The role of the media

Mark Jones
Editor, Reuters AlertNet
Agencies attracting most coverage

Press citations:
- Red Cross/Red Crescent: 7,180
- UNICEF: 3,023
- Oxfam: 1,556
- WHO: 1,151
- Save the Children: 1,099
- Salvation Army: 948
- UN World Food Programme: 501
- Catholic Relief Services: 485
- Doctors Without Borders: 446
- OCHA: 419
- Christian Aid: 193
- UNHCR: 160
- CARE: 158
- Action Aid: 113
- Médecins Du Monde: 105
- Other: 22

Period: 25 Dec 04 - 05 Feb 05
Source: Factiva Worldwide (press releases excluded)
Tsunami vs ‘forgotten emergencies’

- Tsunami: 34,992
- Sudan War: 7,661
- Northern Uganda: 5,209
- West Africa: 4,804
- DRC Conflict: 3,119
- Chechnya: 2,886
- Haiti: 2,669
- HIV/AIDS: 2,623
- Nepal: 2,287
- Colombia: 1,441
- Infectious Diseases: 924

(N=68,615
Period: Mar 04 - Feb 05
Source: Factiva, Reuters Reading List)
Type of health cover

Press citations over weeks:
- General Health Concerns
- Mental Effects

Period: 25 Dec 04 - 31 Mar 05
Source: Reuters Reading List
Type of health cover

- Malaria: 23% (n=608)
- Cholera: 20% (n=537)
- Diarrhoea: 18% (n=469)
- Typhoid: 8% (n=212)
- Dengue: 7% (n=185)
- Pneumonia: 7% (n=180)
- Measles: 7% (n=173)
- Dysentery: 6% (n=164)
- Hepatitis: 4% (n=101)
- Salmonellosis: 3% (n=68)
- ARI: 1% (n=23)
- Viral Fever: 0.4% (n=10)

Period: 25 Dec 04 - 31 Mar 05
Source: Reuters Reading List

N=2,636
Which agencies got health cover?

- Médecins Sans Frontières World Health Organisation: 302
- Merlin: 243
- International Medical Corps: 37
- Médécins du Monde: 29
- Project Hope: 10
- Handicap International: 5

Period: 25 Dec 04 - 31 Mar 05
Source: Reuters Reading List

N=829
Agencies and health themes

- Sanitation: 14%, 19%, 22%, 13%, 14%, 37%, 31%, 30%, 13%, 14%, 11%, 10%, 11%, 4%, 4%, 2%
- Disease: 8%, 4%, 6%, 3%, 6%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 10%, 18%, 18%, 38%, 29%, 14%
- Sickness: 8%, 18%, 13%, 23%, 14%, 10%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%
- Clean Water: 3%, 4%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%
- Contamination: 10%, 18%, 13%, 23%, 14%, 10%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 14%
- Overcrowding: 3%, 4%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%
- Sewage: 3%, 4%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%
- Mosquitoes: 3%, 4%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%
- Epidemic: 3%, 4%, 4%, 2%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 6%

World Health Organisation
 Médecins Sans Frontières
 Merlin
 MAP International
 International Medical Corps
 Médecins du Monde
 Handicap International
 Project Hope

N=1,127
Period: 25 Dec 04 - 31 Mar 05
Source: Reuters Reading List

Tsunami Health Conference

World Health Organization
Journalist critiques of Tsunami media coverage
The next story in the media myth template is ‘fears of killer cholera’ … … Partly it is due to the intense pressure on the media not just to report the news but to anticipate it.

Andrew Gilligan, Evening Standard
The next story in the media myth template is ‘fears of killer cholera’ … … Partly it is due to the intense pressure on the media not just to report the news but to anticipate it.

“There is definitely a feeling within some NGOs that they should not be dealing with the media at all, that they should be about providing relief.”

Andrew Gilligan, Evening Standard
“I’m just trying … to present important material in a balanced way so as to draw people to the program and not chase them away because it is too big, too much, too painful, too overwhelming to absorb in the way that television presents information.”

Aaron Brown, Anchor, CNN NightLine
“Time magazine in 1960 had 55 foreign bureaus. Today, I believe it has nine … the consequence of this is that we don’t know what’s going on and it’s really up to people to agitate, agitate, agitate and that’s the only way we’re going to get to it.”

Daniel Okrent, Public Editor, NY Times
“We don’t get an awful lot from NGOs in terms of suggesting, ‘Do you think perhaps you should cover this story?’, or, ‘We’re going here tomorrow do you want to come?’

Tim Cunningham, Sky News producer
“We don’t get an awful lot from NGOs in terms of suggesting, ‘Do you think perhaps you should cover this story?’, or, ‘We’re going here tomorrow do you want to come?’

“There should be an active dialogue post-disaster … we need to engage in debate and talk about the next time something like this happens what would you like us to do?”

Tim Cunningham, Sky News producer
Relief progressionals’ critiques of Tsunami coverage
“The media did play into the general conception that external aid workers were the ones to come in and help when, in the emergency phase they were not the most important.

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF (US)
“The media did play into the general conception that external aid workers were the ones to come in and help when, in the emergency phase they were not the most important.

“It was also quite alarmist about some of the health risks – that bodies or corpses would transmit diseases.”

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF (US)
“We need to find ways and means of projecting our work, the local story, the local reality, the unheard voices and unsung heroes.”

Ramesh Singh, CEO, ActionAid
“We need to find ways and means of projecting our work, the local story, the local reality, the unheard voices and unsung heroes.”

“In Chennai, we set up a media centre which allowed us to be a point of convergence and we could talk to journalists about this.”

Ramesh Singh, CEO, ActionAid
Suggestions for improving coverage
Suggestions for improving coverage

1. “You’ve got to have journalistic impulses, which is not something you get overnight, that nose for a story.”
Suggestions for improving coverage

“You’ve got to have journalistic impulses, which is not something you get overnight, that nose for a story.”

Helen Palmer, Oxfam’s Global Media Officer
What gets a crisis noticed?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What gets a crisis noticed?</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High death toll</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid workers from same region</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General humanitarian concerns</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material (photos, video, interviews) to help tell a compelling story</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience similar to those suffering</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children suffering</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy implications for home country</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biggest barriers to coverage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of sending reporters to the scene</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of timely response from groups at the scene</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to link up with groups at the scene</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate supporting material on groups’ websites</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues for media teams
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• Do you understand the constraints and preferences of journalists?
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• Are you satisfying journalists’ craving for quantification?
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• Have you built journalists’ story-telling needs into your relief activities?
Issues for media teams

• Do you understand the constraints and preferences of journalists?

• Are you satisfying journalists’ craving for quantification?

• Have you built journalists’ story-telling needs into your relief activities?

• What steps do you take to build relationships with journalists outside times of crisis?
The role of the media

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