REPORTING DEVELOPMENT

A GUIDE FOR AFRICAN JOURNALISTS

European Journalism Centre

IMPRESSUM *REPORTING DEVELOPMENT A GUIDE FOR AFRICAN JOURNALISTS*

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FOREWORD

Joseph Warungu

Development journalism has often been labelled as boring, too positive and abstract, far removed from the popular journalistic mantra "If it bleeds it leads."

Yet in Africa, as in throughout the world, journalism that dwells on the day-to-day global issues that touch on humanity has continued to gain resonance with ordinary citizens because of its relevance to daily experiences and challenges. Such issues include poverty, health, corruption, climate change, education, agriculture, equality etc.

Because these issues are often spearheaded by governments and non-governmental organisations, they are often couched in complex, conceptual, abstract and sometimes stereotypical language that is meaningless to an ordinary reader, television viewer or radio listener. This presents a challenge to a journalist who must, first of all, understand the issues at hand and then simplify them by cutting out all technical lingo and replacing it with palatable, simple and, most significantly, interesting and engaging language.

This handbook provides a distinctly African perspective on how to create direct linkages between consumers of information and development projects by using words and images that communicate and resonate with ease. Development issues can seem dull and flat but they can create a huge impact in society if turned into lively and robust stories expertly and skillfully told by creative journalists.

With the help of this handbook, the African storyteller will be able to tell stories that matter on issues that matter and in a manner that does not clutter the page but appeals to they eye and the heart.

After all, in development journalism, it doesn't have to bleed in order to lead; it only needs to be readable and relevant.

photo/ ***Samir M Khan*** */www.behance.net/sk5sami*

INTRODUCTION

By Hamadou Tidiane Sy

"Twitter study shows Africa is football mad": this is the title of an AFP dispatch published on March 13, 2014 based on a study by Portland, a communication firm. Surely it is great news for the thousands of football lovers across the continent.

But then, what about the dozens of pressing and critical issues, such as access to clean water, food security, education, health, access to justice and governance, which millions of Africans have to grapple with daily?

What this study revealed as a trend in the new and so popular social media in Africa is also valid for most (if not all) of the mainstream media across the continent. This booklet comes as one, among many possible responses to help address such a discrepancy.

The guide is adapted from a previous and similar study, conducted by the European Journalism Centre for Eastern Europe. Although development issues are "global" by nature, this version of the book is designed for African journalists seeking to challenge such trends by providing credible, easy to read, relevant and compelling stories about various development issues in Africa.

Though mostly inspired by the original work, it puts everything into the African context. Where the first handbook focused on "poverty", this one focuses on "development". However, the final objectives remain the same : to provide an easy-to-use guide to young journalists beginning their careers and those keen on dedicating their talents to addressing these pressing issues, so they can deliver the best stories to their audience, with the final aim of contributing to greater change.

DEFINING DEVELOPMENT

Development, one can argue, is a far too large and multifaceted concept to be captured in a booklet. However, this guidebook will propose a few guidelines to those who are interested in the more practical side of things, to offer them a better understanding of issues and give them techniques and tips that will enhance their journalistic skills.

We will not list here all development topics nor will we provide all sources of information, but we will provide valuable information gathered during several workshops in Nairobi and through research and brainstorming sessions conducted in Dakar, as well as some content from the original book. Finally, the most relevant and significant sources, for those journalists interested in the area, are also provided in this guidebook.

Now, it's up to the users of this handbook to use all their talent, creativity and knowledge to make things happen.

DEVELOPMENT AS NEWS

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

DEVELOPMENT

The Online Business Dictionary gives us several definitions of the word development. **businessdictionary.com**

1. The systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements.
2. An extension of the theoretical or practical aspects of a concept, design, discovery, or invention.
3. The process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions.
4. The process of adding improvements to a parcel of land, such as grading, subdivisions, drainage, access, roads, utilities.

To meet the needs of this booklet, and based on several discussions during workshops in several parts of Africa, we could combine definitions three and four. It was usually agreed that this "process" is undertaken by individuals, organizations or States with the clear objective of reaching "a positive change" for the benefit of the majority.

Put against the plight of millions of Africans across the continent, one can say that this process is slow and where it is taking place, the objectives are not easy to reach. And yet Africa is endowed with many natural resources capable of making things happen.

"Africa, a continent endowed with immense natural and human resources as well as great cultural, ecological and economic diversity, remains underdeveloped. Most African nations suffer from military dictatorships, corruption, civil unrest and war, underdevelopment and deep poverty. The majority of the countries classified by the UN as least developed are in Africa. Numerous development strategies have failed to yield the expected results". ***http://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy/poverty-and-development/poverty-and-development-in-africa.html***

This striking paradox about Africa, when it comes to "development", is known to all Africans and keeps generating heated debates. Surely, it is not the role of journalists to solve all these pressing issues. However, their contribution in addressing them is necessary and vital.

Development in Africa is often embodied in programmes all claiming to reduce or eradicate poverty as their main target. But one cannot confine development to such programmes, since their methods and impact are often questionable.

According to experts, Africa needs to build much needed infrastructure, improve its governance systems, and end its dependence on economic aid. In a nutshell, it is about generating wealth to improve the lives of millions of people through access to clean water, good schools, hospitals, etc.

It is also about the equitable sharing of resources once they are created or established in a specific country or region. As many experts have said, the unfair sharing of resources is listed among the main sources of conflicts in Africa, which in turn hinder economic or social progress.

Development is not about and should not be about "charity" and "aid".

The principal recipients of most development aid are the governments of developing countries in Africa. But the "news" element of this issue is mainly about how African countries and their citizens can be involved in breaking the vicious cycle of aid and rely on their own resources to build a better future for themselves.

Surely, where there is no abundance, help or assistance is always welcome. Aid may and is often needed, in cases of extreme need and it mostly comes in the form of humanitarian assistance, i.e. emergency programmes, aimed at saving lives during famine, natural disaster or conflict.

But development cannot be reduced to rescuing people in emergency situations. More ambitious and long term programmes, which have been tried by several countries, have to be put in place for long term objectives. These include economic restructuring , improvement of governance, the setting up of realistic taxation systems, etc.

There is also the whole debate about aid versus trade, and debt relief to kick-start a new beginning for countries struggling to cope with tough competition in the international arena, which is controlled by bigger economies.

These are huge debates by opposing experts in the field. Journalists need to be aware of them as they write their stories without falling into the trap of the United Nations' jargon or the wordy development plans of inefficient government officials.

For journalists doing their job, the main task is understanding the complexities of these issues and then conveying them in simple language for ordinary citizens to grasp. In doing so, there is a clear risk of falling into the trap of advocacy, which covers another sphere, different from journalism, although the final objectives can at times be the same.

One good starting point can be getting familiar with the UN Millennium Development Goals 2000 - 2015 and the newly agreed Strategic Development Goals 2016 - 2030 to see if and how African countries are meeting these targets. But again, the best way to do so is not through aligning numbers but through assessing how they reflect and impact on individuals and communities daily.

HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/MILLENNIUMGOALS

The Millennium Development Goals or "MDGs" comprise a special initiative launched in 2000 by the United Nations, and approved by all UN member countries, which provides a roadmap to help fight poverty and support development by working towards the achievement of eight interconnected goals, by 2015. The eight MDGs are:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

HTTP://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPENT.UN.ORG

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals or "SDGs" and 169 targets announced in September 2015 demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal sustainable development agenda. According to the United Nations, the SDGs:

- Seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve.
- Seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- Seek to integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental.

Within SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, 16.10 is of particular interest to the media community as it focuses on Access to Information. Its implementation and corresponding indicators (which have yet to be agreed) could become an important determining factor in how media professionals report on the SDGs as a whole in the coming years.

BEAR IN MIND:

On the whole, the MDGs are well known within UN and NGO circles, but are not well known among the general public. The SDGs have only recently been agreed to by UN's member nations. When referring to them, a sentence of background information is often useful for providing the necessary context. If a story you are reporting on is about one of these issues, it is often useful to mention that it is one of the key target areas identified by the UN as a vital component to overall development and poverty reduction.

THE NEPAD

Whereas the MDGs and SDGs are a global programme, the African continent has developed its own development agenda through, the New Partnership for Africa's development (www.nepad.org). The Nepad, launched in 2001, is an ambitious programme for the 21st century, initiated by African leaders to "address critical challenges facing the continent such as poverty, development and Africa's marginalization globally", according to its promoters. Where it is acclaimed by some as a major breakthrough in the continent's desire to seriously tackle its development issues, it is criticised by others for failing to deliver the much-awaited change.

The Nepad is centred on a few key themes:

- Agriculture and Food Security.
- Climate Change and National Resource Management.
- Regional Integration and Infrastructure.
- Human Development.
- Economic and Corporate Governance.
- Cross-cutting Issues, including Gender, Capacity Development and ICT.

Assessing from time to time what progress has been made in these areas in a specific country can be an interesting exercise. Here again, one should avoid falling into the trap of the "bureaucrats and experts" but instead use simple, easily understood language for radio listeners, newspaper readers or TV viewers. The next section addresses how to achieve that.

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** */courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation*

ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

The overriding challenge in all journalistic activities is how best to grab the attention of the audience. After all, we are writing for them.

Contrary to the foreign journalists writing about Africa, the African journalist may have had first-hand experience of the issues he or she is dealing with in his reporting and that we are trying to address in this handbook. Whereas this can be an advantage in that it would afford the journalist a better grasp and understanding of issues and realities, it may have its drawbacks since getting too close to the subject can at times lead to failure to adhere to some basic elements of journalism such as **balance, neutrality and fairness**.

Nevertheless, the ability to get very close to the audience can be a good opportunity to give a human face and local context (proximity) to many stories about development and this is a definite strength when time comes to deliver the story to the audience.

Every media audience is different, and every good journalist has to work out how to grab the attention of his or her target reader, listener or viewer. The good journalist usually knows which buttons to press. These are some elements, which have been used successfully over the years to engage an audience:

SELF-INTEREST

Show how African issues are interlinked with global events and vice versa e.g. how tourism is affected by violence, how international oil prices impact the cost of living, etc.

Issues such as global warming affect us all and must be tackled globally, food crises affect consumers in developing countries as well as in developed nations, AIDS knows no frontiers and is a significant challenge in developed and developing countries alike. Investing in development fosters stability in the world's most volatile regions and can work to prevent conflict and poverty-driven migration, etc.

HUMAN SYMPATHY

Several NGOs and international humanitarian institutions have for decades used human suffering to generate sympathy and raise funds. Journalists too can do the same through their reporting to create resonance as long as they don't violate the dignity and integrity of the victims. Issues such as social injustice, inequitable sharing of resources, human tragedies caused by wars, etc., can very well fit in this category.

Nevertheless, there are risks of misrepresenting or exaggerating as some NGOs and humanitarian organizations do to get attention at the expense of truth, which is the essence of journalism. "The missing millions of Kibera" (see link below) gives an interesting insight on development journalism and the links between the various stakeholders that end up falsely depicting the reality we want to portray and change.

"Kibera hosts some of the world's poorest people; residents whose problems are very real and immediate, whose scale hardly needs exaggerating. In a community estimated to host several hundred NGOs, charities and agencies, sucking in millions of dollars in foreign aid, such a fundamental error raises a more disturbing question: if so many people are so wrong about something so basic, what else isn't true?" ***Martin Robbins, the missing millions of Kibera http://www.theguardian.com/science/the-lay-scientist/2012/aug/01/africa-propaganda-kibera***

Images and reports of suffering can evoke sympathy among people with no direct connection to the events in question. But there's a more serious concern about the "pornography of suffering" or "compassion-fatigue". There have also been a lot of voices in Africa that want more than just the story of the four Ds (death, disease, doom and disaster) to offer to the rest of the world.

It remains true however that such images, when properly used can get attention and at times lead to action, something which is harder to achieve with drier, less graphic reports.

Stories about inspiring individuals, such as South Africa's Nelson Mandela, or the environmentalist Wangari Maathai, which highlight exceptional courage and human dignity, and concern for the public good and their desire for positive change, are another way of evoking sympathy among audiences.

CONNECTIONS

Links between your target audience and a specific development project can be invaluable. So ask yourself, what in this story relates to my region or my readers. An education story can be led with the most famous teacher or school in the country, region or province. A World Health Organization report about tuberculosis or malaria is better told (from a journalistic point of view) through local patients and a local doctor than the bulky and "dry" statistics in, say, a WHO report.

INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

News is, of course, about the new. A journalist who can capture the excitement of an invention or innovation that saves lives (a seed type or a new mobile application) or a novel form of behaviour or organisation that transforms communities (a revolutionary health care or schooling scheme) has a good chance of intriguing his or her audience. These unique or original stories will rarely be generated from seminars and workshops, but often from observation and attention to everyday life.

DRAMA

Scale can have an impact. The drama of a famine which threatens millions of lives, a natural disaster over a vast swathe of territory, can make an impression. The massive use of the mobile phone and its impact on job and wealth creation is equally a good source of news. However, clichés should be avoided. When such situations affect large numbers, it is advisable to translate these numbers to something an ordinary citizen can capture more easily, such as the "equivalent to 20 full football stadiums" when talking about people or the number of classes that could have been built with a huge amount of money.

STARS

It's a technique that earnest journalists and activists can find distasteful, but the use of prominent people or stars of music, cinema or sport to publicise development issues is a very good way to engage your audience.

Examples include global football stars such as Didier Drogba, the Ivorian, or the Kenyan Victor Wanyama, musicians such as Baba Maal, Hughes Masekela or Papa Wemba. UN agencies have made particular use of these goodwill "ambassadors." However for a journalist, getting the right peg is key.

LINKS TO OUR DAILY LIFE

Looking for the story behind familiar products we use every day requires nothing but curiosity. For example, mobile phones' main component – coltan – fuelling the conflict in Congo and impacting upon local people and endangering the local gorilla population; chocolate or the inexpensive clothing we use every day working in sweatshop conditions without any opportunity to attend school; or the fish destroyed by European shipping, which pollutes the coastlines of developing countries.

Highlighting the links between daily consumerism and development issues can make the story more personal to the reader, creating connections and allowing a deeper focus on how this subject impacts upon their lives.

LINKS TO HIGH PROFILE GLOBAL "SUMMITRY"

Many international summits are often centred on "development". They may focus on economic growth, trade, arms control, climate change, education, etc.

Highly technical debates take place in the US Congress, the European Parliament, within the United Nations systems, which can have huge implications for farmers or manufacturers in African countries, especially where trade, aid or subsidies are concerned.

Announcements from drug companies, agricultural research institutes or any organisation connected with trade or with a global reach can have big implications for the African farmer, businessman or even school-goer. Paying attention to such events with a focus on certain details can generate good development stories for an African audience.

* When your development "news" story is not strong enough to compete for space with other news stories, write a feature instead. You have more space to explain the complexities and more freedom for writing creatively to convey a real sense of what is happening.

* Keep the "human" in "humanitarian" – write about individuals to illustrate the overall issue and tell the story behind the stark facts and figures. Give the story a human face.

* Attaching your feature to a news event is a useful point of entry for a closer analysis of the plight of mineworkers, a religious or ethnic minority, a neglected region, a struggling industry, a controversial development project. Elections are the most useful "peg" to hang your feature on; peace talks, major conferences, trials and anniversaries are also widely used. ("Five years after the Ruritanian civil war ended, Ahmed is still struggling to find a job…")

* Watch out for big international films or novels which touch on development themes (such as The Constant Gardener, Shooting Dogs, or Blood Diamond) or unexpected successes by sportsmen and women from you country or region in the international arena. They can provide a link between your audience and what you want to write about.

* Going a little deeper into development problems can make your coverage more interesting. A reader who is fed up with reading about famine, failed harvests and hungry children may react to an article about how to make subsistence agriculture sustainable; a success story may be more attractive if it gives clues as to how some individuals or organizations are beating the odds to improve lives. A story on refugees can be enhanced with details about how former fighters can be reintegrated into society.

* Climate change is of growing significance in our news agenda. Many development stories are closely related to the changing weather. By highlighting its impact and what is being done to counter it, thoughtful journalists can keep their audiences engaged. Look for increased migration, new health risks, security implications and other angles, as well as the more obvious impact on food production.

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** */courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation*

* For journalists looking for controversy, aid operations or governance-related issues are fertile ground. Questions to ask: does aid really bring about the needed systemic change in Africa? Why does it continue to dominate relations between Africa and its development partners despite the fact that it has not worked? How should it be given, in kind or cash? Is this operation designed to suit the recipients or the donors? Should food be shipped or bought locally, or in neighbouring states? Can the African continent achieve economic growth only through aid? Is the food being supplied in keeping with the local diet or religious customs? Do international organizations respect the same regulations as in the developed nations when it comes to the quality of the food or drugs provided to Africa? Is an expensive air drop really the best way to supply this community? Could the signs of hunger have been spotted earlier – increased land sales, slaughtering of draught animals, etc.? Is this food aid genetically modified? What are the responsibilities of people in Africa, in your home country or hometown in the situation of the continent? Do the policies in place, encourage or hinder development in a specific region, country, and village?

photo/ ***Josh LaPorte*** */www.ejc.net*

photo/ ***Samir M Khan*** */www.behance.net/sk5sami*

WRITING

The two most common approaches to constructing stories about development are the **general** and the **individual**; start with the overall figures or facts, or start with an example to illustrate the point.

GENERAL

This is the basic "inverted pyramid" structure, which puts the main point into the first sentence and all other facts roughly in descending order of importance. The reader can stop at any stage and still understand the most important facts.

- Up to half a million Ruritanians could benefit from the agricultural revolution, with a new type of seed and new techniques being introduced…
- New strains of drought-resistant maize have doubled harvests in north-eastern Ruritania in the past two years, raising nutrition levels and halting migration to the cities, according to a report from…
- A new system of microfinance managed by a local women's group in the Ruritanian town of X has helped 10,000 children go to primary school for the first time…

INDIVIDUAL

This is a more "featurish" approach which seeks to draw the reader into a subject by building up a picture of an individual case, only revealing the subject at the third or fourth paragraph. It communicates the situation of millions by describing in detail the plight of a single person or family. This can have a much greater impact. A few examples:

Girls' education: *Fatima grabs her bag, waves bye to her mother and proudly walks heading to school. In her family she is the first female to attend school in this otherwise conservative community.*

Microfinance. *Five years ago Mary had a bright idea: why not take all the discarded plastic bags that fly around the village and rest on thorn bushes and turn them into something useful? She collected armfuls and wove them into brightly-coloured ropes, ham- mocks and mats to sell in the local town.*

But nothing came of the scheme. It needed a loom, expensive wires to secure the ends as well as other equipment. And Mary had no money. In her village, in the mountains of eastern Ruritania, it was the men who handled the money. Her husband, who worked as a lorry driver, saw no need to put the hard- earned cash into a speculative scheme like this. Then last year…

These are just examples. Journalism is an art not a science. There are an infinite number of different ways a creative writer can get through to his or her own particular audience. But the standards of good journalism apply equally in writing about development – a powerful "lead," backed up with detail lower down, proper sourcing, graphic writing, balance, good quotes, and of course for television, good raw footage to work with or good sound bites for radio.

Numbers have their own problem. Too many in a single piece can leave the reader confused. It's better to include just a few key numbers in the text and put the rest in a graphic or table. In these days of digital media and data visualization, this has become even easier and more relevant.

Figures on populations, money and area do not always mean much to the casual reader. Try illustrating them with comparisons, e.g. equivalent to the population of Kenya, half the country's GDP, or the size of Uganda. It is an old technique, but it works and the more skilled communicators in the aid and development community make good use of it.

Comparisons such as “living on less than a dollar a day” are to be avoided whenever possible. The cost of living can be very different. These are abstract statistics from the World Bank and UN agencies that mean nothing to a newspaper reader. .

Journalists will need to come to terms with a lot of technical terms, particularly when dealing with budgets, diseases or education and find ways to explain them simply.

photo/ ***Antony Njuguna*** */courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation*

SOURCES

IN THE FIELD

As in all journalistic activities, there is no substitute for direct access. To write about the plight of a Nigerian fisherman with power and authority, you really need to be there, to interview him at leisure, to examine his boat, his nets, his catch, and to make your own assessment on the ground. At times even visit his house and see how he lives.

Experience is the best teacher. The hardened traveller develops an instinct about who to trust and who to doubt, how to find the best stories, how to get around obstructive officials, how to win the trust of subjects and sources. Each country or area has its own particular challenges – even dangers – especially when stories can potentially rub up against strong local interests. But here are some general tips:

Take your time. First appearances can be very deceptive; the journalist who rushes in and rushes out will often misunderstand what is going on.

Eager to please. In some cultures it is considered polite, or potentially profitable, to simply agree with whatever a guest suggests. Beware of fixers, or interviewees, who simply say what they think you want to hear, rather than telling the truth. Please, bear in mind "The Missing Millions of Kibera".

Pride. It is only natural for people, especially officials, to want to present their community or their country in a positive light. While being respectful and polite, it is up to the journalist to find out the true picture and present it fairly.

Media junkies. Journalists, especially broadcasters, need interviewees who are well-informed, clear and capable of delivering good sound-bites. Sometimes the same names and the same faces pop up again and again. Make sure they are really representative and polished, and whenever possible do change the faces of your experts and bring in new ones.

Women and youth. In many parts of the world, the "elders" – all male – will automatically speak for the community, whether they have a mandate or not. The good journalist will try to sound out women and young men too to get a balanced picture.

Atmosphere. Do not forget to show your readers that you are actually there, reporting on the ground, in a farm, a factory, or a hospital. It adds credibility and colour. This does not necessarily mean paragraphs of description or poetic writing. Sometimes the occasional touch is more effective.

Aid workers. Use staff of NGOs, development agencies or community based organizations, who have spent time working in a location. They can interpret for you what is going on, what the trends are, add context and depth. But do not forget that they have their own agenda and interests, and are often well trained to do public relations for their institutions. As a journalist, one must always stay independent.

DESK REPORTING

Being a journalist in Africa may mean one cannot afford to travel to far away locations, or can only do so occasionally at times with the help of some NGOs. News organisations in Africa have limited resources. Consequently, most will do much, if not all, of their reporting sitting on a desk using the internet or making telephone calls. Crowdsourcing has come to the rescue recently, with the advent of digital technology. But nothing can replace the real physical presence of the journalist in the field.

Being a global issue, development has as much material available on the Web as any. Websites are large and sophisticated, with case studies, statistics, summaries, photographs, even videos. No self-respecting government aid agency, NGO, international development organisation or UN body is without one.

The problem is being able to negotiate this labyrinth of material to find the information you need and not to fall into the trap of well trained and experienced PR strategists. Most journalists will build up a library of sites they know from experience are good. There are some useful starting-points:

BEAR IN MIND:

One does not have to reinvent the wheel to do the research himself. There are professionals in every field who specialise in collating figures and drawing conclusions. NGO experts operating directly in the field can also be invaluable sources of information and can often assist with interpreting the situation on the spot. Your job is to talk to them and decide on the correct use of their work.

A FEW PAN-AFRICAN OR REGIONAL AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

The African Union: http://www.au.int/
New Partnership for Africa's development: http://nepad.org/
African Development Bank: http://www.afdb.org/en/
East African Community: http://eac.int/
Economic Community of West African States: http://www.ecowas.int/
West African Economic and Monetary Union: http://www.uemoa.int
Ecowas Bank for Investment and Development: www.bidc-ebid.org
Southern African Development Community: http://www.sadc.int/
Inter-Governmental Authority on Development: http://igad.int/
Central African Economic and Monetary Union: http://cemac.int/
Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa: http://codesria.org/

And of course several other regional organizations, a whole lot of national, and at times local institutions, where a reporter can find facts, get in touch with sources and potential interviewees, background information or story ideas.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE IN AFRICA OR GATHERING DATA ABOUT AFRICA

UN: www.un.org
UN Development Programme (UNDP): www.undp.org
Human Development Report: http://hdr.undp.org
Millennium Development Report: www.mdgs.un.org
Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN): www.irinnews.org
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO): www.fao.org
Children's Fund (UNICEF): www.unicef.org
World Health Organisation (WHO): www.who.int

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): www.unhcr.org
World Bank: www.worldbank.org
The World Development Indicators (WDI): www.worldbank.org/data
OECD– organisation for economic Co-operation and development: www.oecd.org
DAC – Development Aid Committee: www.oecd.org/dac
European Union: http://ec.europa.eu
Europe Aid – Directorate-General of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid
European Commission, Directorate-General for Development: http://ec.europa.eu/development
European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO): http://ec.europa.eu/echo
Overseas Development Institute: www.odi.org.uk
The CIA world Fact book: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook

Finally, every individual journalist working on development issues can build a database of his/her own, depending on his/her topical and geographical areas of interest in his country or region.

photo Reuters/ ***Thomas Mukoya***
/courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

photo/ ***Samir M Khan*** */www.behance.net/sk5sami*

ETHICS

Respecting ethics and professional standards or codes of conduct in journalism is key. At the same time it remains very problematic, particularly in Africa. We know all the ethical issues African media houses are confronted with.

The basic principle is to understand that "ethics" is important in journalism because of the "power" bestowed upon the media. Journalists are considered the "fourth estate" because their work has an impact on people's private or public lives.

Because as journalists we expose individuals, groups and community to the attention of the greater public, we are invited to do it with a high sense of responsibility. The basic principle is to pay due respect to all interlocutors, sources and peoples. In our stories we should at all times respect people's dignity, integrity and their right to privacy.

This can be tricky when it comes to public figures because it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between their public and private actions or their private and public lives as well.

When the media houses are financially weak and the journalists lack proper training, it becomes even harder to implement ethical behaviours: journalists being sponsored by politicians or political parties to produce stories, business interests, and at times in a more subtle way, NGOs supporting networks of journalists end up dictating the agenda. And yet, we all know journalists are supposed to be there for everyone, to report freely, and not to push the agenda of a specific group. The culture of "transport money", "per-diems" and "brown envelopes" is so real in several countries to the disgrace of journalists and the media.

The author of this booklet was shocked to learn that in some countries the practice is so entrenched that the younger generation of journalists take it as a right to claim a "transport refund" or to be "paid" by the organizers when covering an event.

The Nation Media Group, the largest media company in East and Central Africa, regularly runs adverts in all its publications inviting the public to report corrupt journalists and warning about the culture of "brown envelope journalism."

The financial weakness of the media houses cannot justify everything and there is in it a high level of individual responsibility and personal values. One would find in the same media house two journalists behaving totally differently towards the temptation of "envelopes" for media coverage.

The basic guidelines about ethics in journalism can be found in the code of ethics by the Society of Professional Journalists. The full text can be found here: http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

IN IT'S PREAMBLE THIS CODE READS:

"Public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility."

Added to these general principles, in every respectable newsroom one would find a set of internal code of conduct adapted to the local context and in line with the chosen editorial policy which can help the reporter abide by the rules of the profession.

FAILURE

Bad news is the perennial drug of the media. Scandals always outsell dull, steady progress. It is not bad to focus on the problems a given country is facing with a view to helping improve things; it is the first step

towards finding a solution.

Development challenges when dealt with responsibly can lead to more informed and more active citizens, demanding accountability from their leaders. The media can play a big role in this regard.

Good development reporters will also seek out the success stories, to inspire and show the path to the rest. Good news is harder to write than bad, but worth the effort – so long as you can make it interesting.

LANGUAGE

Language is a major difficulty. Experienced journalists are used to "translating" the jargon (used by interest groups or experts) into language easily understood by their own audiences. Different institutions working in the field of development each have their own jargon. The role of the journalist is to make it understandable to the audience.

The problem is that this jargon can be indigestible to the average reader. Each journalist has to decide whether writing about "gender-based violence", "lactating women" or "internally displaced persons". The other option is (the less precise) "violence against women," "nursing mothers" or "internal refugees".

STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes and easy generalisations abound in the African media. Presenting a truthful and non-stereotyped picture of the areas covered represents a big challenge to professional development journalism. Though generalising and simplification is almost inevitable in the media, stereotyping exaggerates characteristics of certain regions, nationalities or groups of people. At times the line between stereotyping and stigmatising is so thin that it can hardly be drawn.

Responsible journalists should be aware of how prevailing reports on disasters, conflicts and famines have already distorted the image of Africa to their audience. Seeking less "predictable" angles is more difficult but is what is expected from the users of this book.

CHILDREN

Most media organisations have guidelines about reporting on minors, based on the legal requirements of their country. These also apply to writing about children. The code of ethics mentioned earlier also gives some guidelines. The risk of a child in a remote village of Africa being identified from a report in an urban newspaper in the capital city or abroad used to be small and may still be, but reporters need to remember that the growth of the internet has significantly increased the chances of this actually happening.

And in any case, the golden rule adopted in several codes of ethics and conduct is to respect the right and dignity of the child.

Each community has its own set of values. Attitudes to women's rights, children's rights or other sensitive issues may vary from one country to the other, journalists need to understand those complexities when dealing with such countries/communities.

Where these differences are believed to have a direct connection with a community's level of development, it is right to report on them, e.g. the link between girls' education and infant mortality.

Beyond that, each reporter has to decide for him or herself how relevant these different values are. At the same time glossing over attitudes which would be unacceptable to your target audience, could be considered patronising. Basic human rights are indivisible and internationally agreed, although different communities, countries and cultures have different interpretations of these standards.

photo / ***Goran Tomasevic*** */courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation*

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

DATA AND DEVELOPMENT

The rise of ICTs and their invasion of the newsrooms have recently given birth to data journalism or data driven journalism.

In Africa, a few attempts are made here and there to adapt to this new trend/style which is reshaping the ways certain categories of news are delivered. Recently a handbook was produced collectively, led by the European Journalism Centre, which provides the basics of data journalism.

datajournalismhandbook.org

This book remains a starting point for journalists trying to tell their story utilizing data journalism methods. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia defines data journalism or data driven journalism as

"A journalistic process based on analysing and filtering large data sets for the purpose of creating a news story. Main drivers for this process are newly available resources such as 'open source' software and "open data". This approach to journalism builds on older practices, most notably on CAR (acronym for "computer-assisted reporting") a label used mainly in the US for decades"

The advent of data journalism has opened a whole new era in using statistics and other data to tell a story. It usually goes with data visualization techniques, which have been here for decades but which have been given a new life and a new importance.

However, and despite all the enthusiasm generated by this new trend, as journalists we should simply see it as another tool or technique. The fax machine, the digital recorder changed the life of journalists, but not the business of journalism. The same should apply to the new technologies and methods. The core business of journalism does not change with the advent of "data journalism". The values and principles which have guided the profession over the centuries should remain and going "data" or doing more "visualizations" should simply be a plus.

Some professionals have started expressing concern on how data journalism is badly used to produce "bad" journalism. In a piece entitled "Data Journalism Needs to Up its Own Standards", Alberto Cairo from the Nieman Lab (Niemanlab. org) wonders if "data journalism is in (already) crisis", pointing out at a number of failed or poor attempts to adopt the new techniques.

http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/07/albertocairo-data-journalism-needs-to-up-its-own-standards/

In his piece (link above) Cairo expresses serious disappointment after having reviewed a certain number of examples which lack the "scientific rigour" needed for good use of data to tell a story. He thus denounces the fact of

"Cherry-picking and carelessly connecting studies to support an idea. It's possible to 'prove' almost anything if you act like this".

With data journalism and technology in general (the internet, the digital technology) news professionals around the world are faced with new and at times unexpected challenges including techniques to verify data sets. Many conferences and workshops are being held across the globe to "reinvent" or "redefine" journalism or find ways to adopt the new tools and techniques or to adapt to them.

Equally, in concepts such as "Citizen Journalism", "participatory journalism", the internet through social media is challenging traditional ways of telling stories and doing things in newsrooms. African reporters interested in development issues cannot ignore these debates and should be part of the global conversation.

ISSUES

Although the challenges that the developing world faces are extensive, several interconnected issues are inextricably linked to overall socioeconomic development. These larger issues are presented in the following section and they include: Agriculture, Education, Health, ICT & Telecoms, Infrastructure, Women & Gender issues, Land issues, and Climate Change.

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

AGRICULTURE

The Encyclopedia of Earth estimates that:
http://www.eoearth.org

"In most African countries, agriculture supports the survival and well-being of up to 70 per cent of the population. Thus, for many, their livelihoods are directly affected by environmental changes, both sudden and gradual, which impact on agricultural productivity"

The same source further indicates,

"About 70 per cent of the rural poor in Africa own livestock, contributing significantly to household and community resilience to disasters, particularly in arid and semi-arid zones. More than 200 million people rely on their livestock for income (sales of milk, meat, skins) and draught power. Overall, livestock contributes about 30 per cent of the gross value of agricultural production in Africa".

In many Africa countries the part of the population depending on agriculture for work, food or revenue counts for about two-thirds. However, these are mostly small rural farmers, who can produce enough to feed the continent. Many initiatives have been launched over the years both at the continental and national levels, but the problems remain. The African agricultural sector remains weak. It is estimated Africa spends annually between 15 and 20 billion US dollars on food imports, and receives about 2 billion US dollars of food aid.

Compared to the number of people who are active in this sector, there's something which needs to be fixed. The 2008 food crisis and the ensuing riots in several countries have shown how critical food security is and how it can impact on the stability of the continent.

And yet, in 2003, the African heads of states had already endorsed a "declaration" known as the Maputo declaration, which had it been implemented would have stopped the 2008 tragedy. But here again, we are faced with statements, for which none holds the signatories accountable. The media and those journalists interested in "development" can do part of that job. In the Maputo declaration, the African leaders pledged to:

"revitalize the agriculture sector including, livestock, forestry and the fisheries through special policies and strategies targeted at small scale and traditional farmers in rural areas, and the creation of enabling conditions for private sector participation". ***See http://www.nepad.org/nepad/knowledge/doc/1787/maputo-declaration***

In practice the idea was for each African country to allocate ten per cent of its national budget to agriculture. More than a decade after the pledge, very few counties have met that target.

An assessment made by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI – ifpri.org) in 2013 reveals that only 13 countries (out of 54) have met the ten per cent Maputo target. These are: Burundi, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

BEAR IN MIND:

Once again, as reporters, we can use the declarations and conventions signed by the governments to ask questions on how they are faring/have fared. But unfortunately many reporters in Africa tend to forget these statements once they are signed and read at the closing ceremony of a big conference. And yet, they are good tools for us journalists if we can keep track of them.

Agriculture is a vast area and subjects/topics abound, if we agree to leave our desks and go to the field to meet the rural farmer. They have more than one story to tell.

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

EDUCATION

With about 45 per cent of the continent's population under the age of 16 and about 60 per cent under 30, educating young people and preparing them for a better future is in itself a huge development challenge.

From the use of a local language in schools to designing the best curricula, through building the proper facilities or finding the funding, the challenges are too many. Many African countries are actually facing an education crisis. There was a time when Zimbabwe's educational system was hailed as a model for the continent. That is an era long gone by. As a result of this continuous and generalized crisis, students and teachers are almost permanently on strike in several African countries.

The Structural Adjustment Programmes of the World Bank (see further down) have been blamed for the collapse of many educational systems. To this major external factor, one should add a few major hindrances to good education: poor governance, corruption, conflict and lack of skilled teachers.

Forget achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the Brookings Institution has issued a barometer predicting that "out-of-school children will be on the rise" until 2025. **http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/africa-learning-barometer**

And yet a lot of funds and programmes are launched, claiming to improve education systems or to increase access for the majority of poorer communities. A good development reporter should be able to challenge all governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organisations, to explain where the funds raised for education are going or what is wrong with the policies proposed.

BEAR IN MIND:

Students or teachers going on strike regularly is no longer news in several parts of Africa. They end up boring everybody including the audience. However, each "new" strike can give an opportunity to go in-depth in a specific educational issue: learning conditions, teachers' salaries and its costs to government, living conditions on campuses, the existence of technological or other facilities, the number of school drop-outs and its cost/impact on employment or the country's overall development.

photo Reuters/ ***Barry Malone*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

HEALTH

Health represents one of the central concerns in development. For poor people, health is also an important economic asset, because diseases cripple their economic activities, depriving them of the little income they have and diverting their few resources.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Besides an insufficient number of medical personnel per capita and poor infrastructure, many developing countries lack medical or social insurance and/or retirement schemes. This makes an enormous difference compared to developed countries.

A separate issue worth looking into is the "brain drain" of doctors, dentists and nurses to rich countries, especially former colonial powers where they can already speak the language.

Another fruitful area for journalists is to look at innovative ways in which new technology, such as mobile phones, can be used to improve the spread and quality of basic healthcare in- formation in regions lacking even basic infrastructure.

CHILD MALNUTRITION

According to UNICEF, malnutrition is associated with almost half of child deaths world-wide, because it makes children prone to common diseases such as diarrhoea or respiratory infections. It also has serious consequences for subsequent physical and mental growth. Malnutrition affects children's learning capacities and it has a long-term impact on their productivity in adulthood.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has traditionally had a unique news value because it is also the only major fatal developing world disease that also threatens newspaper readers in rich countries.

In reality, it is a far more complex and wide-ranging subject, which touches on such diverse issues as economics, politics, social mores, health care, religion and the status of women. Altogether more than 30 million people world- wide have HIV/AIDS, the vast majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

Unlike other diseases, HIV/AIDS kills and cripples the most socially and economically productive age-groups and thus has a much larger impact than the numbers themselves would imply. Old people and children cannot run an economy.

More specific areas to focus on include access to treatment, the controversy over generic drugs, HIV/AIDS orphans as well as the social stigma and discrimination faced by HIV-positive people. Prevention either in the form of education programmes or access to condoms is of vital importance in reversing the spread of the epidemic.

TB, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

While HIV/AIDS gets the most publicity in the media of developed countries, it is far from the only disease that affects developing countries. Respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and whooping cough kill far more people between them.

Equally devastating are diarrhoea-related diseases, such as cholera and dysentery, which are mainly spread through contaminated drinking water. They have the worst effect on babies and young children. Those who do not actually succumb to these ailments are still often severely weakened by them.

Malaria also saps the strength of those it does not kill and is a serious danger throughout much of the developing world. Drug-resistant strains have increased the disease's potency and it kills millions of people annually. Ebola, until recently a relatively isolated disease, made global headlines in 2014. Other, less well-known "neglected" diseases that affect those in the developing world include dengue fever, and sleeping sickness. Schistosomiasis (snail fever), also known as bilharzia, affects tens of millions of poor people with limited access to effective treatment.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and global health initiatives such as of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFTAM) have brought unheard of amounts of money to the battle against diseases that hamper Third World development, funding re- search and treatment as well as services and education. For the journalist, copious amounts of information is available on the websites of these organisations, as well as those of the World Health Organisation, UNAIDS, UNICEF and numerous NGOs and government aid departments.

photo/ ***Katy Migiro*** */*courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

photo Reuters/ ***Thomas Mukoya*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

ICT AND TELECOMS

The boom in the mobile phone industry is probably one of the most significant developments in Africa since the independence years. It has given hopes to many Africans and surely created tens of thousands of jobs, maybe hundreds of thousands across the continent, including in the informal sector and in the rural areas. It has brought significant direct investments and spearheaded a lot of social changes. There are lots of stories yet to be told about the sector.

More generally speaking, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are reshaping the image of the continent, filling in gaps that have been there for decades. This new development has also generated a lot of opportunities.

The ICTs are allowing people who could not access banking services or telecommunication facilities to finally join the modern world. Every single day, young Africans are recognised for their successes in app development, competitions are launched to spot the new generation of innovators and many events are held, focusing on the ICT industry.

BEAR IN MIND:

The enthusiasm and excitement surrounding the sector is hiding more complex issues. It would be interesting to see how many of the benefits actually remain in Africa, how many of the big telecom companies are owned by Africans, and how a formerly strong public sector at times stifles innovation in some countries. The issues are many and because the phenomenon is itself "new", it easily lends itself to coverage.

photo/ ***Noor Khamis*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

INFRASTRUCTURE

Be it ports, roads, airports, energy, hospitals, schools, power plants, you name it, Africa still lacks modern and world standard infrastructure in many areas. This has been a major obstacle to any significant change in the field of development.

In many African countries, the main infrastructure is inherited from colonial times, with little or no improvement since independence. This has been the case for the period between 1960 and 2000. However since the end of the 20th century, things are changing, although not at the same pace for all countries.

According to the African Development Bank Wikipedia page:

"the infrastructure sector, including power supply, water and sanitation, transport and communications, has traditionally received the largest share of AfDB lending. This focus was re-affirmed in the AfDB's 2003-2007 Strategic Plan, which identified infrastructure as a priority area for AfDB lending".

The same source also reveals:

"Given the increased attention to infrastructure development in Africa from donors and borrowers, it is likely that AfDB's infrastructure lending will increase significantly in the coming years. In 2007, infrastructure operations accounted for approximately 60 per cent of the bank's portfolio".

Actually in all major African cities, from Dakar to Nairobi to Luanda and other capital cities, new roads are being built, ports enlarged and new airports planned.

In the biggest economies, such as Nigeria, talks were held with the AfDB (in July 2013) to see how improving infrastructure could impact positively on the country and lead to structural changes.

However, due to the gap between Africa (South Africa excluded) and the rest of the world, there's still a long way to go before African cities are totally changed and fully equipped with all the necessary infrastructure they need for their development.

BEAR IN MIND:

Reporting on infrastructure may be dry if one relies on announcements indicating kilometres of roads built or millions of dollars invested in building a new airport. But asking some questions may help: how are the local communities affected? Who are the direct beneficiaries? What is the impact on the local environment or culture?

Have people/businesses been displaced? Who will benefit?

Another perspective is looking at changes within communities at the local level, the impact on the real economy: the potatoes or onions that used to rot in one part of the country for lack of roads or storage facilities can now be transported across long distances and sold. The number of lives saved because a new hospital has been built or is now more accessible because of a new road, are good examples where one can talk to real people and give a human face to development stories.

For those who love controversial or investigative reporting, corruption is big in the public works sector. It is always good to pay attention to the general figures communicated by the stakeholders but to revert to experts and ask questions about the real cost of a kilometre of tarred road and compare with the local reality. Has the total amount allocated for the building of a new power plant been totally spent?

These are stories that go beyond the simple communiqués sent from the government or from the PR office of the representative of the donor country. It is also in these areas that the media can hold government officials to account while remaining factual.

photo / ***Goran Tomasevic*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

GENDER

The discrimination against women and their marginalization in the political and economic spheres in Africa is an undeniable fact. Their under-representation and at times misrepresentation in the media through age-old stereotypes have been highlighted in several reports over the years. And yet the significant changes are still to come.

Women's organizations are lobbying at all levels for better representation. This has led the African Union (A.U) to declare the years 2010 to 2020 the "African Women's decade". According to the A.U,

> *"The aim of the African Women's Decade is to advance gender equality" by accelerating implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), through dual top-down and bottom-up approach which is inclusive of grassroots participation".*

(Dakar and Beijing refer to major international conferences held in these two cities, respectively in 1994 and 1995 and which are considered cornerstones in addressing women's issues in Africa and the globe).

Detailed background information on the "African women's decade" can be found at: **http://pages.au.int/carmma/documents/african-womens-decade**

However, despite their generosity and ambition, these statements and declarations, as well as the celebration of women's days, weeks, etc., have done little to change the plight of the majority of women. It is true in some countries (e.g. Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and more recently Senegal) gender parity laws or quota systems have been introduced in the national legislations to counter the decades of inequality in representation. This has allowed more women in parliament and other elective positions.

If such measures have helped some educated women, mostly in the urban areas climb the political and social ladder, for the majority of women in the rural areas, the situation remains almost the same. Therefore, reporting on progress (or lack of progress) in this field cannot be confined to examples such as Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf or the former President of Malawi Joyce Banda.

Their examples, as well as of those successful women in business or academia, can be used in our reporting to inspire other African women, but it may need to be properly put in context, so that we do not jump from one extreme to the other.

GIRLS' EDUCATION

A subtopic - related to "gender and women"- is girls' education. The issue is both in terms of access and equal opportunities. In some African conservative societies (once again let us think of those in the rural areas), many families prefer to send boys to school, leaving the girls at home to take care of housekeeping tasks – cooking, cleaning, baby-sitting. Such roles have been created by long established traditions. This has to do with traditional forms of society where the girls are dedicated to "house" work and the boys to "outside" activities. At times it may be for "religious" reasons, where radical groups tend to segregate women and girls.

To identify issues for reporting, one can refer to the 10 objectives set by the "African women's decade" and which are:

1. Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship
2. Agriculture and Food Security
3. Women's Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV&AIDS
4. Education, Science and Technology
5. Environment and Climate Change
6. Peace and Security and Violence Against Women

7. Governance and Legal Protection
8. Finance and Gender Budgets
9. Women In Decision Making Positions
10. Mentoring Youth (Men and Women) to be champions of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Each of these topics can be looked at from a gender or women's perspective : how are women coping in your country or area with these objectives is a good start, as each of them addresses a key priority area where women's plight needs to be improved. Each of these areas can be covered from various angles through profiles, in-depth stories, investigative reporting to keep the signatory governments accountable.

BEAR IN MIND:

Many countries have gender ministries and gender policies, some being more efficient than others. They are good starting point to see what your country is doing.

Let us not be impressed by the declarations and statements: they often do not reflect any reality, so field work and talking to real people remains a must.

Even in the countries where the cause of women is most advanced, there is always an area where male domination exists.

Gender parity laws or quotas systems have at times caused other issues. As reporters interested in "development" we should not and cannot ignore them.

photo Reuters/ ***Thomas Mukoya*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

photo/ ***Siegfried Modola*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

LAND

The relatively recent phenomenon of "Land grab" of the past decade has brought to new light the sensitive issue of land in Africa. Some campaigners from the civil society organizations have called the phenomenon "a tragedy of epic proportions." They denounce the new form of human "exploitation" which transform the small farmers into "slaves" working on what used to be their own lands for big multinationals. **www.stoplandgrab.org**

These campaigners against the "land grab" claim that

"In 2010 up to 123.5 million acres of African land — double the size of Britain — have been snapped up or are being negotiated for by governments or wealthy investors. Ethiopia alone has approved 815 foreign-financed agricultural projects since 2007".

Those favourable to such big investments to acquire land in Africa, reject the negative concept of "land grab" preferring to say its "land acquisition". They argue that African farmers cannot afford the huge investments necessary to develop the vast lands at their disposal. It is a very controversial issue and a heated debate, it involves big money, it has all the ingredients of the struggle of the "weak" against the "powerful", hence the attention the issue has got in the African media in general.

But the land issue in Africa goes beyond the "land grab". It has been there for ages and remains a very sensitive issue in many countries, such as Kenya. Beyond economic importance it has for agriculture based communities, land has a cultural value attached to it for some communities.

Land reforms have been tried by many African nations during colonial times and after their independence, but very few have succeeded to solve the lingering controversies, due to strong customary laws and old practices. Therefore, accessing land is a permanent area of battle both in urban and rural settings. The population growth and the need for developments, the "land grab" by big investors have exacerbated the problem.

In Southern Africa, the legacy of the Apartheid system in South Africa and the white minority rule in Zimbabwe during colonial times have left an explosive legacy that the current governments have serious problems dealing with. "Expropriate" and the white minority gets angry, leave the status quo and the majority black populations cry foul, demanding reform and reparation. It has led Zimbabwe to an unprecedented crisis.

In East Africa, the "land issue" in Kenya has been there for years and is yet to be resolved. In West Africa, countries like Senegal are faced with serious challenges in the capital city which hosts 1/5 of the population in a very tiny strip of land, where customary laws and powerful traditional families, clash with the need for space to build a modern city. This has led to serious speculation on the price of land.

photo/ ***Tony Karumba*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

CLIMATE CHANGE

Due to budgetary constraints and the low level of awareness of its populations, Africa is considered the most vulnerable and least prepared continent when it comes to facing climate change.

Flooding, drought, coastal erosion; the areas impacted by climate change are many. And yet the resilience capacity is low. According to the "know climate change" website **http://know.climateofconcern.org**

"Climate change will result in a loss of species and extinction of many plants and animals. Changes in a variety of ecosystems are already being detected, particularly in southern African ecosystems, at a faster rate than anticipated as a result of a variety of factors, including the influence of climate change."

And the list of impacted areas goes on to include agriculture and food security, human health, access to water. The same source predicts that:

"By 2020, some assessments project that 75-250 million people are estimated to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change".

Despite all these warnings and the major concern that it represents across the globe, the climate change issue is still very much under-reported in the African media. Some of it has to do with the complexities of the subject. Others would say the "scientific" nature of the climate-change-related issues make them difficult to understand. But that is only when one is limited to the "experts" reports. By looking at the "impact" on our societies and on human communities, rather than the scientific reports, it becomes concrete reality more easily dealt with; wherever there is flooding, forest depletion, coastal erosion or human beings are being affected. This is where the good journalist would find his or her human interest story.

The African Ministerial Conference on the environment has predicted an annual loss of about two to four per cent in GDP, together with the vulnerability of coastal cities and many other similar threats. A "fact sheet" and many other relevant documents can be found in the following link below:

http://www.unep.org/roa/amcen/Projects_Programme/climate_change/default.asp?ct=15Dec

BEAR IN MIND:

Climate change is not about "science". It is about human beings, it is about communities, it is about survival. Where human beings are faced with drought, in cities where temperatures are rising, where century old forests are threatened, there is a climate change story to tell. When malaria becomes prevalent in East or Southern Africa, there is a link to climate change.

These are the type of stories which can help our diverse audiences understand better and more easily why climate change should matter for Africa as well. Any initiative that works on resilience strategies should be taken into account so as not to make it appear as we are doomed to face it without any ability to do something. For journalists, it starts with talking about it in our media through creative methods.

HOW DEVELOPMENT AID WORKS

The intention of this section is to provide an insight into the complexity of the structure of international development aid and all the various actors that play a role in it.

photo/ ***Joseph Okanga*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

DONORS, IMPLEMENTERS AND INVESTORS

Before getting into the heart of the matter, it is worth highlighting that the role of development aid's ability to bringing about "development" is increasingly being questioned. The US concept of Trade not Aid popularized during the days of President Bill Clinton in power (1993 to 2001) and the acclaimed book by Zambian Economist Dambisa Moyo ("Dead Aid") have added to the controversy. But others such as the South African cleric, Archbishop, Desmond Tutu argue that aid is necessary and even vital to save lives and uplift the plight of very deprived communities or marginalised peoples in many African countries. The truth should be lying somewhere in between. Furthermore, the issue of its relevance left aside, the processes and the way development aid is delivered and used is another area of heated debate.

GOVERNMENTS

The governments of developed or emerging countries are the main donors of so-called official aid (Official Development Assistance – ODA). To put it simply, official aid is made up of bilateral and multilateral aid. In general, about one third of this aid used to be channelled through multilateral organisations, mainly through a group of international financial institutions, UN agencies, the European Union.

Bilateral aid is provided directly by donor governments to the recipient countries: the USA, Japan, Individual European countries, the rich Arab countries, and more and more these days by "new" emerging nations (China, India, Brazil, South Korea, etc.)

It may be channelled through official aid agencies or through supporting the projects implemented by NGOs or other actors. The costs of refugees, scholarships, civil and military missions and debt relief are also included in bilateral aid.

Donor governments have repeatedly promised to raise the total they spend on development in poorer countries to 0.7 per cent of their gross national income. This benchmark is closely linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the call to make a significant improvement on each of the targets by 2015.

Few governments have reached it so far, apart from the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, with most falling well short of the MDG recommended funding allocations. In terms of total numbers, the United States remains the most generous single donor country.

There are a number of countries that are considered new or emerging donors. The new member states of the European Union fall into this group, as well as new non-traditional donors such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa.

China's entrance in the "aid-market' as a major donor is causing a heated debate based on "human rights" and is a source of concern on the part of traditional donors, especially the United States and the EU.

However, to the Africans this is mere rhetoric between world powers fighting for their interest and influence in the world, as the United States and the European Union are known to have supported undemocratic governments (Mobutu's regime in the Democratic republic of Congo, the regime Obiang

Nguema in Equatorial Guinea).

BEAR IN MIND:

Development aid can be politically sensitive in that it is often used to further foreign policy goals or economic interests, rather than tackling real needs. The other area of controversy is the so-called tied aid, e.g. whether rich countries should favour their own contractors and personnel in development projects.

"Generosity" league tables can be deceptive. Agricultural surpluses offloaded onto developing countries can turn subsidies for farmers into "aid." The cost of refugees on the donor countries' territory, civil and military missions or debt relief can also inflate aid levels from one year to another. You need to ask how much of it is actually spent in the recipient countries.

In addition, some countries, such as the United States, have traditions – and tax systems – which favour giving development aid through private foundations and NGOs rather than through the state. This aid is not reflected in official aid figures, which means that some tables can show some countries as less generous than they actually are.

INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (IGOS)

The biggest share of multilateral aid is channelled through a group of international financial institutions consisting of multilateral and regional banks and lending institutions. The most important are the World Bank group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Each of these institutions deals with different components of the global economy: the IMF oversees the international monetary system and provides credits to its member states; the World Bank assists developing countries through long-term financing of development projects and programmes.

Their roles and contributions to Africa have been severely criticised, particularly after the Structural Adjustments Programmes dismantled the public health and education systems in many African countries in the 80's. The current debate among African intellectuals and experts is to determine whether these institutions have ever helped a nation get out of poverty and seriously trek on "the path of development".

The big UN agencies remain another good starting-point for information for the "development journalist". There are 32 separate UN bodies or groupings involved in some way in humanitarian or development work. The most important ones are the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Here as well, the efficiency of these organizations and their capacity to boost Africa's development is being more and more questioned on the continent.

The European Union has a mandate in its legislative and financial framework to fund development aid. EU development aid is either allocated directly to governments' existing systems in forms of budget support or through supporting projects and sector programmes in developing countries.

The responsibility for development aid is shared between the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament. The old EU member states have all committed themselves to reaching the 0.7 per cent ODA to GNI ratio target by2015, while the new EU member states are committed to a more modest target of 0.33 per cent. Together with the bilateral aid of its member states,

the EU currently provides more than half of the world's official aid.

Usefulness. The 0.7 per cent target has never been met by many European countries.

More recently, the big debate in the relations between Africa and the EU is around the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). For the first time in history, these relations have stretched due to the difficulties encountered in these negotiations, which have taken almost a decade and were not concluded yet at the time of going to press.

As journalistic sources, IGOs are hampered by the political constraint of not wishing to offend any of their contributing states. Do not look here for criticism of corrupt recipient governments or self-serving donor aid policies. Nevertheless, these organisations are present in vast swathes of the world and some of them have become adept at providing useful information to the media, whether on or off the record.

The UN and the World Bank's websites are of immediate value to journalists as they contain vast amounts of statistics and reports on various aspects of poverty and development.

BEAR IN MIND:

In theory, multilateral assistance is less "political" than bilateral aid and more driven by need. In practice, politics continue to intrude, though the influence of the major powers is somewhat diluted.

Both the IMF and the World Bank face severe criticism not only from civil society but also from prominent economists for enforcing controversial reforms with negative social, economic and ecological impacts on developing countries.

The UN agencies have little to do with the other two branches of the UN – the Security Council and the General Assembly. The superpower politics of the former and the hot air and grandstanding of the latter rarely affect the hard work that agencies do on the ground.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS)/ CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS)

NGOs play an enormous role in development, and they range from localised charities funding a single school to international alliances such as Oxfam, Save the Children or CARE with budgets the size of corporations and with a wide spectrum of programmes in many countries all over the world. Collectively they are sometimes described as "civil society," including a further range of organisations and associations such as trade unions, professional associations and research institutions (think-tanks).

They may be direct implementers of projects in developing countries or serve as intermediary organisations, providing funds and other support to implementing NGOs. The bigger NGOs play a growing role as the "watchdogs of the world," (e.g. Human Rights Watch or Doctors without Borders), exposing shortcomings in "official" programmes or malfeasance by commercial companies.

NGOs usually form partnerships, associations and platforms either on a national or transnational level. This helps them to be more effective when promoting their causes and to coordinate in case of emergencies. They are often more fleet-footed and flexible than IGOs and work on a smaller scale, which allows them to work in some of the most remote areas of the world and get closer to their beneficiaries. They also coordinate and work closely with IGOs in the field.

The funding portfolio differs according to individual NGOs and countries. Some NGOs are more dependent on funding from governments or IGOs. This aid is considered part of official aid, while aid financed from private and corporate donations stays outside the framework of official aid.

Usefulness: The best organisations are highly professional with well-qualified and well-paid staff, but many, are run on a shoestring budget. In some areas of scientific or social research their expertise is second to none and they can be peerless at running high-profile campaigns. They can be extremely useful to the media and offer a wealth of material, including both case studies and statistics.

However the media should avoid contributing to the general idea that NGOs and CSOs can replace the government. At times their power and influence is so big, that they tend to impose their agenda on national goals. In no way can the NGOs replace the State in its obligation to serve the public. Remember NGOs are private organizations and choose the areas and communities they wish to serve, whereas a government has a duty to equally serve, all the citizens.

BEAR IN MIND:

Many NGOs combine development aid with advocacy and campaigning for social causes, support for selective or "Fair" trade policies. Journalists should remember this when using them as sources. Understanding that the NGOs have an agenda of their own will help when using them as a source of information or when using their expertise to clarify certain issues.

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Some of the solutions to under-development are known. Others require answers and academic research on health, climate change, agricultural techniques and social practices. Much of this research is funded by governments or IGOs, but some is derived from private donors such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Meeting with academics can always serve as a good starting point to having a better picture on many development issues. The next challenge would be to put all this in a simple and understandable language.

A particular area of interest for journalists is when research for the benefit of the world's poor overlaps with the needs of commercial bodies, such as big medical or agro-biotechnical companies.

CORPORATE SECTION / ENTREPRENEURS

Globally, business is playing an increased role in combating poverty. This concerns equally big transnational corporations, small and middle- sized enterprises as well as entrepreneurs. The key role of business lies in investment, job creation and technological innovation. They also contribute to development through philanthropy, the provision of goods and services to developing countries and through adopting the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Cooperation with the public sector, in the form of public-private partnerships (PPP), represents another form of active involvement in development. Many multilateral funding schemes, such as the Global Fund, now have a PPP component that is required for all grantees. In addition, a large portion of corporate philanthropy comes "in-kind" from the pharmaceutical industry and often consists of donations of essential medications as well as granting permission to produce generic medicines in developing countries.

BEAR IN MIND:

The practices of multinational corporations in developing countries have also included human-rights abuses, low safety and environmental standards, and the disruption of more traditional means of economic growth. One of the clearest examples of this happened in 1984 when more than 4,000 people died after a cloud of gas escaped from a pesticide plant operated by a Union Carbide subsidiary in Bhopal, India.

In Niger, the government after decades of unfair exploitation of its Uranium fields by the French corporation Areva, is now trying to redefine the partnership between the two. But it has proved that changing old ways of doing things is not easy.

It is up to each individual journalist to decide whether to treat corporate activism as simply an attempt to improve a company's public image or as a genuine reflection of the views of its staff and shareholders on its role and responsibilities in the modern world.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Missionaries have traditionally played a big role in development. Faith-based organisations are widely present in the developing world, often in the most remote areas where government institutions and infrastructure are weak. Consequently, they are mostly involved in projects at the local community level, providing a variety of social services such as education or health care. In many developing countries their moral "credit" is usually high and they are among the most trusted development actors.

Religious organisations also have a lot of potential in influencing public opinion, both in the developed and developing worlds, as well as in exerting pressure upon state administration representatives and the international community.

There are thousands of missionaries spread around the world who are potentially an interesting source of information for journalists. Ireland is among the European countries with the longest missionary tradition and the involvement of religious organisations in development is also rapidly increasing in some new EU member states such as Poland.

BEAR IN MIND:

Religious organisations have their own agenda, which can potentially cause divisions and tensions. One specific area of controversy is their position on the reproductive health of women and the use of condoms in HIV/AIDS prevention. The beliefs they promote don't always resonate with the general beliefs of the society and this can contribute to conflicts with local leaders and governments.

In some countries, Islam-based organisations have been associated with terrorism and banned from operating.

photo/ ***Samantha Sais*** */courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation*

PARTNERS

Development aid should be based on the needs of the recipients, who are thus the primary actors of development assistance. Recipients of development aid in target countries can be found on all levels of the society. These can be governments, local authorities, local NGOs, target populations or single beneficiaries.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

There is a continual debate as to whether development assistance from the governments of rich countries is best delivered through budget support for national governments or directly into programmes. Budget support allows recipient governments to choose where the money is best spent and can strengthen national institutions. On the other hand, it can be less transparent, open to corruption, and allow governing parties and elites to play politics by favouring their own electorates.

The most effective development programmes are drawn up jointly by donors and national ministries, central administrative bodies and expert governmental institutions.

Ministers and other key officials already complain that they spend so much time meeting donors' representatives that they have no time to actually manage their projects. So do not expect too much.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Good government often means local government and strengthening local administrations in municipalities and regions is one of the aims of development aid. Nevertheless, the devolution of power is hard enough to achieve in the world's oldest democracies, let alone in countries with less of a democratic tradition. Central governments are rarely keen to surrender control over funding and the power that goes with it to local authorities, regardless of their political leanings.

LOCAL NGOS

Local civil society activists or workers are often the foot-soldiers of development aid, converting programmes and funding into the reality on the ground. International agencies and foreign governments are keen to work with local NGOs, who can ultimately take over responsibility for the implementation of development programmes. Local NGOs can be vital sources for development journalists.

BENEFICIARIES

No development story is really complete without some input from the "beneficiaries," e.g. people who benefit from a new power cable, water-well, primary school or sewerage plant. Their views are extremely important, especially when assessing how positive – or negative – the impact of an expensive development project is.

BEAR IN MIND:

Whereas beneficiaries may possess local knowledge, innate wisdom, and an understanding of their immediate needs and wants, their expertise only goes so far. They often will lack the "bigger picture" view of the long-term benefits and possibilities, which the qualified development worker has from experience elsewhere.

photo/ ***Finbarr O'Reilly*** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

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