

A young Black man is shown in profile, smiling and looking towards the left. He is wearing large black headphones with a blue circular logo on the ear cup. He is wearing a black jacket with a white patterned design on the collar and a white t-shirt underneath. His hands are visible, resting on a keyboard, and he is wearing a silver ring on his left hand. A professional microphone is positioned in front of him. The background is a blurred studio environment with a white wall and some equipment.

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Promoting dialogue, debate and change

# Making Poverty the Story

Time to involve the media in poverty reduction

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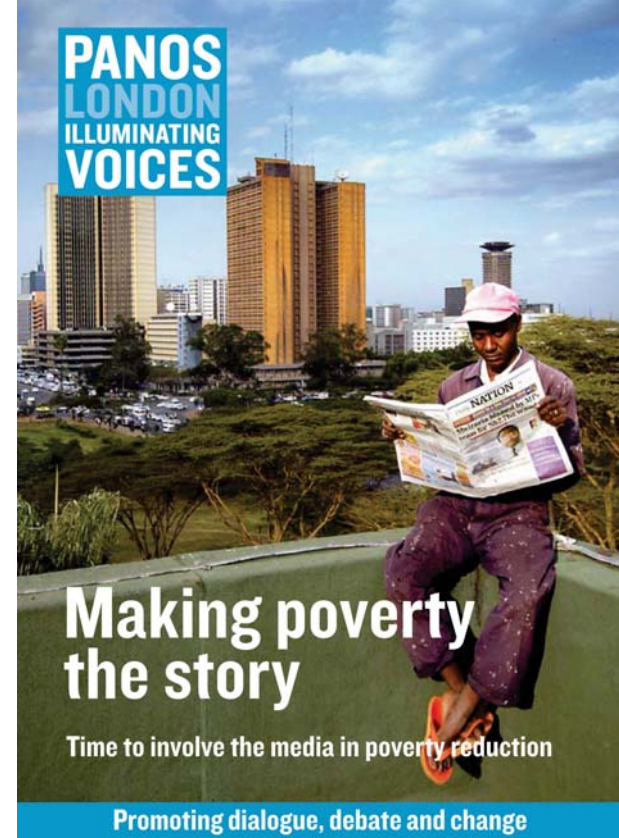
## Arguments of the report

- Time for all actors to recognise and support the crucial role of the media
  - Poverty strategies: communication vital to public awareness and participation, yet media neglected
  - Mass reach of media – a key shaper of opinion
  - Progress towards MDGs in doubt

## A deliberately provocative title

- Do the media have a role in poverty reduction?
- Effective public affairs journalism – a good in its own right
- Challenges of stronger media coverage and better work with the media. Poverty reduction newsworthy?

## A pilot study to kick-start a longer inquiry and discussion



# Setting the scene, making the case?

## Potential public service and public interest roles of the media

- Provider of information to different audiences
- Forum to reflect and bring in different views (including those under-represented)
- An inclusive platform for public discussion
- Scrutiny – holding all power-holders to account

## The context

- PRSPs – participation and perceived role of communication
- Gaps in public communication and peripheral role of media (eg Bangladesh: 91 % of non-Dhaka journalists unfamiliar with PRSP)
- Changing policy approaches: opportunities and challenges for the media (from focus on social spending to ‘pro-poor growth

# Problems and challenges

## Commercial and political pressures

- Media liberalisation – positive changes but risks to diversity and quality of coverage
- Changing media markets: poverty issues may not be seen as newsworthy or attractive.
- Public affairs coverage often focused on elite politics
- Pressure for advertising revenue squeezes editorial space, compounds outside political and commercial pressures

## Media resource problems

- Journalists under-paid, under-skilled and under-resourced
- Time and resources short for story research

# Problems and challenges

## Expertise challenges

- Knowledge and skills to understand complex issues and decipher information and analysis
- Reliance on official sources, despite weaknesses and even secrecy on official information-sharing, though signs of progress
- Growing range of non-state sources, but many journalists unable or unprepared to track down and use this information
- Not just problems of skills – time and inclination associated with newsroom pressures and reporting styles

‘There are lots of poverty stories, but they lack depth. Statement-based journalism has stunted the development of journalists, who have often taken the value of [official] information for granted.’

‘The problem is not so much a lack of information but the ability to interpret it and put it to potent use, targeting the right audiences at the right time.’

# Opportunities for the media

## Building a wider range of contacts and sources

- Academics, policy research bodies
- NGOs and other civil society organisations
- Private sector and business
- Donors
- Parliamentarians

## Changes in working relations between the media and policy actors

- The media can do much more, but non-media actors need a stronger understanding of journalists' professional needs and how to meet them
- For example – making policy research more accessible to the media.
- Packaging of information to respond to media interests and values (deadlines, topicality and newsworthiness)

# Opportunities for the media

## The need for stronger interaction between the media and civil society

- Information and insights from organisations close to poor community and good record of work with them
- Mass reach of media provides outlet
- Mutual respect for each other's role, including media independence
- Beyond mutual suspicion to mutual benefits?
- Coverage beyond financial incentives

## New approaches to stories

- Better events and information resources for the media
- Support for CSOs media relations skills
- Better understanding of civil society approaches

# Opportunities for the media

## Exploring editors' views

- Importance of 'information gatekeepers' linking media houses with journalists and the public
- Audience research, as necessary: what will 'sell'? Key to understanding problems and constraints and how to address them

## Better mutual understanding and working practices

- Poverty – from a social welfare issue to a policy question linked to governance and rights
- Linking human interest with the policy process
- Budgets, public finance, parliamentary reporting, business and economics.
- From 'specialist' topic to mainstreaming in core beats
- Poverty reduction can be newsworthy – Kenyan media coverage of poverty mapping
- Media leadership and support and individual motivation

# The ways forward

## **Time for strategic support for the media**

- Public policies and an enabling environment for the media
- Supportive media legislation and independent media regulation bodies
- Proposals for media financing
- Supportive public interest institutions
- Integral approach to media and communication – not just mainstream media but also alternative media such as community radio
- The needs of local journalists and communicators

# The ways forward

## Civil society

- To make media engagement a key part of their advocacy strategies
- Development of media relations capacity with the support of national and international NGOs
- Build links with media houses and journalists
- Systems and information materials geared to informing journalists in line with media values and needs

## Governments

- Effective public communication strategies needed, including on poverty reduction
- Development of stronger media relations capacity, including with local journalists
- Supportive media legislation and independent media regulation bodies
- Supportive public interest institutions

# The ways forward

## International donors

- Recognise vital role of media in poverty reduction
- Make media development a vital priority, given the practical support and media finance challenges identified in this report,
- Prioritise public service and public interest media
- Support for integral public policies on media (mainstream and community)
- Make media and communication an essential part of aid

## Media leaders and professionals

- Explore opportunities for making poverty reduction part of public interest reporting and core beats (eg politics, business, parliamentary, budgets, governance, crime and public security), including voices of poor people
- Provide incentives and practical support for editors and journalists, working with media support organisations to secure stronger training
- Support effective public policies on media, independent media regulation bodies, including media finance proposals for governments and donors
- Diversification of information sources and audience research