

# LOSING REALITY

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**FACTUAL INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING ON UK TELEVISION, 2000-01**

*2002*



# 3WE

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Designed and printed by The Page Media Group. [www.pagemediagroup.com](http://www.pagemediagroup.com)

First published in the UK in 2002 by the  
Third World and Environment  
Broadcasting Project (3WE)

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ISBN: 0 9525050 4 5

## 3WE

3WE, the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project, is a coalition of the UK's leading international development and environment charities which works for sustained and imaginative coverage of global affairs on UK mainstream television. Its members include:

**ActionAid, Cafod, Christian Aid, CIIR, Comic Relief, the International Broadcasting Trust, ITDG, the One World Broadcasting Trust, Oxfam, the RSPB, Save the Children, Unicef-UK, the United Nations Association-UK, VSO and Worldaware**

# LOSING REALITY

## Executive Summary

The international documentary is virtually dead.

The realities of life for the majority of the world's people, who live in developing countries, are receiving less attention from mainstream UK television than at any time in the last 13 years.

Instead, mainstream television's coverage of international subjects is dominated by 'reality TV', other types of travel challenge and holiday programmes, docu-soaps and 'cultural' programming, much of which has a common format – it places the British subject in the foreground, and uses foreign locations mainly as environments in which to observe them.

And if these conclusions are drawn from monitoring output for the year almost exactly to September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the day of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, a subsequent sample suggests the programme mix has been largely unchanged by those shattering events.

This is the seventh in a series of monitoring research reports published by 3WE since 1989-90. It examines the levels and nature of non-news-and-current-affairs factual international programming between September 2000 and August 2001 inclusive on the free-to-air channels 1-5. These channels, which carry public service obligations, continued to command 80% of the audiences in the year in question.

In the decade from 1989-90 to 1998-99 3WE had found that the amount of such programming on international subjects in general fell by 42% on channels 1-4; while that which covered developing countries fell by 50%.

For the year 2000-01 this report found that, compared to 1998-99:

Factual international programming rose, returning to its 1996-97 level, but remaining one quarter lower than in 1989-90

Developing country factual programming also rose, but at only half the rate, with the rise disproportionately concentrated in off-peak schedules – returning to the still comparatively low levels of the early 1990s

But despite these rises:

The number of factual programmes in categories dealing directly with the society, development and environment of developing countries fell further, to unprecedented low levels in the 12 years of 3WE's research;

There were fewer developing country factual programmes, compared to 1998-99, in each category of: history; politics; development, environment and human rights; and conflict and disaster.

Wildlife programming also fell dramatically, from 37% of the total developing country factual coverage in 1998-99 to 27% in 2000-01. So where did the rises in overall hours come from?

The categories of coverage which rose during 2000-01 were:

'Travel' – including reality TV, holiday travel shows, and travel challenges

'Miscellaneous' – including 'docu-soaps'

'Religion, culture and the arts'

while Channel 5 caused the creation of a new category of 'crime and policing' by the sheer volume of its acquired US programmes on these topics.

Travel, including 'reality TV', rose from 20% of developing country factual programming in 1998-99 to 32% in 2000-01:

ITV1 quintupled, Channel 5 trebled and Channel 4 doubled their number of travel programmes filmed in developing countries

Reality TV accounted for almost 10% of the commercial channels' factual international coverage (and 15% of Channel 4's developing country factual programming)

Docu-soaps accounted for most of the 100% rise in the 'miscellaneous' category of factual international programming.

All channels showed large rises in their factual international cultural output:

The main subjects covered were popular music, international clubbing, the sex industry, and Indian popular and religious culture

There were more cultural programmes filmed in developing countries (93) than the combined total of programmes on developing countries' politics, history, development, environment and human rights, and conflict and disaster (72)

The three commercial channels (ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5) led these trends, but BBC2 also followed in their wake. BBC2 reduced its hours of both factual international and developing country factual programming, significantly decreased its output in the 'harder' developing country issue categories, and like Channel 4 moved towards softer, cultural output.

The rises in numbers of programme hours in the five channels' output of factual international programming and developing country factual programming are welcome. But the programme mix resulting from the trend towards entertainment formats and away from 'harder' issue categories is less so.

The space for in-depth factual programmes examining the lives, experiences, politics and environment of the majority of the world's people – and allowing them to speak for themselves without mediation – has almost completely closed.

It is now questionable whether the main television channels are providing a public service of 'information and education, as well as entertainment' (as the government defines it) with regard to showing us the world beyond our shores.

This report results in a number of recommendations that are relevant to the Communications Bill, published in draft form in May 2002 and due to become a full bill in autumn 2002. In particular it calls for:

the inclusion of a requirement for public service broadcasters to provide non-news-and-current-affairs programming on 'international issues'

the tightening of ITV1's remit to ensure it continues to provide high quality factual programming

new 'statements of purpose' for BBC1 and BBC2 so that the public knows what each channel is for

the new regulator, OFCOM, to regulate proactively and innovatively in this area

the BBC channels and Channel 4 to provide more space for imaginative factual international programming

more use of 'landmark' programmes on international issues, backed by information on other platforms

# INTRODUCTION

The international documentary is virtually dead.

Figures in this report show that the space for in-depth factual programmes examining the lives, experiences, politics and environment of the majority of the world's people – and allowing them to speak for themselves without mediation – has almost completely closed.

It is now questionable whether the main television channels are providing a public service of 'information and education, as well as entertainment' (as the government defines it) with regard to showing us the world beyond our shores.

After a decade of decline to 1998-99, the number of hours of factual international programming on the main five channels rose again, to 1996-97 levels. Developing country factual programming also rose, but to a lesser extent, achieving levels comparable to the still low figures of the early 1990s. Both categories remain around one quarter lower than in 1989-90.

But behind these recent rises lies a change in the programme mix. The raw numbers of hours have been increased by 'internationalising' entertainment and consumer genres.

'Reality TV', putting British people into constructed environments located in developing countries, gets more television hours than the realities of life for the majority of the world's people.

Holiday shows, travel challenges and 'docu-soaps' – all of which mainly feature British people being confronted by foreign environments – also rose, to dominate factual international programming.

The number of developing country factual programmes in 'harder' categories like 'history', 'politics', 'development, environment and human rights', and 'conflict and disaster' fell further – to unprecedented low levels. Although 'history' survived, the other categories became largely insignificant as a public service offering.

The remaining window for insightful programming on international and developing country subjects is through 'culture'. The amount of cultural programming rose dramatically. Again, some of it features the 'internationalisation' of British subjects – often young people clubbing or surfing abroad. But some cultural output was genuinely innovative and

accessible, offering new insights into other countries and their people.

## A disaster in the era of globalisation

At a time when 'globalisation' is understood to be intimately affecting every aspect of the lives of UK citizens – our food, health, jobs and livelihoods, our environment, peace and security – the continued decline of informative and educative programming on the wider world is a disaster.

The non-governmental organisations which make up 3WE see this as a disaster for the public's awareness of sustainable development and its challenges.

For government, communications regulators and for the public, it represents a real challenge – to ensure that UK citizens are enabled to live to their full potential in the new global information society, through having access to high quality information and knowledge of the wider world through the media they most use.

It is therefore all the more surprising that, even after the events of September 11th 2001, the government's attempt to define public service broadcasting in law has omitted any requirement for factual international programming, outside news and current affairs.

3WE's recommendations focus on this omission from the draft Communications Bill, as well as on the new system it introduces for regulating public service broadcasting content.

## The research

3WE, the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project, was founded in 1989, and began a programme of monitoring research, examining the levels and nature of factual international programming on the UK's mainstream TV channels (those with public service obligations).

From 1989 to 1999 we found that the hours of non-news-and-current-affairs factual programming filmed outside the UK and broadcast on channels 1-4 declined by 42%<sup>1</sup>. Factual programming filmed specifically in developing countries declined by 50%. What remained was increasingly being shown outside peak hours.

This report updates the findings by examining the year from September 2000 to August 2001 inclusive. It therefore provides a clear picture of how broadcasters were carrying out their responsibilities to cover the wider world in the year almost exactly to September 11th 2001.

After a decade of decline to 1999, the overall number of hours of non-news-and-current-affairs factual programming filmed outside the UK and broadcast by channels 1-5 rose again – recovering to the level of 1996-97, which was a mini-peak during the 1990s.

Factual programming on developing countries also recovered, but by only half the rate – returning to the relatively low levels of the early 1990s.

BBC2 was an exception to these rises. It decreased its factual international programming.

Behind these rises lay clear trends away from 'information and education' on the wider world, and towards entertainment and consumerism.

Despite the rise of 20% in the hours of developing country factual programming, compared to 1998-99, the number of factual programmes in categories dealing directly with the society, development and environment of developing countries fell.

There were fewer developing country factual programmes in each category of: history; politics; development, environment and human rights; and conflict and disaster:

Only four programmes on the 'politics' of developing countries were broadcast during the year – and three of these were on one channel

(BBC2). BBC1, ITV1 and Channel 5 provided no programmes in this category

The category of 'development, environment and human rights' made up 30% of developing country factual programming in 1989-90, but fell throughout the 1990s – and in 2000-01 it fell again, to just 6% of the total

The number of developing country factual programmes in the 'conflict and disaster' category fell from 32 in 1998-99 to 10 in 2000-01

The number of developing country factual programmes in the 'history' category fell by 4 programmes to 31 in 2000-01

Channel 5 provided no developing country factual programming in any of these categories

During the year 2000-01 the amount of wildlife programming also fell dramatically – by 26% across the five channels. Wildlife fell from 37% of the total developing country factual coverage in 1998-99 to 27% in 2000-01 as the two largest providers, BBC2 and Channel 5, both cut their number of hours.

So where did the rises in overall factual international programming and developing country factual programming come from?

The categories of coverage which rose during 2000-01 were:

'Travel' – including reality TV, holiday travel shows, and travel challenges

'Miscellaneous' – including 'docu-soaps'

'Religion, culture and the arts'

while Channel 5 caused the creation of a new category of 'crime and policing' by the sheer volume of its acquired US programmes on these topics.



## INTRODUCTION cont

The hours of travel programmes filmed internationally, and the amount of those filmed in developing countries, rose on all five channels except BBC2:

Travel rose from 20% of developing country factual programming in 1998-99 to 32% in 2000-01

ITV1's number of travel programmes on developing countries rose by a factor of five

Channel 5's number of travel programmes on developing countries trebled

Channel 4's number of travel programmes on developing countries doubled

One reason commercial channels in particular showed dramatic rises in travel programming is that holiday travel programmes were given extended runs and ranged further afield. Another reason was the advent of 'reality TV'.

Within 3WE's methodology, 'travel' includes 'Reality TV' – observational programmes featuring people facing up to challenges in constructed environments. Increasingly these programmes have been set in exotic locations:

Reality TV accounted for almost one tenth of the commercial channels' factual international coverage

'Survivor' made up nearly half of ITV1's total hours of developing country factual programming in peak time

'Shipwrecked' and 'Temptation Island' made up almost one sixth of Channel 4's developing country factual programming

Many other travel programmes verged on this 'challenge' approach, or on the 'docu-soap' approach – following British people negotiating foreign environments and cultures.

These observational programmes following a cast of true-life, usually British characters, were rarely set in developing countries. But 'docu-soaps' significantly increased the hours of factual international programming.

Within 3WE's methodology they are classed in the 'Miscellaneous' category (as 'lightweight human interest'):

'Miscellaneous' factual international programmes rose by over 100% from 86.8 hours in 1998-99 to 181.8 hours in 2000-01

BBC1 alone broadcast 20 hours of 'Passport to the Sun', following British people in Majorca, and another 8 programmes of the similar 'Escape to the Sun'

Factual crime series made up 28.3% of Channel 5's factual international programming. They were mainly shot in the US and therefore did not affect the developing country figures.

The category of 'religion, culture and the arts' showed a dramatic rise, after falling steadily from 1989 to 1999.

All channels showed large rises in their factual international cultural output. Channel 4 and BBC2 were the main channels focusing this cultural lens specifically onto developing country subjects.

Within the category, religious and anthropological programming did not rise. The main subjects covered were popular music, international clubbing, the sex industry, and Indian popular and religious culture:

'Culture' rose from 7% of the total developing country factual output in 1998-99 to 19% in 2000-01

After 'travel' and 'wildlife', 'culture' was the third most important angle through which developing countries were covered

There were more cultural programmes filmed in developing countries (93) than the combined total of programmes on developing countries' politics, history, development, environment and human rights, and conflict and disaster (72)

The number of Channel 4 cultural programmes filmed in developing countries rose from 20 in 98-99 to 59 in 00-01; BBC2's rose from 10 to 22

The results of these trends can be looked at in terms of the programme mix available through the public service TV channels.

'Harder', 'issue-focused' programmes have reduced to unprecedented low levels.

'Softer', more accessible and entertainment-led formats now dominate. In the case of travel and 'docu-soaps', these formats either focus on the experiences of British people abroad, or they are presenter- or celebrity-led.

As the 'harder' programming has continued to close down, the remaining window through which other societies can be viewed is that of 'religion, culture and the arts'. Here still, much of the output puts British people (clubbers, surfers and performers) in the foreground; but there are some innovative new formats that do offer genuine insights into the lives of others.

Looking at the programme mix of the two mass audience channels:

- BBC1 showed 240 factual international programmes, 203 of which were in the travel, wildlife or 'miscellaneous' categories
- ITV1 also showed 240 factual international programmes, 180 of which were in the travel, wildlife or 'miscellaneous' categories
- ITV1 showed nearly 30 hours of peak time factual programming filmed in developing countries – more than half of which was 'Survivor', and the rest holiday travel, wildlife and a docu-soap on British people trying sex tourism in Jamaica
- BBC1 showed nearly 26 hours of peak time factual programming filmed in developing countries, its highest level in 3WE's research – 19 hours of which were wildlife, holiday travel or docu-soap – though it also showed a three-part series on 'The State of the Planet' and a Comic Relief programme on Rwanda

Looking at the programme mix of the two specialised 'minority' channels, BBC2 and Channel 4:

- Travel and wildlife still dominated their developing country factual programming, with two fifths of the total
- The 'harder' programme categories were better represented than on the mass channels, with one quarter of the two channels' developing country factual programmes covering history, politics, conflict and disaster, and development, environment and human rights – but the numbers of these programmes still declined
- Channel 4 cut its output of the 'harder'

categories more severely than BBC2, but massively increased its cultural output; culture accounted for almost one quarter of Channel 4's developing country factual programmes (59 out of the total 256 programmes)

Looking at Channel 5's contribution:

- Channel 5 was unique in cutting back its developing country factual programming – by one quarter – while increasing its overall factual international programming
- It provided its highest level yet of factual international programming; and its lowest level yet of developing country factual programming
- 62 of Channel 5's 67 developing country factual programmes covered wildlife, travel and crime
- It provided no programmes covering developing countries' history, politics, conflict and disaster, and development, environment and human rights

Looking at the mix of developing country factual programming across all five channels:

- Over 80% of the programmes were travel, wildlife, 'miscellaneous' or 'religion, culture and the arts'
- The categories of politics, history, conflict and disaster, and development, environment and human rights combined accounted for just 16% of these programmes

### Impact of September 11th 2001?

In the wake of September 11th 2001, it was argued that the media would have to change its agenda, moving away from the culture of celebrities and consumerism and back towards serious subjects.

Whether this has happened will have to await further research. Applying its usual methodology, 3WE took a two-week 'snapshot' of programming in February 2002 – far enough away from September 11th for the initial wave of reactive programmes to have faded, and for new commissions to be coming through.

The findings are hedged with caution, as we cannot offer this as conclusive, meaningful research (see Appendix 1).

However, we did not find any evidence of increased attention either for developing countries or for international subjects in general.

# INTRODUCTION

In the year to September 11th, there were on average around 5.5 hours of developing country factual programmes per week. The February sample showed marginally fewer hours: 4.8 hours per week.

The programme mix for February 2002 was similar to that for 2000-01, featuring:

- Three programmes on natural history
- Three holiday travel programmes
- Two reality TV programmes
- A celebrity travel challenge
- A docu-soap on Brits abroad
- A wildlife programme

A notable exception was Channel 4's *'Lahore Law'*, a documentary series which allowed people in Pakistan to show and speak about their experiences of its Islamic court system. ITV1 had *'VSD'*, a daytime documentary featuring Western volunteers working in Mongolia.

On 7th May 2002 the government published its draft Communications Bill, which aims further to deregulate broadcasting. After public and parliamentary consultation a revised full bill will come before parliament and be enacted some time in 2003.

News and current affairs, including stories 'from around the world', will be a mandatory requirement for all five channels, and ITV1's news provider will have to be given 'adequate' investment for a comprehensive service, both of which are welcome. However, the Independent Television Commission has noted<sup>3</sup> that the requirement from the Broadcasting Act 1990 for 'a sufficiency of news' in peak time - ie a full bulletin - has not been carried forward.

But outside news and current affairs, the bill proposes a new 'light touch' system in which broadcasters are expected largely to regulate their own performance against their public service obligations. The regulators have some powers of intervention, but only to be used in cases of 'serious failure', which is not excusable by 'economic

circumstances', and after several stages of consultation with the broadcaster.

This system raises the spectre of broadcasters paying lip service to, or making minimal contributions against, their public service obligations.

To mitigate against this, the government placed a list of requirements in the bill, constituting a 'general remit' for public service TV (channels 1-5). This is the first time that 'public service broadcasting' will be defined in law. The bill states that the duty of these broadcasters across their range of programming is to provide 'information and education' as well as entertainment.

This general remit contains *no requirement* to provide factual programming on international subjects - even though such a requirement was promised in the preceding White Paper<sup>4</sup>.

Without such a requirement as a legislative benchmark, broadcasters may find that the new relaxed system of regulation allows them to default on factual international programming without being sanctioned. 3WE therefore recommends that when the full bill is drafted, the general remit should be amended to include 'international issues'. This wording would also have the benefit of emphasising the need for 'information and education' on international subjects, not just entertainment.


The new system rests largely in the hands of a new body, the 'Content Board', within the new communications regulator, OFCOM. Some of our recommendations relate to this body and its work.

BBC2 remains vitally important to enable public awareness of sustainable development, and of other people and their cultures. For example, it:

Broadcast more developing country factual programmes in the 'development, environment and human rights' category than all the other four channels combined

Broadcast more current affairs programmes on developing countries than the other four channels combined<sup>5</sup>





However, at a time when other broadcasters were increasing their hours of factual international and developing country factual programming, BBC2:

- Cut its hours of factual international programming
- Cut its hours of developing country factual programming
- Cut its peak-time output of developing country factual programming to its lowest recorded level in the last 13 years
- Cut its developing country factual programming in the categories of history, politics and conflict and disaster

Outside its news and current affairs output, BBC2 no longer has a documentary or other factual strand which could clearly lend itself to factual international programmes in the 'harder' issue categories. The 'Under the Sun' strand, for instance, has not been replaced, while 'Storyville' has moved entirely to the new digital BBC4 TV.

Meanwhile it cut back on the wildlife programming which had been a distinctive feature of the channel, the main responsibility for which seems to have passed to BBC1.

BBC2 therefore appears to be drifting, retaining aspects of its role in providing factual programming on international subjects, but without renewing this commitment. As it becomes one of a wider family of BBC TV channels in the digital era, there are questions about its role and purpose.

The BBC differs from the commercial broadcasters in that it is able to spread, and potentially diffuse, the public service responsibilities specified in the draft Communications Bill over a range of services, which do not have specific 'remits' or licence conditions comparable to BBC2's nearest competitor, Channel 4.

3WE therefore argues that BBC2 needs to be given a clear purpose in the form of a specific remit, during the revision of the BBC Agreement which runs parallel to the draft Communications Bill.

### Special note: ITV1

Following the Broadcasting Act 1990 which lightened the regulatory burdens on ITV1, it was the channel which, during the 1990s, dropped its commitments to factual international programming more than any other.

While ITV1's overall hours of factual international programmes rose compared to 1998-99, the programme mix they represented remained very narrow:

- 75 of its 83 developing country factual programmes were in the categories of 'travel' (57), 'wildlife' or 'miscellaneous'
- Only 4 programmes covered 'conflict and disaster', 'development, environment and human rights' and 'history' in developing countries
- ITV1 broadcast no programmes about the politics of developing countries

Broadly speaking, ITV1 took a 'brochure' approach, showing developing countries either as a package holiday destination or as the location of 'Survivor'.

A consensus has emerged that as it fights for its share of a competitive commercial market, ITV1 will remain a public service broadcaster only with regard to providing rivalry with the BBC in news and current affairs, drama and regional programmes.

3WE believes ITV1 can support some more demanding factual programming requirements, albeit at a lower level than the BBC and Channel 4, in return for its licence privileges.

<sup>1</sup> Channel 5 was also monitored but only began broadcasting part way through 1997

<sup>2</sup> 'miscellaneous' includes 'lightweight human interest' such as 'docu-soaps'

<sup>3</sup> ITC evidence to the parliamentary joint committee examining the Bill, May 2002

<sup>4</sup> 'A New Future for Communications', paragraph 5.8.2, December 2000

<sup>5</sup> Although news coverage is not considered in this report, we do note the presence on BBC2 of 'Newsnight', which gives in-depth treatment to international stories

## From the last report

Previous recommendations from this research series have focused on the actions of broadcasters. In the last report, 'Losing Perspective' (2000), for example, we said that:

*"in a world of increasing globalisation, broadcasters must reassess the importance of international programming and commit to increasing, not decreasing programme hours in this area"*

Two years later we see that the number of programme hours has increased, quite dramatically on some channels (although not at all on BBC2). However, we also argued for:

*"a broader range of issues that give a balanced view of the world"*

In this respect, and despite the significant increase in total hours compared to 1998-99, factual international programming has deteriorated further, to the point where we are no longer receiving a full public service.

It was significant, therefore, that we also recommended that:

*"there should be a strengthening of positive programme requirements in future broadcasting legislation to include factual programmes on global issues"*

Now that new legislation is before the public and parliament, it is in this area that we concentrate our recommendations in 2002.

## From this report

- 1 The general remit for public service broadcasting in the draft Communications Bill should include a requirement for factual programming on international issues (and the BBC Agreement should be similarly amended).

The remit currently states, in Clause 181.5(e): *"these services (taken together) include what appears to OFCOM to be a suitable quantity and range of programmes on educational matters and dealing with matters of specialist interest, religion and social issues"*

3WE recommends the insertion of the two words 'and international' before 'and social issues'<sup>1</sup>.

- 2 All public service broadcasters should be required to provide some programming against this requirement, with BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 expected to provide the most, ITV1 some, and Channel 5 the least unless its audience share grows.
- 3 The individual remit for Channel 3 (ITV1) should be strengthened to make clear that it has a higher level of public service obligations than Channel 5, including factual international programmes.
- 4 The amendments to the BBC's Agreement being negotiated by the Culture Secretary should include producing specific channel remits for BBC1 and BBC2.

3WE's figures show that while BBC1 has maintained and even increased its commitment to factual international programming, BBC2 is drifting<sup>2</sup>. With the advent of the minority digital BBC4 TV, and the danger of 'specialist interest' programming such as international issues migrating there, it is important that the regulators and the public have clear expectations about the role of each BBC channel.

- 5** The Content Board of OFCOM should recognise the importance to citizens' interests, in a global society, of the availability of full and balanced information and education about the wider world. Accordingly:

All future remit and licence reviews should include a specification of the channel's or licence-holder's responsibilities for 'international issues'

The broadcasters' performance in this regard should be specifically scrutinised in each year's consultations on channels' programme policy

Failure to provide adequate factual international programming should be treated as a 'serious failure' under the legislation

- 6** The Content Board should initiate a citizenship project to define what citizenship means in the context of communications services; which services are 'essential to citizenship'; and whether new services are required to meet gaps in provision.
- 7** At least one representative of the international interests of UK citizens should have a place on the Content Board; and others should be included in the consultation and deliberation mechanisms to advise the Board on its work.
- 8** The BBC and Channel 4, as the most highly regulated public service TV channels, should take the lead in re-examining their factual programming priorities — expanding the very limited opportunities which currently exist for documentary makers to tackle 'hard' international issues, and placing greater obligations on their commissioning editors to invite innovative ideas on these subjects.
- 9** The TV broadcasters should look for ways of beating the 'ratings trap' by 'driving' public interest in international issues through the use of 'landmark' programmes, favourably scheduled and publicised, and backed by a range of online and interactive information services.

<sup>1</sup> The full case for this amendment is set out in 3WE's evidence to the parliamentary joint committee, available at [www.ePolitix.com/forum/3WE](http://www.ePolitix.com/forum/3WE)

<sup>2</sup> we note, however, that on 22 May 2002 the BBC announced eight new commissions for peak time foreign affairs specials to be broadcast on BBC2 in the autumn of 2002



# METHODOLOGY

This report is based on comprehensive original research. 3WE has followed the same methodology since 1989-90, to allow for comparisons with previous years and the identification of trends over time.

## Data

3WE examined all *new* factual programming:

- broadcast on BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel Four and Channel Five
- between 1 September 2000 and 31 August 2001
- where a significant proportion of programme time was devoted to footage filmed outside the British Isles (ie. outside Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland).

Where a significant proportion of programme time was filmed overseas, we counted the time of the entire programme.

The main body of the research deals with Factual Programmes on International Subjects. This category excludes news and current affairs. Within this category we further analyse the sub-group of factual programmes filmed in developing countries. A separate section dealing with Current Affairs is included.

All non-news factual programming was listed and analysed. Open University, school programmes, the Learning Zone, and repeats and 'omnibus' collations were not counted. Programmes consisting solely or mainly of archive material were excluded. However, the genre of programmes which uses a collation of clips of real life footage from other countries, such as CCTV or police video, was counted.

Arts and culture programming was included, but programmes featuring celebrity subjects, where the culture of their home country was not examined, were excluded. Music shows recorded overseas but consisting of performance only were not included. Those which blended musical performance with other material on the culture or society of the country concerned were included.

Because of ITV's regional nature 3WE monitored the output of London licence holders, Carlton and LWT.

## Sources

The data was collected from publicly available listings sources such as the Radio Times, but was then subject to rigorous cross-checking with the broadcasters, who have co-operated closely with the researcher in order to verify: the genres of programmes, the numbers of programmes in certain series, the location of filming, and the proportion of the programmes which was filmed overseas. Current affairs information was also checked to verify that listed subject matter was broadcast, since these programmes can be subject to late change.

## Developing countries definition

The definition of 'developing countries' can be problematic. Previous 3WE reports used the Brandt Commission distinction between the developing countries (or the South) located mainly to the south of the industrialised nations which comprise the North. However, these categories have been subject to change in the years since the Commission reported. For this report we used the categorisation favoured by the United Nations Development Programme, the pre-eminent world development organisation, in its most recent annual Human Development Report.

In addition we counted Palestine as a developing country, and where programmes featured 'Israel and Palestine' or 'Israel and the Occupied Territories' equally, we counted this as a developing country programme.

Programmes where the exact location was impossible to determine (such as generic ocean wildlife or generic disastrous weather programmes) were counted as 'international' but not 'developing country'.

## Peak time

As in previous 3WE research, our research differentiates between programmes shown at peak and non-peak time slots. Peak-time was classified as between 6:30pm and 10:30pm since this is when audiences are substantially larger than at other times of the day. A programme is counted as peak when the majority of the programme minutes fall into peak time. Where the programme minutes fell exactly half out- and half in- prime time, we gave the

benefit of the doubt and counted that programme as 'peak.' We maintain these peak-time definitions for consistency with previous research, although 3WE acknowledges that some channels such as Channel 4 and BBC2 now consider time slots up to midnight as attracting significant audiences.

Programmes were categorised into Issues. For the issue spread percentages, the information was gathered by giving each programme counted the same value regardless of length. Commercial channels were given the same number of minutes per hour as the BBC, and were not penalised extra for having commercial breaks within the programme. For all other information in the research, the duration of programmes on commercial channels was counted in minutes, minus 10% of the programme time to allow for commercials/trails between programmes.

3WE's previous research categorised factual programming according to the following broad issue bands:

**Conflict and Disaster (C&D):** comprising international and civil war, global security, terrorism, crime and civil unrest within the past ten years, and both historical and contemporary natural and man-made catastrophes.

**Politics (Pol):** comprising elections and political change, political economics, and political analysis within the past 10 years.

**Development, Environment and Human Rights (DEH) issues.**

**Religions, Cultures and Arts (RCA),** including anthropology.

**Wildlife (WL) and natural history:** simply put, these are shows mainly about animals. Programmes which set animal life in its environmental and human contexts were counted in the DEH category.

**Miscellaneous (Misc):** comprising science, medicine, health, and lightweight human interest topics.

In the 1996-97 research, the following three categories were removed from 'Miscellaneous' and

given their own weighting, to give a greater understanding of the overall issue spread.

**History (Hist):** factual programmes telling stories which took place over ten years ago (in order to distinguish the 'History' category from 'Conflict and Disaster,' in the case of war documentaries). This category also comprised archaeology, and included standard documentaries made up of archival footage and 'talking head' interviews, if the historical subject matter was placed outside the British Isles.

**Travel (Trav):** all variations on the travel/adventure/holiday programme.

**Cookery (Cook):** all factual programmes which had cooking as the primary theme and were filmed outside the British Isles.

In this report on 2000-01, all the above categories are included, except 'Cookery' which did not feature significantly in the research data for 2000-01.

We also added for the first time a category of 'Crime and Police', as the rise in acquired US crime investigation programmes as well as use of international cctv and police video compilations would otherwise have distorted the figures for 'Conflict and Disaster'.

A new genre of programming, 'Reality TV', has arisen since the last report for 1998-99. This genre features groups of individuals placed in created and controlled environments and competing to meet 'game' challenges. A growing number of these programmes are being filmed in overseas locations.

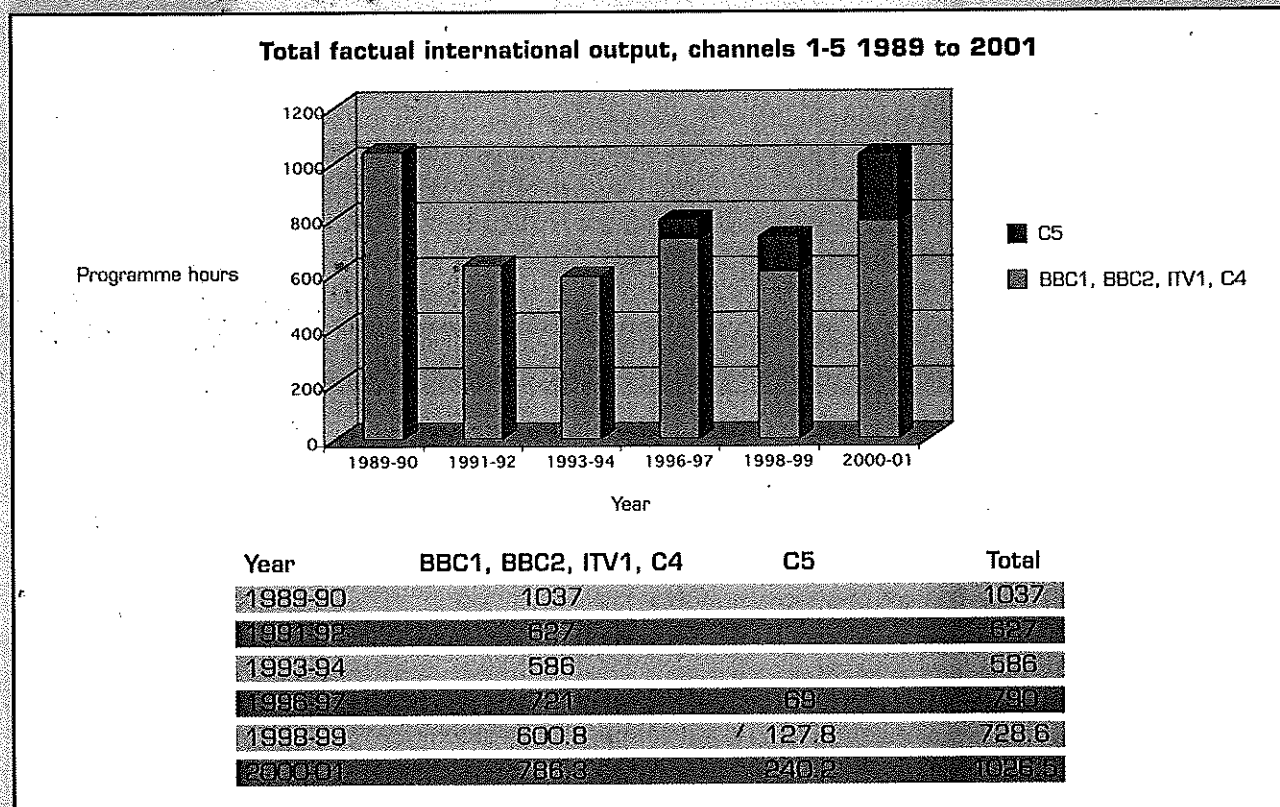
As such, the genre blurs with other genres including travel, game shows and docusoaps. Had we defined these programmes as 'game shows' and therefore 'entertainment' they would not have been included in this research on factual programming. However, they do use real life/observational footage. We therefore decided to categorise them along with 'all variations on the travel/adventure/holiday programme', and hence to count them within the Travel category.

# LOSING REALITY: FINDINGS IN DETAIL

## SECTION 1: FACTUAL INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING

### 1.1 TOTAL FACTUAL INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING 1026.5 hours — c.f. 728.6 hours in 1998-99

CHARTS 1 & 2: Total factual international output, channels 1-5, 1989 to 2001



#### Key Points

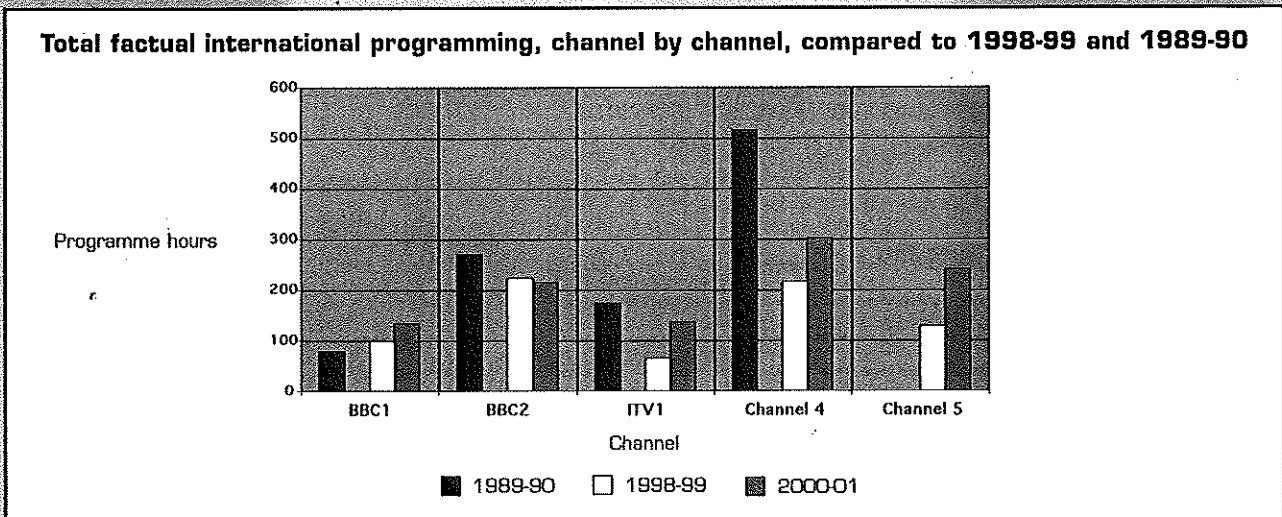
- 1.1.i. In 2000-01, Channels 1-4 returned to the levels of factual international programming they last achieved in 1996-97, which was a mini-peak in the 1990s. After declining by 42% across channels 1-4 in the decade to 1998-99, this recovery is welcome.
- 1.1.ii. Despite this recovery, factual international programming on channels 1-4 remains one quarter (24%) lower than in 1989-90.
- 1.1.iii. Channel 5 only began broadcasting in 1997, and its 1996-97 figure only reflects a part-year. In 2000-01, Channel 5 showed its highest level of factual international programming since its launch.

## 1.2 FACTUAL INTERNATIONAL OUTPUT: CHANNEL BY CHANNEL

**CHART 3:** Total factual international output in programme hours, channel by channel, 2000-01 compared to 1998-99

	2001-01	1998-99	% change
BBC1	133.4	98.8	35
BBC2	214.3	222.5	-3.7
ITV1	135.5	64.5	112
Channel 4	302.1	215	41
Channel 5	240.2	127.8	88

**CHART 4:** Total factual international programming, channels 1-5, 2000-01 compared to 1998-99 and 1989-90.



### Key Points – rises in factual international programming

- 1.2.i Factual international programming rose, compared to 1998-99, on all main TV channels *except* BBC2, which showed a slight fall. BBC2 can therefore be seen to be outside the trend.
- 1.2.ii BBC1's factual international output rose by 35% compared to 1998-99. BBC1 showed its highest level of factual international output in all 3WE's research since 1989.
- 1.2.iii But the percentage rises on the three commercial channels since 1998-99 are even greater. ITV1's factual international programming increased by 112%, Channel 5's by 88%, and Channel 4's by 41%, compared to 1998-99.
- 1.2.iv These rises in factual international programming on the commercial channels have reversed the trend found over the decade 1989-99, when 3WE found that "the gap between commercial television... and the public service strongholds of BBC1 and BBC2 has widened... [and] the commercial channels have seen a much more radical decline".

### 1.3 ANALYSIS: TRENDS IN FACTUAL INTERNATIONAL OUTPUT

1.3.i The analysis of factual international output all five channels shows four clear trends (varying in degree between individual channels):

- a fall in wildlife programming;
- a dominant rise in entertainment and consumer genres;
- a new focus on international culture, especially youth culture;
- a continuing low level of 'harder' factual programmes covering subjects like history, politics, development, environment and human rights.

#### Wildlife trend

1.3.ii From 1989-90 to 1998-99 there was a dramatic rise in international wildlife programming. But between 1998-99 and 2000-01 wildlife programming fell back by 26% from 189 hours to 140.6 hours.

In 1998-99 the largest international wildlife broadcasters were Channel 5 and BBC2. In 2000-01 Channel 5 had cut its hours of wildlife by more than half, from 94.8 to 44.1. BBC2 cut its hours from 42.8 to 35.8. Channel 4 cut five hours to 20.5.

BBC1 was the main exception to this trend, increasing its international wildlife output from 18.5 to 26.9 hours. ITV1 also showed a slight rise.

#### Trend of rising entertainment and consumer genres

1.3.iii Much of the rise in total factual international output is explained by the dominant trend towards viewing other countries through entertainment and consumer genres, namely:

- docu-soaps filmed internationally
- reality TV shows filmed in foreign environments
- holiday and travel programmes
- crime and police programmes – mainly US imports to Channel 5

1.3.iv *Docu-soaps* filmed internationally typically observed British individuals or families as they encountered other countries. Classed as 'lightweight human interest' within 3WE's methodology, and therefore forming part of our 'Miscellaneous' category, these largely accounted for a rise of over 100% in this category from 86.8 hours in 1998-99 to 181.8 hours in 2000-01.

BBC1, for instance, showed 20 hours (40 30-minute episodes) of *'Passport to the Sun'*, a daytime docu-soap on expatriate Britons in Majorca; as well as eight episodes of the similar *'Escape to the Sun'*.

1.3.v *Crime and policing* filmed internationally were largely a Channel 5 phenomenon, accounting for 28.3% of Channel 5's factual international output (68 of its 240.2 hours). The majority of these programmes were acquired from the United States, and therefore dealt with US crime and policing.

1.3.vi *Reality TV*: a new genre for international output, reality TV shows accounted for 7% (67.6 hours of the total 1026.5 hours) of all factual international output. However, with BBC1 and BBC2 only dabbling in this format (just over 2.5 hours between them), Reality TV is largely a phenomenon of the commercial TV channels. Reality TV accounted for almost 10% of commercial TV's factual international output (9.6%, or 65 hours out of a total of 678 hours).

ITV1 majored on *'Survivor'*. Channel 5 offered nearly ten hours of *'The Mole'*, plus nine programmes of *'Treasure Island'*. Channel 4 had 18 episodes of *'Shipwrecked'*, and 13 of *'Real World New York'*, as well as *'Temptation Island'*.

1.3.vii *Travel*: with the exception of BBC2, which showed a large fall, all the channels showed noticeable rises in their travel programmes. These included straightforward consumer travel shows; travel 'challenge' programmes; and observational programmes following Brits travelling abroad.

ITV1 doubled its travel output, mostly through the consumer strand *'Wish You Were Here'* and its daytime sister series, *'Wish You Were Here Today'*, which together totalled 51 programmes; and the *'Dream Ticket'* series which totalled 15 programmes. Channel 4 provided 50 programmes of *'A Place in the Sun'*, in which British people were helped to find dream homes in Europe; a nine-part series following young British people going clubbing abroad, *'Around the World in 80 Raves'*; and a six-part series similarly following British surfers abroad, *'Surf Trip'*. BBC1's 45 hours of travel programming was mainly under the many variants of the *'Holiday'* brand.



## Culture trend

1.3.viii On all five channels there was a rise in programme hours in the 'religion, culture and the arts' (RCA) category, compared to 1998-99. However, within this category, religious and anthropological programming declined. The rise was due to: first, a genuine attempt to view other countries and their cultures through entertaining and accessible formats (such as 'Louis Theroux's *Weird Weekends*'); and second, the internationalisation of youth culture, and the desire of broadcasters to attract the 18-35 demographic group (many programmes featured club culture around the world, including a number of different looks at 'Ibiza').

1.3.ix The trend is most marked on **BBC2** and **Channel 4**. BBC2's hours of 'RCA' programming rose from 11.7 in 1998-99 to 74.7 in 2000-01; Channel 4's rose from 18.5 in 1998-99 to 72.5 in 2000-01.

BBC2's significant cultural series included a 15-part series on 'Jazz'; a seven-part series on popular song, *Walk on By*; and series on American and Australian culture, and the culture of the Irish diaspora. It also had an eight-part series on international nightlife, *Choice World Clubbing*.

Channel 4 series included several in developing countries (discussed in Section 2) as well as *Collectors Lot USA*; a 20-part series on collectables and memorabilia; the 8-part *Secret Life of Japan*; and a series on *Picasso: Magic, Sex and Death*. In addition there were many youth-oriented programmes in its late-night '4 Later' slots such as *The Other Side* and *Cult Crazy*.

## Trend to keep low levels of 'harder' programmes

1.3.x Despite the overall rise in factual international programming, the five channels generally showed no rise since 1998-99 in the number of programme hours on the 'harder' issue categories such as conflict and disaster; politics; history; development, environment and human rights. Indeed, the two channels whose purpose is partly to cover specialised factual matters – BBC2 and Channel 4 – actually cut their programmes significantly in these categories.

1.3.xi BBC1 and ITV1 stood still in these categories. Of BBC1's 240 factual international programmes, only 16 programmes dealt with development, the environment and human rights; 6 with conflict and disaster; and 1 with history. It showed no international programmes in the 'politics' category.

Of ITV1's 240 factual international programmes, only 2 programmes covered development, environment and human rights; 19 looked at conflict and disaster, mainly featuring 'extreme weather'; 2 covered 'politics'; and 6 were on history.

1.3.xii BBC2 cut significantly its hours of factual international coverage of conflict and disaster, politics and history. Channel 4 cut by half its hours of international coverage of conflict and disaster, politics, and development, environment and human rights.

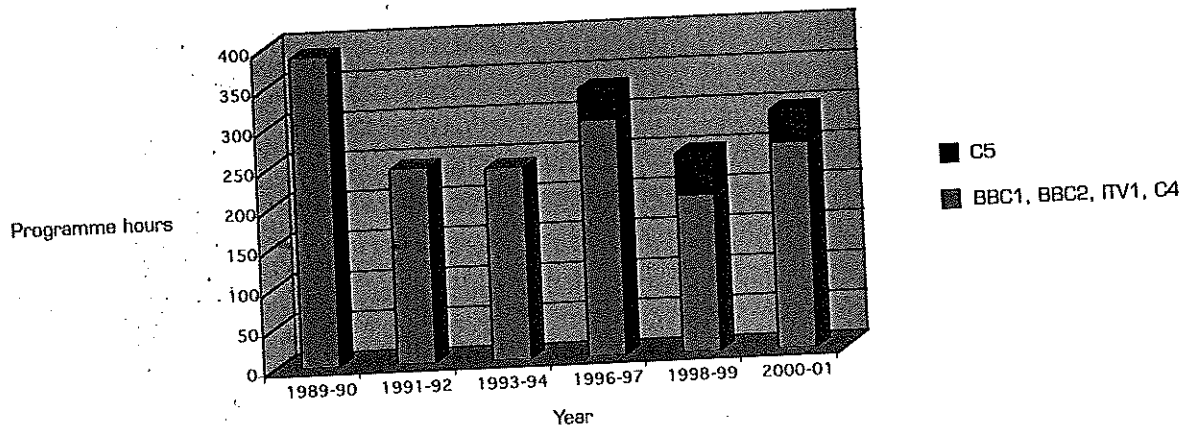
1.3.xiii There was one exception to this trend: Channel 5's international history programming rose from under three hours in 1998-99 to over 17 hours in 2000-01, largely due to the 11 hours of *Hitler's Henchmen*.

## SECTION 2: DEVELOPING COUNTRY FACTUAL PROGRAMMING

2.1 TOTAL FACTUAL PROGRAMMING FILMED IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES  
297.4 hours — c.f. 248.5 hours in 1998-99

CHARTS 5 & 6: Total developing country factual programming, channels 1-5, 1989 to 2001

Total factual programming filmed in developing countries 1989 to 2001



Year	BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, C4	C5	Total
1989-90	387	0	387
1991-92	243.5	0	243.5
1993-94	239.5	0	239.5
1996-97	298.5	49.6	348.1
1998-99	194.9	53.6	248.5
2000-01	256.2	41.2	297.4

### Key points

- 2.1.i Although total factual international output rose by 41% on 98-99, that which covered developing countries rose by less than half that rate (20%).
- 2.1.ii Unlike overall factual international output, therefore, developing country coverage has not recovered to the level of the 1996-97 mini-peak. Rather, it remains close to the comparatively low levels of the early 1990s. Removing Channel 5 for comparative purposes, the 2000-01 figure for channels 1-4 is 256.2 hours, similar to the 1991-92 level of 243.5 hours, and the 1993-94 level of 239.5 hours.
- 2.1.iii Developing country factual output in 2000-01 was still 23% lower than in 1989-90 – even including the additional 41.2 hours provided by Channel 5. Channels 1-4 have seen a 34% reduction in factual programming on developing countries over the 12 years of this research.

## 2.2 DEVELOPING COUNTRY FACTUAL OUTPUT CHANNEL BY CHANNEL

CHART 7: Hours of developing country factual programming, channels 1-5, 2000-01 compared to 1998-99

The chart below shows the total non-news-and-current-affairs factual output filmed in developing countries for each of the five free-to-air terrestrial channels in 2000-01, compared to the previous figures for 1998-99.

	2000-01	1998-99	% change
BBC1	75.6	23	237
BBC2	70.3	76.7	-8.3
ITV1	52	14	271
Channel 4	95.3	76.4	24.7
Channel 5	41.2	53.3	-23

### Key Points

- 2.2.i As with total factual international programming, there was a rise in developing country factual programming compared to 1998-99 on BBC1, ITV1 and Channel 4; and a fall on BBC2.
- 2.2.ii BBC1 and ITV1 have returned to the number of hours of developing country factual programming they produced in 1989-90. By contrast, BBC2 and Channel 4's levels were just over half their 1989-90 figures.
- 2.2.iii Channel 5's developing country factual output fell by one quarter (23%), even as its overall international output rose by 88%. In 2000-01 Channel 5 was back to the level it showed in its first, five-months-only figure for 1996-97. In other words, on a full year basis, Channel 5's factual coverage of developing countries was the lowest since it began broadcasting in 1997.
- 2.2.iv The BBC shows a very similar pattern here to its overall international output – a 37% rise on BBC1, with a slight fall on BBC2. BBC2 showed its lowest recorded level of developing country factual programming in 3WE's 12 years of research.
- 2.2.v ITV1 showed a staggering 271% increase, compared to 1998-99, with its number of programme hours on developing countries almost back to 1989-90 levels. This is even more remarkable given that ITV1 previously showed the most dramatic fall in such programming – 74% fall over the decade to 1998-99.
- 2.2.vi Channel 4's factual output filmed in developing countries rose by one quarter (24.7%), reversing the position vis a vis BBC2, which in 1998-99 had for the first time shown more hours of developing country factual programming than C4.

## 2.3 ANALYSIS: TRENDS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRY FACTUAL PROGRAMMING

- 2.3.i Analysis of each channel's output by genre shows that the four trends seen in overall factual international programming were carried into developing country factual programming, namely:
- a fall in wildlife programmes;
  - a rise in entertainment and consumer genres, transferred to foreign backdrops;
  - an increased use of cultural programming to view other countries;
  - low and declining levels of 'harder' programme genres.
- 2.3.ii However, there were some differences in the way the trends were expressed. The principal entertainment genres found in developing country factual coverage were the holiday programme and the reality TV show. Docu-soaps and crime and police series barely appeared.
- 2.3.iii Despite the rise of 20% in the hours of factual programming on developing countries, the number of programmes in categories dealing directly with the realities of life in developing countries fell. There were fewer programmes in each category of: history; politics; development, environment and human rights; and conflict and disaster.

Detailed analysis of these trends follows, based on Charts 8 and 9.

### CHART 8: Breakdown of developing country factual programming by channel and issue category

In this section of the report, we show the number of programmes in each category, not the number of hours. This gives equal weight to all programmes regardless of length, and regardless of the channel.

The categories are described in detail in the Methodology.

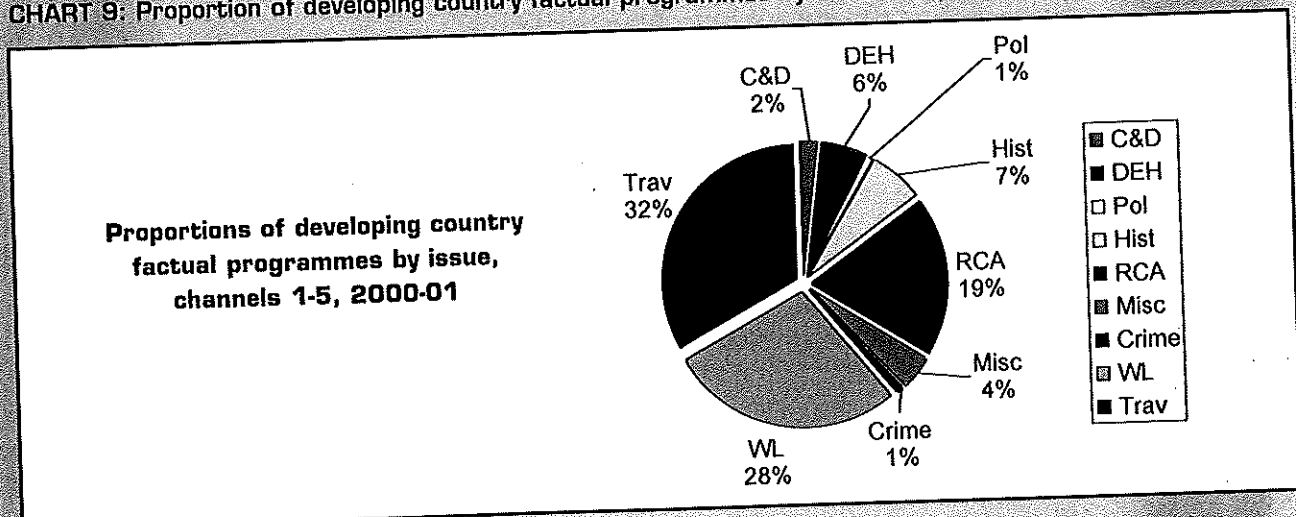
#### Key to data:

- C&D = Conflict and Disaster  
 DEH = Development, Environment and Human Rights  
 Pol = Politics  
 Hist = History  
 RCA = Religion, Culture and the Arts  
 Misc = Miscellaneous (including 'lightweight human interest')  
 WL = Wildlife  
 Trav = Travel (including holiday/adventure/reality TV)  
 Crime = Crime and Policing

Number of factual programmes filmed in developing countries, 2000-01

	C&D	DEH	Pol	Hist	RCA	WL	Trav	Misc	Crime	Total
BBC1	0	5	0	0	6	35	18	4	0	70
BBC2	0	15	0	13	23	38	10	4	0	107
ITV1	0	1	0	1	21	12	57	6	0	83
Channel 4	0	6	0	17	39	14	43	2	0	149
Channel 5	0	0	0	0	2	32	40	1	0	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>476</b>

CHART 9: Proportion of developing country factual programmes by issue category



## Wildlife trend

- 2.3.iv As in 1998-99, wildlife and travel programmes still accounted for 60% of the total, ie the majority of the main five channels' factual coverage of developing countries. However, the relative proportions of travel and wildlife programming were reversed – wildlife programmes fell significantly, while travel programmes rose significantly.
- 2.3.v The proportion of factual coverage of developing countries accounted for by wildlife programmes fell significantly, from 38% of the total in 1998-99 to 27.5% in 2000-01. The two largest broadcasters of wildlife programming on developing countries – Channel 5 and BBC2 – both cut their number of wildlife programmes significantly, compared to 1998-99. BBC2's number of wildlife programmes fell from 56 to 38; and Channel 5's from 82 to 32.
- 2.3.vi Against the trend, however, BBC1 increased its wildlife programming on developing countries from 22 to 35 programmes. BBC1 is now equal to BBC2 and Channel 5 as the main channels for showing the wildlife of developing countries.

## Trend towards entertainment and consumer genres

- 2.3.vii In overall factual international programming we saw four genres contributing to the rise in output. Two of these genres were barely used in developing countries in 2000-01 – the crime and police programme, and the 'docu-soap'. The principal entertainment genres contributing to the rise in developing country factual programming were the holiday programme and the reality TV show (both classified as 'travel').
- 2.3.viii Crime and police programmes accounted for 68 hours or 28.3% of Channel 5's factual international output, but only two of those programmes were filmed in developing countries. Together with the cut in wildlife, this explains why Channel 5's developing country factual output fell even as its overall factual international output rose.
- 2.3.ix Docu-soap programmes also featured far less in developing country factual programming than in the overall factual international output. There were three episodes of BBC1's *'Danger: Celeb at Work'* and one episode of BBC2's *'Back to the Floor'* set in developing countries. Both featured Westerners trying out jobs in other countries. ITV1 had a series on hedonism in Jamaican resorts, *'Pleasure Island'*; and Channel 4 had *'Passport to Passion'*, following a Briton as he pursued a love affair in Kenya, and a series, *'Jungle Janes'*, following British women on an expeditionary challenge.

However, these were a small contribution to the whole; especially compared to lengthy runs of series like BBC1's *'Escape to the Sun'*, following British people living in Spain, which affected the overall factual international figures.

- 2.3.x All the channels except BBC2 increased the number of travel programmes filmed in developing countries. BBC1's rose slightly. ITV1 became the main broadcaster of travel programmes filmed in developing countries, with Channel 4 following. ITV1's number of travel programmes filmed in developing countries rose by a factor of almost five, from 12 in 1998-99 to 57 in 2000-01. Channel 4's travel programmes on developing countries rose from 25 in 1998-99 to 42 in 2000-01. Channel 5's travel programmes on developing countries rose from 9 to 30.
- 2.3.xi The reality TV show *'Survivor'* alone accounted for 31 of ITV1's 57 travel programmes, and 22.4 of ITV1's 52 total programme hours filmed in developing countries. Holiday programmes in the *'Wish You Were Here'* series and its daytime sister series *'Wish You Were Here Today'* were the other significant component of ITV1's travel category.
- 2.3.xii Channel 4's reality TV shows set in developing countries, *'Shipwrecked'* and *'Temptation Island'* together accounted for 23 of its 42 travel programmes, and 15.2 out of 95.3 total programme hours filmed in developing countries.

## Culture trend

- 2.3.xiii Religion, Culture and the Arts coverage rose from 7% of developing country factual output in 1998-99 to 19% in 2000-01. It overtook conflict and disaster, history, and development, environment and human rights to become the third most significant category through which developing countries are viewed on mainstream TV.
- 2.3.xiv This rise in cultural programming is a reversal, over two years, of the trend for the decade 1989-99, during which this category of programmes fell from 20% of the total to only 7%.

2.3.xv The number of programmes on culture (93) easily outstripped the combined number covering developing countries' politics, history, development, environment and human rights, and conflict and disaster (72).

2.3.xvi This rise in cultural programming filmed in developing countries is overwhelmingly a Channel 4 phenomenon, with BBC2 following. The number of Channel 4 programmes in this category rose from 20 in 1998-99 to 59 in 2000-01. BBC2's number of cultural programmes filmed in developing countries rose from 10 to 22. There were only slight rises on each of the other channels.

Channel 4's programming in this category was dominated by five series which accounted for 42 of the 59 programmes. Three of these series focused strongly on India. 'Ambient India' was a ten-part series showing themed imagery of India, usually without narration. 'Kumbh Mela' focused on the great spiritual festival on the Ganges, with 15 daily ten-minute slots plus 4 longer programmes. 'In Search of the Kama Sutra' was a series of three 60-minute documentaries on the sacred text. Other series were 'Untold' bringing new stories to light, and the six-part 'Return to Agia Napa' on the clubbing scene in Cyprus.

#### Trend of decline in 'harder' programme genres

2.3.xvii Despite a 20% increase in the hours of factual programming on developing countries compared to 1998-99, the number of factual programmes in categories dealing directly with the society, development and environment of developing countries fell.

There were fewer programmes in each of the categories of:

politics; development, environment and human rights; history; and conflict and disaster.

2.3.xviii The UK's five main TV channels broadcast only 4 programmes on the politics of developing countries in the year September 2000 to August 2001. 3 of these were on BBC2 (down on its 8 programmes in 1998-99). BBC1, ITV1 and Channel five broadcast no programmes in this category.

2.3.xix In 1989-90, development, environment and human rights was the largest category of developing country programming, since when it has fallen steadily from 30% of developing country programming to 11% in 1998-99 and now to only 6%. This most recent fall was caused by cuts on Channel 4 and BBC1. The number of Channel 4 programmes fell from 19 in 1998-99 to 6 in 2000-01. BBC1 fell from 10 programmes in 1998-99 to 5 in 2000-01. BBC2's contribution remained steady at 15 out of the 27 programmes.

2.3.xx The number of programmes in the conflict and disaster category fell from 32 in 1998-99 to 10 in 2000-01. Channel 4's number fell 32 to 10; BBC2's from 7 to 1.

2.3.xxi The history category fell by 4 programmes to 31 from its 1998-99 level, largely due to BBC2's contribution falling by 5 programmes to 13.

## SECTION 3: PEAK AND OFF-PEAK SCHEDULING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRY FACTUAL PROGRAMMING

Across the five channels, 171 hours of their annual 7,000 hours of peak time broadcasting comprised factual programming filmed in developing countries. In 1998-99 the figure was 160.1 hours.

**CHART 10: Developing country factual programmes in peak time, channel by channel, compared to 1998-99**

	2000-01	1998-99	% change
BBC1	24.9	21.8	14.2
BBC2	42.5	44.1	3.6
ITV1	29.9	8.5	730.6
Channel 4	40.4	44.3	8.8
Channel 5	32.9	45.8	30
Total	170	160.1	6.2

### Key points

- 3.1.i The five main free-to-air terrestrial channels devoted less than 2.5% of their peak time output to factual programmes filmed in developing countries in 2000-01.
- 3.1.ii The rise in developing country factual programming overall, of 20% compared with 1998-99, produced only a 6.8% rise in peak time output.
- 3.1.iii This rise in peak time factual programming on developing countries was almost entirely due to ITV1. Its peak time factual programming filmed in developing countries rose 730.6%!
- 3.1.iv BBC1's peak time output on developing countries, at 25.9 hours, was its highest level ever in 3WE's monitoring research.
- 3.1.v Channel 4 and BBC2 showed their lowest ever level of peak time output filmed in developing countries since 3WE's monitoring research began in 1989-90. Channel 4's level of peak time output fell *despite* the rise of 24.7% from 1998-99 in its total developing country output.

### Analysis

- 3.1.vi ITV's massive rise in peak-time factual programming filmed in developing countries was composed of reality TV, holiday programmes, wildlife and docu-soap. Its 29.9 hours included:
  - 18.5 hours of the 'Survivor' reality TV show
  - 3.2 hours of the 'Wish You Were Here' holiday programme
  - 4.5 hours of wildlife
  - 1.8 hours of the 'Pleasure Island' docu-soap on hedonistic tourism
  - an airline docu-soap episode, another holiday programme, and an extreme weather programme
- 3.1.vii Except for reality TV, BBC1's peak-time factual programming filmed in developing countries was similar to ITV1's, being dominated by
  - 11.2 hours of wildlife
  - 8.6 hours of various holiday programmes
  - 1.5 hours of docu-soap

Unlike ITV1, however, BBC1 also showed 4 peak-time programmes falling within the 'development, environment and human rights' category — three 50-minute programmes on 'The State of the Planet', and a Comic Relief documentary on Rwanda — and 2 in the 'religion, culture and the arts' category.
- 3.1.viii The 30% fall in Channel 5's peak-time factual programming filmed in developing countries is due to the cut of more than half in its wildlife programming. In the first two years of the channel's life, acquired wildlife series occupied a 7.30 slot each weekday evening.

### 3.2 DEVELOPING COUNTRY PROGRAMMES OFF-PEAK

CHART 11: Developing country factual programmes in off-peak time, channel by channel, compared to 1998-99

	2000-01	1998-99	% change
BBC1	12.7	5.8	104.6
BBC2	27.5	32.6	-15.6
ITV1	29.4	16.4	142.5
Channel 4	54.9	32.1	71
Channel 5	8.9	7.1	27
Total	126.1	88.4	42.6

#### Key Points

- 3.2.i The rise of 20% since 1998-99 in developing country factual programming was disproportionately reflected in off-peak output, which rose by 42.6% — compared to the peak-time rise of 6.2%.
- 3.2.ii This 42.6% rise is a significant reversal of the trend for 1989-99, when all channels decreased their off-peak output of programmes filmed in developing countries. Channels 1-4 combined registered their highest level of off-peak factual programming filmed in developing countries since 1989-90.
- 3.2.iii BBC2 alone allowed its off-peak output to fall. It therefore showed a fall in *both* peak and off-peak output filmed in developing countries. Its off-peak coverage of developing countries was its second lowest recorded level in 3WE's monitoring research.
- 3.2.iv Channel 4's rise in developing country factual programming went entirely into off-peak output, which rose by 71%, with peak time output falling.
- 3.2.v BBC1 and ITV1 increased *both* their peak and off-peak output in this category. Both of them doubled their off-peak hours.



## SECTION 4: CURRENT AFFAIRS COVERAGE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

All five free-to-air terrestrial channels are required, either by their commercial licence or by the Royal Charter, to provide some international news and current affairs coverage.

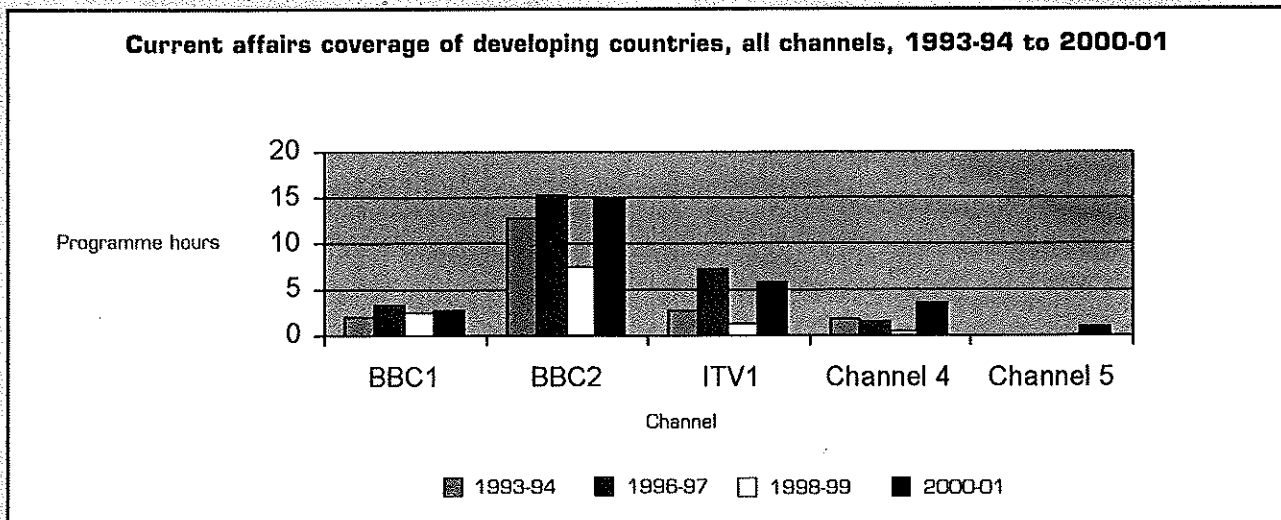
In 2000-01 the main programme strands for current affairs were: BBC1, *Panorama*; BBC2, *Correspondent* and *The Money Programme*; ITV1, *Tonight With Trevor Macdonald* and *Back to the Front*; Channel 4<sup>1</sup>, *Dispatches* and *Unreported World*; Channel 5, *Cruel World*.

<sup>1</sup> Channel 4 counts as 'current affairs' other programmes commissioned by the department of that name, but which we have counted as documentaries in the data in Sections 1-3

### Current affairs coverage of developing countries, 2000-01

BBC1	2.8 hours
BBC2	14.7 hours
ITV	5.8 hours
C4	3.6 hours
C5	0.9 hours
<b>Total:</b>	<b>27.8 hours</b>

CHART 12: Current affairs coverage of developing countries, 1993 to 2001



### Key Points

- 4.i Mainstream television's current affairs coverage of developing countries has more than doubled from the very low level of 1998-99, and is back to the level of 1996-97.
- 4.ii BBC2 was, as in all previous samples, by far the biggest provider. BBC2 broadcast more current affairs coverage of developing countries than all the other four channels combined. All but one of its programmes was in the *'Correspondent'* strand, which produced 18 programmes of at least 45 minutes each on developing countries.
- 4.iii Channel 4's 3.6 hours of current affairs coverage of developing countries was a recovery from a miniscule 0.5 hours in 1998-99. In 2000-01, two *'Dispatches'* programmes were filmed in the developing world. But Channel 4 also produced an innovation — the *'Unreported World'* strand, commissioned to cover events and processes not 'normally' given air time, replacing a section of the Channel 4 News. In four 30-minute programmes this covered the oil boom in Azerbaijan; sleeping sickness in south Sudan; land rights in Brazil; and sectarian conflict in Indonesia.
- 4.iv The increase in ITV1's hours from 1.35 to 5.8 is due mainly to the four-part *'Back to the Front'* daytime series, in which Mike Nicholson revisited countries from which he had reported news.
- 4.v Channel 5 has yet to provide any significant current affairs coverage of developing countries since it began in 1997. It showed only 3 international current affairs programmes in the year, all in the *'Cruel World'* strand examining cruelty to animals, 2 of which were in developing countries.

# APPENDIX: THE IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11TH 2001

This research covered 1 September 2000 to 31 August 2001, a section comparable to previous years.

Eleven days after the sample finished came the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. These triggered many searching examinations of the state of the world and the division between cultures.

One theme of these discussions was the recognition of widespread ignorance within the Western democracies of conditions and experiences in the countries where the majority of the world's population lives. A number of media commentators and analysts attributed this ignorance to the dominance of celebrity and trivia culture in the output of their own media and entertainment industries.

They concluded that if 'nothing would be the same' after September 11th, that must include the media industries, which would rebalance their previous preoccupations against renewed attention to serious issues in the wider world.

The research featured so far in this report may therefore be taken as a snapshot picture of the media 'as it was' in the year almost exactly to September 11th. As we have seen, some general recovery in the crude overall levels of programming filmed internationally and in developing countries had already taken place, although still remaining lower than in 1989-90; but the subject matter was strongly dominated by entertainment genres, while 'harder' programming continued to decline.

Would this really change after September 11th? Would there be more in-depth, contextual programming, directly examining the lives, experience, culture and environment of people in the majority world – and letting them speak for themselves?

In the aftermath of September 11th the first responses were, as would be expected, made by existing news programmes and current affairs series. *Panorama* and *Dispatches*, for example, produced a number of special programmes, as well as focusing on relevant areas of the world in their scheduled offerings.

There were some additional innovations: special programmes rushed into the schedules, and investigations into the structural reasons for the

twin towers' collapse, for example. Notably, BBC2 cleared its post-Newsnight 11.15 pm slot for a season of programmes about the aftermath of the attacks, *The War Zone*.

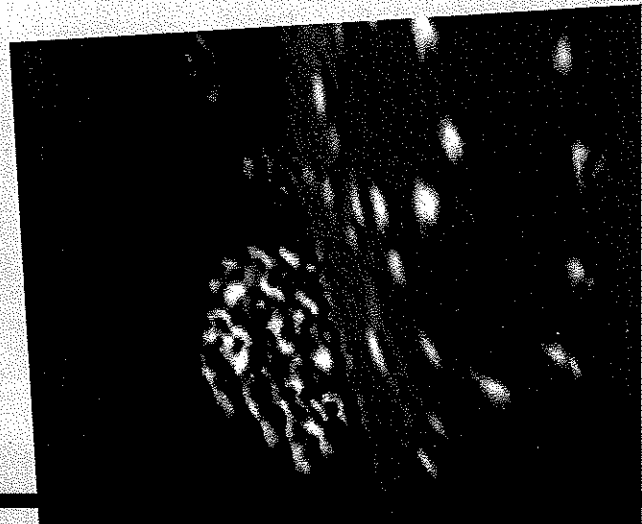
But would this initial rush of programmes attempting to understand the events of September 11th itself give way to the promised long-term shift to serious factual programming?

With the completion of our data due by spring 2002, 3WE recognised that to extend the data sample to include September 2001 and beyond would give an unrealistic picture of the likely longer term effect. It would also render the data useless for comparison with previous single years.

Any long term effect will only make itself known through the commissioning and scheduling policies of the broadcasters. In-depth documentary programmes (as opposed to current affairs programmes) commissioned after September 2001 will still not be ready for broadcast when this research goes to print; though other genres can make it to screen more quickly.

With these significant constraints in mind, however, 3WE decided that one way to see whether there may be a discernible effect of September 11th on commissioning and scheduling would be to take a two-week sample within February 2002, using the same methodology as in the rest of the research. The dates chosen were February 9th to 22nd 2002.

February 2002 was far enough away from September 2001 to reduce the distortion of the current affairs aftermath; and to allow the channels to commission new programmes and adjust their scheduling. The same methodology was used as in all our research.



## Findings

Total factual programming filmed in developing countries, including current affairs, Feb 2002: 11.1 hours.

Total factual programming filmed in developing countries, minus current affairs, Feb 2002: 9.6 hours

Average developing country factual programming in 2000-01: 5.7 hours per week

Average developing country programming in February 2002: 4.8 hours per week

Developing country factual programming, Feb 2002, channel by channel:

BBC1	2.1 hours
BBC2	0.9 hours
ITV1	1.4 hours.
C4	4.4 hours
C5	0.9 hours

Current affairs coverage of developing countries, February 2002:

BBC1	0.7 hours
BBC2	0.7 hours

## Programme Mix

The developing country factual programming mix showed clear similarities to that reported for the year 2000-01.

**BBC1:** developing country factual output consisted of a travel adventure programme in which footballer/presenter Ian Wright was challenged to survive in the desert, *'Surviving the Kalahari'*; a *'Holiday'* travel programme; and *'Living Dangerously'*, a programme from a series profiling British people doing dangerous jobs abroad.

**BBC2:** a *'Horizon'* science documentary on dinosaur fossils in China.

**ITV1:** developing country factual output consisted of *'VSO'*, a morning programme about Western volunteers working on social programmes in Mongolia; a daytime holiday travel programme, *'Wish you were here today'*; and a programme in the *'Savage Planet'* series on the link between the Bermuda Triangle and the extinction of dinosaurs.

**Channel 4:** developing country output consisted of two programmes on Pakistani individuals' experience of an Islamicised court system in *'Lahore Law'*; two hour-long reality TV programmes in the *'Temptation Island'* series, set in Belize, where couples' fidelity is tested to the limits in a controlled environment; and an episode in a series called *'The Flooded Kingdoms of the Ice Age'*, looking at evidence of submerged civilisations.

**Channel 5:** developing country output consisted of a children's travel programme and a wildlife programme on giraffes.

The current affairs programmes on developing countries were: a *'Panorama'* on the Special Forces in Iraq during the Gulf War; and a *'Correspondent'* on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

# LOSING REALITY

Losing Reality is the seventh in a series of monitoring reports published since 1990 by 3WE (the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project).

It examines non-news and current-affairs 'factual' international programming on the UK's main five TV channels during the year September 2000 to August 2001 inclusive.

Looking at all these channels' output, the report examines:

The number of hours of factual international programming

The number of hours of such programming filmed in developing countries

The nature of the programming, by issue category

The distribution of the programmes in peak and off-peak broadcast schedules

By comparing the findings with past years of research, the report is able to identify trends in the way broadcasters are covering international subjects in general, and developing countries in particular.

In this report we show how the number of hours of factual international programming, including the number of hours of programming on developing countries, has risen significantly since our last report on the year 1998-99.

But we also show how entertainment genres were responsible for these rises, while programming in the 'harder' issue categories such as 'development, environment and human rights' plummeted to unprecedented low levels.

In a special appendix, the report takes an additional research sample from February 2002 and finds little change in the programme mix compared to the pre-September 11th period.

This report will be of interest to regulators, broadcasters, programme makers, media studies courses, development studies courses, and to all who care about the need for high quality factual programming on the wider world.



Price £5.00  
ISBN: 0 9525050 4 5