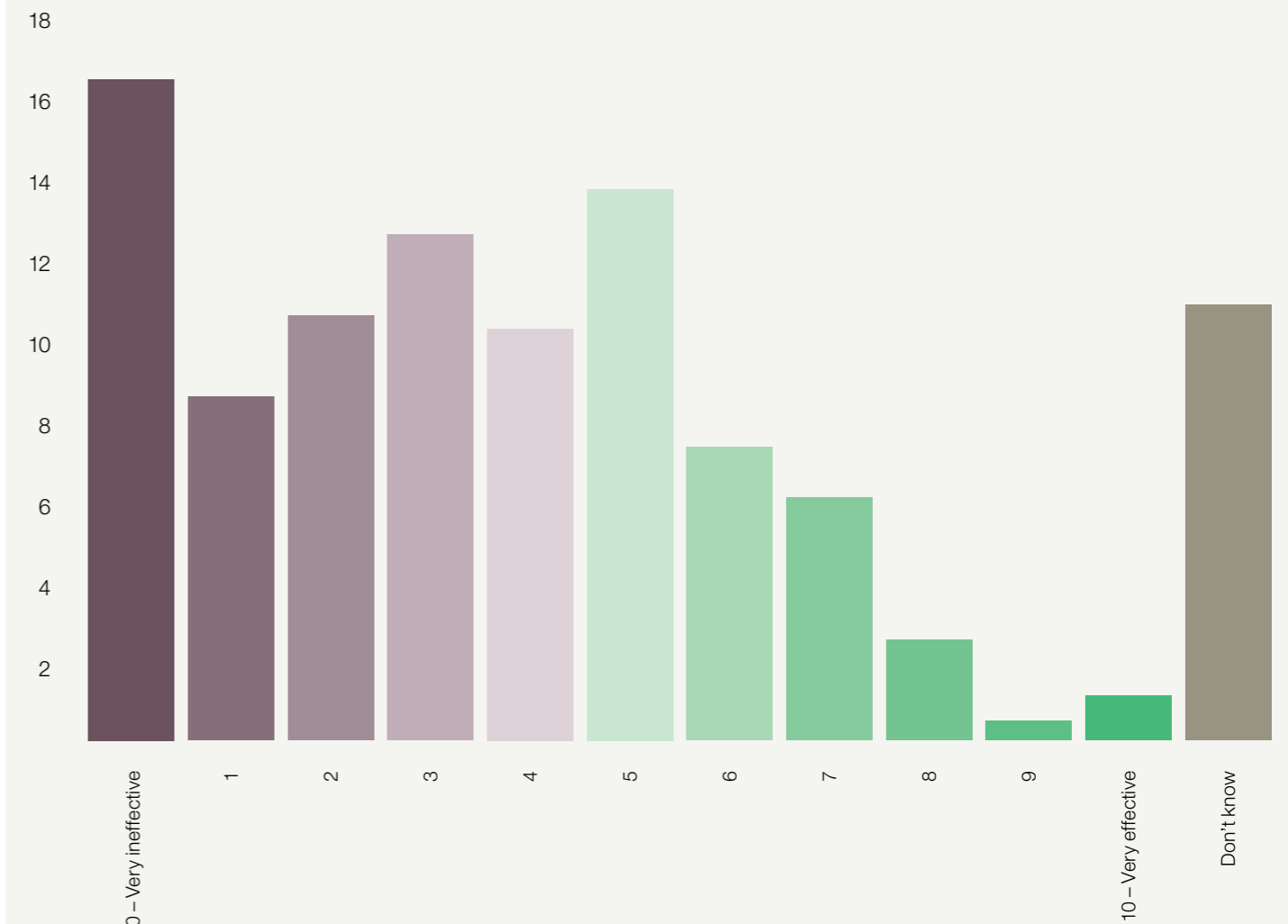
Source: YouGov Aid Attitudes Tracker 2013

THE CHALLENGE

The perceived threat is three-fold:

- wavering support for overseas aid spending and other global development initiatives and misplaced scepticism, rather than healthy debate, about their effectiveness

- a loss of credibility of current poverty narratives in the eyes of an increasingly digitally-savvy public

- a potential reduction in long-term income for INGOs as it becomes more difficult to engage and retain committed givers.

A recent research study by YouGov, in collaboration with a number of development organisations, has shown that public concern about global poverty and support for overseas aid is increasingly fragile[iii]. Most of those questioned said they were more concerned about pressing issues at home than with poverty in developing countries. More than half (53%) believed that aid should be cut, and most felt that it is ineffective, with many people believing that it ends up in the pockets of corrupt politicians overseas.

If nothing is done to stem this tide, the international development sector should be prepared for more challenging times ahead. The sector needs to understand the reasons behind the fragility in support and find ways forward.

A WAY FORWARD

For this reason, in 2013 Bond commissioned research into how global poverty and international aid are covered by UK newspapers, and how this is reflected in public attitudes. The research found that most newspapers – especially those with the greatest reach – present global poverty in a negative and outmoded way, despite the fact that global poverty has halved over the last 20 years[iv]. Hostile media coverage (for example about corruption, or pointing out the economic growth and rise in inequality in formerly low-income countries) has led to increased scepticism around the desirability and effectiveness of aid.

The fact is that, while many 'developing' nations achieve middle-income status and are making real progress with respect to a range of development indicators, poverty, inequality and fundamental rights violations persist – particularly among marginalised groups within countries. Responses to that poverty – from INGOs, governments and the UN system – are increasingly focused on intra-national equity and rights, or structural issues such as tax reform, that move away from a dominant focus on aid. However, these evolutions in poverty and international development are not yet being translated with any fluency to the general public – at least not in a way that is being strongly heard.

Studies have shown that a belief in the moral imperative to fight poverty is an important motivator for some segments of the public, more so than rational arguments about aid effectiveness[v]. Even among people who are very supportive of INGOs and/or support government spending on overseas aid, there remains uncertainty about its effectiveness. Other pieces of research have demonstrated that, in order for the public to support efforts to fight poverty *they must believe change is possible* – otherwise that support will be fragile and ultimately unsustainable.

INGOs are still the most trusted public-facing voice[vi]. Together, INGOs need to find a unifying and potent narrative to communicate what poverty in the 21st century is, what progress has been made, and what still needs to happen to tackle poverty, inequality and injustice. And we need new ways to engage the UK public.

BOND'S HOPE FOR THIS REPORT

This report is intended as a useful resource for that process. It is based on four months' research into the dominant narratives on international poverty in UK media and qualitative research into public attitudes and knowledge. It also includes reflections by some of the leading communicators, fundraisers and campaigners in the UK INGO sector, both on how the research can inform its work and on what might be done to close the gap between the changing face of international development and the way in which it is understood by the UK public.

> ❝
> # THE SECTOR NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND THE REASONS BEHIND THE ON-GOING FRAGILITY IN SUPPORT AND FIND WAYS FORWARD.
> ❞

2 THE RESEARCH

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH AIMS

The goal of this project was to build on existing research that reveals a slow decline in UK public support for development initiatives.[2] We wanted to explore some of the reasons behind this decline and explore how members of the public receive and process information and messages about poverty and international development.

The research also sought to look at how public attitudes to international poverty reflect narratives present in media coverage of the issues.

The wider goal was to contribute to the sector's dialogue about how INGOs should approach building strategies and developing tools for influencing public understanding of, and support for, action on international poverty.

Bond hopes that this report is a helpful contribution and that it encourages further engagement and healthy debate.

The media research data and further information about the typologies identified during the audience research are available at **bond.org.uk/public-support**.

2.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research consisted of three components:

1 MEDIA RESEARCH

The media research was conducted in July 2013, and covered a two-year period from July 2011–June 2013. The research involved quantitative and qualitative analysis of 2,000 articles published during the two-year period in over 30 UK national and regional newspapers in four categories: broadsheet, mid-market, popular and major regionals, as well as their websites.

All of the articles analysed were about poverty in developing countries.

For more details on the media research methodology, including why the focus was on print rather than broadcast media, see Appendix 1.

2 AUDIENCE RESEARCH

From August to October 2013, we conducted a tracking study of 26 carefully selected members of the UK public, who among other indicators were chosen on the grounds that they were neither enthusiastic advocates for, nor active rejecters of, international aid. We wanted to learn as much as possible about their attitudes to global poverty, their knowledge of it, and their responses to information about it through media.

In order to get a more in-depth understanding of the research participants than a survey or focus group could offer alone, over a period of five weeks individuals were asked to record all their 'touch points' with communications about international poverty through any channel (newspapers, online, advertising, etc.), and share their views about them – both with the researchers using video diaries and blogs, and with each other using online discussions. We provided stimuli (e.g., newspaper articles) and asked them to respond to specific questions. At the end of the study, research participants were brought together in a series of focus groups to explore their understanding of the issues and their reflections on the impact and 'take-out' of individual touch points.

[2] A comprehensive collection of publicly available research on this topic is available at bond.org.uk/public-support

26 PEOPLE

Half 'to the left of centre' politically
Half 'to the right of centre' politically

DIVERSE
in age and ethnicity

2 SEGMENTS
apathetic and
partially engaged

Neither enthusiastic advocates for, nor active rejecters of, international aid

3 CITIES

Manchester

Birmingham

London

(For more details of audience research methodology, see Appendix 2.)

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3 BOND STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

In March 2014, we held three half-day workshops with 70 staff from more than 45 Bond member organisations. Participants included Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and senior managers working in communications, fundraising, advocacy and campaigns teams, as well as academics and other experts with experience in this area.

The purpose of these workshops was to share insights and findings emerging from the media and audience research, identify key challenges for the international development sector, and start developing strategies for working together to influence the public narratives around international poverty.

These workshops formed the basis of many of the recommendations in this report. For more details about stakeholder workshop participants, see Appendix 3.

Prior to these components, in May – June 2013 Bond commissioned desk research into available 'grey literature' on how public attitudes to poverty are shaped, as a means of identifying gaps in current knowledge and developing themes for subsequent research elements. This was conducted by Chris Garforth, Sarah Cardey and Gareth Horsfield at the University of Reading.

A NOTE ON THE TIMING OF THE RESEARCH

During the research period, the major events relating to international poverty were the Sahel hunger crisis, the Enough Food for Everyone IF campaign, and the Syria uprising. While these events were all present in media, none stood out significantly in the audience research, nor appeared to dominate media coverage on international poverty in general. The media research took place prior to the hostile media around the salaries of UK charity CEOs that began during August 2013.

2.2 | AUDIENCE TYPOLOGIES

In the course of the audience research we identified five 'typologies' or archetypes among the audience research participants, who were selected on the basis that they were neither enthusiastic advocates for nor active rejecters of international development issues. Typologies are useful because they help us to understand and organise research findings, and remind us that audiences are not homogenous – there is no single point of view, nor is there likely to be a single engagement strategy. The five typologies identified were:

THE CYNICAL AND DISTRUSTING

are sympathetic to global poverty, but don't believe anything can be done about it. For them, corruption and concerns about creating dependency are barriers to engagement. They firmly believe that government aid is a waste of time and money, and that developing nations should be left to their own devices.

THE CHARITY-BEGINS-AT-HOME

agree that poverty overseas is a real issue that needs addressing, but issues at home are more pressing. Beyond major, highly visible events such as Comic Relief, this group have rarely given thought to international poverty and are unlikely to have donated.

THE COMMENTATORS

recognise the problem of poverty and trace it back to the UK's colonial past. The solutions they offer are typically radical. They despise the 'outdated' imagery used by charities. They will take action by signing petitions. While this group hold a strong 'problem analysis' they don't have a clear picture of what actions they themselves, governments, other actors and communities in developing countries should take to shape a different future.

THE NETWORKED

are aware of poverty issues, but any engagement needs to fit around their lifestyle – particularly their leisure and social pursuits. They might buy Fairtrade, or go to a fundraising event but only if it is a 'good one'. They will take messages on board, but are not proactively engaged in activities or campaigns run by INGOs.

DORMANT ACTIVISTS

believe there is a moral imperative to do something, and this is driven by deeply held values. But they need a hard shove to act. They may have strong religious beliefs or a strong sense of social justice. The passion for doing something about global poverty is dormant within them and ready to be reawakened.

3 RESEARCH INSIGHTS

THIS SECTION EXPLORES THE KEY ISSUES AND THEMES ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

3.1 | WHO DOES WHAT AND HOW FAVOURABLY IS IT REPORTED?

The table below is a distilled breakdown of the top six interventions aimed at addressing poverty found in the media research, the most prominent sector (e.g., government, UN agency, INGO) associated with each, and the average favourability of coverage in relation to the intervention. Favourability is based on a simple, numeric grading on a scale of -2 (highly unfavourable) to +2 (highly favourable).

The media research found that, on the whole, the press tends towards negative reporting on global poverty. In the table below, while issues like *political and economic reform* are shown to be reported on favourably, these are interventions that imply *political or economic problems* and therefore can still be seen as negative reporting or at least *pointing at a problem*. An exception to this is that fundraising and awareness-raising initiatives tend to be positively reported on, provided they are positioned in relatively soft terms and can deliver a feel-good story.

We found general warmth towards INGOs, even among newspapers that are on the whole negative about aid. However, we didn't find much acknowledgement that INGOs are a key channel for the deployment of government aid, which may explain why aid delivered by the UK government is often reported negatively, while interventions delivered by INGOs are shown in a much more positive light. We found something similar in the audience research, where the participants saw government aid and the work of INGOs as quite separate.

FAVOURABILITY OF THE TOP SIX INTERVENTIONS COVERED IN THE MEDIA, AND THEIR MOST CLOSELY ASSOCIATED SECTOR

| INTERVENTION	SECTOR	FAVOURABILITY
Fundraising from the UK public	INGOs	+0.9
Increased knowledge, awareness and publicity	INGOs	+0.6
Political reform, including tackling corruption	Domestic governments in developing countries	+0.5
Economic reform	Domestic governments in developing countries	+0.3
Law enforcement and justice	Domestic governments in developing countries	+0.1
Development aid	UK government	-0.4

Favourability was measured by how favourable or not the article was towards the main intervention being proposed. Favourability was rated on a scale of -2 (very unfavourable) to +2 (very favourable).

Sector refers to which sector, or area, the primary actor named in the article was most closely associated with e.g. government, NGO, private sector, sport, celebrity).

Reporting on aid differs significantly across the media sectors, with the mid-market newspapers tending to report negatively (or very negatively) on aid; the regionals tending to report positively; and the broadsheets as a whole offering a more balanced position (tending toward positive) as the graph (right) shows.

FAVOURABILITY OF REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL AID (% ARTICLES PER MEDIA SECTOR)

- Very unfavourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Neutral
- Somewhat favourable
- Very favourable
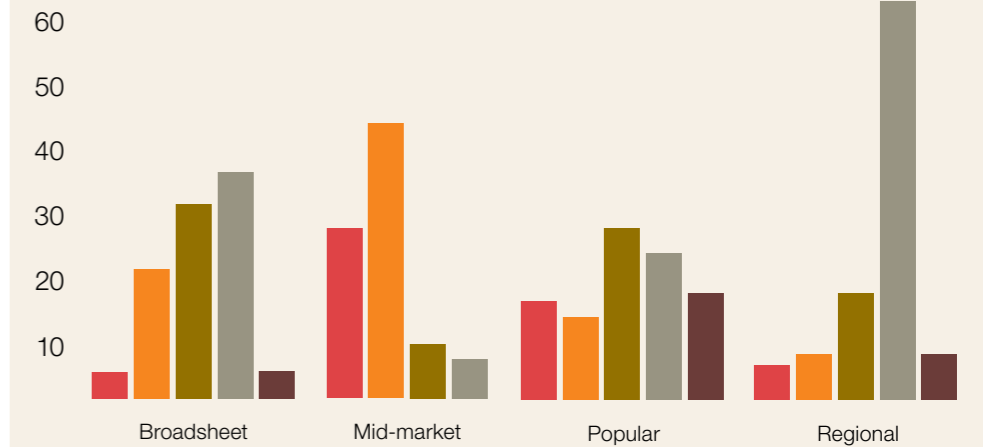
3.2 | WHERE IS POVERTY?

DISTRIBUTION OF COVERAGE BY REGION (% ARTICLES BY MEDIA SECTOR)

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Europe
- Oceania
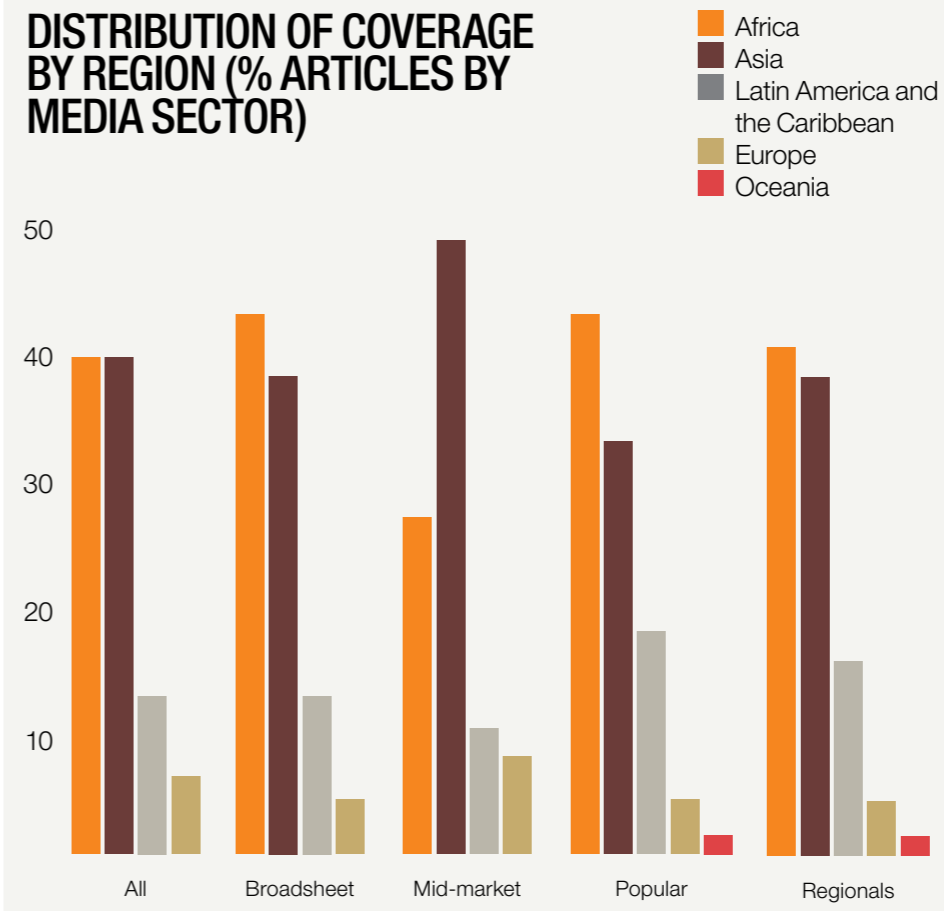
The media research, which was limited to International Monetary Fund (IMF)-defined 'developing countries'[vii], found that, across all media sectors, Africa and Asia are covered most with the greatest prominence, with poverty in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe given much less visibility.

Coverage of poverty in Oceania is almost non-existent, limited to just a handful of articles across the two-year period. Consequently – and owing to the fact that the audience research participants talked almost exclusively about Africa and Asia – most of the content of this report relates to these two continents.
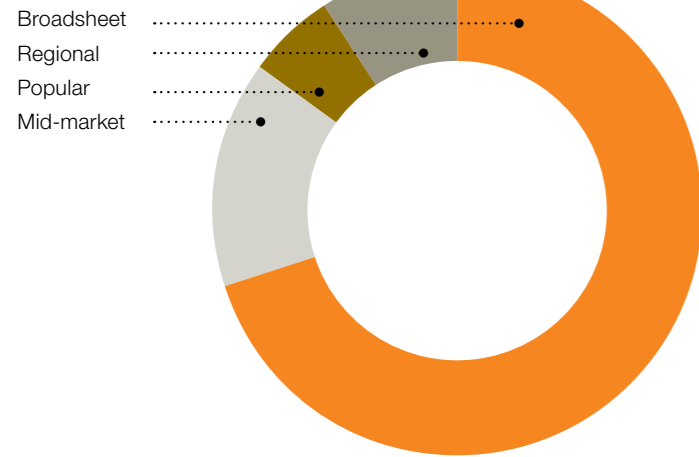
Notably, reporting on Asia in the mid-market press represents a significantly greater proportion of overall coverage than the norm. This is owing to the *Daily Mail's* heightened interest in India during the research period which is explored further in Section 6.
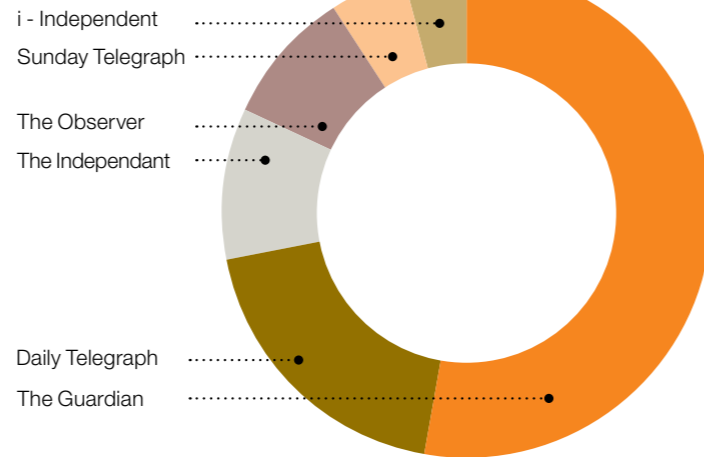
WHO IS REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL POVERTY?

In terms of the number of articles, broadsheets account for more than two-thirds of all coverage about international poverty, as this graph shows.

A closer look at the broadsheets shows that approximately half of all coverage of international poverty appears in *The Guardian*:
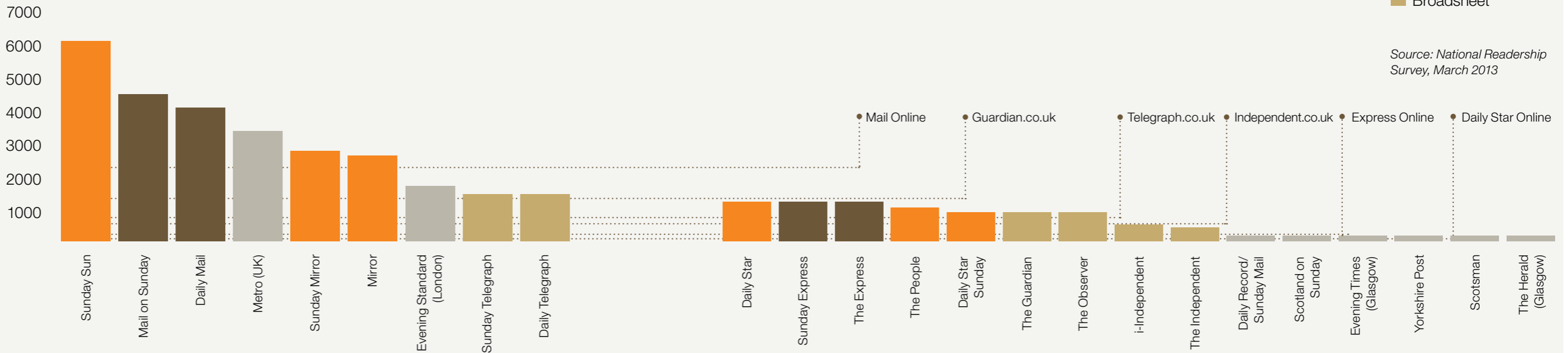
% OF ARTICLES BY MEDIA CATEGORY

- Broadsheet
- Regional
- Popular
- Mid-market

DISTRIBUTION OF BROADSHEET COVERAGE (%)

- i - Independent
- Sunday Telegraph
- The Observer
- The Independant
- Daily Telegraph
- The Guardian

THREE CORE THEMES

NEWSPAPER WEBSITES: AVERAGE DAILY READERSHIP (000s)

(Source: CommsScore, March 2013)

2500
2000
1500
500

- Mail Online
- Guardian.co.uk
- Telegraph.co.uk
- Independent.co.uk
- Express Online
- Daily Star Online

Looking at website traffic of the major newspapers included in this study there is a stronger representation of broadsheet brands. However, the *Mail Online* achieves the strongest traffic here too.

When we consider both distribution of coverage of international poverty across media categories, and factor in audience reach, the *Mail* is clearly the dominant voice in terms of overall reach. While *The Guardian* covers international poverty with much greater frequency than other UK media brands, it is reaching far fewer people by comparison.

This dominance of the *Mail* brand (including the *Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday* and *Mail Online*) came up time and again throughout the research programme. The narratives it promotes were those most strongly reflected back by participants.

As we progressed through each stage of the research programme, three core themes emerged:

1 There is **public confusion** over the causes of and solutions to poverty

2 Significant prominence is given to the **'corruption' of governments in developing countries** in the media, which is reflected in audience responses

3 **Aid to India and other middle-income countries is a contentious issue** that created hot debate.

These three themes are explored in the following chapters.

Looking at the average daily offline readership of the titles we reviewed, broadsheets achieve relatively low reach compared with other categories. **The *Daily Mail* enjoys almost five times the readership of *The Guardian*.** The same is true of their Sunday counterparts (the *Mail on Sunday* and *The Observer*) – as the charts below show.
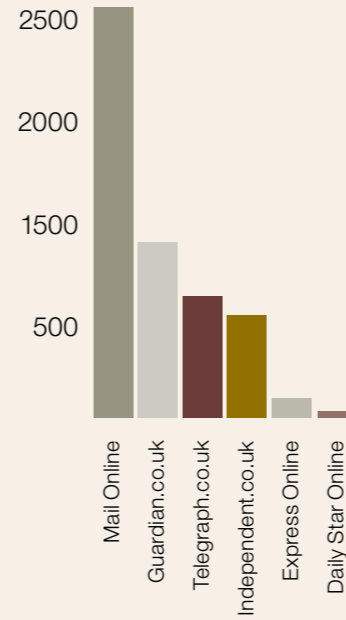
UK NEWSPAPERS
AVERAGE DAILY READERSHIP (000s)

Legend:
- Popular
- Mid-market
- Regionals
- Broadsheet

Source: National Readership Survey, March 2013

7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000

- Sunday Sun
- Mail on Sunday
- Daily Mail
- Metro (UK)
- Sunday Mirror
- Mirror
- Evening Standard (London)
- Sunday Telegraph
- Daily Telegraph
- Daily Star
- Sunday Express
- The Express
- The People
- Daily Star Sunday
- The Guardian
- The Observer
- i-Independent
- The Independent
- Daily Record/ Sunday Mail
- Scotland on Sunday
- Evening Times (Glasgow)
- Yorkshire Post
- Scotsman
- The Herald (Glasgow)

- Mail Online
- Guardian.co.uk
- Telegraph.co.uk
- Independent.co.uk
- Express Online
- Daily Star Online

4 | THEME I: PUBLIC CONFUSION

THE RESEARCH FOUND THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC CONFUSION OVER THE CAUSES OF AND SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

4.1 | CAUSES OF POVERTY

There is a great deal of confusion in the public's mind around what causes poverty, how it might best be tackled and (to a lesser degree) what poverty actually *is*.

When asked about the **problems** associated with poverty, some loose themes emerged in the audience research participants' video diaries and blogs and in the audience focus groups. Asked to 'define the problem', they focused on lack of clean water and sanitation, lack of food, and lack of access to healthcare.

However, when asked to talk about the **causes** of poverty, their responses were more varied and included natural disasters, historical and ongoing relationships with the 'developed' world, overpopulation, corruption, and lack of resources (whether that be lack of access to investment, technology, knowledge or infrastructure).

"

ALL OF OUR ACTIONS COLLECTIVELY AMOUNT TO A CROWDED SET OF PINPRICKS, UNCONNECTED, WITH NO FRAMEWORK, AND THAT LEADS TO A DISEMPOWERMENT OF THE PUBLIC.

"

Bond stakeholder
workshop participant

4.2 | SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

In the 2,000 media articles examined, more than 30 broad categories of 'poverty interventions' (or solutions to poverty) with numerous variants were identified. These included issues as diverse as adoption, public activism, economic reform, community empowerment, environmental regeneration, multilateral and bilateral aid, entrepreneurship, tourism, tackling corruption, volunteering, microfinance, population resettlement, public donations… the list goes on.

The four top categories of poverty interventions cited made up around 60% of all reporting. These were:
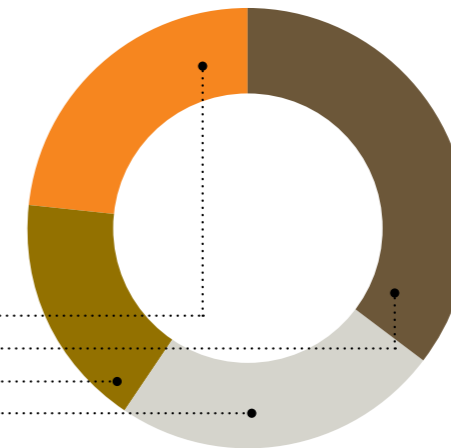
Public donations **23%**
Aid (multilateral or bilateral) **35%**
Economic reform **17%**
Political reform/tackling corruption **24%**

When audience participants were asked about the solutions to world poverty, most seemed tired or even irritated by the question itself, and offered a scattergun list of contrasting, unconnected ideas.

Solutions pointed to the range of work that is undertaken to tackle poverty – from cancelling debt, to women's rights, to ending conflict. Some solutions proposed seemed to be informed by the UK domestic poverty agenda.

Of course, poverty and inequality are multi-faceted and the actions needed are incredibly varied and complex. So confusion – to some extent – is to be expected. However, throughout the duration of the audience research, it became clear that the public are not able to knit together all of the various inputs they hear into a clear narrative, which enables overarching key messages like 'all aid money goes into the pockets of corrupt officials' or 'development projects are largely ineffective' to rise to the top of the public's mind.

The challenge for the development sector is therefore not to seek to address the confusion per se, but rather to find ways to counter the negative myth-based messages that are currently dominating the space created by the confusion.

Ideas like *'self-sufficiency'*, *'long-term permanent change'* and *'giving them the tools'* came up with some regularity. However, audience research participants were vague about what these terms might mean in practice.

Almost without exception, the issue of confusion was attributed by Bond stakeholders to INGOs' need both to differentiate from each other and to offer simplistic solutions as a means of breaking tough problems down – typified, in the view of one stakeholder, by £5 bed nets presented as the solution to malaria. Another perceived that confusion is inevitable because: *'We offer myriad solutions, at least one per NGO.'*

Q WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES?

(Sigh…) time… I think time is the only solution to poverty in developing countries. Time, education… educating the people to right or wrong… stopping the black-market side of it.

Solutions? Oh God… In terms of war, the people who are fighting need to sit down and talk, and then aid can get to the right people… Umm, distributing the wealth fairly… Umm, rainfall… there's nothing really you can do about that but [with aid] there could be investment in irrigation systems.

Increasing planes and having better aviation in developing countries, in Africa for example, so that they can get between those countries… so if they're talking to each other there is less reliance on France and Spain and Britain.

I believe we should offer more low-cost housing and if these people can't afford to pay for the house, we should try and get them into voluntary work, so that they're actually giving something back.

Withdrawal of aid from those who are part of the power struggle would be one solution I suppose.

"

Audience research participants

4.3 | THE UK GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

The audience research participants were also unclear about the UK government's role in tackling world poverty.

None expressed overtly political views or an unshakeable opposition to aid (and had been selected on the basis that they were not 'rejecters' or 'enthusiastic supporters' of it). Issues that came up repeatedly were perceived corruption of developing country governments, and the ethics of giving aid to middle-income countries – especially India – both of which we explore in following chapters.

By the end of the research study, it was broadly agreed that the UK government *should* continue to give overseas aid and support charities working in developing countries. However, domestic problems – including the economic downturn, falling living standards, unemployment, immigration, the NHS and education – were typically deemed more pressing.

This is a narrative that is also apparent in the newspaper coverage we reviewed.

We are supposed to live in the Western world where the poor are hidden because it is a political hot potato to admit that there are people in the UK who struggle to put food on the table.

"

Audience research participant

4.4 | THE NEED FOR A COHERENT NARRATIVE

Most of the INGO workshop participants linked public confusion with declining support for tackling global poverty, and felt it was grounds for creating a strong public-facing narrative about world poverty – an easily-understood, unified story that could help the public make sense of, or join-the-dots between the range of legitimate and specific pieces of communications they're exposed to.

It was noted by most stakeholders that public confusion is to some extent inevitable because tackling global poverty is a complex business. But, as one participant noted, charities in other sectors have been able to talk about their field as complex while also developing simple overarching messages, citing the fight against cancer and the role of society in winning it.

Stakeholders agreed it was imperative that the sector works to find what one participant coined a *'single overarching narrative'*; an overarching set of key messages that all could agree upon and that linked with – and gave coherence to – individual INGOs' distinct approaches. This idea gained traction with most stakeholders, although some expressed concerns that a reductionist approach could undermine efforts to tell the full story.

For those supportive of the idea of a single overarching narrative, there was – for the most part – agreement that balancing a positive vision of the future with messaging that is honest about the *'messiness and difficulty along the way'* might be a smart approach, or that the narrative should talk about the journey to ending poverty and the progress that has been made so far.

Stakeholder workshop participants noted that the starting point in developing a shared narrative was agreeing which sections of the UK public we want to engage and what we want them to think, feel and do about international poverty. This tallied with a strong focus on knowing audiences better and targeting those segments open to engaging in international development issues. There was also consensus that we should begin with issues the INGO sector is united around, and amplify them. A strong contender was the **extraordinary progress being made in tackling world poverty**. The rationale for this was that – arguably – a key cause of public confusion is that many people grasp for explanations as to why international development is failing, which is – and this was agreed by all – a false premise.

5 | THEME II: THE CORRUPTION NARRATIVE

GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CAME ACROSS AS BOTH A CAUSE AND A CONSEQUENCE OF POVERTY IN BOTH THE MEDIA AND AUDIENCE RESEARCH
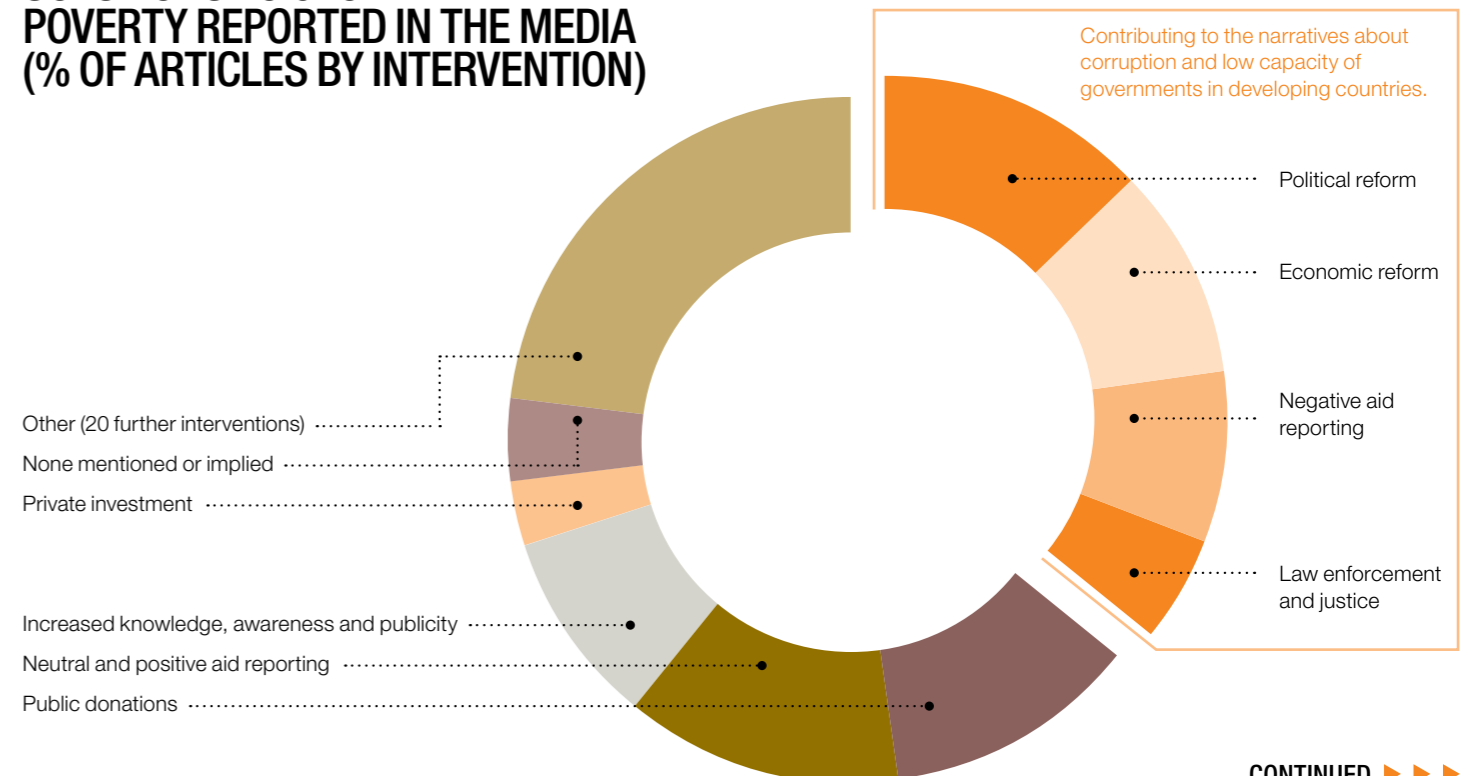
"

UNTIL WE GET RID OF THE CORRUPTION, WE'RE NOT GOING TO SEE POVERTY LIFTED OUT OF THE SLUMS.

"

Audience research participant

Almost all of the media articles analysed for this research on political reform, economic reform and law enforcement were about corruption (usually explicitly) and, where aid was reported negatively, it was also about corruption or 'waste' (in many cases a byword for corruption).

SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL POVERTY REPORTED IN THE MEDIA (% OF ARTICLES BY INTERVENTION)

Contributing to the narratives about corruption and low capacity of governments in developing countries.

- Political reform
- Economic reform
- Negative aid reporting
- Law enforcement and justice
- Public donations
- Neutral and positive aid reporting
- Increased knowledge, awareness and publicity
- Private investment
- None mentioned or implied
- Other (20 further interventions)

ACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM (IN THE MEDIA ARTICLES)

Percentage of coverage

- Domestic government (in a developing country)
- International organisations (e.g., EU)
- Domestic political organisation (in a developing country)
- INGOs
- UN agencies
- UK government
- Domestic NGO (in a developing country)
- Private sector
- Foreign government
- Entertainment/celebrities (domestic or global)
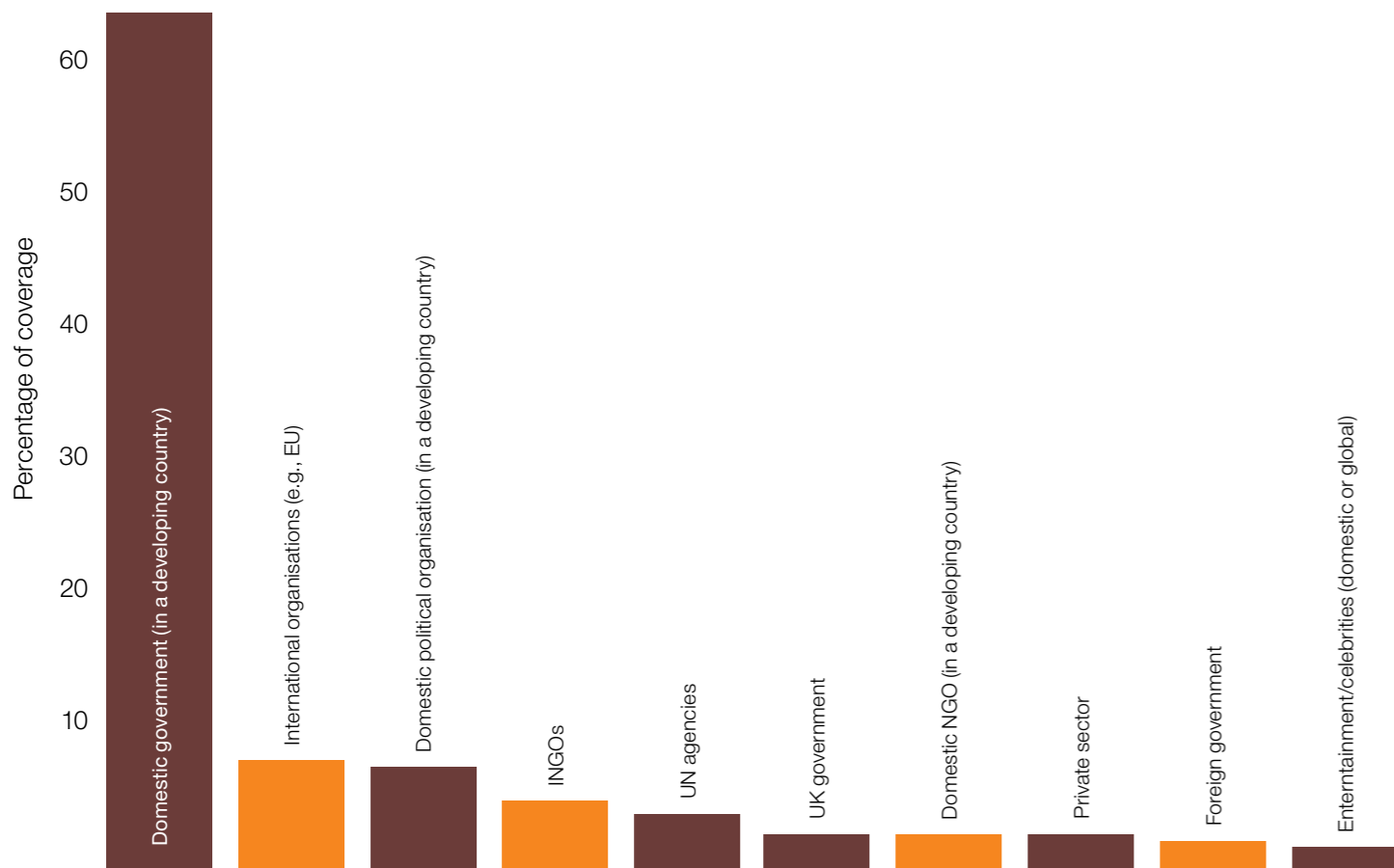
When the media sources we reviewed (in particular the mid-market press) report on corruption, they are usually talking about domestic governments in developing countries. As the graph left shows, around two-thirds (65%) of coverage on political and economic reform put these governments at the centre of the story.

Governments of developing countries also inspired very little confidence among audience participants. Many in the focus groups perceived governments to have failed to make progress on poverty, with leaders *'ruled by self-interest'* giving *'little or no support to their population'*. Some participants told us that *'corruption is rife'* and that *'human rights violations are common'*, committed by *'corrupt, greedy and selfish'* tyrants.

The problem of poor local governance (with the aid system *'propping up dictators'* as one participant termed it) tended to be viewed as two sides of the same coin – and for some participants, this narrative told more or less the whole story. Their language often seemed to echo that used in some of the more pointedly critical journalism reviewed through the course of this study.

BINGU WA MUTHARIKA, WHO HAS DIED AGED 78, WAS AN ECCENTRIC AND WAYWARD PRESIDENT OF MALAWI WHO THREW AWAY A REPUTATION FOR BEING MODESTLY SUCCESSFUL AND BEGAN LEADING HIS BEWILDERED COUNTRY TO RUIN.

(Mutharika) abandoned his presidential palace in Lilongwe not out of shame over inhabiting its 300 luxurious rooms, built for $100 million in a country suffering abject poverty, but because he declared it to be haunted and claimed that invisible rodents were running all over him at night.

Telegraph.co.uk, 10 April 2012

POLICE SEIZE £5M CAR HAUL FROM DICTATOR

ELEVEN supercars worth up to £5million have been seized from outside an African dictator's Paris mansion as part of a foreign aid money-laundering investigation.

The vehicles… are all registered to Teodoro Obiang Nguema, president of Equatorial Guinea.

He is one of numerous African heads of state who regularly receive vast handouts in foreign aid, including British cash via European funds.

Express, 1 October 2011

UK 'HELPS DICTATOR BUY 16 PARIS HOMES'

BRITISH taxpayers are funding the multi-million-pound Paris property portfolio of an African dictator through aid payments to his nation, it has been claimed.
It emerged yesterday that Denis Sassou Nguesso, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, owns 16 of the most luxurious houses and flats in the French capital.
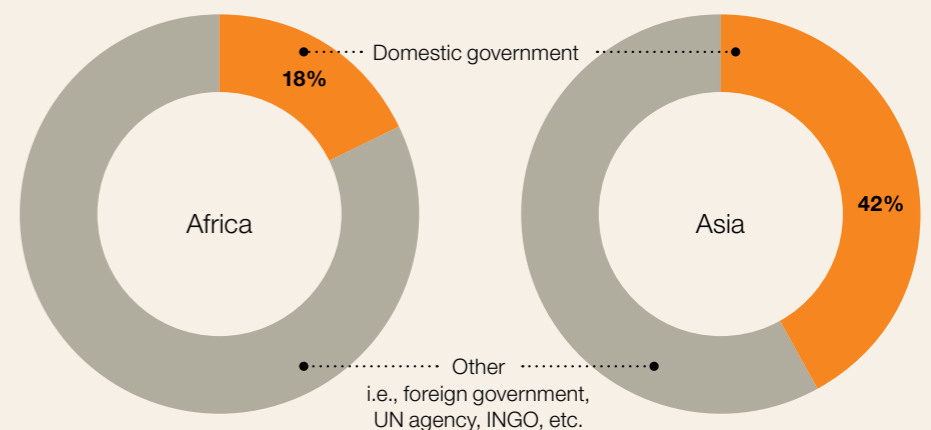
Daily Mail, 29 July 2011

Most participants in the audience research focus groups expressed strong doubts that governments in developing countries should be 'allowed' to distribute financial, physical, or intellectual resources to their population, because they believed that – however well-meaning – funds would eventually go missing, that *'deals would be struck'*, and the poor would rarely benefit.

As soon as these people get into power they decide that they're going to have the money for themselves rather than the good of the nation.

❞ Audience research participant

GOVERNMENTS: AN OBSTACLE TO TACKLING POVERTY

For most of the audience research participants, the *solution* to corruption – indeed part of the solution to poverty itself – was to cut out the intermediaries, bypass the government, and give resources and finances to the people who need them. However, the participants seemed to view cutting out the 'corrupt intermediaries' (developing country governments) as a desperate measure rather than a preferred policy choice.

I think [the solution to poverty is] using professionals rather than governments to deal with this problem, who can actually bring something to the table to solve this.

❞ Audience research participant

Cut out the corrupt intermediaries and find a way to get the money direct to the people.

❞ Audience research participant

It is likely that this idea has some roots in the UK media. Analysis of the media articles found a strong tendency to present developing country governments as relatively minor players in tackling poverty – particularly with respect to African (as compared to Asian) and low-income (as compared to middle-income) countries.

The graphs below and over the page, illustrate this point.
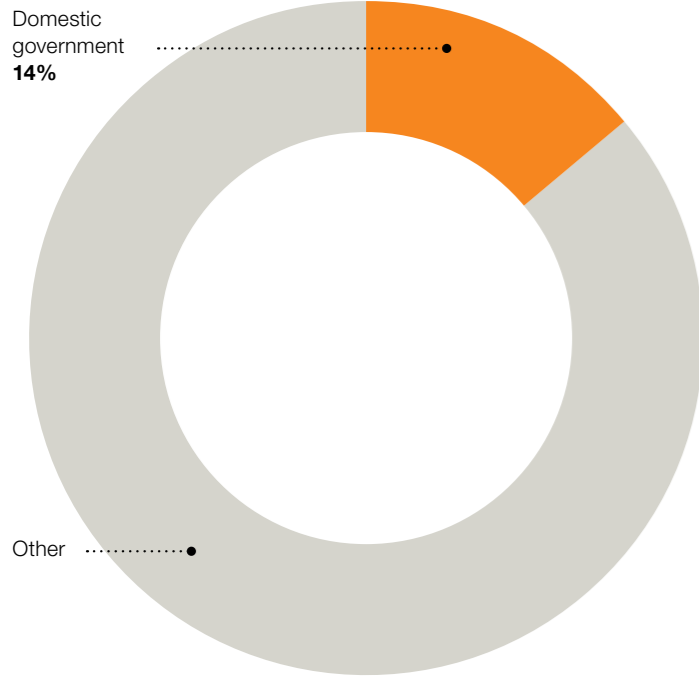
FREQUENCY THAT GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA AND ASIA ARE POSITIONED AS THE 'PRIMARY ACTOR' IN TACKLING POVERTY IN THEIR COUNTRY (% OF MEDIA ARTICLES)
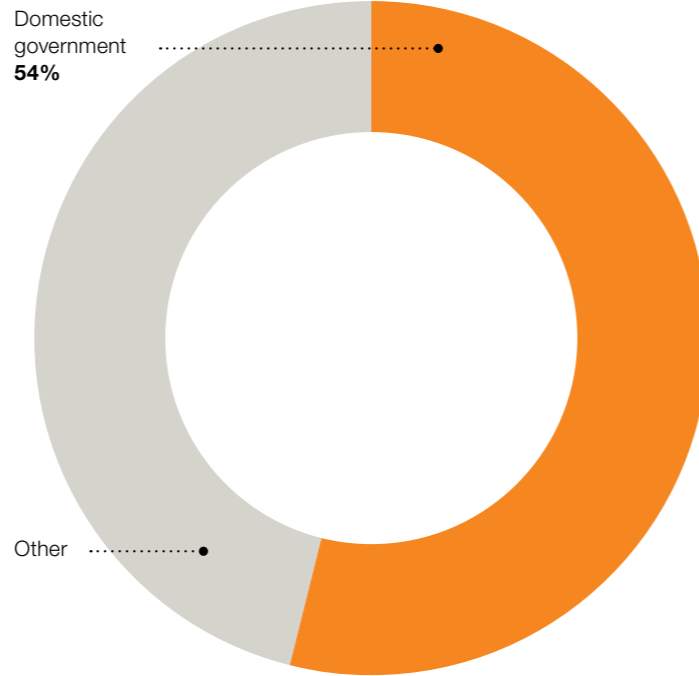

Africa — Domestic government 18%

Asia — Domestic government 42%

Other i.e., foreign government, UN agency, INGO, etc.

PRIMARY ACTOR LINKED TO TACKLING POVERTY IN LOW-INCOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Domestic government
14%

Other

PRIMARY ACTOR LINKED TO TACKLING POVERTY IN MIDDLE-INCOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Domestic government
54%

Other

5.2 | AFRICA: SEEN AS A WHOLE RATHER THAN SEPARATE COUNTRIES

ACCORDING TO MEDIA COVERAGE ABOUT AFRICA:

WHAT DOMESTIC ACTORS DO

Political and economic reform
64%

Other

WHAT FOREIGN ACTORS DO

Aid and public donations
67%

Other

"

THERE IS TOO MUCH CORRUPTION AND NO AMOUNT OF FIGURES OR GOOD NEWS STORIES WILL CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT THAT.

"
Audience focus group participant

Poverty reduction is portrayed and seen as something that is done *to* developing countries (especially the poorest countries) more than as something that is done *by* them. Given the research looked at in the UK media, it's not surprising to see a strong presence of foreign actors in the coverage.

But there seems to be an assumption in the press that governments in the poorest countries have a limited role, or are not 'trusted' actors, in the fight against poverty – or at least lack the capacity to address their nations' problems.

In the case of Africa, the media research revealed that the UK public are hearing very little through newspapers about the actions or agency of individuals, NGOs, governments or other institutions in Africa. This is in marked contrast to reporting on South-East Asia where the actions individuals, NGOs, governments and other institutions in South-East Asia are taking to tackle poverty are regularly referenced.

Participants in the stakeholder workshops were not surprised by this finding, but agreed that there was a real need for INGOs based in the UK to use existing relationships with journalists and media outlets to find ways to proactively address this issue.
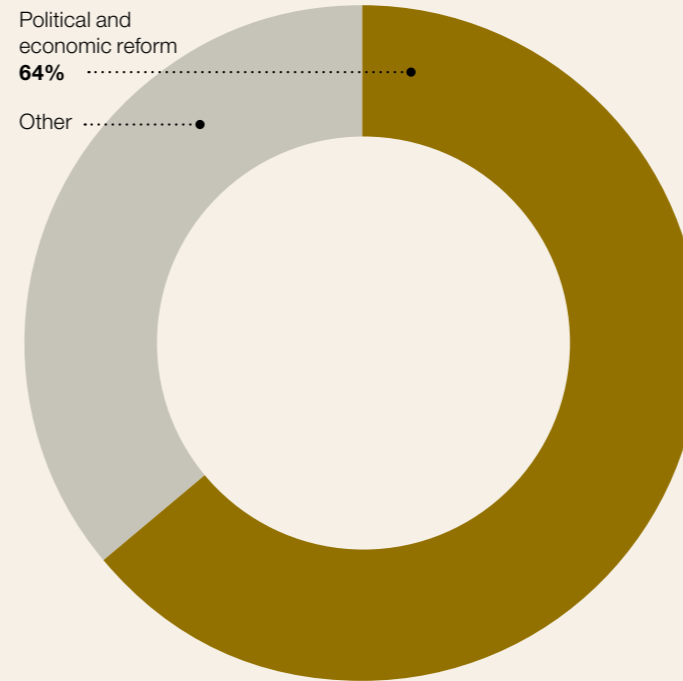
This is a well-documented issue about how corrupt government officials in the developing world often prevent the aid getting through to those in need.

"
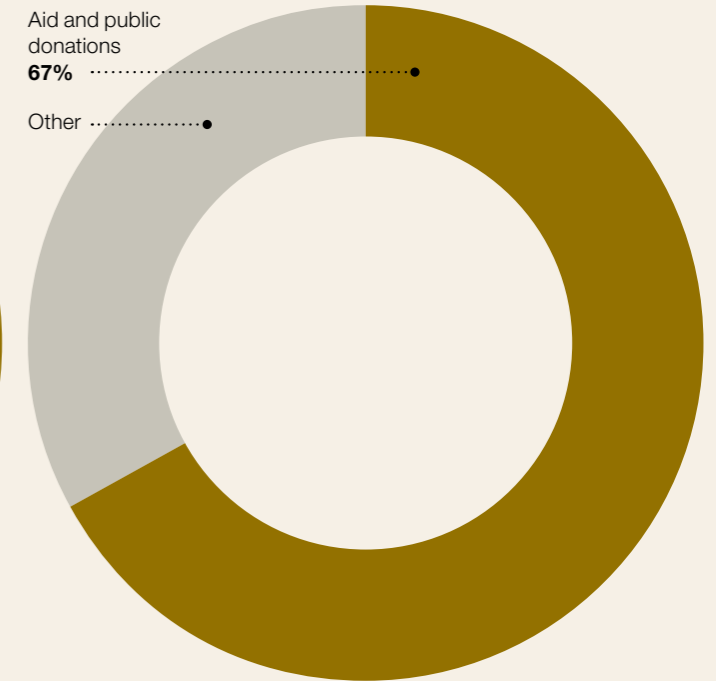Audience focus group participant

In the audience research, Africa generated by far the most video diary entries and blog postings and corruption was frequently raised. Africa – in the eyes of most of the audience group – was perceived as a single nation, rather than as a continent made up of different countries with different economic statuses. The imagery associated with it was that of barren, rural landscapes, starving children and wealthy, corrupt leaders.[3]

In the media analysis we found something similar: that reporting on Africa was around three times less likely than reporting on Asia to mention a specific country (often either mentioning a number of countries, or not mentioning any country at all).

Taking the media narrative in totality, the impression is that if African governments and other domestic actors have a role, it is primarily to reform themselves and their economies, while foreign actors (including donor governments, INGOs and UN agencies) provide aid and public donations. The graph above illustrates this quite starkly.

[3] This resonates with concerns expressed time and again that negative and misleading images of situations in African countries (or 'Africa' in general) are getting in the way of a more constructive engagement (e.g., Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2009, *'The Danger of a Single Story'*, Ted Talk; Marieme Jamme, 2010, *'Negative perceptions slow Africa's development'*, Poverty Matters blog, 10 December 2010; BBC News, 2012).

5.3 | POLITICAL REFORM: THE PERCEIVED ANTIDOTE TO CORRUPTION

RAP REVOLUTION: VOICES OF DISSENT IN SENEGAL

A hip-hop protest movement has hit the streets in response to stagnation and broken government promises.

It was an idea born in the darkness of one of Dakar's epic blackouts… With no electricity to record their music, the conversation among (rappers) turned to politics and the broken promise of development.

Independent.co.uk, 20 February 2012

GHANA'S BOOM PROVES AID CAN REALLY WORK

It's all too easy to think of Africa as a single place defined by famine, war and instability. The truth is very different, with a diverse array of countries, each with its own story to tell.

Twenty years ago, (Ghana) was in a very different place: heavily indebted, more than half the population living in poverty and only just beginning the process of returning to democracy. Since then, its political stability has laid the foundations for record growth, bringing jobs to the country and its people.

Observer, 15 January 2012

As prominent as the corruption narrative was – especially in relation to Africa – we did find examples of positive reporting around political reform in the media analysis, particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring. Still, even positive reporting about African nations tackling corruption may also have served to reinforce the notion that corruption is the main driver behind poverty and inequality. None of the participants in the audience research said anything to suggest that this more positive framing of political reform in Africa had made an impression on them.

Some stories in the media research, usually in the broadsheet press, framed corruption and Africa in more nuanced, positive terms – for example, stories around community initiatives advocating for political and economic reform, or accounts of individual nations, such as Ghana, prospering thanks to a combination of aid and good governance. But, on the whole, these were in the significant minority.

5.4 | AUDIENCE MISTRUST OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT

International NGOs and charities

UN agencies

Private sector

UK government

International bodies

Domestic governments in other countries

◄ ·· ►

HIGHER TRUST   **LOWER TRUST**

Notably, for the audience research participants, mistrust of governments was not limited to those in developing countries. In the focus groups they expressed very little faith in British politics. Many said they didn't plan to vote and just one-third said they would vote for an established party. Trust in the UK government was ranked low (on a scale of 0-10, trust was rated as 4 – much lower than charities, which achieved a score of 6.3).

Proof should be provided that aid is really going where it should and benefitting the right causes in the right way.

❞ Audience focus group participant

There was a broad recognition that, as a nation, the UK does give generously compared to other nations. Yet there were also concerns expressed about an apparently unclear agenda, about wastefulness of resources, an absence of clear targets for measuring the effectiveness of aid, and a perceived lack of transparency.

5.5 | CORRUPTION: THE TABOO WORD FOR DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS

Some participants in the Bond stakeholder workshops suggested that the omnipresence of the corruption narrative in the research findings was a consequence of many INGOs largely avoiding the issue in public-facing communications. There was a strong sense that corruption had become an unmentionable taboo, *'the 'C' word'* (as one put it) not to be uttered. One participant discerned that *'there is a fear of contaminating'* what INGOs are doing. While an increasing number of INGOs are working on – and talking about – a range of strategies to improve governance and the aid system generally, it was clear that the current *de facto* strategy (shared by a lot of the sector) of not directly talking about corruption was intended to avoid inadvertently reinforcing a negative framing.

The famous George Lakoff book, *Don't Think of an Elephant* was cited by another – and how on hearing the command 'don't think of an elephant' no person can stop their mind from summoning a hulking grey beast with a swinging trunk. Doing so, this participant underscored the view that when we *negate a frame, we evoke the frame*.

There was also the suggestion from several workshop participants that part of the fear around talking about corruption is that doing so may be perceived as racist; even that the corruption narrative is *in itself* inherently racist. Why, they pointed out, should African corruption be perceived as different from US or European corruption?

And how has corruption come to shape public perception of African governments so much more than that of governments in other parts of the world?

Some provided the insight that the corruption narrative is prominent in part because it serves as an easy explanation for the perceived failure to make progress in tackling world poverty, with one participant noting: *'If the public believed development was working, would they seek out explanations for its failure?'* Others suggested that negative perceptions of poverty reduction served as a 'guilt alleviator' or a neat excuse for inaction for some members of the public.

> **SWAZILAND'S AUTOCRATIC KING MSWATI HAS OBTAINED A PRIVATE JET WORTH MILLIONS, DESPITE THE MAJORITY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN CONTINUING TO LIVE IN ABJECT POVERTY.**

The Telegraph, 25 April 2012

> **FOR MOST VOTERS THE TRUE TEST OF THE "NEW" NAWAZ … WILL BE HOW HE TACKLES THE COUNTRY'S CHRONIC ECONOMIC WOES AND ACCOMPANYING, ENDEMIC CORRUPTION.**

guardian.co.uk, 12 May 2013

> **BUT WHEN [MANDELA'S] GONE? WELL, THINGS COULD BE VERY DIFFERENT. THE ANC – ALREADY ACCUSED OF ARROGANCE, CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE – WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO TRADE SO EASILY ON PAST GLORIES.**

Daily Mirror, 6 April 2013

When the Bond stakeholders discussed the daunting prospect of communicating more directly about corruption, many felt it was critical to establish the facts: that is, how much aid is actually wasted and how do these figures compare to, say, UK spending on defence, the National Health Service, or benefits? There is, added one participant, *'a need for truth, positive documentaries, success stories, and counter-narratives'*. Another asked whether aid could be positioned as a solution to, rather than a cause of, corruption.

Many of the stakeholders determined that part of the way to create a more balanced perception of corruption among the UK public was to better publicise the positive work of domestic actors in developing countries (especially in Africa), and in particular help UK audiences get to know African leaders better, so that they could cease to be 'remote anonymous caricatures'.

All stakeholder workshop participants shared a motivation to make corruption less of a barrier to public support for efforts to tackle world poverty. To that end, some suggested it might be time to *'go where the conversation is'* and work with the corruption story. This would mean painting a more nuanced picture of the complexity of development – of which acknowledging corruption would be a part. How, after all, could the picture be *all good or all bad*? A more *'grown up'* public conversation might, it was mooted, be that despite a range of real difficulties – including corruption – real progress is still being made.

Of the risk of reinforcing negative framing, one participant argued powerfully that not talking about elephants *'won't cut it any more'*, when the public conversation keeps returning to the topic of corruption.

Given that it has become the dominant narrative, one participant noted that, *'these days, if you're not talking about corruption, you're not really talking about development'* and *'if we're not in that conversation, we look out of touch'*.

Workshop participants agreed that any work in this sphere should seek to accurately 'contextualise corruption'. They argued that it was important to acknowledge the problem and impact of corruption, but that this should be done in a manner that countered the fact that corruption has, for many members of the public, become the dominant and overarching 'explanation' for why poverty exists and persists.

6 THEME III: AID TO INDIA AND OTHER MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

ON THE WHOLE, MEDIA REPORTING ON AID DURING THE RESEARCH PERIOD WAS FAIRLY EVENLY DISTRIBUTED ACROSS DEVELOPING NATIONS, WITH JUST ONE EXCEPTION: INDIA

> **"**
> ## I'M AWARE OF THE DREADFUL POVERTY THAT EXISTS IN INDIA AND WONDER WHY THEIR GOVERNMENT SQUANDERS MONEY ON MISSILE SYSTEMS WHILE THEIR PEOPLE STARVE.
> **"**
> Audience research participant

The majority of media reporting about India was negative, particularly in the mid-market press and right-leaning broadsheets, and focused on the question of whether India should receive aid at all – with headlines like *'Booming India Tell UK to Stop Their Aid'*, or *'Aid may be 'a peanut' to India, but not to us'*.

Of all the media coverage we looked at, while there was a good deal of reporting on aid to 'Africa' in general, India was by far the most frequently mentioned country. When a specific country was mentioned, 20% of reporting about international poverty in general centred on India. In relation to government aid, the figure was almost one-third.

PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES ABOUT AID THAT SPECIFICALLY MENTION INDIA

India **20%**

31 Other countries
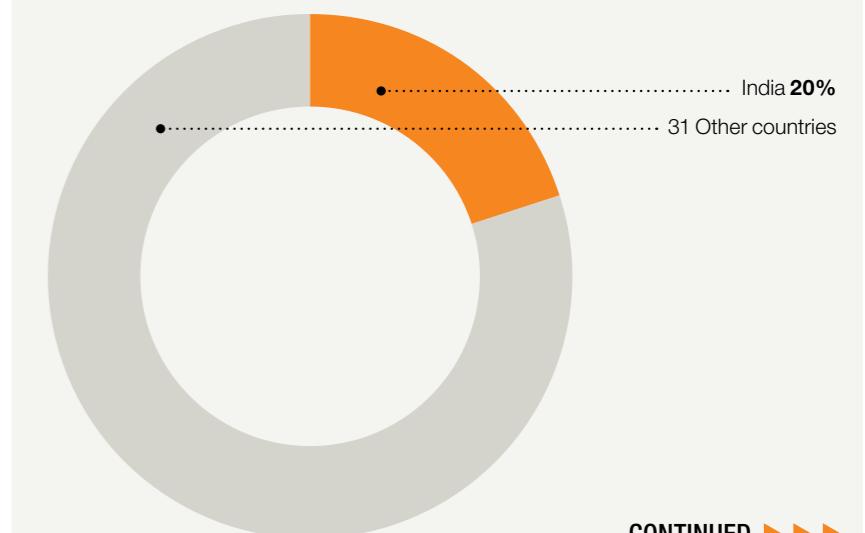
GREENING CALLS A HALT TO CASH AID IN BOOMING INDIA

Cash aid to India will stop in 2015, heralding an end to British taxpayers giving money to boom nations, Justine Greening announced today. The UK is this year sending £280 million to India, which is rich enough to have its own space programme while millions of Indians live in poverty.

"It's time to recognise India's changing place in the world," said Ms Greening. "... India is successfully developing, and our own bilateral relationship has to keep up with 21st-century India."

Evening Standard,
9 November 2012

There were occasional exceptions to the negative reporting on aid for India, with some articles making the case for the continuation of aid.

UK UNVEILS NEW AID STRATEGY FOR INDIA

DfID points out that India is still home to one third of the world's poor – people living on less than $1.25 a day – more than the number of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite its status as a middle income country…. More than half of all young children in Madhya Pradesh are malnourished; only one in four people in Bihar have access to a toilet.

Guardian.com, 21 October 2011

WE PAY FOR INDIA'S NAVY: SCANDAL AS BRITAIN'S FOREIGN AID CASH IS SPENT ON WARSHIPS

There was fresh anger over taxpayer aid to India last night as it emerged the country is spending £1billion on three warships.

Britain is still handing over £280million a year despite India admitting it doesn't need the help and regards the amount as "peanuts".

Express, 30 August 2012

BRIC NATIONS ROCKED BY AFTERSHOCKS OF EUROZONE CRISIS

The devastating slowdown in the European economies has shown that 'decoupling' – the idea that developing nations would go on growing despite problems in the west – is a myth.

Observer, 24 June 2012

But reporting of this type was in a small minority and, while overall reporting on aid was neutral, aid to India was reported particularly negatively – when averaged across all media sectors.

AVERAGE FAVOURABILITY OF REPORTING ON AID

0 — All reporting on aid

-1 ⋯⋯⋯ Reporting on aid to India

0 = neutral reporting

-1 = somewhat unfavourable

The audience research reflected this trend towards questioning the need for and legitimacy of aid to India. Other countries were also mentioned, including Syria, with one participant telling us, *"I understand the appalling situation these refugees are in, but it is not poverty in a developing country – Syria is a well organised, moderately rich country that has an ongoing conflict."*

For many, the images conjured up by India had moved on from those of rural poverty to those of urban deprivation, homelessness and squalor – some highlighting this as a reflection of the rapid transformation of the country's economy. This apparently represented progress for some, who noted that India had *'grown significantly'* and should therefore no longer qualify for aid, especially in the context of Britain's economic struggles at home.

I've just seen an article in *The Guardian* about how so many UK children will never 'reach the bottom of the economic cliff, never mind climb it' because of the amount of debt people are in and how the use (of) food banks has increased recently.

> Audience research participant

Bond workshop participants seemed to agree that this purported misdirection of aid was an easy story for the media to tell, and one that fits perfectly into a wider anti-aid agenda. They were unsurprised to learn that the audience research participants saw aid going to countries like India as wasteful and a distraction from 'greater' domestic needs – especially in light of a general media focus on ascendant middle-income economies among the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and MINT (Mexico, India, Nigeria, Turkey) nations. Indeed, a few felt this argument to be valid – or at least that it raised legitimate questions that couldn't be answered easily.

The bias towards negative rather than positive news reporting was also felt to make any narrative around progress through development and aid a hard sell to news media – which perhaps explained how India had become the 'poster child' of the failure of aid, and not of its success.

More surprising perhaps was the anecdotal feedback shared by some Bond stakeholder workshop participants that, although negative reporting on aid to India had been common, it had not – in the words of one fundraising expert – *'affected the number of supporters actually donating money to causes there'*. Contrary to the findings of the audience research, they also suggested that few people were *'truly aware'* of the difference between middle- and low-income countries, or certainly not to the extent that donation patterns were negatively affected at the INGO they worked for.

Stakeholder workshop participants remarked that, while the map of poverty is changing as more poor countries move to middle-income status, space in which to tell a more nuanced story about growing inequality in many of those countries remained limited. It was suggested that a 'single overarching-narrative' could aim to shift the focus from countries to people – recognising that poverty is something experienced by individuals who are excluded and otherwise subject to discrimination – regardless of the wealth of their nation.

Some wondered if a stronger framing of poverty as a social injustice might be part of the answer to the middle-income country narrative, moving INGOs decisively away from the familiar imagery of destitution and need that could be solved with a hand-out.

It was also argued that the rise of the Indian economy – and those of other middle-income aid recipients – could provide a stronger opportunity for INGOs to highlight the progress that has been made in the fight against poverty and the part they, and UK aid, have played in it. This, it was proposed, might support a more general move away from the rich-country-poor-country dichotomy that has characterised so much of INGO communication, instead illustrating development as an internal struggle within nations that richer countries can support.

Such a narrative could be developed with reference to diaspora organisations in the UK in order to avoid – as one person put it – *'the INGO sector's often paternalistic voice'*. It was further suggested that, in the context of this narrative, turning up the volume on issues like employment or minority rights could help underscore the lived reality of individuals living in poor communities, and link to familiar and universal issues better understood by UK audiences.

> I DO WONDER (RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY) WHY WE ARE MADE TO FEEL SO GUILTY ABOUT NEEDING TO SEND MONEY TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY IN NEED IN OUR COUNTRY?

Audience research participant

7 CHANGE THE RECORD: RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS SECTION PUTS FORWARD SIX RECOMMENDATIONS
TO HELP 'CHANGE THE RECORD' ON GLOBAL POVERTY

7.1 DEVELOP A CLEAR AND COMPELLING OVERARCHING NARRATIVE TO COUNTERBALANCE NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Bond undertook this programme of research for two main reasons:

- to contribute further insight into the existing body of knowledge on UK public support for aid and development, particularly among people in the 'middle ground' who are neither emphatically for nor against tackling global poverty

- to enable Bond members to discuss the diminishing level of public support for international development and to identify practical ways in which to respond to and reverse this trend.

The research findings represent a significant challenge to the international development sector. They provide a picture of how aid and development are covered in the UK media and how these narratives are reflected in UK public opinion. While it was clear from the Bond members we spoke to that many INGOs are seeking to tell a more progressive story about development, our audience research indicates that, broadly speaking, public understanding has not yet caught up.

Together with the stakeholder workshop participants, Bond has developed a number of recommendations as a signpost to the kind of activity needed to address the increasingly fragile UK public support for global development. Changing public discourse and attitudes is a long-term project. These recommendations should be seen as a contribution to that journey.

FINDINGS

- There is a great deal of confusion among the UK public around what causes poverty, how it might best be tackled and (to a lesser degree) what poverty actually is.

- There is a significant disconnect between the collective story of global development as told through the UK media; the development story that is heard, remembered and talked about by the UK public; and what many in the INGO sector would recognise as a balanced or accurate account of global development.

- The INGO sector enjoys a high level of visibility and public trust, which brings with it a responsibility and opportunity to take a leading role in engaging the UK public in the fight against global poverty, including the structural causes of poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **There is a need to tackle the public confusion and the dwindling levels of public support with a new narrative.**

- Participants at the stakeholder workshops agreed that the sector should work together to develop what one participant coined a 'single overarching narrative'– perhaps in the form of a limited number of key messages that all could agree – to give coherence to individual INGOs' distinct and complementary approaches and tackle the general confusion that exists among the UK public. Over time, such a narrative would aim to build a more informed and engaged public.

  This idea gained traction with most stakeholders, although some expressed concerns that a single narrative approach could undermine efforts to tell the full story.

- Within the workshops, a number of potential new narratives were proposed. Those with the broadest support included: narratives rooted in social justice and a structural understanding of poverty; narratives where issues like jobs, social protection and minority rights were amplified; and/or narratives that celebrate the significant progress made to date in tackling poverty.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

- Undertake necessary work internally to prepare staff for developing, testing and implementing new narratives.

- As it emerges, work to apply new narrative/s throughout our organisations' communication channels.

ACTIONS FOR BOND

- Building on the available research and the workshops held to date, convene a broad grouping of INGOs to develop and test new narratives for poverty and global development that can be adapted and used to suit a range of organisations, communication functions and audiences.

- Facilitate Bond members to share examples of the new-narrative in practice and insights as they emerge.

7.2 | ADOPT A COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO TACKLE PREVALENT MYTHS

FINDING

Two of the development issues that dominate UK newspaper coverage – corruption and aid to middle-income countries – are often written about unfavourably and include inaccurate allegations. These stories have a significant impact on the public's understanding of and support for global development. Furthermore, the audience research and stakeholder workshops found that the INGO counter-voice to inaccurate stories has been muted and has failed to cut through to the public with much potency.

RECOMMENDATION

As a sector, we should coordinate to rapidly counter myths or inaccurate attacks that are perpetuated through the media. This should be done in a way that will help build public support.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

• Learn from the existing areas where the sector currently responds collectively and rapidly e.g. humanitarian crises responses.

• Work together to deliver coordinated responses to any myths or attacks so that no one organisation takes the brunt of the burden or has to 'go it alone'.

ACTIONS FOR BOND

• Trial approaches to support Bond members to rapidly respond to media stories in a coordinated fashion using compelling messages. Ensure a range of spokespeople are featured (see below recommendation for additional information).

• Share learning from these approaches about what messages are most effective and achieve the greatest public cut-through.

7.3 | PROMOTE VISIBILITY OF A MORE REPRESENTATIVE RANGE OF DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

FINDING

Across all media outlets and geographic regions, two main actors dominated coverage – INGOs and donor governments. This was also reflected in the audience research, where INGOs and donor governments were named as those most responsible for tackling poverty and global development.

Participants in the stakeholder workshops agreed this was a very problematic finding because it perpetuated a distorted and inaccurate picture of *who* was involved in tackling global poverty.

By situating northern NGOs and governments as the key actors, individuals, communities and governments in the global South and diaspora development organisations in the UK, among others, are largely excluded.

RECOMMENDATION

UK INGOs should actively create more opportunities for other development actors to be seen and heard in the media and through other public communication channels.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

• Increase efforts to identify, nurture and promote other key development actors – including (but not limited to) Southern partners and diaspora communities in the UK – to achieve greater visibility in UK media.

This could have the dual benefit of challenging some existing stereotypes while strengthening more diverse and progressive development narratives in the media.

• Undertake testing with target audiences to identify who the most compelling messengers are and then work to enable these voices to be seen and heard through media work.

ACTION FOR BOND

• Bond should support such efforts – for example, through training and engaging a diverse range of spokespeople when undertaking any rapid response media work (see above recommendation).

7.4 | WORK TOGETHER TO TACKLE PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

FINDING

Stories of corruption and development feature prominently in media coverage and in the public's perception of development. For some people, corruption is a barrier to their support for aid and development. For others, it is a convenient excuse to explain why they don't support global development.

RECOMMENDATION

The INGO sector needs a strategy to address this trend in order to make corruption less of a barrier to public support for efforts to tackle world poverty.

Some suggested that we should *'go where the conversation is'* and work *with* the corruption story.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

• As a sector, we should coordinate to rapidly counter myths or attacks that are perpetuated through the media. This should be done in a way that will help build public support.

This would mean painting a more nuanced picture of development – acknowledging that corruption exists in parts of the public and private sectors throughout the world, not just in developing countries. It should be noted that this was a very controversial area of discussion within the stakeholder workshops. While all participants shared the motivation to make corruption less of a barrier to public support for efforts to tackle world poverty, there was disagreement about the best way to go about it.

ACTIONS FOR BOND

• Convene discussions to help agree a collective effort to respond to this challenge.

• Gather evidence about what UK INGOs are currently doing to tackle corruption through programme, campaigning and policy work in order to develop a fuller picture of existing work and, as appropriate, communicating this publicly.

• Learn from available research – or conduct new research – to better understand what the UK public understands 'corruption' and 'waste' and other related terms to be.

• Learn from the organisations who communicate publicly about issues of corruption, governance, accountability and transparency to better understand what messages work and why.

7.5 | COLLECTIVELY TARGET AUDIENCES WHO CAN BE ENGAGED

FINDING

Among the partially engaged and apathetic audiences that this research focused on there exists a range of perspectives and typologies, some of which are more open to changing their perception/and or behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION

INGOs should continue to take an audience-centred approach to their communications. INGOs should work collectively to agree specific target groups, in particular those who are most open to changing their perception and/or behaviour like the 'dormant activists' discussed earlier in this report.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

• Build strategies designed to engage specific audience typologies, recognising that different messages and channels will be needed to reach different audiences.

• Work on collaborative initiatives to reach audience segments – those who hold a connection with our vision to tackle poverty – that will help build deeper public support for global development, i.e., the dormant activists.

ACTIONS FOR BOND

• Support Bond members to better understand the range of typologies that exist and share best practice about approaches that work when targeting new audiences.

• Convene Bond members to identify audience segments or typologies to target through collective or individual initiatives.

FINDING

The stakeholder workshops highlighted a significant imbalance across the sector in people's understanding of existing research on public support for development. Furthermore, and understandably, there is little immediate incentive or opportunity for staff to critically consider the *collective* impact the INGO sector's communication has on the UK public.

RECOMMENDATION

As a sector, we need a deeper commitment to more systematic and sustained learning from public attitude research and each other in order to drive the major and long-term shift in approach that is needed.

ACTIONS FOR EVERYONE

• Build opportunities for staff across multiple disciplines and levels to critically engage with available public support research and emerging initiatives.

• Commit to develop, test and implement messaging that is rooted within frames that are proven to help build long-term support for global poverty reduction.

ACTIONS FOR BOND

• Disseminate this research and other related research to staff across multiple disciplines and at all levels throughout the sector.

• Facilitate members to proactively share and discuss new approaches, best practices and emerging insights.

FIND OUT MORE

bond.org.uk/public-support
email: advocacy@bond.org.uk

Any sector-wide change in practice will need to be responsive to emerging research and evolve over time to reflect changing external contexts. The success of this work will be dependent on a sustained effort from across the Bond membership. It will require engagement from all levels and disciplines – campaigning, fundraising, marketing, communications and beyond; from frontline fundraiser to chair of the board.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – MEDIA RESEARCH
APPENDIX 2 – AUDIENCE RESEARCH
APPENDIX 3 – STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

APPENDIX 1
MEDIA RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

This research project was limited to UK newspapers and their websites, which remain key trusted channels with an agenda-setting role. TGI[4] states that 'news and current affairs' reporting is the single most important trigger in donating to charities working in overseas development and famine relief. While newspapers function somewhat differently to broadcast media, we judged that they serve as a reasonable proxy for the wider media agenda.

The first step was a search of newspaper articles in the LexisNexis UK print media database (this excludes News International titles – e.g., the *Sun* and *The Times* – protected by a 'paywall'). We developed Boolean search strings for all articles related to the term 'poverty' (plus a selection of linked keywords) relating to developing countries (as defined by the IMF Developing Country index).

Five thousand articles were gathered from over 30 national and regional titles, from which a core of 2,000 articles, evenly distributed across dates and publication type, was selected for analysis. Researchers were asked to read and analyse each of these articles, giving greater weight to headlines and content toward the start of text. A formalist narrative analysis of media articles was conducted.

For the 'issue' classification, we developed a closed taxonomy of terms based on issues that the UK INGO sector works on – by reviewing the 'what we do' sections of the websites of the 30 largest (by expenditure) Bond members.

Using a formalist narrative analysis approach, a four-part classification framework for the media research was developed:

ACTOR: who is acting on poverty?

ISSUE: what 'problem' is the subject of this article, as it relates to the issues Bond members work on?

INTERVENTION: what is the main action being taken to address the issue?

FAVOURABILITY: how favourable, or unfavourable, is the article to the intervention?

The media research did not include an analysis of social media – despite the huge growth in online news, established brands (such as the BBC, *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, etc.) still dominate. Indeed, only 16% of the UK public use digital-only news sources[viii].

FULL CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Publication name; media sector; average daily readership; date of article; headline; geographical region covered; primary nation covered; economic status of primary nation; primary actor; sector of primary actor; primary issue; intervention; favourability to the intervention. The researchers also recorded whether the article related to a 'humanitarian' (emergency) or 'development' intervention – although, inevitably, this distinction was somewhat blurred.

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[4] TGI: Target Group Index from Kantar Media, which includes an extensive and regular survey of 25,000 UK adults.

NEWSPAPER TITLES AND THEIR WEBSITES

The following titles were reviewed in the media research:

Broadsheet
Daily Telegraph; *Sunday Telegraph*; Telegraph.co.uk; *The Guardian*; Guardian.co.uk; *The Observer*; *Independent*; *i-Independent*; *Independent on Sunday*; Independent.co.uk

Mid-market
Daily Mail; Mail on Sunday; *Express; Sunday Express*; *Express Online; MailOnline*

Popular
Daily Star; Daily Star Sunday; Daily Star Online; *Mirror; Sunday Mirror; The People; Sunday Sun; Daily Record/Sunday Mail;*

Major regionals
Evening Standard (London); *Evening Times* (Glasgow); *The Herald* (Glasgow); *Metro* (UK); *Scotland on Sunday; Scotsman*; *The Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday; Yorkshire Post*

APPENDIX 2
AUDIENCE RESEARCH

AUDIENCE SCREENING QUESTIONS

Summary of the criteria used to screen prospective audience research participants.

Geographical area	Spread between three segments – London, the North West and Midlands
Age	Mix of ages (between 20 and 60 years), with no more than two the same age per segment
Gender	Male/female mix per segment
Working status	Full time, part time or non-working, all within social grade B, C1 or C2
Nationality	All UK nationals and resident in the UK for at least 10 years
Member of family working in journalism, public relations, advertising, market research, government	Excluded
Interviewed or attended a discussion group for market research	Half to have never attended a group discussion / interview, none in the last six months and none on politics in the last year
Read, watched or taken action on international poverty	All to have read, watched or listened to a news article and discussed with friends, family or others. Partially engaged to have donated money and purchased or boycotted products/services related to an issue. None to have taken action such as volunteering abroad, starting a community online or offline, or writing to an elected representative on the issue.
Political affiliation	Four per segment to be left of centre, four right of centre and none to belong to a political party

The audience tracking focused on 26 research subjects around the United Kingdom. They were asked to maintain an ongoing dialogue with us through a digital portal (into which we fed new themes and questions each week), and to analyse outputs in both text and video in real time. To promote honesty and openness of their responses, participants were assured of their anonymity.

The participants were diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, and political views. They were selected on the basis that they were 'apathetic' to, or 'partially engaged' with international development.

We chose not to recruit participants who were highly engaged with international development, or – at the other end of the spectrum – issue rejecters, on the basis that effective strategies for increasing public engagement would likely need to be targeted at audiences with genuine potential to engage. The apathetic and partially engaged segments constitute the 'swing voters' on international development, and within these groups we wanted to find sub-segments that could be targeted in future strategies.

The breakdown of audience research participants was as follows:

- Eight partially engaged, aged 20–40 in London
- Nine partially engaged, aged 40–60 in Manchester
- Nine apathetic, aged 25 –55 in Birmingham.

They reported a wide spread of media usage, and most could be termed 'first among friends' to know what is going on around them in the world (although not necessarily on the topics of international poverty, overseas development or aid).

APPENDIX 3
BOND STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Three half-day workshops were held in March 2014 at which representatives from Bond members and other key stakeholders were presented with, and discussed, the findings and insights from the media and audience research.

The aims were to test the findings against the experiences and knowledge of workshop participants; identify the key challenges facing the development sector; and start developing strategies for working together to change the narrative in the UK around international poverty in order to maintain and build public support.

The following organisations were represented at the workshops:

Action Against Hunger, ActionAid, ADD International, AFFORD, Africa Initiatives, Age International, Basti Ram, BBC Media Action, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, British Red Cross, CAFOD, CAME Women and Girls, CARE International UK, Christian Aid, Comic Relief, Concern Worldwide, Disasters Emergency Committee, Diaspora, Volunteering Alliance, Engineers Without Borders UK; Global Poverty Project; Global Witness; International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Lessons for Life, M&C Saatchi World Services, MADE in Europe, Muslim Aid, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), ONE, Oxfam, Plan-UK, Positive Runway, Practical Action, Progressio, Publish What You Fund (PWYF) Restless Development, Salvation Army, Save the Children, Sightsavers, Tearfund, Think Global, TOSHPA, University College London, VSO, WaterAid, WHEAT Mentoring and Support Trust, WSPA.

ENDNOTES

[i] YouGov, Aid Attitudes Tracker, 2013 (a multi-year longitudinal study of public attitudes on development and aid conducted by YouGov in collaboration with a number of development-sector organisations).

[ii] See Charities Aid Foundation report, UK Giving 2012 (https://www.cafonline.org/publications/2012-publications/uk-giving-2012.aspx)

[iii] YouGov, Aid Attitudes Tracker, 2013 (a multi-year longitudinal study of public attitudes on development and aid conducted by YouGov in collaboration with a number of development-sector organisations). Fieldwork referred to in this report was conducted online in November/December 2013, with a sample size of 6,000+ people in each of the four countries where the research takes place – UK, USA, Denmark and France.

[iv] http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview

[v] YouGov, Aid Attitudes Tracker, 2013

[vi] The Edelman Trust Barometer (2014, p.3) reports that, for the seventh year running, NGOs are the world's most trusted institutions.

[vii] http://www.ioha2012.net/?page_id=1945

[viii] http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/

bond
FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Society Building
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
UK

+44 (0)20 7837 8344
bond@bond.org.uk
bond.org.uk