

# HOW YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK CONNECT WITH THE WIDER WORLD

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### **FOREWORD**

It's often said that young people show a lack of interest in politics and the wider world, but this report provides much evidence to challenge that assertion. For the first time, we have commissioned research which focuses exclusively on one section of the population: 14-20 year olds. Our aim was to find out how young people become engaged with what's happening in the world and to understand the role that the media plays in that process of engagement.

In chapter 1, we hear from broadcasters and campaigners. Television remains the key way of reaching young people but there are surprisingly few programmes on the wider world which target young audiences. BBC3's *Blood, Sweat and T-shirts* strand is a notable example. It's unfortunate that mainstream broadcasters aren't following BBC3's lead.

Chapter 2 is based on interviews with young activists, friendship groups and focus groups drawn from the young general public. This research demonstrates that although many young people are well informed about the developing world, there is a strong sense of disengagement. Schools work hard to inform and engage, but they compete with an overwhelmingly negative imagery that dominates media portrayals of the developing world.

For chapter 3, we commissioned YouGov to survey 1,500 young people. The findings reveal that most young people are concerned about global poverty and the lives of people in developing countries. More than half say they would like to do something but a number of obstacles are discouraging them. Many are ignorant about what they could do or feel that nothing they do will make a difference. If some of the barriers to taking action can be addressed, it's clear that this global generation has the potential to become far more active.

Mark Galloway Director, International Broadcasting Trust

# **KEY FINDINGS**

Many young people in the UK *are* interested in international events and how people in other parts of the world live their lives. Many are also well informed about the developing world, but there is a strong sense of disengagement.

Half of the young people surveyed said they knew a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount' about global poverty and the lives of people in developing countries. Two thirds said they were concerned about global poverty. The main issues of concern were climate change (for males) and child labour (for females).

Television remains a key way of reaching young audiences and the internet helps to sustain their interest. The importance of television as a regular source of information increases with age. 66 per cent of 14-15 year olds mentioned TV news, 42 per cent documentaries and 26 per cent comedy panel shows, while 79 per cent of 18-20 year olds mentioned TV news, 56 per cent documentaries and 42 per cent panel shows.

The media sometimes has a negative impact on young people's interest and engagement in two different ways: domestic news coverage is regarded as presenting young people in a negative light whilst international coverage focuses on famine and disaster.

Schools work hard to inform and engage, but compete with overwhelmingly negative imagery that dominates portrayals of the developing world.

Most young people have experienced a 'connection' with the developing world at some point, and school is often where these connections are made – whether issues are covered in lessons, charity activities organised or passionate teachers have championed development issues.

More than one in eight young people surveyed said they were doing something or have done something about issues affecting the developing world. The most common form of action was buying products, such as Fairtrade, or donating money to a charity.

Young activists become interested in campaigning and volunteering as a result of a range of influences: school, family, friends, media and influential individuals such as teachers.

School often provides the first steps to involvement through fundraising for a charity but getting involved is as much about confidence as it is about interest.

Levels and types of activism reflect an individual's identity and, although involvement is at heart altruistic, it is underpinned by a sense of personal reward, which may be emotional (self worth) or tangible (looks good on a CV).

For many young activists, becoming engaged with global issues is part of a journey. They may start by being interested in an issue closer to home and by volunteering in their local community. That may then give them the confidence to volunteer abroad or campaign on global issues. Volunteering

abroad has a significant impact on young people's lives.

More than half of young people surveyed said they would like to do more but there were a number of obstacles preventing them from doing so, for example lack of time or confidence. Many expressed a strong interest in volunteering abroad.

Major international news stories do affect young people. Media coverage of the earthquake in Haiti led two thirds of the young people surveyed to think about other issues affecting developing countries, with many discussing Haiti with their friends and family.

Television can also play a positive role when broadcasters work with young people to understand what interests them. Programmes like *Blood, Sweat and Luxuries* are popular because they document the experiences of young people in challenging situations.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst schools are successful in informing young people about the wider world, they need to find new ways of turning knowledge into engagement.

Many young people are attracted to the idea of volunteering but are discouraged from doing so by a lack of knowledge or confidence. NGOs should consider ways in which they could make it easier for young people to become involved in global issues.

Broadcasters need to reconsider how they perceive young people. This sector of the audience is not necessarily apathetic towards the wider world.

Young people still watch television and television – rather than online – is likely to be the most effective way of using the media to engage them with politics and the wider world. Young people know what interests them. Broadcasters should consider setting up young people's audience panels, which could inform and inspire the production of programmes aimed specifically at this global generation.

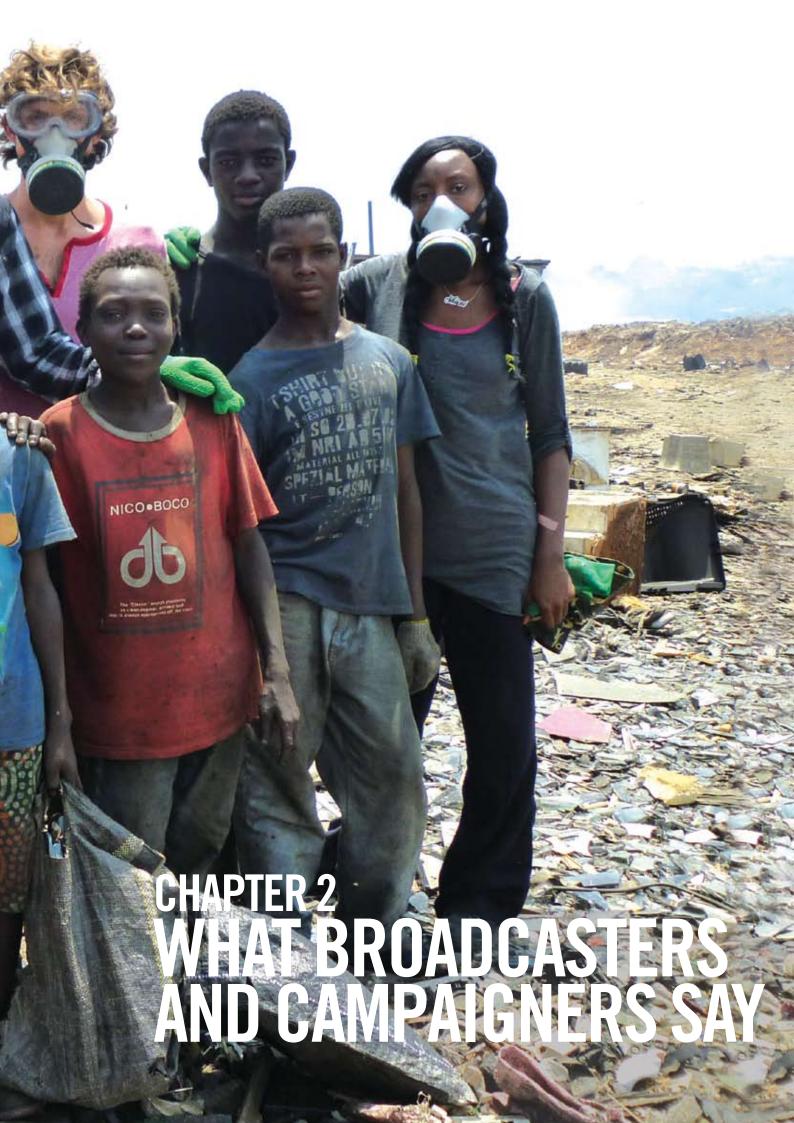
Young people are put off by the tone and content of television news. News broadcasters need to consider ways in which mainstream news programmes can be more effective in engaging young audiences.

News coverage of young people is too often one dimensional. News editors should consider the impact that their portrayal of young people has on young audiences, and look for ways of reflecting a more varied range of stories that feature them.

Negative imagery of the developing world, particularly in television news, has a significant impact on young audiences and news broadcasters need to reflect a wider range of stories from developing countries.

Mainstream broadcasters should build on the success of BBC3 which, with the *Blood, Sweat and T-shirts* strand, has found a way of covering the wider world which appeals to young people and places them at the heart of the story.





#### **INTERVIEWEES**

Helen Boaden, Director of News, BBC
David Buckingham, Professor of Education,
Institute of Education
Phil Hudson, Head of Global Xchange
Harry Lansdown, Factual commissioner, BBC3
Rod McKenzie, Editor, Newsbeat, Radio 1
Katrin Owusu, Head of Marketing and Youth
Innovations, Christian Aid
Jonathan Smith, Head of UK Campaigning,
Save the Children
Marie Staunton, Chief Executive, Plan UK
Mark Vyner, Head of Platform2
Janey Walker, Head of Education, Channel 4

#### INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes more globalised and interconnected, so the lives of young people in the UK will become increasingly affected by what's happening in other countries. Yet many commentators worry that this is a generation that is growing up to be disengaged and apathetic. The reality is quite different.

According to the 2008-9 Citizenship Survey, 24% of 16-25 year olds formally volunteered on a regular basis during the year and 38% volunteered informally, comparing favourably with the figures for those aged between 26-34 (21% formally volunteer, 33% informally volunteer) and 35-49 years old (28% formally volunteer, 34% informally volunteer) (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2010).

David Buckingham, Professor of Education at the Institute of Education, has tracked the activities of young people as citizens. He says it's not the case that they lack interest in politics and the wider world.

The problem is not so much that young people are too lazy to find out about the political process, it's more that the people who control the political process are not especially interested in young people and in engaging young people. The problem lies not so much with young people but with the system.

Much of the volunteering which young people undertake is in their local communities. "It's the local where you feel you can make a difference" says Buckingham. But there are a number of international volunteering schemes like Global Xchange which are in great demand with young people, as Phil Hudson, Head of Global Xchange notes:

I think that although there is that disillusionment with formal politics and more traditional forms of engagement, actually the opportunities to get involved in a whole different range of ways really matter and there is a demand there. It's just that it is taking a different shape. The people that we work with are really, really keen to make a difference.

Many development agencies also have volunteers who are active in the UK. Marie Staunton, Chief Executive of Plan UK, believes young people want to understand their place in the world.

We're looking at ways in which they can engage and the idea is that if you engage with other young people across the world you don't just engage with development but you reflect on yourself and your place in the world. What is the place of other people in the world? What is this interconnectedness and what does that mean?

One of the key tools for engaging young people in these issues is the media. All the broadcasters and commentators we interviewed for this research believe that television, not the internet, remains central to communicating development issues. 'Television is still very important' says Helen Boaden, the BBC's Director of News. But she also acknowledges that television is not fulfilling its potential to reach young audiences.

The most difficult age group is 14 plus. And I think that in all honesty all broadcasters find it a struggle to get that age group.

But there are some television success stories which stand out, like BBC3's *Blood, Sweat and T-shirts* strand. According to its commissioner, Harry Lansdown:

What we've done on BBC3 is to make the programmes feel different from what you get on other channels, say Unreported World or Panorama. We put young British people at the heart of stories.

#### WHO ARE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

For the purposes of this research, we've defined young people as being aged between 14 and 20. They're far from being a homogenous group. Channel 4 has shared with us some unpublished audience research from its *UK Tribes* project. It identifies 25 separate 'tribes' within the 16-24 year old age bracket, each exhibiting subtle differences in their values and outlook on life. For example, 'Trendies' and 'Rahs' are more likely to agree that they 'talk about TV programmes with my friends' (41% versus an average of 34%), whilst those grouped under the definition 'Alternative' are less likely to see having 'a high powered job' as 'very important' (9% as opposed to 16% for the overall sample).

However, this tribalism does not mean that young people do



not also share common values and interests. Another piece of research, Channel 4's *TGI Media and Lifestyle Survey*, found that 40% of young people (aged 15-24) say they are 'interested in international events' and 45% are interested in 'other cultures'.

Whilst many young people are skilled users of digital media, both in terms of consumption and creation, referring to them as 'digital natives' would be inaccurate. They have not been born with an innate set of skills to navigate the digital landscape. As IBT's previous research, *The World Online*, has demonstrated, young people use the internet to pursue interests they already have, not to discover new interests. David Buckingham is concerned about the impact of this trend:

The danger is that the gap between those who are engaged and those who are not engaged gets wider. Those that have will be given more, would be the consequence and so that's why television, as a more 'neutral' or universal medium, I think in many ways is really important, because television does have the potential to reach out to young people or people in general who are not engaged and just make them aware of things that they've never thought about. It's harder to see the internet or other digital media doing that.

BBC3 has shared with us some of the findings from its online panel of young viewers, known as *Insight*. Many of the young people on this panel are active and interested in the world around them. They participate in social and political causes, they support *Comic Relief*, give money to charities and are active in their communities, especially around issues which have a personal impact on them. Alice is one of BBC3's young viewers:

I like to get involved with things, especially if I think it's for a good cause and deserves support, and I don't hesitate to let my friends know about things if I think it's really important.

But the *Insight* research confirms that the internet is not necessarily the place where young people are active. The researchers conclude that:

Social media is more about frivolity between friends than serious mass participation. They are much less participatory in an online

context than they are in the real world. Most say that Facebook is not taken as a serious alternative to participating in the real world.

Of course this doesn't mean that social media is only used in a frivolous way. Some of the young people who took part in the *Insight* research felt that platforms like *Facebook* could be a good place to start a serious conversation. Sama is another of the BBC3 viewers:

Whilst making YouTube videos is a good idea, that alone won't help much. Getting young people involved through petitions on social networking sites, like Facebook or MySpace, might be another good way of influencing them to vote or to get more involved in politics.

# HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME ENGAGED WITH THE WIDER WORLD?

Learning about the world and becoming engaged with it is the result of numerous influences including formal education, the media, family and friends and exposure to inspirational people, particularly teachers. The interviews with young activists undertaken as part of this research provides some insight into the importance of these different factors, but it also reveals that some media coverage is actually having a negative impact on young people's interest and engagement.

Studying citizenship at school means that most of the young people we spoke to are well informed about the world but, for the most part, this has not been translated into a desire to take action. The activists we interviewed often became involved with global issues after volunteering or being active in their local communities. Confidence was also a factor and activists often come from middle class homes or have been privately educated, both of which can instil a sense of self-confidence that helps young people feel empowered.

Liz took part in *Global Xchange*, a joint project between VSO and the British Council. She spent time as a volunteer in Nigeria and explains what sparked her interest:

I think it probably started when I was at primary school and we used to have a partner school in Uganda. But I think I really started getting involved in these things when I was at college. I did the

International Baccalaureate and as part of that you have to do 60 hours of community service. I worked at an environment centre, in a hospice and I did some fundraising for Romania Challenge. That's what really made me want to do Global Xchange.

Dan became involved with development issues almost by accident. He's been a volunteer with ActionAid's *Bollocks to Poverty* campaign which has a high profile at music festivals:

I was at Reading Festival and I remember strolling through the campsite and I bumped into this guy. I'm not going to lie. Originally when I heard 'well you get a free festival ticket' I thought 'well a free ticket is pretty cool'.

When the activists do talk about media coverage of the wider world and development, they acknowledge that before they became interested it failed to appeal to them. Jordan went to Nepal as a volunteer with Christian Aid's *Platform2* scheme. He says the negative way in which poor countries are portrayed almost put him off: 'You think if I did go abroad, could I deal with that?'

But Jordan had also watched some BBC3 programmes including *Stacey Dooley Investigates* which looked at child labour in Nepal.

I think it was good what she did because it made people a lot more aware. No 16 or 17 year old is going to sit down and watch a full blown documentary on it but if Stacey Dooley does that it makes it a lot more real and understandable for our age group. Now that Jordan has become interested in the wider world he watches more TV programmes with global themes. Whilst current media coverage might well help sustain interest amongst those like Jordan, who have already become actively engaged, it is far less successful in inspiring young people to take an interest and get involved in the first place.

#### YOUNG CHAMPIONS

Volunteering abroad for all the young people we spoke to has been a life changing experience, not only in respect of global issues but also by empowering them to realise their own potential, as Jordan puts it:

I've just lived in council houses and we've all been brought up in council houses, but now after Platform2 it's given me the courage to go out there and stuff. Now I live on my own. I decided to move out and get a proper job.

*Platform2* has specifically targeted young people from poorer communities. Its goal is not just to encourage volunteering but to persuade the youngsters who take part to become champions in their communities as Mark Vyner Head of *Platform2* explains:

There has always been a very strong emphasis on the fact that it's not supposed to be a project that finishes when they get back to the UK. That it's actually all about engaging them in the long term, not just in development activities themselves but actually in raising awareness of global issues amongst their peers.







This new generation of activists brings fresh perspectives and approaches to advocacy and campaigning. Mariam, another *Platform2* volunteer, has been involved in engaging her peer group since returning from Peru. She firmly believes that 'if you put it across in a young person friendly way then they are going to want to listen to you' and that 'the only way to get people involved is to ignite their passion and do things on their level.'

Others have also found that once young people do become involved they are hooked. Another Christian Aid project *Ctrl.Alt.Shift* is aimed at 'Generation Z' and engages them with development through a range of cultural initiatives including partnerships with *Vice* magazine and Sadler's Wells Theatre. Its goal is to harness the creative potential of young people, by treating them not as a passive audience but as creative, active participants who may not initially be interested in development but are interested in having their voice heard. As Katrin Owusu from *Ctrl.Alt.Shift* notes:

We have people who started with us primarily because they wanted to interview some celebrities for our magazine, and then they've gone on to attend protests, write regular columns for us on development issues and hold their own, probably more so than I could.

The development agencies believe that their experience of working successfully with young people offers significant clues for how broadcasters could rethink the way in which they are trying to reach young people. As Marie Staunton from Plan UK notes:

Our learning has been that young people do not want to be talked at. They want to be talked to.

A key to Plan's success, in Marie Staunton's view, is working closely with young people and she recommends that broadcasters set up young people's advisory panels so that they can listen and respond directly to the views of young people.

#### THE MEDIA OFFERING

Public service broadcasters have a strong commitment to young audiences but they take radically different approaches. Whilst Channel 4 has moved its education offering (aimed at 14-19 year

olds) from television to online the BBC relies more on television. Janey Walker, Channel 4's Head of Education, believes the move to online has been successful:

We are definitely reaching more people with every project than we did with linear TV broadcasts. And there are examples where the numbers are absolutely huge, so for example we did a genetic science project last year called Routes. Now part of the Routes project was a number of little flash games and there was one game which was called Sneeze which was a game showing how, if people sneeze, germs travel and I think 16 million people played that game.

But she admits that reach is not the only criteria for judging success and there is a question over how many of those were people actually learning from one play of the game.

Whilst the Channel 4 remit includes a duty to provide 'news and views from around the world' this is not the main focus of any of its educational content. This is surprising, given that Channel 4 has such a strong track record in international news and current affairs. Janey Walker explains:

We concentrate our efforts on the things that we think Channel 4 does best and that nobody else is doing. So we do a lot of things about sex education. We do quite a lot of things about politics and citizenship.

David Buckingham is sceptical about whether the internet is the best way of engaging young people with content about politics or the wider world.

You partly wonder whether broadcasters haven't just given up on this audience. They've accepted the argument that for teenagers it's all digital. Actually young people watch a lot of television. They might be watching it online, but they nevertheless watch a lot of television. And television is particularly crucial in terms of reaching young people that are not already engaged.

Jonathan Smith, Head of UK Campaigning at Save the Children, also points out that when young people do use digital media it's often used to amplify their existing experiences not to generate new ones. 'If you

live in a small world' he says, 'it doesn't make you live in a big world.' But, as Janey Walker points out, digital initiatives can be successful tools for engaging with young people. One such example is Channel 4's *Battlefront* project.

If you look at something like Battlefront, that is a very good way of introducing international issues, in that one of last year's Battlefronters was the Iraqi girl who was trying to create an Iraqi Youth Orchestra. And so in a way that is quite seamless, it's not saying 'come over here and we'll have the international stuff.' She was just a great campaigner so she was one of the twelve.

The success of *Battlefront* does demonstrate that, as the development agencies have found, young people want to be active participants. It's a lesson which BBC3 has also learnt. Harry Lansdown is its factual commissioner:

Viewing in some ways is a different kind of experience than it used to be. My feeling is that people now, when they watch television, want more from it than just the hour of telly.

At BBC3 there's an enthusiasm for international content aimed at young people.

There was a time when people thought 'Oh, you can't do foreign stories' and I think that's been proved wrong. I think this generation are really interested in issues around globalisation, poverty etc. And I think they have a hunger to hook into it.

When we interviewed young activists, several spoke of watching BBC3 programmes, like *Blood, Sweat and Takeaways*, which investigated how the food we consume is produced. It approached the subject by following a group of young people to developing countries and

observing them working in the factories which produce the food which we eat. This approach – of documenting the experience of young people in different situations – has enabled BBC3 to tackle a range of subjects in series like *World's Strictest Parents*, *Stacey Dooley Investigates* and *WAGS*, *Kids and World Cup Dreams*.

It's clear from BBC3's experience that there is an appetite amongst young people for certain kinds of international content. As Harry Lansdown notes:

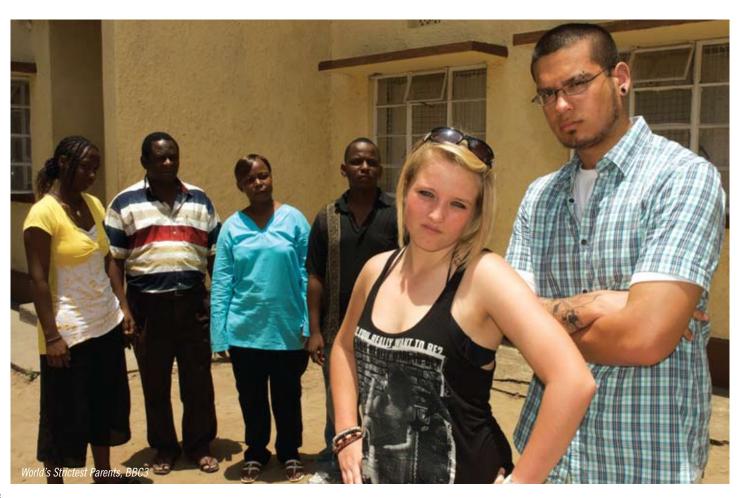
I think they like seeing themselves on television and they really like learning stuff and they like programmes to be entertaining. But they do like strong content. We see the viewing figures and those figures tend to rise across the hour so people join the programme and stay with it.

Given the success of BBC3, the challenge is for more mainstream channels like Channel 4, BBC1 and 2 to find ways of reaching young audiences with international content.

#### THE NEWS GAP

IBT's previous research, *The World in Focus*, established that television news is – and continues to be – the main source of information about the rest of the world for most people in the UK. But, as the findings presented in chapter 2 of this report show, many young people feel that televisions news is not for them and does not speak in a language that they can engage with. David Buckingham has also found this to be true from his own research with young people:

In mainstream news you'll get a lot of focus on immediate events, the foreground, but what you won't get is the explanation. The approach and structure of news isn't actually especially effective in informing young people.





However, there is one news programme which many of the young activists we spoke to had watched when they were younger, *Newsround*. Nicole is a volunteer with ActionAid:

It was news I could understand, it was almost as if the presenters were talking to you as a grown up, because you were young you were thinking 'Oh isn't it great, I understand what is going on!'

Newsround is aimed at younger children and is successful in providing the context to complex international stories and explaining how these events relate to the lives of young viewers. Catering for older children is more challenging, according to Helen Boaden, the BBC's Director of News:

We acknowledge that there isn't anything at this point for that age group, it's an ongoing challenge for us. The thing about a younger audience is that you've got to try a lot of different things. There's not a simple way of getting information to them. Radio 1 is still absolutely fundamental, BBC3 is important and we have our 60 second news on BBC3, the BBC1 bulletin at 8 o'clock is important and the website.

Rod McKenzie, the Editor of Radio 1's *Newsbeat* acknowledges that the traditional approach of mainstream news does not appeal to young people:

The things that turn young audiences off are men in suits, politicians and pundits. That is the stock in trade of a BBC news piece for general audiences. We'll get an Israeli politician on, a Palestinian politician or community leader on, and we'll get someone from a university on to give us a sound bite on how bad the situation is. It's kind of formula broadcasting. Not that there's anything wrong with it, but it's very, very disengaging for younger audiences.

Newsbeat's approach is different:

What we did when we were reporting from the Middle East was to tell it through real people, real stories, get out there and talk to enough ordinary Arabs and ordinary Israelis. It helps to humanise and personalise it a bit more and audiences said that they felt that they understood the story more in the way that we did it rather than a procession of men in suits.

There's another aspect of mainstream television news which young people are highly critical of – the way in which they are portrayed. It's a complaint which is recognised by some broadcasters, like Channel 4's Janey Walker:

I think they are very poorly portrayed, because it's either the stereotype of the hoodie or the enormous amount of coverage on ASBO's, and the media is much more likely to cover a bad news story than a good news story. This whole issue of how they feel the rest of the population views them is a very big deal.

Leon, one of the young activists we spoke to, says it discourages them from watching television news:

That's why young people would rather sit on Facebook all day than watch TV, because it's aggressive towards them – broken Britain and all the rest of it.

However, news broadcasters like Helen Boaden dismiss this criticism.

The news is not about 'here's a positive story about this group or that group', news is about a surprising, unexpected or dramatic story and very often they are negative.

But it's no coincidence that the content which appeals to young people, whether BBC 3's *Blood, Sweat and Luxuries* or Channel 4's *Battlefront*, shows them in a more varied light. Janey Walker:

With Battlefront, it wasn't the reason that we did it, but I am delighted that as a by product there are more people seeing what fantastically animated young people are doing, whether it is about knife crime, organ donation or trying to create a youth orchestra in Iraq.

If news broadcasters want to engage young viewers they need to consider the impact their portrayal of young people has on young audiences.



# CHAPTER 2 TALKING TO YOUNG PEOPLE



Young activists' workshop, March 2010 (photos by Gerard Brown)

#### **BACKGROUND**

The research presented in this chapter was undertaken by TWResearch on behalf of IBT, and was conducted amongst young people aged 14-20. The aim was to explore the motivations to interest (and activism) in development issues. Although the research examines all motivations, it focuses in particular on the role of the media in driving and sustaining interest in the developing world.

The research has four key objectives:

- 1.To understand the motivations to engagement and involvement with development issues.
- 2.To understand what differentiates young people who are active in development from those who aren't.
- 3.To explore the role of the media in stimulating and sustaining interest, and understand the best media and type of message to motivate young people.
- 4.To provide guidance as to how young people might be more effectively reached and engaged in development issues.

Ultimately, the research aims to provide greater understanding as to the core barriers to interest in developing world issues, and guidance as to whether and how they might be overcome.

#### THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Research was conducted in three stages and with two distinct audiences. The first stage explored motivations and drivers to engagement amongst current young activists. In depth interviews were conducted with eleven activists from a range of NGOs.

The second stage consisted of 'peer group sessions', discussions moderated by the young activists involved in the first stage, with a group of their friends (other young people usually not involved with development). These sessions explored the barriers to engagement and activism and what differentiated the activists from their peer group in terms of involvement with development. An 'activist workshop' was then held, where all the young activists came together to share their experiences and develop hypotheses from their findings.

The third and final stage explored motivations and barriers to engagement with development amongst the young general public. Eight group discussions with young people were held in London, Glasgow, Manchester and Norwich, representing urban, suburban and rural perspectives.

All respondents conducted a pre task detailing their media use over the period of a week, and key points of connections with the developing world (moments when they felt empathy or engagement).

#### THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of the following young people all aged 14-20: Young activists—volunteers were nominated by NGOs and reflected a range of commitment and activity. NGOs represented were: ActionAid, Christian Aid, Oxfam, PLAN, Tearfund, UNICEF and VSO.

The peer group sessions consisted of the activists' friends.

General public – respondents were recruited to reflect the 14-20 year old population in terms of gender, social class, ethnicity

Stage 1: Activists

Pre task Media diary Points of connection with the developing world

- 11 x depth interviews
- personal histories
- journey to volunteering

Stage 2: Peer Groups

Pre task Media diary Points of connection with the developing world

- -7 x peer group sessions
- motivations and barriers
- what differentiates

Stage 2: General Public

Pre task Media diary Points of connection with the developing world

- 8 x group discussions
- motivations and barriers
- role of media





and studying vs. working. All were recruited to be concerned about at least one issue related to the wider world. Groups were conducted in London, Norwich, Manchester and Glasgow.

#### MAIN FINDINGS Young lives and the role of the media Building an identity in a fragmented world

The young are growing up in a world that is changing rapidly and which has as many differences as similarities to the one in which their parents grew up. The more structured lifestyles and culture of older generations meant that self-identity was to some extent imposed. There were clear family structures, jobs for life, reliable state support, stronger community ties, defined political parties and single minded media brands, all of which provided identity markers.

In contrast, young people live in a much less stable world. Families are more flexible constructs, people have multiple jobs and changeable careers, there is a lack of cradle to grave state support, less of a political tradition and a multichannel, multiplatform media. Identities are more self-defined and are less influenced by social constructs.

This evolving sense of identity building has implications for development as it means that young people are growing up with a stronger sense of personal choice, and less of a sense of duty and obligation compared with previous generations. For the young people we spoke to, there was little sense of guilt around not being interested in the news, a lack of embarrassment about not feeling concerned about the poor and less sense of why they should be interested in the wider world if they didn't actually find it of interest.

#### The role of media and news

The multichannel, multiplatform media has redressed the historic relationship between the provider and audience. The traditional 'top down' relationship is now more balanced with the audience using media as and when it suits them. Radio and TV are consumed as much online as they are via a set, giving the audience control over exactly what they engage with and when they engage with it. Newspapers are rarely bought, and 'the news' is absorbed rather than sought out (although young activists are more news interested and alert). However, young people are also constantly surrounded by the media (particularly the news) – free papers, TV screens at stations, news headlines from their email providers - which results in fewer proactive decisions about how and what type of news to access.

The young are fully alert to the power of the media and they talk about it with objectivity. There is a stronger sense of mistrust in the media amongst younger than older audiences, and this is particularly evident when discussing the news. The news can be regarded as a media 'construct' offering a didactic definition of what news is, how and to whom it's relevant. As one teenager in Glasgow said:

I like the sense of not living by anybody else's rules and I think the government has such control on what is in the media that it can influence you, so I just don't bother.

The overwhelmingly negative portrayal of young people in the news vindicates these perceptions and can exacerbate any sense that the news is irrelevant and 'not for me'. Underpinning this are indications that information about the wider world is valued from 'alternative'







Figure 2: A 'wordle' depicting all the TV programmes watched by respondents in a week

sources, be it the specialist magazine picked up in the local skater shop, celebrities' tweets, trusted brands' newsletters or comedy shows on TV. As one young activist said when reporting back from his peer group sessions:

The news is aimed at adults or children and there is nothing in between aimed at teenagers. So my friend gets his news from Mock the Week.

Figure 2 is a 'wordle' depicting all the TV programmes watched by respondents in a week. The size of the font depicts the size of the audience watching the programme (the larger the font, the more people watched that week).

'Morning news' programmes (those circled in red) feature as part of family routines where parents choose what's on and children accept them. This is passive, background viewing with TV news used for headlines rather than depth.

Figure 2 also shows some of the programmes credited with keeping young people in touch (circled in purple). *Russell Howard's Good News, Mock the Week, QI* provide an 'alternative' perspective on the world and an irreverent slant on serious issues. Older audiences use these programmes to complement the news, but for younger audiences they seem to play a greater role in informing and educating.

#### The impact of new media technology

New technology means that young audiences have a very different TV relationship to older audiences. Most TV viewing is conducted in the privacy of their bedrooms, with much of it online rather than via a TV set. As one respondent said:

I only watch live sport on TV, the rest I watch on the computer. The TV is off 90% of the time and my Mac screen is huge. You can watch what you want when you want.

TV viewing is therefore driven by choice rather than a linear schedule, and there is less compromising on what to watch. Young audiences are experimental in their online providers, using a variety of sources (from *iPlayer* to *YouTube* to *surfthechannel* to *clublandtv*) including much international TV. Freedom from the constraints of scheduling means that viewing habits

are different, and there is much less routine from day to day. However, there is much more availability to watch 'series' and favourite shows will often be watched in 'blocks'.

Programming on demand also has implications for the discovery of new programmes. Online viewing provides fewer clues as to content providers (channel brands are less pertinent, scheduling zones don't exist, there is less habitual viewing) and trails and programme promotion are often missed if audiences aren't watching via a traditional TV provider website like *iPlayer*. Despite the fact that there is more to watch, there can be less opportunity to discover new content that is not obviously connected to personal interests. Programme titles, descriptors and word of mouth are therefore key to trial and discovery.

This clearly has implications for the discovery of programming about the developing world. Increased audience control over what they watch means there are fewer opportunities for chance encounters. There is increased pressure on programming about the developing world to communicate a point of personal connection and relevance – a reason for young audiences to watch if they're not interested in development.

# **Engaging with development The relationship between knowledge and engagement**

Young people are relatively well informed about issues connected to the developing world, and most can talk about a specific example (such as sweatshops in Pakistan or the irrigation problems of the Niger Delta) in some depth. School is key to development knowledge, both from a curriculum and broader 'community focused' perspective. Development issues are covered in both Citizenship and Geography lessons (which explains the depth of knowledge around specific examples) and charity fundraising is common. However, knowledge tends to exist in silos and few connections are made across countries and issues. For most young people, knowledge does not appear to have translated into engagement. There is a strong sense (particularly for those studying GCSEs or relevant A levels) that development is homework. There is some understanding about how the lifestyles and economies of developed countries impact on those of poor countries, but there is also a pragmatic response to it: 'that's life'. Although

sympathy and concern are demonstrated (particularly in response to natural disasters), there is little sense of personal relevance and when probed there is an underlying sense of 'what's it got to do with me?' As one girl in Norwich said:

I feel like people have sympathy for certain things, but we don't really care that much about it most of the time.

A boy in Manchester talked about his introspective viewpoint:

We're used to a world where everything is done for us and we don't have to worry about anything. So we don't really have much come across to us about other countries ... you're never involved with them if you know what I mean.

Underpinning this sense of disengagement are also the broader barriers that exist amongst the public at large. Issues around the static and negative imagery of the developing world, levels of corruption, the predominantly political and geographical focus of news and other programming, and an inherited sense of 'developing world fatigue' all contribute to a sense of disconnection and disempowerment. The knowledge that school delivers struggles to counteract the dominant imagery around the developing world.

#### Points of connection with development

Despite this, sympathy, concern and 'connection' were experienced at some point by most of the young people we spoke to. A range of 'touchpoints' were discussed although most individuals only talked about one or two. Five key sources of connection emerged: school, personal experience, the media, the news, and charities.

School is a key point of connection. Although it appears to be more effective at informing than engaging, it plays a crucial role in the personal journeys of young activists. Many schools encourage a sense of community from both a local and global perspective and this is evidenced by charity fundraising (links to a school in Sierra Leone, stationery collection for a school in Africa, charity event for Haiti etc.), and the encouragement of volunteering (mentoring younger students, school councils, helping out in local communities). 'Getting involved' is as much about confidence as it is about interest and school provides a familiar, comfortable environment for 'first forays', particularly for those with no history of issue or NGO involvement.

The media also provides points of connection particularly through natural disasters (the earthquake in Haiti was cited a lot – the scale of the disaster, its geography in terms of its closeness to the US, and the immediacy of news coverage), films such as *Blood* 



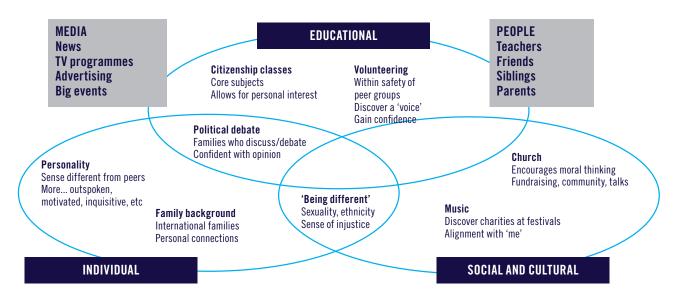


Figure 3: The broad landscape of influences on involvement with development issues

Diamond and City of God (just as likely to have been seen at school as at the cinema), and big events like Red Nose Day and Sports Relief. Some TV programmes also cut through although these tend to be reality formats (such as Ultimate Traveller on T4 or World's Strictest Parents on BBC3) rather than documentaries.

Personal experience can be crucial, because it's either about direct experience or personal connections. Travelling is an increasingly common experience. Some had parents living abroad, and some had friends or family serving in Afghanistan and posting on *Facebook* or writing blogs.

Charity connections are more sporadic and tend to become more relevant once young people are engaged and seeking out issues and organisations to support. However, campaigns linked to relevant brands and interests do have more resonance and impact. The Nike Lace Up, Save Lives campaign and ActionAid's Bollocks to Poverty at music festivals were all cited as engaging young people in development issues.

#### What stimulates involvement?

Understanding what makes some young people active in development issues can be difficult, as much of it is about the intangibility of personality and personal history. Some young activists are highly unusual in their levels of commitment, with responsibilities to a range of organisations whilst also doing their A levels or studying for a degree. Others have very distinct histories - overcoming adversity (being thrown out of home for instance) or experiencing prejudice (due to sexuality or race) that enable a connection via a strong sense of injustice. However, motivations to involvement can be broadly mapped within three themes: educational, individual and social/cultural.

Figure 3 shows the broad landscape of influences on involvement with development issues. The media is a backdrop to all these influences, providing a talking point at home, used as a resource in schools, and supplying information about key news stories and events.

Most activists also spoke of a particular individual who had an impact. For example, passionate teachers with a personal interest in development who will bring it into lessons, organise activities and groups after school, talk about events in the news. One activist describes her teacher:

My teacher at school was inspirational and she was always organising projects for the kids.

Others spoke of parents who already support charities, discuss politics at home and work in social rather than commercial professions:

My parents can be political and they swayed me because they were fighters in the war back home in Eritrea. It was interesting that they did something to stand up for what they believed in – maybe people should do that more often.

Others were influenced by friends or siblings who had travelled and shared their photos and experiences.

#### Beyond altruism: the rewards of volunteering

Being interested and involved in development issues often reflects the activists' sense of identity. They choose what and who to support to match their personal interests, ambitions, and sense of self. Charity brands may be selected or dismissed because of their name or tone of voice, campaigning may reflect a political interest or support a political ambition and running an NGO stand at a festival may be linked to a personal interest in music.

Altruism is a common thread running through activism, but involvement can bring personal and practical benefits. As one young activist said:

I always like to get involved in things, it gives me experience whilst helping out.

- The opportunity to travel is highly appealing and is a key motivator to volunteering abroad. Volunteering also offers the chance to experience local cultures and meet local people as opposed to the superficiality of 'travelling'.
- Career development is also a key motivator when it comes to volunteering. Young people with ambition are alert to what will differentiate them on an UCAS form or a CV, and volunteering demonstrates proactivity and experience. This is particularly relevant in the current economic climate with increased competition for careers in journalism, politics, or development.
- Personal development: helping others can improve a young person's confidence, purpose and self worth. Being listened to provides a sense of 'voice'. These emotional rewards are more valued depending on the character of the individual – those lacking confidence have more to gain.
- Social networking: volunteering can also provide a social opportunity – meeting like-minded people with similar interests.
   Activists (particularly those who have left the social constraints of school) tend to develop friendship networks consisting of other like-minded people, many of whom they have met through their volunteering activities.
- Free tickets: activists admit that free tickets and backstage passes at music festivals in exchange for helping to run NGO stalls are very





motivating. This approach doesn't depend on a pre-existing interest in development, but does mean that young people are likely to leave more engaged than when they arrived. As one activist acknowledged:

The fact that you got free entry into the festival encouraged you to do it, and then I went on the day and got to wander round behind the scenes and speak to other people, actual acts, and speak to them about the charity. I really enjoyed it.

#### The challenge of advocacy

Activists are highly sensitive to becoming a development 'bore'. As one said:

I don't want to bore people with my amazing experience in Ghana. I don't like to push it on people.

Their sense of being different from the mainstream (i.e. more motivated, more inquisitive etc.) means that they often assume that friends and family aren't interested. The best opportunity for talking about development comes after travelling when experiences and photos are fresh. Peers are genuinely interested in this personal connection to the issues, but once these experiences have faded the issue territory inevitably shifts from the personal to the political and activists report that their friends 'tune out'.

Although activists are not necessarily championing the cause with their peers, they are using the internet to share their thoughts and opinions. A distinctive feature of the internet is that it doesn't force opinions on others and allows friends to choose whether to engage or not. *Facebook, Twitter* and blogs are all utilised as advocacy tools, and activists generally feel that friends do read, acknowledge and occasionally even explore recommended links or download films.

#### The role of the media in stimulating and sustaining interest

The media plays both a positive and negative role in engagement in development. The media's perceived control over the news agenda in terms of information and perspective can create suspicion, particularly in the context of the negative portrayal of the developing world. The news does feature in the lives of young people but the degree to which they investigate and trust news sources is questionable. There is a sense that they're looking for non traditional sources to give them a fresh perspective.

Activists use the media to sustain their interest in development, and are broadly more news interested than their peers. It's difficult to assess whether an interest in the wider world led

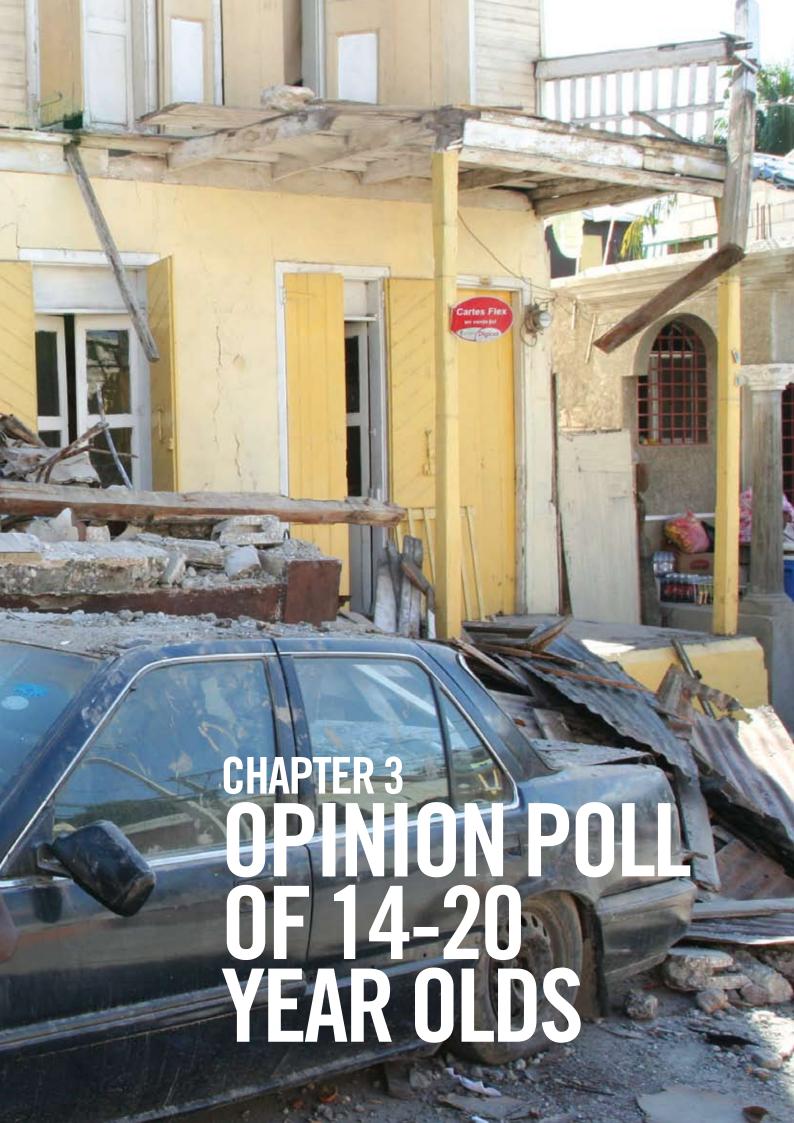
to an interest in development or vice versa. They may be as cynical about the news agenda as their peers, but the desire for information overrides this. Online newspapers and charity communications tend to provide their development information and TV programmes (often documentaries) stimulate and sustain emotion, particularly for those in the early stages of involvement.

The media also provides points of connection to the broader young audience. Big news events like Haiti or *Sports Relief* stand out, and TV is particularly important for discovery and interest 'stretch'. However, the prevalence of on demand TV may have implications for the extent to which this continues in the future. In terms of programmes that appeal and engage, the key is providing a point of personal connection:

- Relevance. Programmes that provide a personal connection or relevance to the audience (*The Devil Wears Prada* for instance) allow young audiences an 'easy to access' context and personal role in the story.
- A representative with whom viewers can identify. As one respondent said: 'the presenter is our representative and makes the journey more accessible'. Familiar faces (such as Kevin McCloud in *Slumming It*) also encourage empathy. As another teenager put it: 'I always donate money to *Comic Relief*. When you see real celebrities with these people they seem more real.'
- Young people and children: using young people as the representatives (*Blood, Sweat and Luxuries*) or as the subject (*Saving Africa's Witch Children*) is very appealing.
- Action and drama: a good story is always engaging (*Blood Diamond*). However, it's the story not the geography that is motivating, and the reward is not finding out about the developing world but entertainment.

The way young audiences watch TV has implications for the marketing of programmes both on TV and online. Titles are a key factor in the decision making process, and a potentially enjoyable programme is likely to be missed if the title doesn't inform and engage. For example, More4's *Moving to Mars* is a programme with content that sounds interesting and entertaining. Yet the title fails to motivate as there are no clues to content, and therefore audiences admit it's unlikely to be discovered in the schedules. In contrast, BBC3's *The World's Most Dangerous Place for Women* is an impactful and intriguing title implying danger and action – a wealth of emotions for the audience, which was found and watched by some.





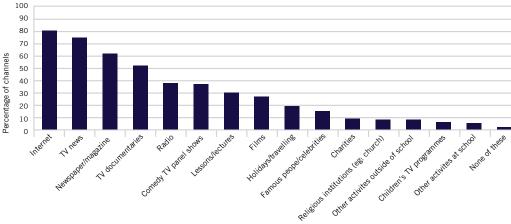


Figure 1: The media channels used to keep up to date with what's going on in the world

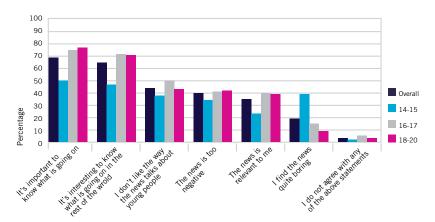


Figure 2: Views on the importance of keeping up to date with the news by age

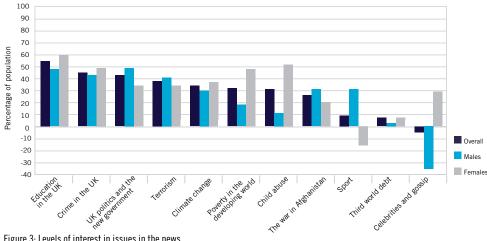


Figure 3: Levels of interest in issues in the news

#### **BACKGROUND**

This opinion poll was conducted for IBT by YouGov through an online survey of 1,500 14-20 year olds. The sample was drawn in two ways. The 16-20 year olds were drawn from YouGov's consumer panel of 280,000 individuals aged 16 and over. The 14-15 year olds were drawn from those with parents on the YouGov panel who had previously replied that they were willing to allow their child to participate. Respondents were sampled so as to be representative in terms of age, gender, social grade and region. Fieldwork took place from June 7-16, 2010.

#### HOW YOUNG PEOPLE FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD

Figure 1 shows that the methods 14 to 20 year olds have of keeping up to date are dominated by the internet and television, particularly television news. The importance of television as a source of information increases with age. 66 per cent of 14-15 year olds mention TV news, 42 per cent documentaries and 26 per cent comedy panel shows, while 79 per cent of 18-20 year olds mention TV news, 56 per cent TV documentaries and 42 per cent panel shows.

As figure 2 shows, most young people are interested in what's going on in the world and have broadly positive views about the importance of the news with only 19 per cent admitting to finding the news boring while 40 per cent agree that it is too negative. Despite 65 per cent believing news from around the world is interesting and 69 per cent believing it is important to keep track of, just 35 per cent agree that the news is relevant to them.

#### WHICH ISSUES ARE YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN?

Interest in the news tends to be focussed more on domestic issues such as education, politics and crime than on international or development issues.

85 per cent of respondents claim to be very or fairly interested in one or more issues related to the UK, compared to 62 per

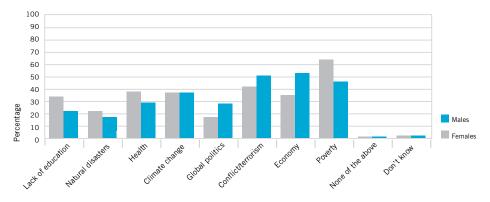


Figure 4: Views on the three most important issues facing the world

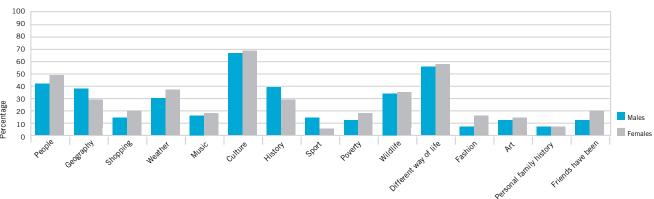


Figure 5: What motivates the desire to visit other countries

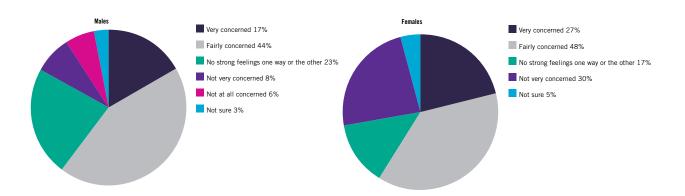


Figure 6: Concern about the levels of poverty in poor countries

cent and 60 per cent who are very or fairly interested in one or more issues that affect the rest of the world and the developing world respectively.

When asked to choose three important issues that are facing the world, there is a distinct difference between the priorities of male and female respondents as figure 4 illustrates. Females are more likely to focus on issues such as poverty, education and health, whilst males are more likely to prioritise conflict/terrorism and economic issues.

We asked respondents what motivated their desire to visit other countries. As figure 5 shows, an interest in the culture and way of life are mentioned by over half of both males and females. The people of the chosen country also feature highly, particularly for females. Television appears to fuel an interest in visiting other countries, with over half (52 per cent) reporting that they have seen a TV programme on the country they specified an interest in, and which had made them want to visit it.

Respondents were asked which, if any, country in Africa, Asia, South or Central America they would like to visit. The most popular responses, in order of mentions, were Brazil, Japan, Africa as a whole (and more specifically South Africa, Kenya, Botswana, Ghana), India, Egypt and China.

#### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GLOBAL POVERTY

When asked about their own level of knowledge about global poverty and the lives of those living in developing countries, around half of 14 to 20 year olds claim to know a great deal (5 per cent) or a fair amount (44 per cent)

The majority (67 per cent) of 14 to 20 year olds claim to be very or fairly concerned about levels of poverty in poor countries. As Figure 6 shows, females are more likely to be concerned (75 per cent compared to 61 per cent of men). Concern is lowest among those aged 14 to 15 (60 per cent compared to 73 per cent for 16 to 17 year olds, and 68 per cent for 18 to 20 year olds).

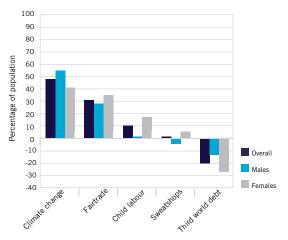


Figure 7: Levels of knowledge on issues related to people in the developing world

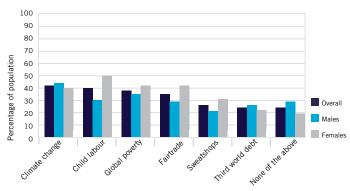


Figure 8: Numbers who are very interested in specific issues related to people in developing countries

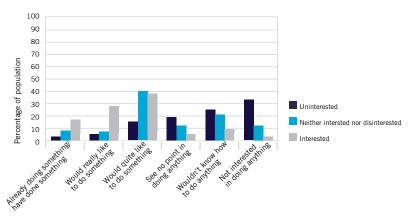


Figure 9: Interest in taking action about issues affecting the developing world by interest in them as a whole

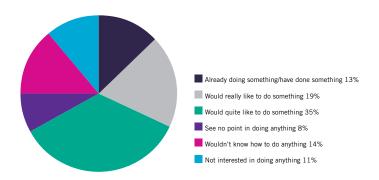


Figure 10: Whether respondents have done or would like to do something about the issues affecting the world

#### INTEREST IN AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Levels of knowledge about specific development issues vary greatly, as figure 7 shows. Climate change ranks fourth in the list of greatest issues facing the world. However, it jumps to top of the specific development issues individuals claim to know a lot about or to be very interested in.

While figure 7 details levels of knowledge on issues relating to development, figure 8 illustrates the levels of interest in these issues. Climate change is the issue of most interest to males, whilst child labour is the biggest issue for females.

As figure 9 shows, there is a strong correlation between having an interest in issues affecting the developing world, and wanting to take action. Among those who are interested in such issues, 17 per cent are already doing something and a further 66 per cent would really or quite like to. Respondents who are uninterested in development issues are more likely to answer that there is no

point in doing anything, they wouldn't know how to do anything or that they generally have no interest in doing anything.

#### **CURRENT ENGAGEMENT**

Overall, 13 per cent of 14 to 20 year old respondents are already doing something or have previously done something about issues affecting the developing world, as figure 10 illustrates.

It is females who are more interested in taking part. 59 per cent of females would really or quite like to do something compared to 49 per cent of males. 11 per cent of males see no point in doing anything compared to 5 per cent of females.

Of those who have done something about these issues, the most common form of action is buying products that help, such as Fairtrade products, or donating money. Following the general trend, it is females who are more engaged with taking action about issues in the developing world than males. Females are more likely than

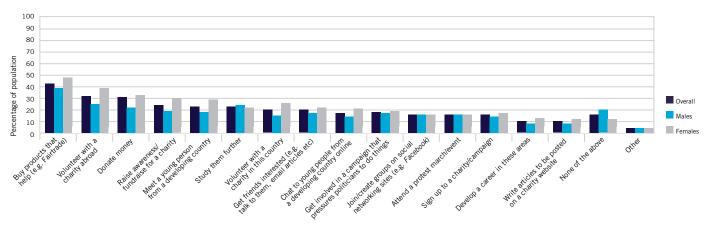


Figure 11: What they would like to do about issues in the developing world if they could

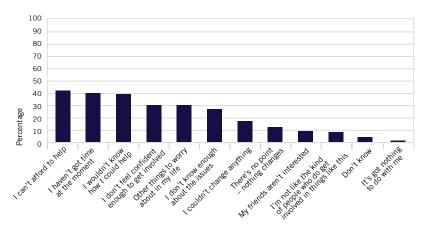


Figure 12: What barriers are there to engagement in issues affecting the developing world?

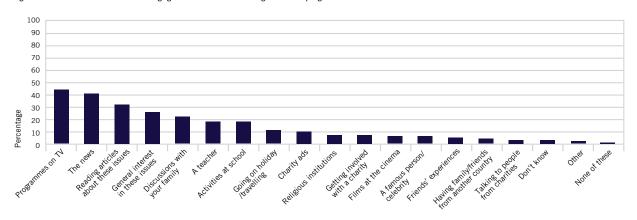


Figure 13: Things that have led to an interest in issues affecting the developing world

males to mention volunteering abroad and at home, raising awareness and fundraising, donating money, joining campaigns to pressure politicians, buying products that help and trying to persuade friends.

As figure 11 shows, buying products that help and volunteering with a charity abroad are the top two things 14 to 20 year olds would like to do if they could. Donating money comes third. Females are again more likely to want to get involved in almost all areas listed.

#### **BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT**

Lack of time and resources are high on the list of barriers preventing 14 to 20 year olds from engaging with issues that affect the developing world. This is particularly true for older respondents (46 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds and 43 per cent of 18 to 20 year olds cite a lack of time compared with just 29 per cent of 14 to 15 year olds).

However, as figure 12 demonstrates, lack of confidence and knowledge

about how to go about helping also feature highly (30 per cent and 39 per cent respectively).

Females are more likely to be concerned about their confidence (34 per cent vs 24 per cent for males) and be unsure how to help (44 per cent vs 33 per cent for males). Males are more likely to feel they lack the time to get involved (46 per cent compared to 35 per cent females).

#### TIPPING POINTS TO ENGAGEMENT

As figure 13 shows, the role of television in leading an interest in issues relating to the developing world is clear, with programmes on TV and the news at the top of the list of things that have stimulated this interest (with 44 per cent and 41 per cent).

In this instance the sources of influence vary more by age than by gender, with 14 to 15 year olds more influenced by teachers, activities at school and discussions with family than their older counterparts who rely more on reading articles, the news and a general interest.

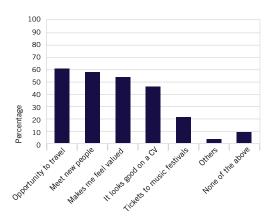


Figure 14: Reasons other than fighting poverty and helping poor people which encourage involvement

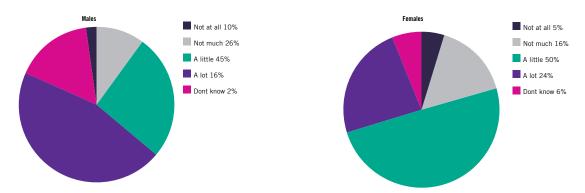


Figure 15: How much the earthquake in Haiti prompted respondents to consider other issues that affect people in developing countries

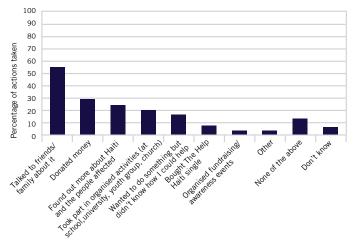


Figure 16: Actions taken as a consequence of seeing or hearing coverage of the Haiti earthquake

Respondents were also asked about a number of other potential reasons they might get involved with development issues in the future (figure 14). 61 per cent cited the opportunity to travel. Meeting new people was also high on the list of motivations (58 per cent). Other popular reasons included 'that involvement would look good on a CV' (46 per cent) and that it would make them 'feel valued' (54 per cent).

#### HAITI AS CASE STUDY

The earthquake in Haiti was widely reported in the UK media, and this is supported by the high number of respondents in the survey (91 per cent) who had read, heard or seen something about Haiti. As a result it offers an interesting opportunity to determine whether the attention paid by 14 to 20 year olds to the earthquake through the media could provide a 'tipping point' to further engagement with other related development issues. 20 per cent of respondents said that the earthquake in Haiti led them to think a lot about other issues affecting the developing world,

with another 48 per cent thinking about these issues a little. 29 per cent said they thought about these issues not at all or not much.

As figure 15 shows, there are differences in these results when analysed by gender – with females significantly more likely to say Haiti has prompted an interest in other issues that affect people in developing countries by a lot or a little (74 per cent compared to 61 per cent of males).

As a consequence of the Haiti earthquake coverage, 55 per cent of 14 to 20 year olds discussed the matter with family and friends, by far the most common result of exposure to the coverage. Less than half that number found out more about Haiti (24 per cent), took part in organised activities (20 per cent) or bought the Haiti charity single (just 7 per cent). Donating money was also frequently mentioned (29 per cent).

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