

ibt

International
Broadcasting
Trust

Annual Review 2016

Introduction



2016 was a busy and productive year for IBT:

- We lobbied extensively on the new BBC Charter and in response to the Government's announcement that it was considering the privatisation of Channel 4
- We published a new research report *Small Screen, Big World* which analysed in detail the quantity and range of international content on all the main TV news bulletins in the UK.
- We organised a number of briefings with editors from a range of media outlets including Channel 4 News, Al Jazeera, CNN, the Daily Telegraph and the Independent
- We expanded our *Reframing Climate Change* project, working with broadcasters, producers, NGOs and experts, and we published *Climate Change on Television*, a report which looked at TV coverage of this issue a year on from the UN Paris Agreement
- We ran a series of training events to help media officers and CEOs in their use of social media and in response to new technology
- We held an annual dinner and networking event for CEOs of our member organisations. The guest speaker was Jamie Angus, the Editor of the Today programme

IBT works with the media, government and civil society to increase understanding of people throughout the world and the issues which affect them. Our vision is of a world in which the media is a force which enables all people to be active global citizens. Our goal is that people in the UK have access to more and better coverage of the world and are able to find it easily through their favourite media.

We focus on four main areas of activity:

- Advocacy – lobbying Government, media organisations and regulators
- Research – on media coverage of the developing world, the environment and human rights
- Dialogue – with the principal media organisations
- Events – regular briefings with editors and training for media officers and CEOs

I'd like to thank all our members for their support without which IBT would not be the influential voice that it is.

Mark Galloway IBT Director
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Advocacy



In 2016, the main focus of our advocacy was the new BBC Charter. This was much debated and there was significant political pressure for a diminution in the size and scope of the BBC. Our main goal was to ensure a strengthening of the global purpose which commits the BBC to producing international content across all genres.

We also lobbied on the future of Channel 4 in the face of Government threats to privatise the channel. We argued that a privatised Channel 4 would be likely to reduce its spend on international news and current affairs, to maximise revenue for shareholders.

Lobbying government, parliament, media organisations and regulators is an important part of our work. Public service broadcasters can be highly effective in engaging mainstream audiences with international stories and issues, but much of what they do is underpinned by legislation. In the past, IBT has played an influential role in ensuring that the remits of all the PSBs – the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Channel 5 – include a commitment to international content especially in news and current affairs.

Sophie Chalk, IBT's Head of Advocacy, managed our lobbying, appeared on many public platforms, had numerous private meetings with MPs, peers, civil servants, broadcasters and regulators. In order to strengthen our lobbying effort, we produced a new research report *Small Screen, Big World* which analysed the quantity and range of international content on all the main TV news bulletins in the UK.

We also worked with Public Voice, a civil society coalition, set up to defend and promote public service broadcasting.

Our lobbying on the BBC was successful and when the new Charter was published in December, it included a strengthened global purpose committing the BBC to producing international content that appeals to all audiences. It also included a separate purpose for the BBC World Service. The new Charter comes into effect in January 2017. The position of Channel 4 remains unclear although it appears that the threat of privatisation has receded.

Research



We publish regular research reports to provide an evidence base for our lobbying and to inform our membership about changing media trends.

This year we published *Small Screen, Big World* which analysed in detail the quantity and range of international content on all the main TV news bulletins in the UK. The study provided our membership with clear evidence of how broadcasters are covering global issues and gave us useful research to use in our lobbying on the future of the BBC and Channel 4.

Television news is hugely important – it's the main source of information about the rest of the world for most people in the UK. But how well does it cover global issues and stories? Is it too committed to the big story of the day? Does it provide enough context and analysis?

The findings revealed a strong commitment to international stories but they also highlighted some concerns. There was an increase in the amount of coverage, compared with a similar analysis which we conducted in 2009. However, there was also a decline in the number of countries featured. We looked at who reporters interview and found that the voices featured across many of the bulletins were strikingly similar, leading some of our interviewees to raise concerns about homogenization in news coverage. Few NGOs appeared in these bulletins. It could be argued that featuring the voices of those directly affected by events, rather than NGOs, is an indication of greater authenticity in storytelling. But there is a risk that some crucial context is lost.

This year we also published *Climate Change on Television – what the Paris Agreement means for broadcasters*. This report reviewed TV coverage of climate change a year after the all-important UN agreement in Paris and made recommendations so that broadcasters could strengthen their future coverage (for more on this, see separate section on Reframing Climate Change).

Making NGOs more effective



A major focus of our work in recent years has been helping our members to be more effective in their media messaging.

As part of this work, we organise a series of briefings so that IBT members can meet informally with editors from a range of media outlets, to gain a better understanding of how to pitch ideas to them and of the kind of stories that work best for each outlet. This year we heard from Channel 4 News, CNN, Al Jazeera, On Assignment, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent, Marie Claire and GQ.

We also ran a series of training events to help media officers and CEOs in their use of social media platforms and in realising the potential of new technology, including virtual reality filmmaking.

We held an annual dinner and networking event for CEOs of our member organisation. The guest speaker was Jamie Angus, the Editor of the Today programme. Jamie spoke about his commitment to international coverage and his view that the BBC should seek to present a more rounded picture of the developing world. He said among the highlights of his editorship had been live broadcasts from Bangladesh and Liberia.



Reframing climate change



One of our main strands of work in 2016 has been our *Reframing Climate Change* project.

IBT has a longstanding interest in climate change. Several years ago we published *The Environment on TV – are broadcasters meeting the challenge?* That report highlighted a creative gap – broadcasters wanted innovative and engaging content on climate change but they struggled to find the right ideas to bring to the screen. Since then, we have worked with independent producers, broadcasters and a wide range of experts to stimulate their creativity and to make the case for reframing climate change so that it is not just seen as an environmental issue but one that affects many aspects of our daily lives.

In 2016, we collaborated with the Sheffield International Documentary Festival, organising a panel discussion to help producers to develop their climate change ideas and an open competition in which the shortlisted filmmakers were able to pitch their proposals to a panel of commissioners. The winning entry was awarded development funding.

In December, we published *Climate Change on Television – what the Paris Agreement means for broadcasters*. A year ago, the Paris Agreement was signed and governments committed themselves to far reaching reductions in their carbon emissions. These commitments require major changes to our lifestyles. Since television is the main source of information for the UK public about climate change it is appropriate for us to examine the way that it has covered climate change over the past year.

The report found that television had a good track record of making issues related to climate change accessible to mainstream audiences but made recommendations for ways in which it could continue to tell a range of stories about climate change to engage audiences and better equip them to respond to this dynamic story.

About IBT

Key contacts

Mark Galloway Director

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Funding

This year we received funding from The JJ Charitable Trust for our *Reframing Climate Change* project, and from The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for our work to promote public service broadcasting. We are extremely grateful to both Trusts for the support we receive from them.

Our core funding came from membership fees. We currently have 33 member organisations working in development, the environment and human rights.

International Broadcasting Trust

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