

NEWS RELEASE

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CHILDREN IN UK BLINKERED FROM THE WIDER WORLD BY TV

Children's television in the UK is overwhelmingly dominated by North American programmes and mainstream coverage of the wider world is declining, according to a major new report published today.

'Screening the World', commissioned by the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) and funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), investigates how UK broadcasters portrayed international affairs in 2007-8. It focuses on children's, news, and factual programming.

The report, written by the University of East Anglia, also highlights the crucial role played by the BBC in providing British children with programming about the world outside the UK and US.

The report shows that in children's programming:

- Nearly half the international children's programming on terrestrial UK channels is from North America
- From a sample of 19 digital channels over two weeks, 79% of international children's programming was North American and only 7% of international children's programming portrayed countries in the developing world
- BBC Blue Peter's coverage of developing countries was greater and more diverse than the output of ITV1, Channel 4 or FIVE. .

The report also found factual programming about non-US or UK countries was continuing to 'migrate' from mainstream channels to more 'niche' digital channels such as BBC4 or More 4.

Sophie Chalk, IBT's Director of Campaigns, said:

"The results of this research are very worrying. Despite the fact we live in a more interconnected world, with the internet, social networking and global TV news, our children are growing up with television which only focuses on the UK and USA. These are the citizens of the future: they have a basic right to good quality, engaging

information about what is going on elsewhere in the world in order to become fully developed citizens.”

Gillian Merron, Minister for International Development, said:

“The broadcast media has a vital role to play in bringing a fair and accurate account of complex issues such as poverty, trade, conflict and climate change to our television screens, in formats that appeal to and engage UK audiences of all ages. I hope ‘Screening the World’ will encourage broadcasters to look seriously at how they can do more to help the British public become better informed about the wider world.”

Mark Galloway, Director of IBT say

“Television is the main source of information about the wider world for most people in the UK. However, this research shows there is a steady decline in the range of countries, stories and voices represented.

“It's vital that coverage of the developing world isn't just limited to news and current affairs which inevitably concentrates on the negative. Innovative factual formats and drama can present a much more rounded and positive picture of the kind of lives people in other countries lead and audience research suggests that viewers would like to see more of this sort of positive coverage.”

The final chapter of the research is an examination of the Kenyan election coverage at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 through interviews with the leading UK news providers. It highlights the difficulties journalists and news organisations faced in reporting a fast-moving, complex, international news story.

Ends

For a PDF copy of the report in advance of publication, further information or to secure an interview please contact:

Moira Stewart, IBT press office, tel: 020 8943 3360

Pippa Ranger, DFID press office tel: 020 7023 1607 (Press office tel: 020 7023 0600)

For an online copy of the PDF, see www.ibt.org.uk

Notes to editors:

You are invited to attend the **launch of the Screening the World report on Thursday 12th June 5-6pm** at the Empire Room, New Connaught Rooms, 61-65 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5DA where there will presentations by Shahid Malik, Minister for International Development, Adam

Fleming, BBC Newsround, Marie Staunton, Chief Executive of Plan UK, and Charles Badenoch, Chief Executive of Worldvision UK.

Children's, factual and news programming are all considered essential elements of public service broadcasting which is currently under review by the Government and Ofcom. Children's television has been closely examined because it is one element of public service broadcasting currently under threat.

International factual programming has been tracked through a unique longitudinal study commissioned by IBT since 1989.

The International Broadcasting Trust is an educational and media charity working to promote high quality broadcast coverage of the developing world. Their aim is to further awareness and understanding of the lives of the majority of the world's people and the issues which affect them. www.ibt.org.uk

The Department for International Development (DFID) is leading the UK government's fight against global poverty. DFID supports initiatives that promote understanding about the wider world and global issues in the UK. www.dfid.gov.uk