

Poor news:

BBC misleads humanity on goals and progress

Inaccuracies, imbalance and omissions in BBC output
and by BBC staff and Trustees in response to complaints

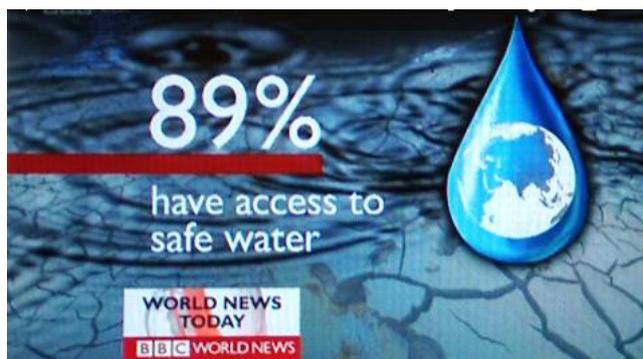
Statistics on "poverty", hunger, health and so on are used to support policies and governments.

The BBC has repeatedly exaggerated the thoroughness of World Bank poverty research.

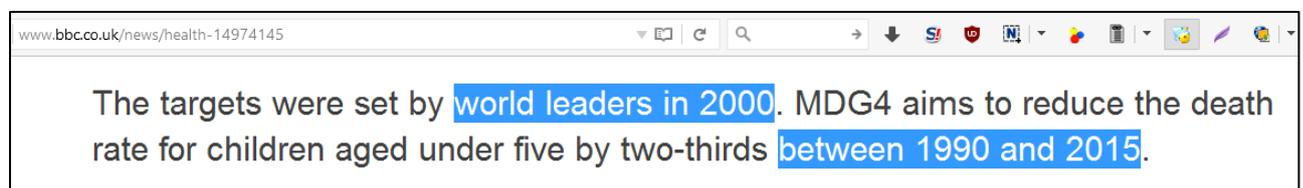
It has given a false impression that the World Bank "calculate" prices faced by the poor, and take varying needs into account.

The programme More or Less has falsely claimed the World Bank uses a "basket of essential goods"; and such things as "a certain level of shelter ... or health care". In reality those are exactly what is not done.

BBC overstates human access to water:



BBC persistently understates world leaders' pledges:



BBC staff and, in public statements, trustees have persistently misdescribed the complaints.
The inaccuracies persist.

Includes many communications 2001-2016 to the BBC.

Matt Berkley

Draft 25 October 2016

This document is being updated after a recent response from BBC News claiming to have dealt with correspondence, but which ignored complaints such as:

"BBC does not report actual [Millennium] pledges of 2000 even though reaffirmed by world leaders in 2013."

"BBC does not report scandal: MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration."

"Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact"

"pattern of imbalance of views on world poverty goal and progress reports..."

BBC tends to present official "\$/day" claims as on "extreme poverty" without adequate questioning or other views."

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Notes

The BBC is far from the only organisation making these kinds of wrong statements.

It is far from the only organisation putting forward views which it is hard to see people applying to themselves - such as that a fixed amount of money measures "poverty" without looking at prices faced by the poor or what people need at different times.

In the accounts which follow, the examples are given to illustrate. In several cases there are far more examples of similar BBC problems in the text of the complaints.

It seems extremely unlikely that inaccuracies in web pages, podcasts and videos were not duplicated in BBC broadcast material, perhaps in many cases repeated several times: for example, a very short "Global Goals" video.

A similar consideration may apply on imbalances, since the evidence seems to suggest at best extreme laziness in repeating official claims without looking for any alternative views, or even questioning, for example, whether someone's "income" measures their material prosperity in view of necessary expenditure. If the dedicated programmes on official claims or global targets omit significant strands of thought, it may be likely that short news reports have been no better.

The contents list is not necessarily to all items included here. Short descriptions for contents list entries should not be taken as comprehensive, or as suggesting limits on scope of the texts.

Material has been formatted for readability and underlining added, partly because the BBC complaints system removes formatting.

BBC understates Millennium pledges

Times of India,
September 10 2000:

For eliminating poverty they promised to halve 20 per cent of the world's population **currently** without access to safe drinking water and 22 per cent living on less than one dollar a day. They also agreed to take steps to ensure all children completed primary education, reduce maternal mortality by three quarters and infant mortality by two thirds.

UNITED NATIONS: U.N. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT ENDS WITH DECLARATION PLEDGING EFFORTS IN PURSUIT OF PEACE, SECURITY, DISARMAMENT AND ERADICATION OF POVERTY



08 September 2000 Story ref: 009080017 Contains: 1 Clips Format: imx 30

Heads of state and government leaders from more than 150 countries ended an unprecedented U.N. Millennium Summit on Friday (September 8) by setting an ambitious course for the 21st century.

A resolution in the form of a Millennium Declaration pledged efforts in pursuit of peace, security, disarmament and the eradication of poverty.

The declaration endorsed targets set by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in a near-Utopian report last April that called for halving by the year 2015 the 22 per cent of the world's population **now existing** on less than a dollar a day.

*By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three-quarters, and under-5 child mortality by two-thirds, of their current rates.

September 2000: The BBC wrongly refers to commitments to halve "numbers", but correctly omits 1990.

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/917165.stm

"Ultimately, you are yourselves the United Nations," he said.

"It lies in your power and therefore it is your responsibility to reach the goals that you have defined.

"Only you can determine whether the United Nations rises to the challenge."

Declaration goals for 2015

- ▶ Halve the number of people living on less than \$1 a day
- ▶ Halve the number of people without safe drinking water
- ▶ Enable all children to complete primary school
- ▶ Halt and reverse the spread of Aids and Malaria

The summit's unanimously adopted Millennium declaration sets out a series of detailed commitments.

Peace and Security

It commits the UN to some ambitious targets for 2015 - halving the proportion of the world's people who live on less than a dollar a day, and halting and beginning to reverse the spread of Aids.

Along with many media organisations, academics, journalists and others, the BBC has, after the year 2000, understated world leaders' promises of that year. Like the New York Times, the Financial Times, the Guardian, the Lancet, the Economist and the Daily Mail, the BBC did so even after complaints.

The Millennium Declaration was based on 15 years rather than 25.

It says nothing about a "1990" baseline.

The philosopher Thomas Pogge has pointed out for over a decade that the Declaration has a baseline of 2000.

What nations "agreed in 2000" was not the easier MDG targets.

Also, its promises were wider than the Millennium Development Goals devised in 2001. The commitments were not only more ambitious but went far beyond the "development" parts of the Declaration to include for example peace and human rights.

I complained from February 2014 onwards about the BBC's inaccurate and misleading statements relating to the pledges of 2000.

After multiple complaints, the BBC continued to mislead the public, including in material for children.

The BBC "MDG website" of 2004 makes an explicitly false statement about the pledges:

The screenshot shows the BBC website's Millennium Development Goals page. At the top, the URL is www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/. The navigation bar includes Home, News, Sport, Radio, TV, Weather, and Languages. The main header features the BBC logo, "WORLDSERVICE.com", and the text "Millennium Development Goals" next to a "2015 where will we be?" graphic. A sidebar on the left lists the eight goals, with "Introduction" selected. The main content area includes an image of a woman and children, a sub-header "Introduction: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)", and a paragraph stating that the Millennium Declaration was ratified in September 2000. A highlighted blue box contains the text: "The Declaration outlines eight broad goals. Within these are eighteen targets - most set for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark - and forty-eight indicators." Below this, another paragraph states that the MDGs represent a global commitment to reduce poverty and improve lives.

2005:

The screenshot shows a BBC article titled "AFRICA'S CHALLENGES" with the sub-header "AFRICA 2005: Time for a change? In Depth". The URL is news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/africas_challenges/html/5.stm. The main text of the article states: "In September 2000, a UN summit set a series of targets to improve lives worldwide by tackling disease and extreme poverty. The Millennium Declaration, adopted by all member-states, has eight broad goals, with specific targets mostly to be achieved by 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark." The year "1990" is highlighted with a yellow box.

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World leaders discuss the future

Top politicians from around the world have been meeting in New York for the United Nations General Assembly summit.

At the meeting, 191 leaders including Prime Minister Tony Blair and President George Bush are discussing some of the biggest problems around the globe.



Many countries think the UN should do more on its Millennium Goals, set out five years ago, which include cutting poverty and child illness and death.

www.bbc.co.uk/french/news/story/2006/09/060913_children_report.shtml

qu'un flux RSS?

LANGUES

Rappelons-nous l'an 2000, et les Objectifs du millénaire pour le développement, annoncés à grand renfort de publicité par les dirigeants du monde entier.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/french/highlights/story/2008/02/080215_developmentgoals.shtml Recherche

BBCAfrique.com | Highlights | Les ONG, l'Afrique et les objectifs du Millénaire

Aide | Version texte

Page d'accueil Dernière mise à jour: 15 Février, 2008 - Heure de publication 21:15 GMT

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- SWAHILI
- ENGLISH

Les ONG, l'Afrique et les objectifs du Millénaire

L'ONU a arrêté en l'an 2000 huit objectifs essentiels à atteindre d'ici à 2015. A mi-parcours de l'échéance, où en est-on ? Eléments de réponse avec le Dr Mahamadou Tounkara, spécialiste des questions liées au développement, ancien fonctionnaire de l'ONG Plan International en Asie et représentant résidant au Bénin.



Dr Mahamadou Tounkara, de l'ONG Plan International, spécialiste des questions de développement

A VOIR AUSSI

- ▶ Premier festival de la BD au Congo
- ▶ Internet en Afrique: perspectives d'avenir
- ▶ Une monnaie unique africaine en 2021
- ▶ Rwanda : un miracle économique ?

INTERVIEW

BBC Afrique : En l'an 2000, les Nations unies ont défini une série d'objectifs de développement pour le millénaire. D'après vous, que peuvent faire concrètement les ONG pour aider à la concrétisation de ce plan ambitieux ?

www.bbc.co.uk/search?q=poverty&sa_f=search-product&tsuggid= Search

22 Apr 2008



Analysis Archive: The Economic Crisis and Poverty Relief

...In 2000 world leaders outlined a vision to end extreme poverty and hunger within 15 years. They were called the Millennium Development Goals. Did the economic crisis derail ambitious plans to...

Programmes | BBC World Service

Much other BBC output states or implies the same thing.

www.bbc.com/mundo/internacional/2010/09/100913_onu_objetivos_milenio_dinero_action_aid_jp.shtml

milenio.

El encuentro busca impulsar los esfuerzos destinados a alcanzar los **ocho objetivos establecidos** en la **Cumbre del Milenio en el año 2000** para cumplirse en 2015.

www.bbc.co.uk/swahili/habari/2011/09/110916_utafiti_wanawake_watoto.shtml

Malengo hayo yalifikiwa na viongozi duniani mwaka 2000.

MDG4 ina dhamira ya kupunguza idadi ya watoto wanaofariki dunia wenye umri wa chini ya miaka mitano kwa robo tatu kati ya mwaka 1990 na 2015.

MDG5 inaelezea kuwa na nia ya kufuta vifo miongoni mwa wanawake wajawazito kwa kiwango cha robo tatu katika kipindi hicho hicho.

Watafiti hao kutoka Seattle wanakadiria kuwepo vifo vya watoto wachanga milioni 7.2 duniani kote katika kipindi cha mwaka mmoja uliopita- ikilinganishwa na watu milioni 11.6 mwaka 1990.

China, Rwanda na Botswana wamesifiwa kwa "kasi" katika kupambana na vifo vya watoto kwa muongo mmoja uliopita.

Even the BBC's charity claiming to help people "hold governments to account" has parroted the spin that the 1990-2015 targets were among the historic pledges of 2000.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbcmmediaaction/entries/a068ea08-6557-3ab1-99d2-c9750f917b29>

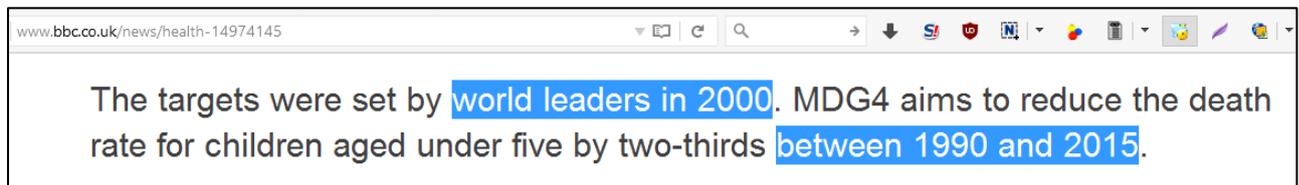
The original Millennium Declaration agreed in 2000 – which articulated the Millennium Development Goals due to expire in 2015 – also affirmed freedom as one of the fundamental values underpinning the MDGs and urged a commitment "to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information". That Declaration has tended to be forgotten, however. Instead, it is the eight Goals it laid that have galvanised international attention in the interim years.

2014:

I informed the Head of Editorial Complaints, beginning with an error on the baseline by More or Less in the edition of 10 March 2012.

This was not the route the BBC suggested for complaints. I chose to inform him after the BBC repeatedly failed to answer other complains.

After this, BBC again repeatedly misled - for example:



I complained to other parts of the BBC about this error: BBC World News, the Swahili service, the Woman's Hour team and a main global health correspondent.

Womans' Hour material, for example: [I did not complain about the claim that nations aimed to "eradicate human suffering within 15 years"]



19 June 2015:

BBC Trustees formally accepted, in a decision by their Editorial Standards Committee, that the later MDG target was easier than what leaders actually pledged in 2000.

However, they refused to consider the evidence that the BBC had misled for years with explicitly false statements on the baseline.

Trustees have the legal power to seek information from BBC employees or to start investigations on matters of concern, even if there is no complaint or appeal. In this case, I had stated at the outset that I did not think the Woman's Hour errors, which is what the Trustees limited their decision to, were necessarily that team's fault. In my view, the evidence of worse and repeated inaccuracies on world leaders' pledges - which I had sent to the Trust - was essential context for Trustees.

July 2015:

BBC continues misleading that the Millennium Summit set the easier targets - for example:

The screenshot shows the BBC website interface for a 'More or Less' episode. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, 'Sign in', and links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, Radio, and More. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, the 'iPlayer Radio' logo is visible. The main content area features the 'More or Less' title and a large image of people holding plates with the text 'FULL OF PROMISES --- STILL EMPTY PLATES'. The episode title is 'Millennium Development Goals' and the duration is 28 minutes. The page includes a sidebar with 'Last on' and 'More episodes' sections. The 'Last on' section shows the episode aired on Fri 3 Jul 2015 at 23:32 GMT. The 'More episodes' section lists 'Biggest Movies' and 'More or Less: The Greek Odyssey'. The page also includes a 'See all episodes from More or Less' link.

Millennium Development Goals: Child Mortality

Fifteen years ago, the UN pledged to cut the global child mortality rate by two-thirds by the end of 2015, but it is a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) the world is unlikely to reach. We look at why that is and hear some of the stories behind the numbers. Reporter Brian Hungwe is in the Zimbabwean capital Harare and speaks to new mothers there. Mthuli Ncube, the former chief economist at the African Development Bank and now a senior research fellow at the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, tells us how this particular MDG has been useful in development work. And Mickey Chopra, UNICEF's head of global health programmes, explains why cutting child mortality by two-thirds globally has been a tough target to reach.

Available now
🕒 18 minutes

NEXT
Greece: Fracturing Europe's Identity? 

See all episodes from Business Daily

The show will be broadcast on the BBC and is timed to coincide with the UN General Assembly meeting.

The meeting of world leaders will announce new goals designed to fight inequality, tackle climate change and extreme poverty.

It's being organised by film director Richard Curtis.

He told Newsbeat he'd be using many of the skills he learned organising Red Nose Day to bring attention **to the concert**.

"In 2000 there were some millennium development goals that people like me, through my experience on Red Nose Day and Make Poverty History campaign, have been really **obsessed with**, which set out to do great big things in terms of health and poverty.

14:56 **About the UN goals**



House of Lords
Parliament

Gender parity in education was one of the **UN Millennium Development Goals, which were agreed in 2000.**

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) included pledges to eradicate extreme poverty, hunger and disease.

The MDGs included pledges to provide universal primary education and reduce infant mortality, to promote gender equality and improve maternal health.

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06dl1t6

In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed on a series of ambitious targets to improve the lives of people everywhere. The Millennium Development Goals they signed up to were meant to herald unprecedented progress in every corner of Earth. They promised enormous reductions in poverty, increased life expectancy and an altogether fairer world.

Those goals are being renewed this year. This powerful and poignant film asks kids to show us, from their perspectives, whether older generations have lived up the promises we made back at the turn of the millennium.

Material for children:

Extreme poverty is when people are so poor that they **cannot afford basic things** like food and **somewhere to live**.

The goal in 2000 was cut in half the **number** of people who are living with hunger, and with less than \$1.25 (**about 80p**) to survive on per day, by 2015.

15 years later, the **number** of people living on \$1.25 per day **has been cut in half**.

But there is still more to do. **1.2 billion** people are stilling living **in extreme poverty**, and more than **99 million** children younger than five still don't have **enough food**.



Revise



Test

In 2000 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by governments around the world. One of the goals was to reduce the

January 2016: BBC Trustees falsely claim that they dealt with the complaints on the baseline in their decision of June 2015.

In reality they had, in the June decision, said they would not consider any material outside the Woman's Hour output from a single day. They dismissed that complaint on the grounds that the Woman's Hour material did not mention mortality or a baseline, which other material clearly did. It was also clear that they had not addressed the cumulative effects, or that the BBC seemed to have failed to tell the public the actual pledges by world leaders, with any reasonable degree of prominence.

www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/ goal 2000



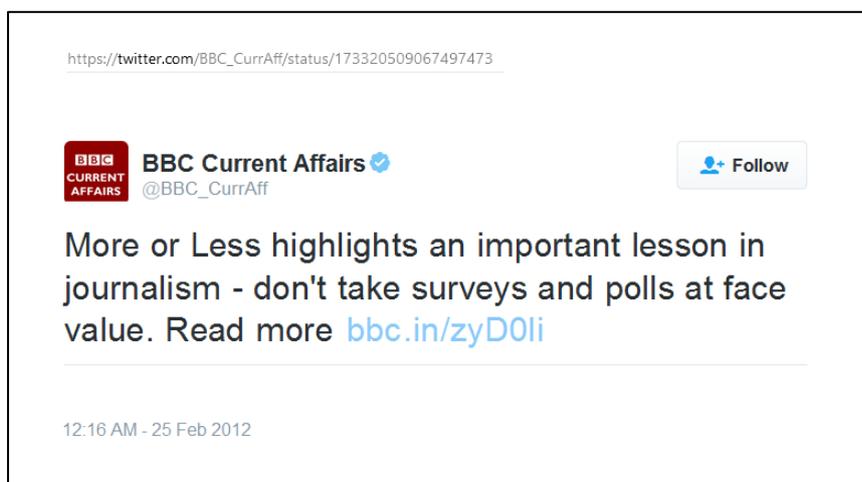
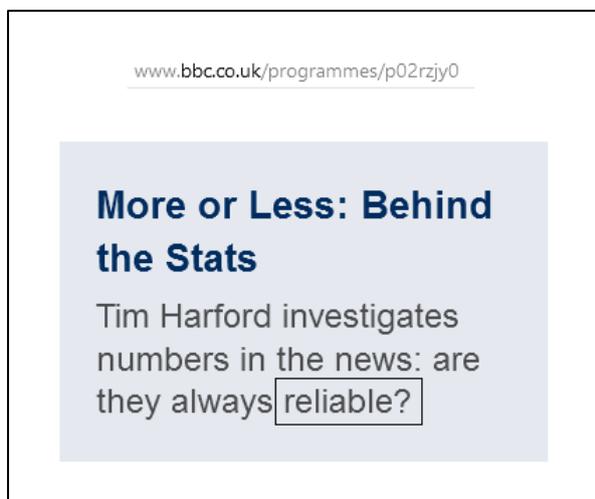
200m
people reached
through our
programmes around
the world

91%
of audiences agreed our programmes are
holding governments to account

BBC has repeatedly exaggerated World Bank research thoroughness: The BBC's fictional "basket of food" and other inaccuracies

The BBC presents its radio programme More or Less as, for example, "statistical sleuths" who "never peddle subprime numbers". What is bizarre has been not only its failure to explain what the "vital goal" on extreme poverty is, and not only its failure to challenge the World Bank with common criticisms, but also its exaggeration of how thorough the World Bank method is. The facts seem to reveal a staggering avoidance of the truth, and a contravening of the programme's claimed standards.

More or Less does not seem to have asked whether the "dollar a day" claims were reliable, until July 2015 - three years into a series of exchanges about the complaint that it had failed to do so in this case.



In the real world, two criticisms of official "extreme poverty" claims are:

- 1: The "dollars a day" are not based on prices faced by the poor;
2. They ignore changing needs.

These are important facts. The flaws also apply to influential "studies" claiming which policies are "good" for the poor.

More or Less is a programme whose presenter/scriptwriter/resident economic expert is an economist who worked at the World Bank in the mid-2000s. He returned there to give a seminar, and chair a conference session in 2014. He has written a book subtitled "Why the rich are rich, the poor are poor...".

So you might expect the team to get the basic facts right about the World Bank poverty claims.

But instead of noting the simple facts about the official numbers, the More or Less team misled a global audience. They wrongly claimed the World Bank economists "calculated" what people could "afford" - a "basket of food".

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.bbc.co.uk/search/?q=poverty&search_form=in-page-search-form. The BBC logo is visible, along with navigation links for News, Sport, Weather, Capital, Future, and Shop. A search bar contains the word "poverty".

On the left, a "Categories" sidebar lists various content types with their respective counts:

- All Results (24,027)
- News (20,598)
- TV & Radio Programmes (1,112)
- TV & Radio Sites (893)
- Blogs (458)
- Sport (310)
- Learning (155)
- Local (archive) (140)
- About the BBC (50)
- History (23)
- Music (22)
- iPlayer (6)
- Films (5)
- Food (3)

The main content area features an "Editor's Choice" section with two news items:

- Mapping child poverty in England**: A news article with a map of England showing high poverty rates in 2010. The text says: "Discover which areas of England faced the highest child poverty rates in 2010".
- The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic**: A news article with a photo of a person in a field. The text says: "Knowing how many people live on less than \$1 a day has helped fuel anti-poverty campaigns - but has the statistic harmed or helped?".

At the bottom, a "News" section indicates "20,598 results >".

On 8 December 2012 the editor of More or Less accepted that the World Bank did not use prices faced by the poor for its "extreme poverty" claims, but national prices.

But in that case, it should be obvious that More or Less' whole story collapses. The economists did not "calculate". They took prices from the comparisons of whole economies, and national consumer prices. The nonsense about economists using "household surveys" and "census data" to calculate prices - which in fact come from sales outlets, not households - misrepresents what the World Bank economists actually wrote. They in fact said those things are used in the whole process, not to "calculate" "how much money you would need".

But the World Bank team actually said, in the long version of their methodology paper:

"Global poverty measurement combines data from virtually all branches of the statistical system. The measures reported here bring together national poverty lines, household surveys, census data, national accounts and both national and international price data."

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/526541468262138892/pdf/WPS4703.pdf>

They did not say they "calculated" what people could afford.

They did not say they looked at "hundreds of prices".

They did not say they used household surveys to see what a basket would cost.

They did not say they used a "basket of food".

They did not say they used a "basket of essential goods".

The editor accepted that the economists used national prices.

So it was obvious that More or Less' story was not true.

9 March 2012, More or Less article which BBC promoted until early 2016 as its only "Editor's Choice" on international poverty:

"Ravallion and his colleagues"

[ie the dollar-a-day team]

"at the World Bank were not talking about what you could buy if you took an American dollar to a bank and converted it into Indian rupees or Nigeria naira.

A US dollar does go quite a long way in some developing countries.

Instead, the economists calculated a specially-adjusted dollar"

[Untrue. They took the rates from a project comparing whole economies]

"using something called Purchasing Power Parity, or PPP."

They [!] looked at the price of hundreds of goods

[Misleading: they in fact took the existing price ratios for whole economies]

"in developing countries.

And then with reference to national accounts, household surveys

[Bizarre mistake for a team including an economist to make. The prices come from shops, not households.]

"and census data,"

[Odd. Census data are not essentially related to how much money you would need - especially as the World Bank amount is per person, taking no notice of how many children's meals are required.]

"they [!] calculated how much money you would need in each country to buy a comparable basket of essential goods"

[Untrue. That is precisely what critics of the World Bank claims say correctly was not done. The BBC removed the word "essential" in November 2012, but left it in the Spanish version and the podcast. The meaning is still there: the words clearly indicate that prices were researched for the poorest when they were not.]

"that would cost you \$1 in the USA."

You were under the global poverty line if you couldn't afford that basket.

[There is no such basket]

"It's still a reality of life"

[! - Misleading. The statistics take no account of changing need for rent, food, medicine, debt repayments, travel, or anything else. They do not tell us about the "reality of life".]

"for 13% of people in China; 47.5% in Sub-Saharan Africa; 36% in South Asia; 14% in East Asia and the Pacific; 6.5% in Latin America and the Caribbean. Almost 1.3bn people in total.

And surprisingly perhaps, people who live on \$1 a day do not spend all of it on that basket of food"

[There is no "basket of food".]

2 November 2012: More or Less editor Richard Vadon acknowledges the complaint.

3 November 2012: More or Less broadcasts more fiction, having just been told that the World

Bank does not consider any consumption-need trend.

"We look at how poverty is measured across the world."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0104h4dh>

Audio:

"...to make international comparisons you need to measure poverty in absolute terms. This is where the poverty line depends on a minimum acceptable standard of living - whether you've got enough money [!] to have a certain level [!] of shelter, clothing and health care, for example."

Comment: That would make some sense, if More or Less had not then gone on to claim that the World Bank line was an example of an "absolute" line.

"And this is a constant [!] across countries so it's more easily comparable."

Comment: It is not clear what is a "constant" across countries. The amount in the pretend dollars is "constant" - provided the conversions are sensible and reliable. But people's food, accommodation, water quality and so on vary across countries. It is not clear how to compare different things in different countries. Inevitably, researchers have to make their own choices about what is equivalent. But also, people's needs vary - which is not taken into account.

The BBC's implied message that the World Bank takes into account "*enough money to have a certain level [!] of shelter, clothing and health care*" is fantasy. There is no "certain level" of these things in any case.

"The most common measure of absolute poverty is living on less than a dollar 25 a day."

In reality there are no "international comparisons" looking at "enough money" for "a certain level" of shelter or health care. There is no "certain level" of shelter that you can sensibly say is equivalent in a city slum versus a village. In reality, the World Bank researchers said the surveys omitted the value of living in your own home, and do not cover state services. More or Less implied the opposite.

8 November 2012: BBC More or Less editor accepts that World Bank "dollar a day" economists in fact used national inflation rates, not prices faced by the poor.

He agrees the word "essential" "could be misunderstood".

The BBC removes it from the English version of the page of 9 March 2012. However, it leaves content meaning the same thing, including the fictional "basket of food"; leaves the Spanish version and the podcast unchanged, and appears to breach the rules by not acknowledging the change and leaving the wrong date on the altered page.

10 November 2012 (US time): New More or Less story to accompany the broadcast of 3 November uses the same word in a paraphrase of the previous article.

BBC then removes the word.

However, as in the other content it leaves the same meaning.

Since the "dollar a day" economists in fact used national prices for inflation, it is obvious that More or Less' story is likely to be fiction - which it is.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://newsdiffs.org/diff/96619/96817/www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20255904>. The page title is "NewsDiffs | Diffing: Is one in eight Australians really poor?". The main heading is "Comparing: Is one in eight Australians really poor?". Below the heading is the URL <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20255904>. There are two bullet points: "Pink: Archived November 10, 2012 at 7:46pm EDT" and "Green: Archived November 11, 2012 at 3:28am EDT". Below the bullet points is the text "No previous revision | All changes | Later revision =>". The main content of the page is a diff between two versions of a BBC article. The article title is "Are one in eight Australians really poor?". The date is "10 November 2012". The text of the article is: "A recent study says that one in eight Australians are living in poverty. This seems quite high for a developed country, so what's behind it? [...]. Instead, the economists calculated a specially-adjusted dollar using something called Purchasing Power Parity, or PPP. They looked at the price of hundreds of goods in developing countries. And then with reference to national accounts, household surveys and census data, they calculated how much money you would need in each country to buy a comparable basket of essential goods that would cost you \$1 in the United States. Over the years, the \$1 a day poverty line has been recalibrated. The World Bank's global poverty line measure is now not \$1, but \$1.25 a day. [...].". At the bottom of the page is the copyright notice "© NewsDiffs 2012 | @newsdiffs | Subscribe".

16 May 2014: More or Less presents Chief Economist of World Bank as voice of reason, saying that a "think-tank's" claims don't look at prices faced by the poor.

But that is exactly what the World Bank has been doing - a far more important point. The audience

is not told directly that the World Bank has prices faced by the poor, but there seems no reason for people not to think the guest means it does.

3 July 2015: More or Less again misleads. It talks about the World Bank line being set at the *"amount the World Bank thinks you need...to have basic needs met"*; and says it does *"calculations to try to adjust for economic conditions [?] and prices [?] in every country"*.

As I explained to the More or Less team in 2012 - and as should have been clear to the ex-World Bank presenter/scriptwriter - the prices used do not relate to having "basic needs met". The World Bank did not "adjust" for economic conditions such as how many people were adults, or how many needed to pay for transport to work or accommodation away from home.

Unanswered complaint, August 2015:

Complaints

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Make A Complaint

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Thank you for completing all the details on this form. Please check your complaint and use the "Edit these details" buttons if necessary. Do not use your browser's back button because it will lose the information you have entered.

Please print this page now if you wish to retain a copy. Then scroll down to "SUBMIT YOUR COMPLAINT".

Your Complaint

Type of complaint: Radio

Choose station: World Service Radio

Complaint category: Factual error or inaccuracy

Contacted us before: No

Complaint title: Misleading on UN pledges

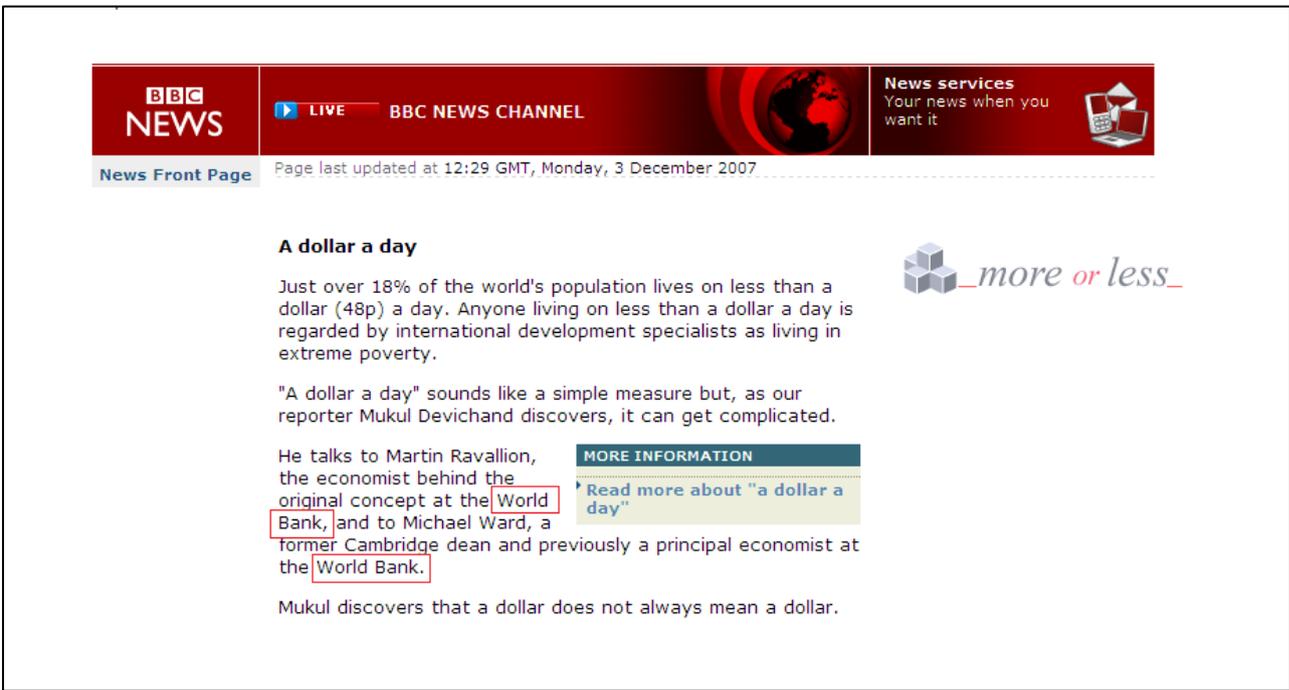
Complaint description: Major matter. Please see CAS-3340770, 3430579. More or Less 3/7/15; related text. Failed to correct error that UN members are committed only to relevant MDG targets. More or Less 10/3/12 stated that in 2000 members agreed "1990-2015". In fact 2000 baseline: c.3.5 M child deaths in 2015; MDG target is 1990-2015, 4.3 M. Widely-distributed 3/7/15 programme/podcast descriptions - signposts for audience: "at Summit UN set 8 goals [...]...They [...] became known as MDGs...how did we do?". Programme does not look at Summit goals, though guest said did not want document to be forgotten. Instead of reporting baseline scandal or correcting errors after complaints, BBC featured ex-civil servant who agreed baseline change without Assembly authority. Other guest is ex-UN, heads UN expert group, co-leads UNDP survey. Telling general public the truth could be difficult for both. \$1.25 was "lowered" from US-inflation-adjusted \$1.45. UN says hunger "almost halved" but UN stats:1991:18.6%, 2001:14.9%, 2015:10.9%. "Amount WB thinks you need...to have basic needs met [...]...calc'ns to try to adjust for econ conditions [...] and prices [...] in every country": may mislead, perhaps not well sourced. What evidence that WB adjust for needs, costs, or prices faced by poor? On prices and need see the largely unanswered complaint to Richard Vadon 1 November 2012 and comments on ECU provisional response 1300394. Guests, BBC were informed in 2000/2/c.2003 of MDG problem: stats look better if poor die.

BBC "assesses" World Bank/UN claims using contributors with Bank/UN ties. BBC Trustees falsely claim the complaint was about bias of one presenter, ignoring complaint of "imbalance of contributors"

From 2007 onwards More or Less has used an unreasonable proportion of contributors with official ties to comment on World Bank/UN statistics.

December 2007 programme segment on World Bank statistics: The main presenter/scriptwriter (although the section was presented by a reporter) is an ex-World Bank economist.

The guests are a World Bank economist and an ex-World Bank economist.



BBC NEWS **LIVE** BBC NEWS CHANNEL **News services** Your news when you want it

News Front Page Page last updated at 12:29 GMT, Monday, 3 December 2007

A dollar a day

Just over 18% of the world's population lives on less than a dollar (48p) a day. Anyone living on less than a dollar a day is regarded by international development specialists as living in extreme poverty.

"A dollar a day" sounds like a simple measure but, as our reporter Mukul Devichand discovers, it can get complicated.

He talks to Martin Ravallion, the economist behind the original concept at the World Bank, and to Michael Ward, a former Cambridge dean and previously a principal economist at the World Bank.

Mukul discovers that a dollar does not always mean a dollar.

MORE INFORMATION
Read more about "a dollar a day"

 *more or less*

More or Less broadcast and article, 3 and 9 March 2012: The presenter/scriptwriter is the same ex-World Bank economist - who subsequently returned to speak at and chair a conference session at the World Bank.

<https://twitter.com/DoNoHarmBlog/status/184981792242143232>



DoNoHarmBlog
@DoNoHarmBlog



 Follow

A debate on the \$1/day poverty line, featuring Martin Ravallion, Lant Pritchett, Abhijit Banerjee & Jonathan Morduch:



Dollar benchmark: The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic - BBC News

Knowledge of how many people live on less than \$1 a day has helped fuel anti-poverty campaigns - but has the statistic done more harm than good?
bbc.co.uk

1:34 PM - 28 Mar 2012

The article features:

- the originator of the "dollar a day" line at the World Bank,
- an ex-World Bank economist who proposes a similar line at a higher level,
- a World Bank partner economist who went on to be listed on the World Bank list of experts, and has used the "dollar a day" line; and
- an ex-chair of the UN expert group on poverty statistics - another ex-World Bank economist who had edited a World Bank journal.

From 2012 to 2016 the BBC has failed to respond to repeated complaints on "imbalance of

contributors" in More or Less output of 2007, 2012, 2014 (two editions) and 2015 - all dealing with the World Bank "dollar a day".

The "big critic" of the World Bank line

On 3 March 2012, in a World Service broadcast, the ex-World Bank economist presenter referred to one of the ex-World Bank economist guests as a "big critic" of the World Bank line.

But in reality he was not here a critic of "how poverty is measured" - which was what the BBC said the programme was about. He in fact argued for a similar line - bizarrely omitting any changing needs - at a higher level.

In reality he represented the *older World Bank view* of encouraging "economic growth" rather than getting "transfers" to the poor.

For the BBC to claim this was an "assessment" of "how poverty is measured" would be to twist words from what ordinary listeners would think was meant.

The BBC question about whether the line could have "done more harm than good" was basically presented as asking whether to help the poor or the economy - not fundamentally anything to do with poverty "measurement".

The guest was saying the line gave publicity to the poor. He meant that the official line gave an emphasis on helping the poorest, which in his idea, was the wrong way to help them. He was saying there was too much emphasis on helping the poorest.

Unsurprisingly, as time goes by, the older World Bank view represented by this guest is more and more discredited.

The ridiculousness of his view can be seen in the fact that land was allocated to people in communist China, which then provided a basis for later rises in living standards. It does not seem plausible to suggest that without this allocation of resources - which were clearly "transfers" to poor people, the progress of poor people in China would have been the same. It is widely recognised that grants to poor people in Brazil have had a significant effect.

Also, looking at the poorest - which the World Bank does not achieve properly because, among other things, it does not consider changing needs, and is based on surveys which in 2015 the World Bank methodology paper said were becoming less comparable to each other and so were a less reliable source of information over time - does not have to encourage "transfers" to the poor. It could involve removing barriers to their progress. Removing a legal obstacle to a fair wage is not a "transfer" - it is the removal of a "transfer" of poor people's labour to richer people without something fair in return.

A more sensible question is "has the way poverty is officially "measured" caused harm?".

More or Less obscured that question by giving a false impression over more than one programme - here a strange story - of economists gathering prices faced by the poor, and a false impression over more than one programme that the World Bank take into account needs for "shelter" and "health care".

In reality, as the complaint of 1 November 2012 stated, economists have used the same type of statistics - without prices or needs faced by the poor - to argue for policies. They have also used these statistics the wrong way, leaving out the dead among the "extreme poor" - the statistics look better if the poor die. The statistics on "income" or "expenditure" or "own produce" are not trustworthy in any case, as was known by academics in the early 2000s. They omit changes in people's assets or debts. This is a scandal, and the topic of "how poverty is measured" would shed light on it. Instead, More or Less with its guests who had worked with or at the World Bank managed to avoid the real problems.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22935692

GETTY IMAGES

In most cases, the problem could be resolved through nutrition education, Black says.

In some cultures, women don't get to eat the best food in the household, which can mean children are born underweight. Milk and meat may also be avoided for cultural reasons, as they are in parts of India for example. And sometimes it's just not fully appreciated how important fruit and vegetables are.

A quarter of the deaths can be attributed to inadequate breast-feeding, Professor Black estimates, -with many families not realising that, up to six months of age, babies need to be exclusively fed on breast milk for the nutrients it provides, but also because it protects them from exposure to contaminated food.

So there's a much more complicated picture than the headline statistic - that one child dies every 10 seconds because of hunger - suggests.

But you have to simplify a message if you are to get people's attention, according to Jack Lundie.

"Yes, it may be that in what we would call our top-line messaging you don't get all the information about the entire problem, but I don't think it would be realistic to expect that to happen from a very short piece of communication.

"In terms of creating a conversation in which people can be informed, you first have to get their attention - their emotional attention. People are very busy so you need an instantly accessible understanding to open a conversation."

More from the Magazine



It's shocking to learn how many people live on less than \$1 day - and regular publication of the figures over the last two decades has helped fuel anti-poverty campaigns. But could the statistic actually have done more harm than good?

"It's a wildly successful PR device that I think has been a failure in terms of achieving the objectives of improving human well-being in the world," says Lant Pritchett, an ex-World Bank economist who is now Professor of the Practice of International Development at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

He argues that it has put a focus on philanthropy more than long-term development - applying a sticking plaster rather than solving the problem.

The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic

2015: BBC fails to respond to complaints on imbalance of contributors in programmes on MDGs, including on More or Less of 3 July 2015:

"Instead of reporting baseline scandal [ie UN and governments falsely giving impression that leaders in 2000 only agreed the easier MDG targets] or correcting errors after complaints, BBC featured ex-civil servant who agreed baseline change without Assembly authority.

Other guest is ex-UN, heads UN expert group, co-leads UNDP survey."

January 2016: BBC Trustees falsely claim the original complaint was that the presenter was biased.

Like the BBC at all stages, Trustees fail to address the actual complaint of:

"Economist and Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances, including presenter. Links unbalanced."

2016: More or Less programme dealing with reliability of UN statistics introduces a guest as with the "campaigning" Data2x and "at the Center for Global Development".

In fact she is also at the UN Foundation - whose stated aim is to support the UN.

BBC failure "since 2000" to describe "main"/"vital"/"world's number one" development target accurately

A 2000-9 World Service series confused real and "purchasing power parity" dollars throughout. As I stated in 2012, it misled the audience in one segment that the World Bank had taken into account the cost of basics in its claims of a global poverty decline. As with many complaints, the BBC failed to reply.

Documentary: A Dollar A Day - Series One



Less than a dollar a day is a phrase we are all familiar with, but **what does it really mean?** Mike Wooldridge travels to Kenya, Peru, India, Ghana and China



BBC Radio 4

10 March 2012

Did you know that the dollar in the 'dollar a day' poverty measure is not a US dollar but a special dollar concocted by World Bank economists, which has different values in different countries?

In fact, the measure used by the World Bank is now \$1.25 a day.

More or Less presenter Tim Harford assesses how global poverty is measured, and asks how useful a benchmark is the 'dollar a day' global poverty line?

Hear the full report by downloading the More or Less podcast: <http://bbc.in/o1kAZb>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>



The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic

Knowledge of how many people live on less than \$1 a day has helped fuel anti-poverty campaigns - but has the statistic done more harm than good?

BBC NEWS

3 March 2012: According to the BBC, the ex-World Bank economist presenter "assesses" how "poverty is measured" by the World Bank.

In fact - in an unusual choice for this programme - he does not "assess" how the World Bank make their claims, simply saying "there we are, the target's been met". The programme contains a false story of economists collecting prices faced by the poor.

What appear to be critical comments, such as what the producer/reporter claims the team "discovered" about reported global progress being mostly in China, are in fact largely in the World Bank press release.

The programme's so-called "big critic" of the dollar-a-day line is in fact promoting the older World Bank view: that economic growth is better for the poor than getting "transfers" to them. His view is nothing to do with "how global poverty is measured" - he in fact promotes a similar line at a

higher level.

The BBC fails to mention the present or past World Bank connections of the presenter/scriptwriter and two contributors. The others are long-term present and past World Bank economists.

BBC fail to challenge reliability of official statistics with reasonable prominence

Incredibly, the BBC's main programme about truth and statistics questioned a "think tank" claim on global poverty, but not the official claims - until 2015, when it did feature a guest doubting them.

It was in 2003 that I first told the BBC academics thought the World Bank claims unreliable. The BBC removed the "doubting" episode without acknowledgement, in an apparent breach of its own standards. Is there no More or Less content available giving any reason to doubt the official claims?

Here is More or Less doing what it usually does - asking whether a claim "stacks up". It is a striking contrast to its general approach to the World Bank claims: on 3 March 2012, the ex-World Bank presenter said, "there we are, the target's been met". That programme did point out a slower reported fall at higher money amounts and a bunching up of people around the "poverty line" - which was in the World Bank's own information being distributed with its news release.

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01ys3t5

Did the number of people around the world living in extreme poverty fall by half a few weeks ago? That is one interpretation of newly released figures for purchasing power parity around the world. The figures compiled by the International Comparison Programme of the World Bank show that in a lot of poorer countries, things are cheaper than we had thought. **One development think tank has suggested** that if people in these countries can afford to buy more, fewer of them will fall under the World Bank's definition of extreme poverty. **We take a look at the argument to see if it stacks up**, and whether the World Bank should be lowering its estimates for global poverty in light of the new figures.

Available now
🕒 11 minutes

https://twitter.com/BBC_CurrAff/status/173320509067497473

 **BBC Current Affairs** ✓
@BBC_CurrAff

[Follow](#)

More or Less highlights an important lesson in journalism - don't take surveys and polls at face value. Read more bbc.in/zyD0li

12:16 AM - 25 Feb 2012

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02rzjy0

More or Less: Behind the Stats

Tim Harford investigates numbers in the news: are they always reliable?



Globalization of Poverty and the New World Or... (Paperback)
by Michel Chossudovsky

The entire "one dollar a day" framework is totally removed from an examination of real life situations. No need to analyse household expenditures on food, shelter and social services; no need to observe concrete conditions in impoverished villages or urban slums. In the World Bank framework, the "estimation" of poverty indicators has become a numerical exercise, which usefully serves to conceal the globalization of poverty.

The United Nations' Poverty Figures

The United Nations echoes World Bank falsehoods. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Group claims without supporting evidence that "the progress in reducing poverty over

2000: Richard Douthwaite article in the Guardian, with support from Ray Thomas of the Open University, questions World Bank use of statistics to infer poverty levels.

2003-2006:

Prominent dispute between "dollar a day" team and Pogge/Reddy on meaningfulness of the statistics, covered by George Monbiot in The Guardian.

I warn BBC that World Bank "income" statistics are viewed by academics as unreliable.

Jan Vandemoortele, one of the "MDG architects", says the same.

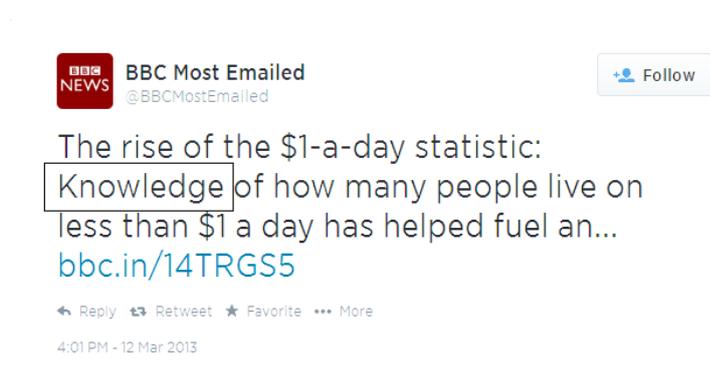
November 2007:

Sanjay Reddy letter in Financial Times (for which the ex-World Bank presenter/scriptwriter of More or Less writes leader articles, presumably with an interest in World Bank poverty claims) questions meaning of World Bank "poverty" statistics.

December 2007: BBC More or Less gives wrong impression that World Bank do estimate how much simple food the poor can afford with the "dollar".

2012: Complaint that More or Less of 2012 has not questioned reliability of World Bank "extreme poverty" claims. and that More or Less did not relate the World Bank claims to real life (as it does with other claims).

Instead of pointing out that the figures have been known for many years to be unreliable, the BBC promotes the idea that they provide "knowledge" - even after the editor accepted on 8 November 2012 that the World Bank used national inflation rates, which means they do not consider inflation rates for the poor:



3 July 2015: Following the messages to the BBC in 2003-6, the complaint of 2012 and the concern expressed in 2013 by the "High Level Panel of Eminent Persons" including David Cameron, More or Less claim "we discover" MDG statistics are unreliable.



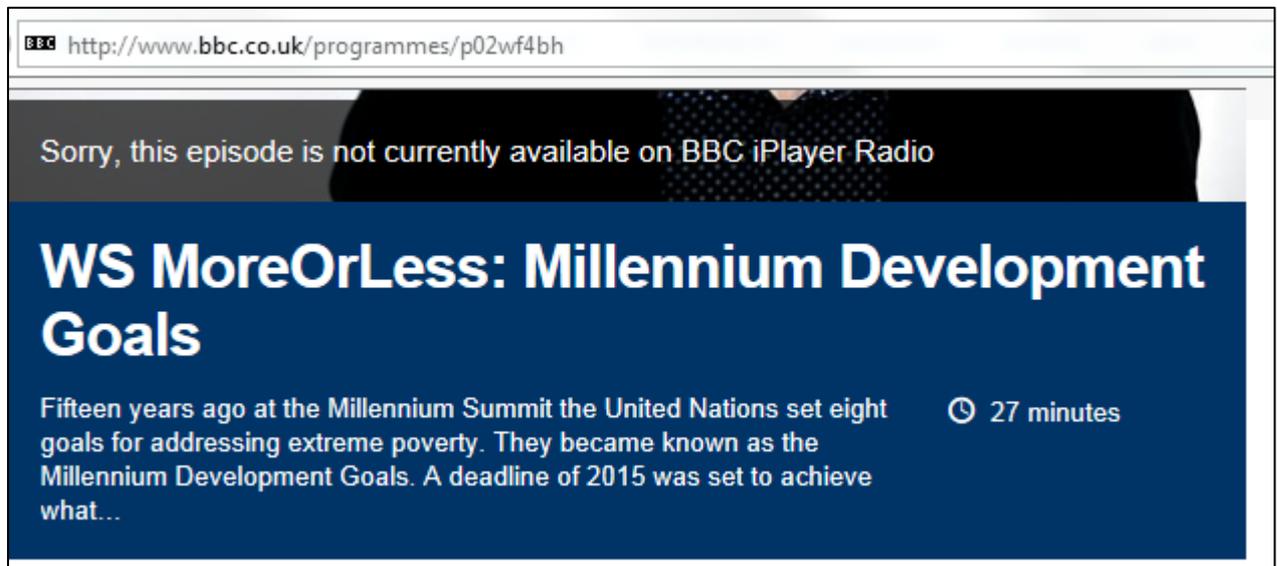
August 2015 - before the UN Summit:

BBC breaches clear guidance by removing the audio of the More or Less edition of 3 July 2015 from both iPlayer and the podcast list without explanation.

While removing the useful information, it leaves uncorrected the text misleading the public that leaders in 2000 pledged the easier 25-year targets.

In 2016 the BBC has not answered the complaints that More or Less misled in this edition, or that the BBC removed the audio.

It is misleading to state that the UN set "eight goals" "fifteen years ago" which became known as MDGs.





Stuart Harris @StuartHarris14 · [14 Sep 2015](#)

[@BBCMoreOrLess](#) have you deleted the **MDG** episode? Can't find it in the feed. Really good episode, would like to listen again



Carl Johan von Seth @carljohan_vs 25 Sep 2015

[@BBCMoreOrLess](#) Earlier this year, I listened to an episode on measuring the UN's Millennium goals, but I can't seem to find it now.

BBC exaggerates World Bank claim of progress; after complaint, presenter does so again

After a complaint about the same thing in the programme of 3 March 2012, the BBC More or Less presenter, an ex-World Bank economist, repeats his exaggeration of the World Bank claim.

He again uses the wrong dollar level (\$1/day in 2005 "PPP" dollars) which purports to give a faster fall in poverty than the World Bank's actual line of PPP\$1.25. There is no questioning of why a fixed amount of money is appropriate for different people's needs:



The Undercover
Economist Strikes Back
by Tim Harford

we've achieved that goal: in 1990, 31 per cent of the population of the developing world lived on less than a dollar a day; by 2008, the proportion had fallen to 14 per cent. It's real progress.

20 November 2015: Complaint that BBC underrepresents criticism of World Bank statistics

https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=TE4G20GHMJSQQFVHQ68GIT8GK4&uid=193134851#anchor

Complaint title: Inaccurate and imbalanced in context of BBC output

Complaint description: It seems that CAS-3561236-D8SQR0 was submitted within the 30-working-day period, so I request a response. I wish to complain also about this page: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34490054> . The categorical statement "Fewer than 10% of the world's population now live in extreme poverty" has an unclear factual basis, since this is essentially a matter of opinion rather than verifiable fact; in this case there are no estimates of changing need or inflation faced. It seems to contribute further to imbalance of BBC coverage on progress on global poverty towards World Bank sources. It is difficult to see much in BBC output to counterbalance the official claims.

www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/33382023

In the year 2000, countries around the world joined together to start the biggest ever effort to tackle global problems.

It was the start of a new millennium, which marks a thousand years. **Global leaders** agreed that we should all do more to fight poverty, so that the new millennium would be better than the last.

189 countries agreed to work together to achieve eight big goals by 2015 - called the **Millennium Development Goals**.

2016: Trustees wrongly claim they had dealt with this in their decision of 19 January 2016.

In reality they did not even deal with the suggestion of "systematic bias" from specific inaccuracies and imbalances within one programme.

Since the appeal they were supposed to be deciding was requested on 18 August 2015, it clearly did not include the complaints about material around the time of the UN Summit of 25 September.

Water: BBC makes governments look better, through more than one inaccuracy. BBC understates the UN water pledge and the MDG target. It repeats the UN propaganda that the statistics are on "clean" or "safe" water, even after complaints. The BBC even exaggerates the UN propaganda claim about progress.

6 March 2012:



History:

A 2004 BBC news story (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3601350.stm>) linked to a UN document.

The document provides information which is not in the headline UN announcements, even in 2015, about progress on supposedly "clean" or "safe" water.

The UN headline claims about MDG success have been that a "safe" water target was met. In fact the statistics are on what are called "improved" sources of water. This refers to the type of source, not water quality.

The UN headline reports ignored the MDG target's reference to sustainable access. They ignored the Millennium pledge's requirement that the water should be affordable.

The BBC linked in 2004 to the UN document which stated:

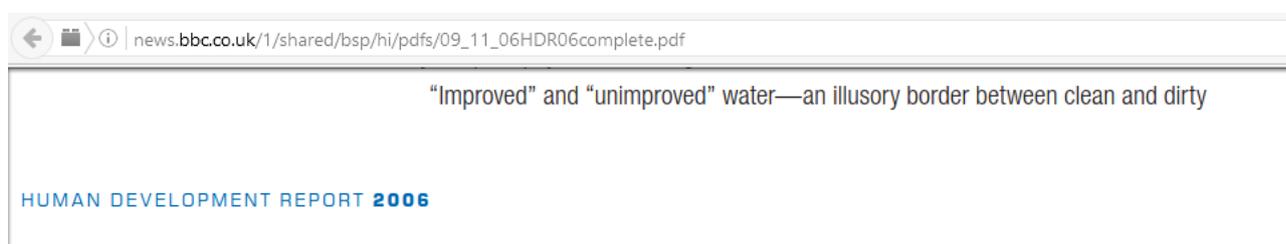
"Using improved water sources, such as a protected spring or well within a reasonable walking distance, provides substantial health benefits. But hygiene may still be compromised and water may

be contaminated in transport and storage."

news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/26_08_04_unwaterdoc.pdf

In 2006 the UN Human Development Report, another document available via the BBC website, referred to the distinction between "improved" and "unimproved" as an "illusory border between clean and dirty [water]".

[The UN authors referred to "improved water" rather than "improved water *source*" which is what the actual MDG indicator refers to.]



Even the contents list for the 2006 document makes the situation clear:

A screenshot of a PDF document showing a table of contents. The browser address bar shows the URL: news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06HDR06complete.pdf. The table of contents lists various sections and their corresponding page numbers.

<u>The data systematically underreport the scale of the deficit</u>	36
The human development costs of the crisis	41
Worsening income poverty—the wealth effect of the crisis	41
Retarding improvements in child mortality rates—the deadly link at birth	42
Spawning lifecycle disadvantages	45
Raising wider health costs	45
Hurting girls' education	47
Exacerbating time-poverty and gender inequality	47
Undermining human dignity	48
The crisis hits the poor hardest—by far	48
The poor account for most of the deficit	48
<u>The poor pay more—and more than they can afford</u>	51

munity has failed to prioritize water and sanitation in the partnerships for development that have coalesced around the Millennium Development Goals. Underlying each of these problems is the fact that the people suffering the most from the water and sanitation crisis—poor people in general and poor women in particular—often lack the political voice needed to assert their claims to water.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06HDR06complete.pdf

Many countries demonstrate the imperfect relationship between wealth and the provision of water and sanitation. The Philippines has a

The data systematically underreport the scale of the deficit

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06HDR06complete.pdf

The distinction between improved and unimproved is clear-cut and convenient for international reporting purposes. It is also a deeply misleading guide to reality on the ground. In the

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06HDR06complete.pdf

Water source, improved, population with sustainable access to The share of the population with reasonable access to any of the following types of water supply for drinking: household connections, public standpipes, boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs and rainwater collection. *Reasonable access* is defined as the availability of at least 20 litres a person per day from a source within 1 kilometre of the user's dwelling.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06HDR06complete.pdf

6 March 2012:



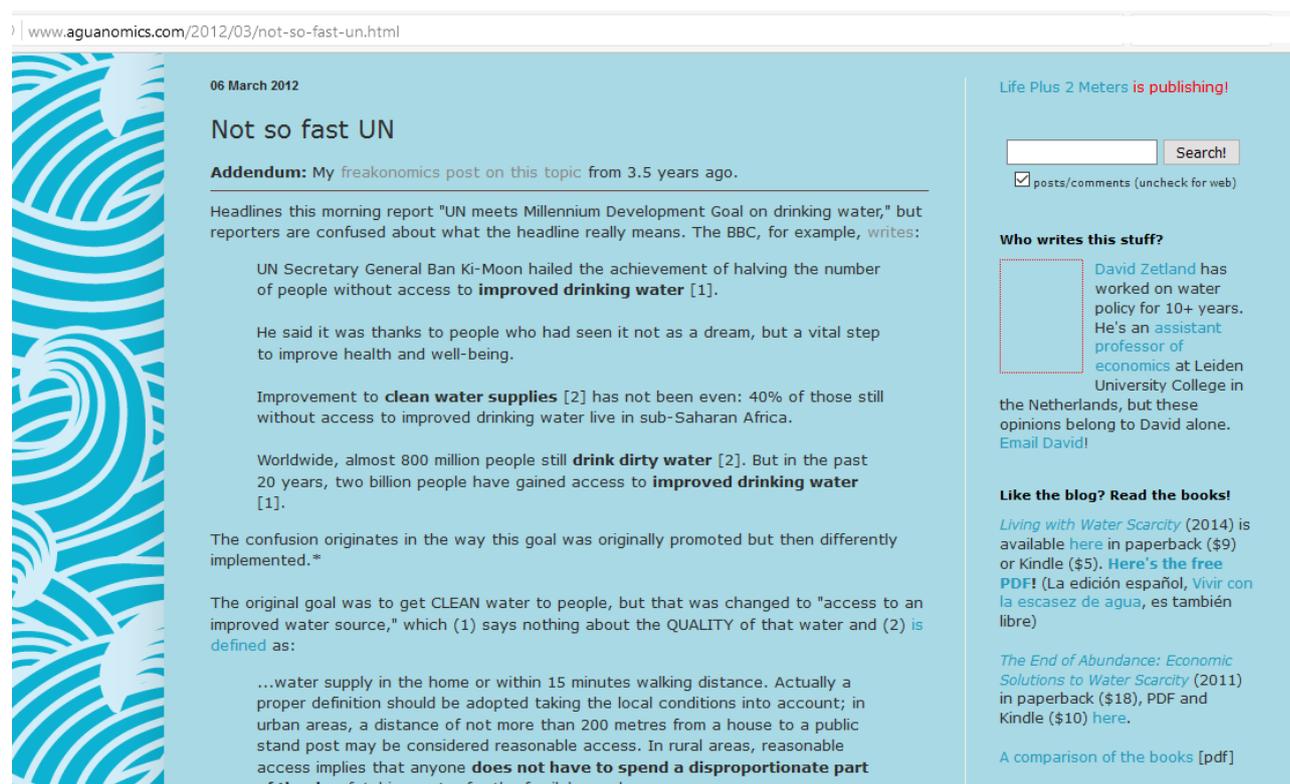
During this broadcast it was noted that the statistics are not actually on water quality.

But these news broadcasts are often shown in public places or workplaces, where the sound or the text of transcribed speech may not draw enough attention to the contradiction in what the BBC was saying. If the relevant BBC news team knew the safe water claim was not true, why did they broadcast it? Why was the wrong information given on the World Service, as stated by More or

Less, and by News Online as well as the World Service?

Also on 6 March 2012: **Members of the public challenge BBC reports on human access to water.**

The Guardian also pointed out that the statistics were not in fact on water quality.



www.aguanomics.com/2012/03/not-so-fast-un.html

06 March 2012

Not so fast UN

Addendum: My [freakonomics](#) post on this topic from 3.5 years ago.

Headlines this morning report "UN meets Millennium Development Goal on drinking water," but reporters are confused about what the headline really means. The BBC, for example, writes:

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon hailed the achievement of halving the number of people without access to **improved drinking water** [1].

He said it was thanks to people who had seen it not as a dream, but a vital step to improve health and well-being.

Improvement to **clean water supplies** [2] has not been even: 40% of those still without access to improved drinking water live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Worldwide, almost 800 million people still **drink dirty water** [2]. But in the past 20 years, two billion people have gained access to **improved drinking water** [1].

The confusion originates in the way this goal was originally promoted but then differently implemented.*

The original goal was to get CLEAN water to people, but that was changed to "access to an improved water source," which (1) says nothing about the QUALITY of that water and (2) is defined as:

...water supply in the home or within 15 minutes walking distance. Actually a proper definition should be adopted taking the local conditions into account; in urban areas, a distance of not more than 200 metres from a house to a public stand post may be considered reasonable access. In rural areas, reasonable access implies that anyone **does not have to spend a disproportionate part of the day** fetching water for the family's needs.

Life Plus 2 Meters is publishing!

posts/comments (uncheck for web)

Who writes this stuff?

 David Zetland has worked on water policy for 10+ years. He's an assistant professor of economics at Leiden University College in the Netherlands, but these opinions belong to David alone. [Email David!](#)

Like the blog? Read the books!

Living with Water Scarcity (2014) is available [here](#) in paperback (\$9) or Kindle (\$5). [Here's the free PDF!](#) (La edición español, *Vivir con la escasez de agua*, es también libre)

The End of Abundance: Economic Solutions to Water Scarcity (2011) in paperback (\$18), PDF and Kindle (\$10) [here](#).

[A comparison of the books \[pdf\]](#)



Florian Westphal @FlorianWestphal · 6 Mar 2012

"@aidworkerdaily: **BBC News - UN meets Millennium Development Goal on drinking water** bbc.in/yFkBXD" Good News, **misleading** headline



UN meets Millennium Development Goal on drinking water - BBC ...

The UN's Millennium Development Goal for access to clean water has been reached, ahead of the target date of 2015.

bbc.co.uk

BBC Newsround CBBC iPlayer CBBC on TV Bitesize

cbbc home shows games watch join in music

newsround

home news sport entertainment

This page was made on Wednesday 7th March 2012

Safe water targets set by the UN have been reached



The UN has met its targets to make sure 88% of the population has access to clean water.

In the last 20 years two billion more people have water that's safe to drink.

The Millennium Development Goal has been met ahead of the 2015 deadline but water charities say there's still lots of work to be done.

More news stories

10 March 2012: More or Less corrects a World Service report, but makes two wrong claims: that the MDG target has a 1990 baseline, and that the MDG structure (which has a 1990 baseline for other targets) was what the UN agreed in 2000.

The BBC leaves the misleading stories on the website.

14 May 2012: A BBC article by Roger Harrabin quotes experts as saying the true number of people without safe water may be 3-4 billion - five times the UN claim.



The image is a screenshot of a BBC News article page. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18020432. Below the address bar is the BBC logo and a 'Sign in' button. A navigation menu includes links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, and Radio. A prominent red banner features the word 'NEWS' in white. Below this, a secondary navigation bar lists categories: Home, UK, World, Business, Politics, Tech, Science, Health, Education, and Entertainment. The article's category, 'Science & Environment', is highlighted in red and underlined. The main headline reads 'Harrabin's Notes: Safe assumptions'. Below the headline, the date '14 May 2012' and the category 'Science & Environment' are displayed, along with a green 'Share' button. The article's opening text states: 'Put the champagne away! It seems that the number of people in the world without drinking water may be as much as five times higher than the UN has stated.'

12 July 2012: The BBC publishes a new story claiming "87%" of humans have access to "drinking water". Since data collection was less common in the past, the claim for the "increase" since 1992 is even more uncertain.

How the world changed since Eco92



Primary forest area on the planet has decreased by **300** million hectares
an area larger than Argentina



Access to drinking water has increased **13%***
and now covers 87% of the population



Access to sanitation has also increased **13%***
but is falling short of the UN Millennium Development Goal of 75%
- only 61% of the world population has access to improved sanitation*

*From 1992 to 2008

Source: Keeping track of our changing environment, UNEP 2011

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18505412>

BBC misleads schoolchildren

At some date after the UN MDG report of 2012, the BBC again referred to "clean water" statistics when clearly if some contaminated sources were among the so-called "improved sources", were likely to be an underestimate:



Revise



Test

MDG Report, 2012

The most immediate consequence of poverty is not having enough nutritious food to eat. Around 850 million people, 15.5% cent of the world's population are malnourished. Hunger and the risk of famine remain very high in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia outside of India. Nearly one child in five under the age of five in the developing world is underweight.

Poor housing

Today 863 million people are now estimated to be living in slums compared to 760 million in 2000 and 650 million in 1990. Of the world's population, 11% or 783 million people remain without access to clean drinking water. In India 626 million people, in China 14 million people and 7 million people in Brazil have no inside toilet facilities.

2013: The BBC makes a claim about "clean" water in a new story.

It responds to a complaint on 25 July 2013 by amending the story:

"4) The clean water reference has been changed to "improved sources of water"."
(Email from News Online, 25 July 2013)

The BBC apparently breaks its rules by failing to acknowledge several changes on various aspects of poverty reporting on the web pages.

2015: The BBC continues to mislead on "safe" water; exaggerates the made-up UN claim by telling audience the "number" has been halved:



Millennium Development Goals: What are they?

1 July 2015 Last updated at 02:27 BST



Search



The goals on poverty and clean water were met ahead of time

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'End poverty' - and 16 more UN Global Goals - BBC News



BBC News

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2,596 views

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👍 16 💬 27

Published on Oct 3, 2015

Ending poverty is one of 17 goals outlined by the UN to replace the Millennium Development Goals which expire at the end of this year. The 17 goals aim

Simple things like **safe** drinking water and a clean home are crucial for survival. but millions of people around the world don't have access to them.

In 2000, world leaders agreed to try and reduce the **number** of people suffering in this way **by half**.

This target **has been met**.

Since the goals were set, more than 200 million people have better access to clean water, and are living in cleaner, better quality houses. Now, more needs to be done so that everyone has the same.

In the year 2000, countries around the world joined together to start the biggest ever effort to tackle global problems.

It was the start of a new millennium, which marks a thousand years. **Global leaders** agreed that we should all do more to fight poverty, so that the new millennium would be better than the last.

189 countries agreed to work together to achieve eight big goals by 2015 - called the **Millennium Development Goals**.

Complaint of 4 May 2016 forwarded to Director-General's office:

Dear Ms Harris, Ms Cecil and World Service staff,

I regret that the BBC has repeated an error already corrected (please see the correspondence below). This seems to add to inaccuracy over time (please see the attached document).

A web page of 22 March 2016 states,

"It's estimated that 650 million people around the world still don't have access to clean water."

Business Matters

World Water Day - how music can improve sanitation

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03npvx9>

Yet those numbers refer to "improved sources", not clean water. As the evidence in the attached document shows, the official experts are unable to state that the figures for clean water are anywhere near as low as that.

But what is far more worrying is the BBC's continued failure to address complaints on matters relevant to the public's ability to hold governments to account.

8 August 2016: BBC continues to mislead.



At least **76 million** people live without **safe** drinking water in India...

"Huge amount" of BBC output confused "dollars a day" with real dollars worth far more

[BBC News - Angola country profile - Overview - BBC.com](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13036732)

www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13036732 ▾

Economy: One of Africa's leading oil producers, but most people still live on less than **US \$1 a day**. Experiencing a post-war reconstruction boom; International: ...

[BBC NEWS | Americas | Task for new Guatemalan president](http://www.bbc.com/2/hi/americas/7081312.stm)

www.bbc.com/2/hi/americas/7081312.stm ▾

Nov 6, 2007 - Over half of Guatemala's 13-million-strong population lives on less than **US\$2 a day**. Analysts say he will be hard-pressed to find the public ...

[BBC News - 'Pollination crisis' hitting India's vegetable farmers](http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-11418033)

www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-11418033 ▾

Sep 28, 2010 - ... to live below the poverty level, which - under the UN's Millennium Development Goals - refers to people who live on less than **US\$1 a day**.

[New dawn for Liberia's 'blood forests' - BBC News](http://www.bbc.com/2/hi/science/nature/6035617.stm)

www.bbc.com/2/hi/science/nature/6035617.stm ▾

Oct 12, 2006 - Underpinning it all is poverty, with few citizens apart from the super-rich in their fortified Monrovia mansions earning more than **US\$2 per day**.

[China 'unfairly seen as eco-villain' - BBC News](http://www.bbc.com/2/hi/science/nature/8100988.stm)

www.bbc.com/2/hi/science/nature/8100988.stm ▾

Jun 16, 2009 - China is a developing country, in a sense that a substantial proportion of the people still live on less than **US\$1 a day**. Should we halt its growth ...

Below, the main More or Less page for the "dollar a day" tells readers to listen to a "Dollar a Day" series wrongly presenting earnings in real dollars in the context of talking about the World Bank "dollar a day". In fact real dollars are worth far more than the World Bank "dollars a day" - as More or Less itself explained on 3 December 2007, and in the same edition the page was about: 3 March 2012.

One episode of the documentary series also gave the impression that the World Bank took into account prices faced and amounts needed by extremely poor people. This is one of many points the BBC has failed to respond to.



Play now
10 mins

Last on

WORLD SERVICE Sat 3 Mar 2012
23:50 GMT
BBC World Service

See all previous episodes from
More or Less

More episodes

Living on less than a dollar a day

Tim Harford assesses how global poverty is measured as the World Bank releases the latest figures on the number of people living on less than a dollar a day.

What progress has been made, and how useful a benchmark... > SHOW MORE

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24 Share f t

Duration: 10 minutes

First broadcast: Saturday 03 March 2012

Documentary: A Dollar A Day - Series Two



What keeps a billion people trapped in the most persistent poverty? Mike Wooldridge travels to Nicaragua, Namibia and Nepal

Listen to the documentary series

Documentary: A Dollar A Day - Series One



Less than a dollar a day is a phrase we are all familiar with, but what does it really mean? Mike Wooldridge travels to Kenya, Peru, India, Ghana and China

Listen to the documentary series

Free downloads



More or Less: Behind the Stats

Tim Harford investigates numbers in the news. Numbers are used in every area of public debate. But...



Tim Harford: Pop-Up Ideas

Tim Harford - in the company of Malcolm Gladwell, David Kilcullen and Gillian Tett - uses key...

Related Links

- 1. Download this episode (mp3)
- 2. Download more episodes of More Or Less

The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic



"We intended to have some impact with it. Make well-heeled people realise how poor many people in the world are"

Read more on the BBC News website

Broadcasts

BBC WORLD SERVICE
Sat 3 Mar 2012
11:50 GMT
BBC World Service

BBC WORLD SERVICE
Sat 3 Mar 2012
18:50 GMT
BBC World Service

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Sat 3 Mar 2012
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I complained several times about this type of error from 2012 onwards. In 2013 and 2015, Hans Rosling presented statistics which the audiences would naturally take to mean real dollars but were in fact worth far less.

The BBC Editorial Complaints Unit made a related error in a published ruling in 2005. In 2014 the ECU was dealing with one programme which debunked its own error and another which made the same error as the ECU. I raised the possibility of a conflict of interest and informed the Trust when the ECU failed to reply. The head of editorial complaints promised a reply and did so after a year.

The BBC Trustees obscured the ECU's error by wrongly claiming I had raised the possibility of an ECU conflict of interest for a reason that made little sense: that the ECU had dealt with previous complaints from me. It had not.

I told the Trust of their inaccuracy. After seven weeks' "consideration" of this and other problems in the Trustees' text, they published the false information anyway, still omitting the apparent fact that the only time the Editorial Complaints Unit had dealt with the dollar a day, they had overstated its value by perhaps, in poor countries, 50 to 300 percent. (There is no true value, since it depends how you judge the value of different accommodation in different environments, dirty versus clean water, and so on; and because of odd features of the official method such as omitting the value of living in your own house rather than paying rent).

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrss1/episodes/downloads.rss

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[WS MoreOrLess: The Ignorance Test](#)
10 April 2015 01:00

Professor Hans Rosling - perhaps best-described as a kind of **international development myth buster** - delivers his Ignorance Test. Hans asked presenter Ruth Alexander three questions from the test. Can you do any better? This programme was first broadcast on the BBC World Service.

"Myth buster" uses wrong dollars, and BBC gives false impression that half the world's population has income of a real \$10 or less:

MUNDO

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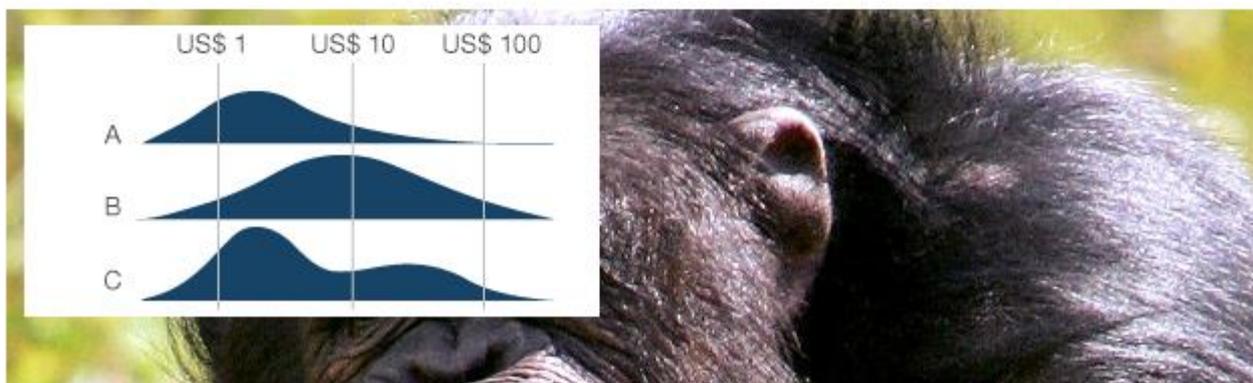
Test de ignorancia: ¿sabe usted más sobre el mundo que un chimpancé?

Redacción BBC

Domingo, 1 de diciembre de 2013



Test



Hans Rosling exaggerates official claims on "income" of world's poor and "middle billion": Wrong dollars, wrongly presented as reliable

May 2013: Hans Rosling in the Guardian rubbished World Bank "extreme poverty" claim of 1.3 billion people as "plus or minus half a billion".

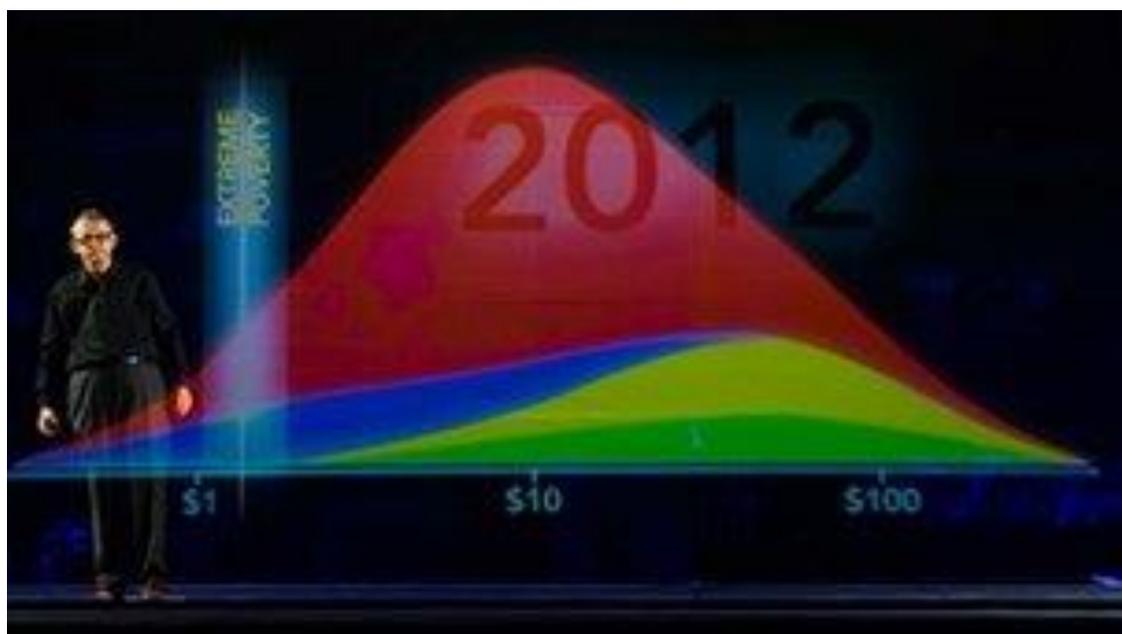
November 2013: He uses them on the BBC.

Despite his stated scepticism, he strangely claims he knows the middle billion are on "ten times" the dollar-a-day level.

The World Bank weak data puts it around 3.4 times.

He appears to have confused household surveys, which the "dollars a day" use, and GDP statistics which include more.

Apparently due to the same error, he puts the official "extreme poverty" line in the wrong place for his claim that over a billion people are to the left of it.



Unanswered Stage 2 complaint to the BBC, 20 May 2014:

"This [chart above] clearly does not represent a sixth of people as in extreme poverty."

It looks more like a sixteenth than a sixth.

Also: Africa here is blue. On 9 March 2012 BBC More or Less factcheckers gave the figure of 47.5% of Africans living below \$1 a day. The chart shows vastly fewer.

There is another problem with his presentation.

The audience would naturally assume the programme meant real dollars.

Accompanying web material more explicitly misinforms them that these are real dollars.

In fact these units are pretend dollars. They are supposed to be based on what a real dollar would buy in the US.

If people were on a real US dollar or ten US dollars, they would be, other things being equal, mostly far better off than they are in reality.

Taking the two errors about dollars into account, we can guess that in real dollars, the middle billion would be officially (on the basis of weak data and strange concepts) on nearer to \$2 a day than \$10.

Professor Rosling's source for the ten GDP dollars said in effect that the figure had to be perhaps halved to correspond to the World Bank units.

And the World Bank "purchasing power dollars" could be worth 1.6 to 4 times less in poor countries as real dollars - for both the "extreme poverty" line and the "middle billion".

The BBC did explicitly state the dollars were US dollars:

www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2013/12/131125_test_ignorancia_finde.shtml?p

5 / 9

¿Cuál gráfico muestra la distribución de ingresos en el mundo en la actualidad, medida en dólares ganados al día?

A
 B
 C

CORRECTO Es B: en el pasado nuestro mundo estaba claramente dividido en dos grupos -ricos y pobres- que correspondían a lo que llamabamos países "desarrollados" y "en vías de desarrollo" (parecido al gráfico C). Pero hoy en día es distinto. En lo que se refiere a ingresos, tenemos una curva de distribución continua y la mayoría de la gente vive en el medio.

In the so-called "correct" chart, the proportion to the left of \$1 is again ludicrously small. The problem is worse because the audience would think it was referring to World Bank dollars.

The shape of the so-called "correct" chart is also wrong for real dollars. It is wrong for both the World Bank household survey numbers or the GDP numbers Professor Rosling confused with them.

It is hard to see why viewers and readers around the world would not think real dollars are what is meant. One question is whether in real dollars, the right-hand side would have a bulge because real dollars are worth far more in rich countries than the pretend dollars the chart is based on.

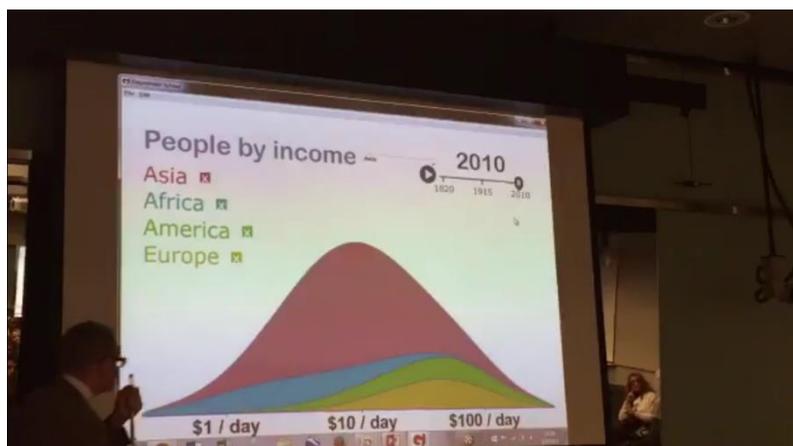
The fact that a reader chooses A or C does not mean they are ignorant. The figures are based on GDP, not what people "gain per day", and not in US dollars.

The chart does not, as the description claims, show the "distribution of income". That kind of graph would have an extremely steep rise at the right-hand side.

The jargon word "distribution" can give the wrong impression. In mathematics, it means "spread", not "distribution of income to people". Professor Rosling has elsewhere more correctly, though perhaps not consistently enough, described the charts as showing "people by income" (as in the example below, though the chart's proportions and dollar levels are still highly unusual). Confusing this with "income distribution" masks the inequality.

Another problem is that it sounds like this is "distribution" to people, but the statistics are only on people who survive. I informed the BBC of this problem in June 2001, before, apparently, any official agency or economic theorists wrote about it.

2015: Despite the complaint, Professor Rosling still presents the strange chart with tiny proportions of people under a dollar, and with the strange "\$10" for the middle billion - here in a talk at the World Bank. Note the small proportion of Africans (blue) to the left of even the "y" of "\$1/day":



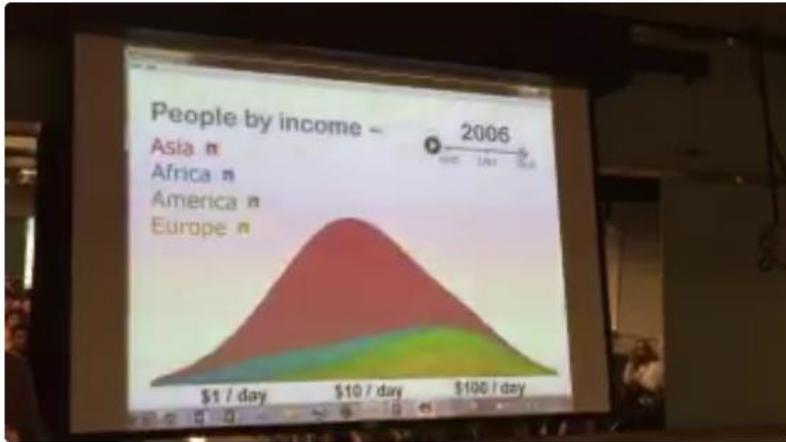


Tariq Khokhar
@tkb



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On global income distribution: "we've gone from a two-hump world to a one-hump world"
[#opendata](#) [@HansRosling](#)



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In 2015 Hans Rosling presented another BBC2 programme. He had moved his "poverty line" to the right, in line with what I explained in the complaint of 2013 and again to the Head of Editorial Complaints in 2014.

But the new chart still appeared to say the middle billion were on roughly \$10 a day, and he still failed to explain that the "dollars" were in fact worth far less than the real dollars the audience seemed likely to assume he meant.

BBC



I deal in facts not rhetoric.

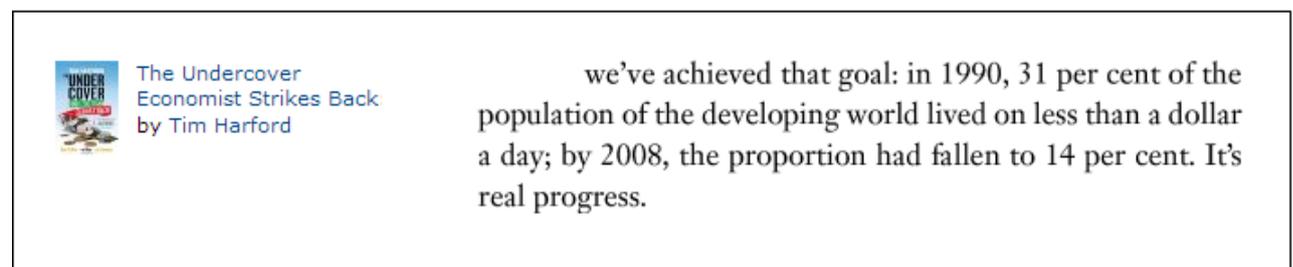
More or Less exaggerated World Bank claim on extreme poverty fall

2 November 2012: More or Less editor acknowledges complaint.

It includes the point that the ex-World Bank presenter exaggerated the World Bank's claim of progress on extreme poverty: he used "\$1" at 2005 prices, when they actually used "\$1.25" which had a slower fall.

The editor, while purporting to answer the complaints, does not answer this.

2013: The presenter's book contains the same error.



The World Bank has never used \$1 at 2005 prices for its "extreme poverty" line.

It did give the figures Mr Harford cites, but not in the context of a "goal". The research director claimed the "goal" (in fact wrongly referring to what was in fact only a target) was achieved in 2010, not comfortably achieved in 2008. ¹

2014: The Head of Editorial Complaints fails to answer the point.

2016: The BBC Trustees wrongly imply that in the complaint of "systematic bias" this did not exist.

¹ Note: [draft, to be checked and considered further]

The underlying data are clearly unreliable, but in fairness: The actual pledge by world leaders was to halve the 2000 proportion classed as below a 1993 dollar. At the time the estimate given was 22%. That is a lower percentage than the World Bank's later claims for 2000, after revisions to the "purchasing power parity" rates based on the surveys done in 2005, then 2011. Smaller reported proportions of "extremely poor" for any year result in faster reported falls. So it might be argued that the World Bank made the target *harder* through its adjustments, so that the "true" fall at the level the pledge related to (\$1 in 1993 dollars with unreliable inflation rates and adjustments from the new data/guesses/judgements on prices versus US dollar prices in the US) was faster than even what More or Less was claiming.

But there is no "true" fall, since for one thing poverty is a matter of need, and need is a matter of opinion. The World Bank omit consideration of changing needs and do not estimate prices faced by the poor. Also, the baseline given by both the World Bank and More or Less for the Millennium pledges is wrong.

2015: BBC exaggerates official report of progress on child mortality



There is no basis for the BBC's statement that in 2000 there were 90 deaths per 1000 births.

The UN statistic for 2000 is 76.

The BBC therefore exaggerates the UN claim of a fall.

I posted this complaint on the Director-General's blog, as well as complaints about the BBC's huge error on the Millennium pledges. There are still only four comments on the page.

"Posted by [Matt Berkley](#)
on 21 Jul 2015 05:19

...No reply at Stage 1a: complaints to ECU, BBC World, World Service or Audience Services. CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 and others...

A smaller error: The Inquiry states, similarly to its web page, "over the past 15 years child mortality has halved"

Comment posted at:

"Tony Hall: The BBC is perfectly set up for future challenges" [!]

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/6d70efd6-c5ba-4e25-8eb2-69fb35fb5348>

2015: BBC exaggerates official report of African progress

A single error, but perhaps part of a pattern.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34312879



The proportion of people living in extreme poverty, on roughly \$1 a day, has fallen by more than 50% since 1990 in...

- Asia
- Asia and Latin America but not Africa
- Asia, Latin America and Africa

NO - It's fallen by more than half in Asia, Latin America and Africa since 1990.

[Next >](#)

Question: 1/7

*For more about the facts on world poverty, watch Prof Rosling present **Don't Panic - How To End Poverty In 15 Years** on BBC Two at 20:00 on 23 September - or*

2016: In response to complaint, BBC removes quiz question and answer but appears to breach own rules on "rewriting history" by failing to note the change.

BBC still fails to answer the more important complaints:

- "failure since 2000" to describe the World Bank "extreme poverty" method accurately,
- failure to inform the public of the pledges of 2000,
- patterns of inaccuracy in reporting progress.

The quiz's strange statement about Africa would not be very problematic if it were not in the context of apparent patterns:

- BBC repeating UN spin, and
- BBC exaggerating official claims.

June 2001: Unanswered communication to David Dimbleby of BBC on mortality error. Macroeconomists and others look at statistics the wrong way. If the poor survive, a macroeconomist would say people have done "worse". This problem was basically ignored by poverty experts and economic theorists until MB, economists Mark Weisbrot and colleagues and philosopher Thomas Pogge had, separately, raised it.

This communication seems to have been mistaken in overestimating the effect on current UK statistics.

The following extracts are the more sensible parts.

.....

To David Dimbleby, June 2001

...Here is an undeniable truth...

The growth figure - as a mathematical fact, and independently of anyone's change in income - will always rise if inequalities widen in survival rates between rich and poor.

[! - MB later comment: here as elsewhere in this communication I should have said "other things being equal"]

...Mathematically, average income at the end of a period will be higher if more rich people survive the period, and lower if more poor people survive.

If poorer people generally have shorter lives than richer people, the growth statistic will rise over time.

...

Mathematically, the growth statistic is influenced by three factors only:

[changes in income among people who survived the period]

+

[the income of new members of the population (young people and immigrants)]

-

[the income of those who left the population (people who died and emigrants)].

In other words:

Growth = (income changes among survivors) + (new people's income) – (leavers' income).

Irrespective of births and migration, and irrespective of anyone's change in income, the mathematical relationship between survival rates and growth always holds:

If an extra poor person survives, the average will be lower; if an extra rich person survives, the average will be higher.

If a policy increases the life length of people with below-average income, then the average income of the population at the end of the period will be lower - even if no-one's income went up or down. If a policy increases inequality of life length between the rich and the poor, then average income - and therefore the growth statistic - will be higher.

The greater the inequalities in income and life length, the less the growth statistic reflects the true change in average income for the original population. The poorer you are, the more you pull down the average - and the more the average rises when you die. The richer you are, the more you pull up the average by surviving longer than poor people - even if everyone's income, including yours, stays at the same level the whole of their life.

.....

Appendix 4: Why this is not just another everyday problem in statistics and economics: The litmus test - does the growth statistic measure increases or decreases in welfare, or both mixed up?

The statistical problem described above is a different kind of methodological problem from other problems in economics and statistics.

Most other methodological problems introduce an element of uncertainty which could distort the result either way. Most other complicating factors (including the effect of births and migration on changes in the average) are hard to interpret in terms of their significance for the growth statistic as a measure of welfare. This one is not, and it is not an accuracy problem. It is a fundamentally paradoxical influence on the growth statistic - it is the only part of the mathematics of the growth statistic which means that decreases in welfare (shorter lives of people with below-average income) will necessarily raise the numerical value of the statistic, even though the statistic is usually taken as showing increases in welfare. The other methodological problems are like having an inaccurate piece of litmus paper. This problem is like having a piece of litmus paper which always turns the wrong colour with some alkalis or acids. It can indicate the wrong direction of change in an

important aspect of welfare, and so might be thought to pose a serious problem for average income as a measure of welfare.

A statement that “the average person’s income has gone up” based solely on the growth statistic is only true in an abstract sense - it compares the income of “the average person alive before” with the income of “the average person alive now”. It does not measure the change in the income of the average person over the period. If more poorer people than rich people die during the period, then other things being equal (if no-one's income goes up or down) it is clear that statistically “the average person now” has more income than “the average person before”. But any statement that “the average person’s income has gone up” can only be shown to be true in its usual sense (i.e. “the average person who started the period increased their income”) if survival rates are taken into account. Survival rates, basically, are the difference that income makes to the age at which people die.

[end of extracts from communication to David Dimbleby]

Examples of related communications are below. Two recipients, Jonathan Morduch and Claire Melamed, who was by now at the Overseas Development Institute, contributed to BBC output from the fact-checking More or Less team in 2012 and 2015.

From 2003 Professor Morduch chaired the United Nations Steering Committee on Poverty Statistics. He contributed to a BBC More or Less article on 9 March 2012. The BBC made a correction to its English version in response to the complaint of 27 May/1 November 2012 - but not to the Spanish version, the podcast or the actual meaning complained about: the false impression that for their claims on global poverty and which policies are best for the extremely poor, economists have estimated prices faced by the poorest.

In 2004 Professor Morduch's UN committee presented a paper co-authored by Ravi Kanbur, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/poverty/edocuments.htm> on economists' glaring error.

MB had explained the problem to Professor Kanbur on 18 April and 2 May 2001, to Jeffrey Sachs on 11 April 2001, to a UK Department for International Development statistician, to the later World Bank and OECD representatives at discussions agreeing the Millennium Development Goal framework, to the speechwriter, head of media relations and a lead economist at the World Bank, and on 15 October 2001 complained to his member of parliament, Andrew Smith, about this widespread failure. The complaint received a reply the next month from Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development and UK Governor of the World Bank. In December 2001 Professor Sachs' World Health Organisation Commission on Macroeconomics and Health adopted the kind of radically different approach to large-scale statistics which MB had suggested to Professor Sachs in April it use. In 2002 the incoming World Bank chief economist, Francois Bourguignon, followed a similar approach in a paper on inequality.

.....

Email to Simon Maxwell
Director, Overseas Development Institute, London

Subj: Possibilities
Date: 27 July 2000
To: s.maxwell@odi.org

Simon

It was good to talk the other day...

...I would be very keen to talk further about possibilities for independent policy work, based on a rehumanising of economics....

What I would like to do is get data which reflects the life courses of individuals...

...projections for 2015 must surely be incorporating something over 100 million early deaths...If these people die, the income figures look a lot better.

It's possible to say how many people might die early given certain policies. One catalyst for this approach could be "we need a rethink due to HIV and the digital divide".

.... (blindingly obvious)....

Simon Maxwell, September 2000:

"I like your life-cycle idea"

Reforming poverty alleviation policies

3 August 2000

To: jmorduch@princeton.edu

...What strikes me is that in policy debates people look at "reducing poverty" without looking at how many people die in the interim.

This seems to me the worst flaw in simple economic analysis (Deininger, Dollar) - if the poorest die, the income figures look better.

So my question is this: even if cost-benefit analysis often focuses on narrow policy options, is there any reason for the total mix of a government's policies not to be evaluated on the number of deaths among the most-vulnerable?

Many thanks.

.....

Professor Morduch replied in 2000:

"Your argument seems absolutely correct: government policy as a whole ought to be judged, at least partly, on implications for the poorest members of society -- and mortality rates should loom large in that analysis."

Email to Claire Melamed following telephone call mentioning the mortality error

Subj: Re: Dollar and Kraay
Date: 10 August 2000
To: cmelamed@christian-aid.org

File: C:\CEPR on D and K.zip (129522 bytes) DL Time (32000 bps): < 1 minute

Claire

Thanks for the papers.

I've found another one, from the Center for Economic Policy and Research in Washington - released on Monday.

It mentions the possibility that the poorest dying off can make the figures look better. This still seems plausible to me, but more plausible is that the figures look better if non-productive people die.

I wonder what you think of the following.

On the first point, if deaths of the poorest households turn out not have a statistically significant effect on the income figure for the poorest quintile, why is this? I would have thought for the same reason that the average income in the quintile isn't far from the top income: if you're very far below the top you drop out of the figures, because the consumption level isn't enough to sustain life.

On the second point, It looks to me as though the biggest influence on per capita income figures is the proportion of non-productive members of households - largely children. One reason why per capita income figures go up can be that fertility rates have gone down (this might be due to growth among the poor, national growth, or something else). Per capita incomes in China have gone up - there aren't many children.

In a simple model, let's say children don't generate income and adults each generate \$2. If you have 50 children and 50 adults, per capita income is \$1. If you have 48 children and 52 adults, it's \$1.04.

If we make this into a model of the bottom quintile, I think what happens is this: for each 2 children who die, their places are taken at the top of the quintile by 1 adult and 1 child. You end up with 49 children and 51 adults: \$1.02 per person. 4% of existing children die and you get a 2% rise in per capita income. For each percentage change in child death rates you get half a percentage point change in per capita income.

Survival rates of under-fives can be only 75% in a vulnerable group. A 1% variation around this figure would make a significant difference to the growth figures - if 0.5% of per capita income is attributable to higher child deaths than in another country or at another time, this is a serious problem for the idea that growth is good for the poor.

In fact, to end up with 1% of existing children dying (the ones who've survived till now), you would

only need to see a smaller increase in the total child mortality rate (all those who were born, including those who've already died).

There are obviously other factors: for example, over time, the poorest people may produce more children replacing the dead ones.

It would seem sensible to compare countries' national and bottom-quintile growth rates along with 1) fertility rates; 2) ratios of productive to non-productive members of households; and 3) death rates among non-productive members of households (under-fives would be a good start).

In practice there are more children than adults - so many that more than 50% of all deaths in the global poorest quintile are of people under 15, even though the death rate for people in this age group is 21% *. A small percentage increase in their death rate results in a large number of children dying.

I do wonder how in a situation where a high numbers of children die, there could be more debate about the effects of growth on fertility rates and survival rather than on tiny changes in income.

* Davidson R. Gwatkin and Michel Guillot, The Burden of Disease Among the Global Poor, 1999

Subj: Growth and survival
Date: 10 August 2000
To: e.w.j.anderson@ids.ac.uk

Dear Ed,

Here are some thoughts on what we discussed.

The CEPR paper mentions the possibility that the poorest dying off can make the figures look better. This still seems plausible to me, but more plausible is that the figures look better if non-productive people die. ...

2002: BBC was informed of problem with aims of development policy. "Slower progress" may be due to poor surviving; AIDS deaths may skew results.

Subj: Questioning statements about poverty

Date: 30 August 2002

To: lisa.mcbain@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms McBain

Thank you for your interest.

Bizarrely, it is absolutely true that governments do not know the answers to some very fundamental questions about their own statements on poverty. They really do use the statistics in the simplistic way I describe below.

I know this because I have been researching this area and have spoken with staff in the statistics departments in DFID, the OECD and the World Bank, several professors of development economics, and many others. ...

Poverty reduction means that the proportion of poor people goes down.
This tells us nothing about whether most poor people had more or less food.

[Later note: Overstated]

But politicians always talk as if halving poverty, or poverty reduction, or eradication, or elimination, is the same thing as raising people's incomes. They have no evidence at all for saying this,

[Later note: Overstated.]

but only the fact that the proportion went down.

Some possible questions:

If more people die of AIDS, won't the proportion of poor people fall faster?

If so, then how can we say poverty reduction tells us that poverty has been alleviated?

How do we know governments aren't helping the people who are at the top over the poverty line, and leaving the others behind?

Since most poor people are undernourished, how do we know we aren't encouraging governments to neglect the majority of poor people, so that there's a kind of economic "cleansing"?

The poor live longer in some places. If this means the proportion doesn't fall as fast, won't this be a good thing, rather than a bad thing?

A very provocative question would be "isn't poverty eradication a bit like ethnic cleansing, in places where we know the child mortality rate is bad?"

or

"Why are you emphasising poverty reduction when

- a) it's already far ahead of other goals, like child mortality,
- b) it may be telling us about deaths rather than raised incomes,
- c) it doesn't tell us how many people rise out of poverty
- d) it anyway tells us nothing about raised incomes for the majority of poor?"

If they reply that growth is good for the poor, you can ask them

"If the poor die, won't the average go up?" or

"But surely, if the poor eat more, they'll live longer, so growth will be slower?"

In fact, places like Cuba or Sri Lanka, where the poor have good health services and live a long time, really do have slow GDP. But politicians are very unlikely to have made a connection between this and their economic figures.

For background, see the official site at www.developmentgoals.org/Poverty.htm

I hope you have a good programme.

2002: "The proportion of poor in some countries may be reducing because of early deaths."

Email after phone call to environment correspondent, who said he would try and put what MB had told him in a report from the Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit.

Subj:Re: Poverty

Date: 2 September 2002

To:Simon.Jeffery@guardian.co.uk

Dear Simon

Thanks. I have just received your email, after sending this to Alex Kirby of the BBC, who I had a brief chat with today.

Dear Mr Kirby

I've remembered who Bjorn Lomborg is - he is saying something very different from me.

Summary

Facts no-one can deny:

1. Poverty reduction statistics (showing the decline in the proportion of poor people) cannot tell us how much incomes of the poor rose or fell.
- 2.. The proportion of poor in some countries may be reducing because of early deaths.
3. This is never taken into account in official calculations.
4. So we cannot say how much poverty reduction policies help or hurt the poor.
5. Current statistical progress on reducing proportion of poor is much faster than on other Millennium Goals.
6. "Poverty reduction/halving" is being emphasised more than the other goals, despite the facts that a) it doesn't tell us how the poor do and b) the original intention of the Goals was that they should be treated as a package of mutually-enhancing measures.

My solution: If balanced progress is made on the Goals, then poverty reduction may be a more useful statistic.

This is because child mortality shows how well or badly the poor are doing. If child survival is better, then probably poverty reduction is not due to excess deaths of poor.

The basic problems are:

1. The poverty reduction statistic itself tells us nothing about how well or badly the poor did as a whole.

The best it can might tell us is that, say, 50 million out of 1100 million poor increased their incomes beyond \$1 a day.

2. The statistic does not tell us that even this number of poor increased their incomes. No-one knows whether slow reduction was due to the poor living longer, or fast reduction to the poor dying of hunger and disease.

The authorities count any fall in the proportion of poor people as showing increased incomes on average to the poor.

3. Average income statistics for the poorest fifth of the population, which are used as one of the indicators for the poverty reduction statistic, will also look better if a lot of poor people die. In any case, the poorest fifth is a different group in different countries - in some it's most of the malnourished, in some, it may be poor people plus others.

4. The intention was to include in the indicators of poverty reduction a measure of the depth of poverty (how badly off poor people are: the poverty gap ratio).and how it has changed. But this was only measured once in each country during the last 15 years. So no changes in it have been recorded. So we know even less about what happened to those below the poverty line.

5. When governments equate poverty reduction with poverty alleviation, this is based on huge assumptions:

- a) they can tell how many people rise from poverty (and ignore the fact that death rates vary for different countries)
- b) the reduction tells them about overall alleviation or worsening of poor people's condition (it doesn't).

I have researched the death-rate issue in depth. And no official or economist can tell me any reason for accepting the assumptions.

Off the record, on death rates, I have spoken to:

the head of statistic in the UN,
the head of the World Bank's World Development Indicators,
a senior economist in DFID,
a senior economist in the World Bank,
the statistics department in DFID,
professors of development economics in Oxford and elsewhere,
a statistician in the FAO,
and the head of statistics at the OECD,
amongst many others.

I have searched through about ten Oxford University libraries on the subject, and hundreds of

economics papers and books.

My own background is in classics (including philosophical logic, welfare measurement (utilitarianism) and philosophy of knowledge), and my second degree was in experimental psychology. I have lived in Bangladesh with ordinary (illiterate) people, and researched the needs of people with mental health problems in the UK. I saw then how organisations can overlook death rates as outcome measures.

Please contact me for evidence or more detail.

Yours sincerely

Matt Berkley

Unanswered, 2003. To BBC Environment Correspondent: World Bank fails to "adjust for inflation in poor people's prices"; "data...certified as unreliable by senior academics"; "wrong policy or a wrong outcome measure can be a matter of life and death to hungry people"; "man in charge of the World Bank numbers for "halving poverty", has written academic papers about flaws in poverty measurement and then subsequently used the flawed methods."

Email

Around July 2003

Global statistics on poverty

To: alex.kirby@bbc.co.uk

...We spoke a few months ago about global poverty statistics, during the Earth Summit.

I think you may be interested in the story below, which perhaps deserves some attention in the media. I realise that this is not your speciality, but perhaps you could guide me to someone who could assess the content for the BBC.

...There are many disturbing things about this story, including the fact that Martin Ravallion, the man in charge of the World Bank numbers for "halving poverty", has written academic papers about flaws in poverty measurement and then subsequently used the flawed methods.

...if poor people die earlier, poverty is "halved" faster. This flaw appears in Millennium Goals...

Traditionally, economics has ignored the human cost of dying and the benefit of staying alive. Its practitioners have produced claims as to what has been "good" or "bad" for the poor without any data on survival rates.

...The flaws include:

1. Failing to adjust for the fact that changes in survival rates of hungry people influence the economic statistics in the wrong direction.
2. Failing to adjust for the cost of living, or even the general price of rice or wheat.
3. Failing to adjust for food requirements, even though proportions of children vary over time and between countries.
4. Using income data known to be unreliable, and certified as such by senior academic economists.

...

Some aspects of macroeconomics are highly complex. But some of the main problems, says Mr Berkley, are easily visible to non-specialists. ...

1. Failing to adjust for the “negative” impact on economic statistics of survival rates

Simply put, if poor people die earlier, poverty is “halved” faster. This flaw appears in Millennium Goals and the World Bank/IMF Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers for poor countries.

A further flaw is to ignore death as a cost to individuals. Economics is in part the science of financial costs and benefits. It has traditionally used statistics which are affected in the wrong direction by survival of poor people. But economic statistics are also used to infer how well or badly poor people have done in general or on average. That implies an assessment of human costs and benefits as well as financial ones. Traditionally, economics has ignored the human cost of dying and the benefit of staying alive. Its practitioners have produced claims as to what has been “good” or “bad” for the poor without any data on survival rates.

2. Failing to adjust for inflation in poor people’s prices

Income is only part of the equation for wealth. Prices are an essential component often left out of macroeconomic analysis. Grain prices are essential for any assessment of poverty using income data. Poor people mostly depend on grain to stay alive.

3. Failing to adjust for the falling proportion of children

Adults need more food than children. Birth rates have fallen in many countries. So any international “per person” poverty line set in 1990 – such as the “dollar a day” line was claimed to be – must now be too low. A fall in the birth rate results in less total food requirement, but an increase in the statistical average required for the same size of adequate meal.

4. Using income data from household surveys, certified as unreliable by senior academics

These data, the Deininger and Squire dataset from staff at the World Bank, have been since 1996 the prime source of claims from macroeconomists in large-scale international poverty comparisons.

Scope of the flaws

Those four flaws apply to the macroeconomists' and in particular the World Bank's major claims in recent years concerning:

1. The effects of globalisation on poor people;
2. The effects of various government policies on poor people;
3. Millennium Goal monitoring on "halving poverty by 2015".

They also apply to the findings of other researchers in universities who have used similar methods.

The mortality flaw appears in other Millennium Goals measured by statisticians: the goals on water, slums and education.

The failures of the World Bank researchers appear to reflect a lack of adequate professional standards in academic economists and statisticians. Without some minimum professional standards for researchers, they are free to promote conclusions with only part of the required data.

Poor value for money to the British taxpayer?

A subsidiary question arises as to whether the macroeconomics profession has provided value for money to the taxpayer for work on poverty. The high cost of specialist mathematicians can be compared to the low cost of other available methods such as the measurement of survival rates. The total cost to taxpayers of flawed research is not publicly known. Expenses include those in DfID, the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN. They include expenses on researchers' wages, administrative costs, travel expenses, publication expenses, and liaison with the media. Such expenses have come from money allocated for international development and the relief of poverty. Total cost of the researchers' wages is not known.

The total cost of the consequences to the poor of the flawed research, on which poverty policies have been based, is not knowable. A wrong policy or a wrong outcome measure can be a matter of life and death to hungry people.

...

[reproduced email to the chairman of the House of Commons International Development Committee, which included this:]

The first error is perhaps the most shocking. It is to fail to count survival as a better outcome.

It is to use statistics on living people without counting:

the cost of early death

or

the effects of demographic change (including changes in mortality rates) on the statistics.

Economists have measured for example, average income in the poorest fifth, as an abstract segment of the economy. But that cannot tell us how poor people did.

Suppose that average income in the poorest fifth rises by 1%. Traditionally, economists think that this is equivalent to "on average people in the poorest fifth had a 1% economic gain?". But the two statements are not equivalent. This is one fundamental mistake in the World Bank document "Growth is Good for the Poor".

For one thing, in a country where more poor people die early, the statistic on the poorest fifth will rise - simply because poor people did worse. I have been telling economists this for three years. I have told several senior members of staff in DFID; my own MP, Andrew Smith, who passed my message on to the then Secretary of State for International Development in 2001; the head of the World Development Indicators project at the World Bank; and several heads of department at UK universities. Prominent economists are now discussing the problem, led by Ravi Kanbur of Cornell University. I had two detailed conversations in 2001 with Professor Kanbur, in which I explained aspects of the theoretical problem to him. ...

Current statistics on income cannot tell us how many people "rose out of poverty". Nor could any statistics even on a perfect measure of annual poverty. What is more, survival is the most important outcome for poor people. Traditional "welfare economics" does not count survival as a good outcome (except for those people on higher incomes).

A second serious flaw in economic research is this. To be blunt, economists claim income gains or losses to poor people without knowing the price of food. The "income share of the poorest fifth" does not tell us, even if we know survival rates were stable, whether the poor gained or lost. In a country where poor people eat rice, you need to know the inflation rate for rice if you are going to say anything about poverty from income statistics. Economists use the overall inflation rate in a country. Why have they assumed that the price of rice changed at the same rate as non-essential goods? I have no idea.

All of the World Bank's major research conclusions ("Assessing Aid"; "Growth is Good for the Poor"; "Globalisation, Growth and Poverty"; and measures of income inequality) suffer from these flaws.

To measure the outcome for the survivors is not to measure outcomes for people during the period. To measure income without knowing the price of staple food is not to measure poverty.

Measures of income "inequality" - income ratios or Gini indices - falsely show more inequality if poor people live longer. The extent of this problem is unknown. Fundamentally, the change

in average income does not tell us the average gain. Average income falls if the poor live longer. Average income rises if people in the majority on below-mean incomes die earlier. The poor are bad for growth.

In the cases of both the mortality flaw and the inflation flaw, the poor can look as if they have done better when they have in fact done much worse, or vice versa. Martin Ravallion, who designed the methodology for the World Bank's global poverty counts, wrote of the mortality flaw in 1996. Despite this, the World Bank has claimed that their statistics show the degree of benefit to poor people. This is not good enough in any age, but is especially alarming in the age of AIDS.

Thirdly, the Select Committee should know that prominent academics do not consider the main World Bank dataset to be reliable. The main dataset for research on world poverty is the Deininger and Squire dataset of 1996. Its critics include Tony Atkinson of Oxford, who is one of the most respected authorities on inequality in the world, and James Galbraith of Texas. The criticisms are eminently sensible for prima facie reasons as well as comparisons with other data. The surveys in different countries are carried out using a wide range of different techniques, and it is unreasonable to expect poor countries' statistical departments to have carried out rigorous and comparable surveys. After all, these are poor countries. The data are a jumble of gross income, net income and expenditure, all assessed using different methods. In the document "Growth is Good for the Poor" the authors admitted that for some data they did not know whether the income was gross or net. Martin Ravallion is on record as saying that the rich and the very poor do not cooperate with surveys, so that there are gaps in the data.

Problems as to the reliability of the data for measuring the numerical values of income are in addition to the problems of making inferences from

a) the numerical value of income

to

b) purchasing power

to

c) economic gains, which include changes in assets and debts.

One difference between my writings and those of economists is that I refer to all the problems, rather than considering one or two at a time. (Economists are forever telling each other to adjust for children's needs, or to get better purchasing-power parity information. But those don't solve all the serious problems).

Another difference is that I take the commonsense view that without the required data, a social scientist does not have a firm conclusion. That is not to say that social scientists should not speculate, or assume, or infer. The point is that speculation, assumption and inference should be labelled as such. The social scientist might infer a conclusion from general knowledge, but that is not the same as saying that they have calculated the answer. Oddly, it is the tradition in economics to state, for example, that there "is" a relationship between a policy and economic gains to poor people, without the required data on prices.

Professor Kanbur, and the economic theorist Kenneth Arrow, have both suggested to me that the problem of food prices is not economists' fault, because national statistical agencies do not provide those data. They are right in the sense that absence of data is not the fault of economists. However, that is neither the point which I make nor relevant to it. My observation is simply a matter of fact: the vast majority of development economists claim, without the required evidence on food prices, to know the level of economic gains to the poor.

[Note, 2016: At least, some of the most influential "studies" do contain this fundamental flaw]

Adam Smith noted an observable difference between the inflation rate for the poor and for other people in 1776. It is somewhat surprising that two hundred years later, for all the equations and long words, economists are using more primitive methods than that. To ask around about the cost of rice and get a rough idea would be simple. To get an accurate idea would be complex. A sensible solution is to ask a few basic questions before saying what the answer is.

The numbers on the faces of the coins do not tell us whether hungry people were able to eat more or less. Development experts have made similar excuses to me about data availability when I discussed the mortality flaw. In both cases, with all due respect to the experts, their thinking was the wrong way round. To think that the standard assumption is acceptable just because it is standard is not to take a scientific approach. The standard assumptions are merely conventional, with no theoretical or empirical support.

Unanswered, 2003. To editor of Today: "International development scandal?" Flaws in economists' poverty policies "easily visible"

Email. Excerpts: underlining added.

Subject: News item

Dear Mr Marsh

I think I may have a story for the Today programme. ...

International development scandal?

[Letter to Chairman of Select Committee on International Development was reproduced at end]

...flaws in official statements on world poverty...concern the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Goal on poverty, and other claims on which policies have helped poor people. The flaws also appear in work by a number of economists in universities, some funded directly by DfID.

The flaws include:

1. Failing to adjust for the fact that improvements or deterioration in the longevity of poor people influence the economic statistics in the wrong direction.
2. Failing to adjust for the cost of living, or even the general price of rice or wheat.
3. Failing to adjust for food requirements even though proportions of children vary over time or between countries.
4. Using income data known to be unreliable, and certified as such by senior academics.

...The main statistic for the Millennium Goal on "halving poverty" is one xample. Statistical claims from economists are also used as evidence on what has worked for the poor.

Some aspects of macroeconomics are highly complex. But some of the main problems...are easily visible to non-specialists.

Unanswered, 2003. To Panorama: "detail of poverty statistics does not match the public announcements"; economists' "failure to take into account that extra items of expenditure may be needed"....Mortality error and failure to consider inflation faced by poorest may have contributed to wrong policies

Email. Underlining added.

Subject: Possible story

Dear Panorama team,

I think the following may provide you with an interesting story at some stage. It relates to statements made by the UK Department for International Development, the World Bank and the United Nations. I am writing a book showing how the detail of these statistics does not match the public announcements.

Matt Berkley

Oxford

Taipei Times

Saturday, June 7, 2003

Page 8

Economists' fatal flaws

Jeffrey Sachs states that life expectancy of poor people is falling in many places in the world ("Why the poor get poorer," June 3, page 9). And yet a prime aim of international development policy is to reduce the proportion of people in poverty.

There is something wrong here. The proportion will fall faster if more poor people die earlier. The proportion is not an indicator of success of hungry people unless you know that survival rates are improving.

Let us hope that the UN will recognize this as soon as possible. Let us also hope that social scientists will, in their outcome measures, count survival as a good outcome in itself rather than of no welfare value.

Let us also hope that one day economists will recognize that income is not a measure of poverty unless the inflation rate for the poor is taken into account. No studies of the world's poor people have done this: they have relied at best on the overall inflation rate in a country.

Why anyone should think that the cost of rice always changes at the same rate as non-essential goods is beyond me. Adam Smith noted an observable difference between the inflation rate for food and that for the overall economy in 1776.

There are other common flaws in economic research on poverty: such as failure to take into account a) that extra items of expenditure may be needed in cities, where more poor people now live, and b) that the ratio of adults to children is rising in many countries, and adults need more food.

Together, the mortality flaw and the inflation flaw, in particular, may have contributed to the devising of policies which, though they made the statistics look better, made the condition of poor people worse.

The economic statistics available at present can neither confirm nor deny that. What is available is information on life expectancy and child survival.

One day, perhaps poverty experts will understand a simple matter of common sense: if hungry people eat more, they live longer.

The economics of hunger is measured in years.

Unanswered, to Panorama 2006. "Governments routinely misuse statistics on international development." Economists' policy advice is based on statistics which look better if the poor die and no estimates of prices or needs faced.

Underlining added.

1 April 2006

To: Panorama@bbc.co.uk

Subject: World poverty claims - programme idea

Hello - this is to suggest a programme idea.

I have done some independent research on the basis of claims about world poverty.

Governments routinely misuse statistics on international development.

An example is the "dollar a day" statistic. One problem is that it is for both adults and children, but the ratio varies over time. So other things being equal this generates spurious "poverty reduction".

Hilary Benn was informed of this problem in 2003, but still insists on making claims about people "rising out of poverty" without looking at how much food is needed. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation thinks food needs per person are rising because the proportion of children is falling. DfID has yet to take this into account for claims about poverty.

Other problems include the facts that

- many indicators look "better" if more die;
- policies have been assessed on the assumption that they were not associated with changes in the relative price of food or rent, or changes in need;
- in an age of urbanisation, when people may leave village houses to live in rented accommodation, the official claims about world poverty omit any consideration of whether people need to pay rent.

I have discussed these issues with senior professors of economics and philosophy; and senior officials in the World Bank and UN agencies.

Yours,

Matt Berkley

2012: First complaint. More or Less is a radio programme. The BBC presented it as checking statistical claims against real life. This was a broadcast to poor countries; the BBC promoted the linked article for several years as its sole "Editor's Choice" for global poverty. One complaint was "Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor". Uncharacteristically, this edition failed to look accurately at the relationship of the statistic to real life and failed "to question whether the [global extreme poverty] target's been met" several years earlier. The BBC states that due accuracy depends on audience expectation. It claimed this edition "assessed how poverty is measured" and "scrutinised" the "goal" - which clearly did not happen. 27 May 2012

Summary: Request for on-air correction: global poverty

Global poverty errors

More or Less, World Service 3 Mar.

Web: "Dollar benchmark" 9 Mar; "El Problema..." 10 Mar.

Perhaps other items.

Guidelines: Accuracy, including links. Impartiality. Editorial integrity online. Controversial subjects. Range of views:4.4.7. Major matters. Assumption and bias: 4.4.14. Range of links: 14.4.19.

1. Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor: "basket of essential goods", etc. They use CPI.
2. "Essential" may mislead. Bank does not estimate any consumption-need trend.
3. "Consumption" misleads a general audience.
4. Erroneous implication that Bank can assess progress on Goal 1 without FAO, WHO-UNICEF and ILO estimates on nutrition and employment. Conflation of goal with subsidiary money target or indicator. No challenge to Bank research director's errors on these matters in person and in a link.
5. Failure to note WB stats are outliers for Goal 1's and all goals' indicators.
6. Did Bank "recalculate everything" in respect of trends?
7. Economist and Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances, including presenter. Links unbalanced.

8. Reasonable steps not taken to "scrutinise" (More or Less, 10 Mar) or assess, statistic for data reliability; survey comparability over time; what is included (housing, public services, etc); or relationship to real life (assets, debts, needs).

9. Failure to question whether

a) "the target's been met";

b) people were richer if crossed the line;

c) their money buys more or less.

.....

BBC reference for above: CAS-1469786-SX4GR2

Submitted 27 May 2012, formatted for readability; underlining added.

Unanswered reminder of complaint on "major" and "controversial matter"
- fact-checking programme failed to consider real life, contained errors
and imbalances. 29 August 2012

Complaint resubmitted via online web form

Reference CAS-1654743-M5VHDP

Unanswered second reminder: complaint on "major and controversial matter". 19 September 2012

Complaint to BBC Audience Services.
By telephone: reference CAS-1686513.

The next reminder states of this call:

"...the staff member taking the call told me that it was very rare for the BBC to fail to respond even once. He asked me whether I wanted to complain about complaint handling. I answered that that was the lesser concern. He told me that he would inform the World Service and online news."

Third reminder to Audience Services. "Complaint handling: No response on global poverty". 26 October 2012

Complaint handling. No response on global poverty.

I have received no response to any of the following complaints. They have the same text - identifying factual error and other problems covered by editorial guidelines in the BBC's analysis of global poverty claims.

27 May: via online web form, CAS-1469786-SX4GR2.

29 August: via online web form, CAS-1654743-M5VHDP.

19 September: telephone 1686513.

On the third occasion the staff member taking the call told me that it was very rare for the BBC to fail to respond even once. He asked me whether I wanted to complain about complaint handling. I answered that that was the lesser concern.

He told me that he would inform the World Service and online news.

It is still the lesser concern, but the fact that both the presenter of the original programme and I identified the matter as a major matter may raise further questions about how this failure to respond has come about.

The present complaint is designed to ensure that a different section of the BBC is aware of the original complaint and the BBC's handling of both the original and reminders.

Sent via complaints system web form

From: Audience Services [mailto:bbcaudienceservices@capita.co.uk]

Sent: 26 October 2012 18:32

To: NewsOnline Complaints

Complaint of 2012 unacknowledged by May 2016: "failures over many years...past years...BBC appears never to have reported correctly the facts about [World Bank] claims [ie that they do not estimate inflation faced by the poor, or needs]...since 2000". 31 October 2012: Complaint of May resent with additions after BBC again fail to acknowledge complaint on broadcast. Substance of the complaints on due accuracy and impartiality not answered. BBC Executive and Trust never address the section "Why is this important?", or acknowledge the simple remedies proposed. After four communications to the BBC, the eventual staff acknowledgement read as if the complaint on the broadcast did not exist. From then on, the Executive and Trust wrote as if the allegation of long-term failure did not exist. Trustees eventually claimed that the fact-checking programme's problems were minor, but failed to address the whole section "Why is this important?" or reminders of its points. Trustees claimed the complaints were complex, but ignored the easy solutions suggested for checking facts, and the simple remedies proposed.

Date: 31 October 2012 09:21

Subject: Re: FW: Complaint handling. No response on global poverty.

To: NewsOnline Complaints <newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk>

Dear News Online,

Request for on-air correction on global poverty: factual error in the World Service programme More or Less, and its accompanying News Online article

Thank you for the response of 29 October to my complaint of 27 May.

Below are the original complaint and URLs you requested.

The News Online article and its translation into Spanish were linked to the World Service programme; the writer of the former, Ruth Alexander, was the producer of the latter.

Please therefore send this message to the World Service complaints team and the team for the World Service programme More or Less.

Please also send this message to Audience Services so that it is clear to them that I am not aware of the overall BBC approach to my complaint, having heard nothing from the World Service.

Audience Services have not informed me whether that part of the complaint is being or will be dealt with.

Those requests are intended, in view of the failures to answer this complaint, to ensure that liaison can be prompt and effective on investigating the allegations and rectifying all problems caused by the BBC's errors.

.....

Note to BBC News Online, World Service and Audience Services:

Please adopt the principle of rectifying the situation to (as far as common sense can determine) what the situation in the world would have been had the BBC taken reasonable steps to provide the correct information on global poverty monitoring in past years as well as these recent items.

Please let me know if the BBC does not intend to take that approach.

The BBC appears never to have reported correctly the facts about official claims of progress on global poverty since 2000.

Please bear in mind also that the BBC's failure to report correctly, or alternatively its rectifying the situation, could have already played and may still play a significant role in current discussions on global post-2015 goals.

.....

Problem: BBC has, for instance, falsely stated that the World Bank uses a "basket of essential items" to determine prices paid by poor people in different countries at different times, and has never stated the correct position in its reporting since 2000. BBC has failed to ask basic questions of those providing the information.

Possible/likely effect on the real world: See section "Why is this important?" below.

Suggested solutions would include: a) Immediate provision of the correct information with prominence designed to counterbalance negative effects of the misreporting, exacerbated by several months' delay in responding to original request for correction.

b) Special programme or series investigating the truth of these matters.

The original complaint was as follows.

[reproduced complaint of 27 May 2012]

The News Online URLs for pages to which I referred are:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/03/120309_economia_politica_un_dolar_bd.shtml

The second is a Spanish version of the first.

The phrase "perhaps other items" refers to the possibility that there were, for instance, other items on BBC News Online making similarly inaccurate reports. That is not a high priority in terms of timing.

The priority is for the named items to be examined, a common-sense appraisal to be made of likely real-world effects of the misinformation, and appropriate action to rectify the problems.

.....

Why is this important? Public belief in wrong information on global poverty

As correctly implied by the presenter's introduction for the World Service programme, this matter affects many people's lives, and perhaps whether some people live or die.

That is because if the public and/or public servants and/or others are misinformed on official information about global poverty, they may accept or urge policies which are not helping the poor, worse than alternatives, or damaging to the poor. They may do this because either:

i) they believe on the basis of false media reports that there is more reliable information about progress than there is in reality, thus acquiring false ideas about what has been achieved by current politicians and policies;

and/or because

ii) they are led to believe, by implication from those false media reports, that economists' information is better than it is in reality as to which policies have more positive effects on the consumption adequacy, assets, debts, and/or other aspect of economic life of the poor.

Point (ii) follows because unsurprisingly:

Economists use the same kind of survey data - without relevant price data, or any estimate of changing needs or any estimate of how far the people are spending money they have earned or money they have borrowed or raised by selling assets rather than becoming richer - for policy recommendations.

That should not surprise anyone because if the World Bank which compiles the data from the national statistical offices do not have information about poor people's prices, needs, assets, shared assets or debts over the last 20 years, then clearly it is unlikely that any economist had such information when they advised governments or the public that a policy is better or worse for the poor.

[The BBC may wish to consider the fact that while the financial crisis was building up over the years to 2008, economists thought prosperity was rising because GDP per capita rose - without looking at how much of the spending was financed by debt. A simple and devastating mistake. The BBC might consider whether it is unreasonable to question experts who make assumptions of a similar nature in relation to poverty as were made in relation to prosperity.]

The BBC's reporting of the situation as regards the truth behind the World Bank statements therefore has further implications for democratic scrutiny and contributions to solving or otherwise the problems of world poverty.

.....

Please do not delay further rectifying the political situation caused by the BBC.

This section identifies a risk of what may happen internally at the BBC concerning this complaint. It presents the information using several different forms of words in the hope that it will be well understood.

The BBC could make the problem it has caused worse by prioritising matters relating to its own performance rather than giving attention to rectifying the problem.

The intent of my communications on this matter is that for reasons which may be obvious:

- the first priority must be to publish and broadcast corrected information in an effective way as outlined below and
- the questions on the BBC's performance can be tackled second.

I suggest that any institutional desire to save face, discover what went wrong with the original broadcast and onlin items, discover what went wrong in the complaints process, or use time on apologies or explanations for failures, be left for later.

The contents of this email are designed to encourage a prompt and appropriate rectification of the original problem.

If this principle of proceeding without further delay due to distractions is not explicitly accepted by the BBC staff dealing with this complaint then I request that I be informed immediately.

Otherwise, given the failures which have already occurred in relation to the original complaint, and the points in the present email, and absent any convincing explanation by the BBC, I may regard as deliberately obstructive any delay in dealing with the original complaint which a BBC employee may ascribe to

a) dealing with the complaint about complaint handling

or

b) dealing with those parts of the original complaint which relate more to problems at the BBC than to the task of rectifying the problems caused by the BBC which need rectifying in the outside world.

In respect of all the points I make here relating to my two basic complaints (original and on complaint handling) it would be counter to my intentions for any points I make about the unsatisfactory nature of any response to be taken as indications that complaints handling matters should in any way hinder or delay the process of the BBC making amends for factual and other errors as described in the original complaint.

.....

Suggestion: Liaison between World Service and News Online

The News Online respondent wrote on 29 October:

"I'm sorry you have not had any response to your complaints concerning global poverty coverage on the BBC News website. Could I ask you to please re-send your complaint, including the URLs, for the news website articles to you which you refer."

I requested on-air correction. That is because the complaint was about not only the article but also the radio programme to which it relates.

The article in English, which was also translated into Spanish, had the byline of the producer/reporter on the programme.

That is why I listed points relating to both media. The producer who wrote the article, and the presenter of the programme who writes books on economics, should have no problem understanding the relevance of the News Online material in conjunction with a transcript of the programme.

I therefore cannot see any viable alternative to News Online liaising with the World Service over the response. I request that you send this email to the World Service as well as to the World Service producer who wrote the News Online article, Ruth Alexander, and to the presenter, Tim Harford.

I have had no response from the World Service to any of my complaints. I have had no indication from the BBC that the part of the complaint which is about the programme is being dealt with.

I therefore request that you send Audience Services this email, so that the responses to both the original complaint and the complaint handling complaint can be coordinated. I am not suggesting that the two complaints be coordinated in the sense of being dealt with together, but that the elements for each be coordinated.

The priority in terms of timing is the rectification of the problem that the public has been given the wrong information, exacerbated by the BBC's delay in responding to the original complaint. I repeat my insistence that the complaint on complaint handling not get in the way of making amends for the situation caused in the real world by the erroneous information.

If there is a risk for some reason that this may happen - that the BBC may end up wasting time on dealing with the complaint handling matter first or on deliberating about its own failures rather than correcting and compensating for the impression given to the audience and readership and harmful effects in the real world on policies to help the poor, I request that the BBC let me know immediately.

.....

Suggestion: BBC carry out brief but appropriate common-sense political analysis of problems caused by the misinformation

If the BBC has misled the public on a matter which the presenter of the programme described as very important, then appropriate amends would appear to consist of rectifying the position to what it would have been had a reasonably responsible report been produced.

That would mean the public being informed with appropriate prominence being given to corrections.

Appropriate prominence would appear to mean:

- a) adequate for the public to be able to understand correctly the position;
- b) voters being able to ask questions of those who make policies or claim success;
- c) the public to be able to question adequately those experts who supply scientific data and/or conclusions as to trends in global poverty; and

d) the public now to be able to achieve these things as well as if they had been correctly informed by the BBC.

I am not saying that this can be done precisely, but I hope the general principle is clear.

I also hope that given the BBC's failures in reporting the correct facts and questioning officialdom the BBC will take the approach that the appropriate way is to err on the side of caution - to ensure that the public does have the correct information, rather than to risk the public still being under the wrong impression about what information is available on world poverty.

A political analyst at the BBC may be in a better position than broadcast or online news staff to assess the damage and suggest appropriate action.

.....

Suggestion: BBC political analysis of likely harmful effects of BBC errors and failures to question official information, on post-2015 planning process, to inform appropriate correction

As regards the last point, I suggest that the BBC take special note of the current international discussions on post-2015 global goal setting.

Further delay by the BBC in examining and acting on the original complaint may jeopardise further the chances that those setting goals will understand either the true evidential position on global poverty or the reliability of institutions and methods which may be used in the future.

I hope it is now clear that it is not just the errors, but also the past delays and any future delays in correcting the errors, which may be harmful to billions of people. It is billions because the same methods used for assessing the progress of those identified as the poorest are used for others as well.

I hope it is also now clear that of the points in the original complaint, those in most urgent need of correction are those which relate to the evidential position on global poverty. Other failings of the programme and article such as imbalance of contributors are matters which while important from the point of view of the public understanding what has happened with the BBC's process of making the programme and article, are not so urgent. I have in mind the fact that if the BBC contests some of the points made, the appeal process could take months more.

So I strongly suggest that the appropriate course of action is for the BBC to make initial corrections on matters which are both important and urgent.

.....

Suggestion: Interim correction within a week

It is easy to check, for example, the BBC's error about a "basket of essential items" in point 1, since the World Bank media release for the news which the BBC was reporting stated that the researchers used the CPI instead:

"The researchers first convert those numbers to local currency units using the purchasing-power parity rate, and then convert the line to the prices prevailing at the time of each household survey, using the best available Consumer Price Index."

<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/0,,contentMDK:23129612~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:469372,00.html>

The World Bank research director, Dr Ravallion, did later (after my complaint, which gave a correct account according to all the available information from the World Bank) give a different account of his method, stating that he had used food prices for some countries in the last few years.

But he does not have specific prices faced by the poor even for food for any year. A simple telephone call to him can confirm all this, and if there is any doubt his methodology papers can be consulted.

I suggest that for this error, and the obvious errors such as that about whether it is the goal or the target or just the indicator which has achieved the intention, it would be extremely easy for the BBC to find out the truth and broadcast it with appropriate prominence as described, and for the reasons, above.

I see no reason why this cannot be done within a week.

.....

Suggested interim correction

In view of the urgency due to current discussions on post-2015 goals, a suggested initial approach to rectifying the problem is as follows.

1: Principle to adopt

The BBC's multiple delays in responding to the request for correction have resulted in a longer period in which influential people may have been under a false impression at a time when the post-2015 agenda is being drawn up.

Therefore the appropriate principles to inform decisions on action would include the corrections being given greater prominence than the original erroneous items, guided as outlined above by a

common-sense political analysis of how to rectify the likely damage from the BBC's failures over many years to report the correct situation.

2: Substance

Text for interim on-air and online announcements could be along the following lines.

"Contrary to the information in the World Service programme.... and in a News Online article, the World Bank does not have information on global trends in poor people's prices. They have not been monitoring, as the BBC claimed, prices for a basket of essential items.

"The "dollar a day" monitoring for the Millennium Goal does not measure consumption in the ordinary sense of the word but largely spending. Economists call this consumption expenditure. Contrary to the impression given by the BBC, economists do not know what poor people could buy with their money in 1990 compared with 2010 and so cannot know what people consumed.

"Secondly, the World Bank do not consider how much of each item is essential, even though this may vary due to larger meals being needed as people grow up, or such things as how much they need to spend on rent if they move to cities. The BBC therefore accepts that its use of the word "essential" was misleading.

"Thirdly, the BBC acknowledges that it should have challenged the World Bank research director's erroneous claims that he had measured consumption adequacy and that Millennium Goal 1, which is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, had been achieved. Other organisations besides the World Bank are responsible for monitoring other parts of Goal 1's targets and the BBC should have pointed out that without those progrss towards the goal could not be reported by one organisation."

.....

The failures of the BBC both to carry out its responsibilities in reporting and to act when those failings were pointed out are serious matters, but are for the longer term.

I think people's jobs should be safer if they own up to errors rather than compounding them by failing to put them right. I also think this is an unusually important matter. Do you agree?

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

On 29 October 2012 21:51, NewsOnline Complaints<newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley,

I'm sorry you have not had any response to your complaints concerning global poverty coverage on the BBC News website. Could I ask you to please re-send your complaint, including the URLs, for the news website articles to you which you refer.

Kind regards,

BBC News website

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

1 November 2012: Stage 1a complaint still largely unanswered in 2016. Scope of complaint: More or Less 2007/2012; Dollar a Day series 2008 to which More or Less linked; apparent BBC "failure since 2000". BBC never denies "failure since 2000" to tell public correctly the basis of official claims on the "vital goal" on poverty. BBC never denies suggestion of "systematic bias" towards World Bank through combination of BBC exaggerating World Bank research thoroughness, other inaccuracies and impartiality problems - not "presenter bias" or just accuracy "terms" as Trustees claimed on 19 January 2016. BBC never answers section "Why is this important?" or the proposed simple remedies. "Reasonable steps not taken" to scrutinise/assess official "extreme poverty" claim for relationship to real life as BBC appeared to promise. BBC never addresses problem: Clear and significant factual inaccuracies about World Bank "goal", method and results despite ex-World Bank presenter/scriptwriter. In 2016 BBC Trustees falsely claimed the complaint about a documentary series was added later (to which More or Less programme page had linked and which it urged readers to listen to). Trustees misconstrued the complaints, as described to the Trust 25 January 2016.

Note: An addition to this complaint sent to the presenter of the Dollar A Day series on 7 November 2012 is reproduced after the main text.

The first version of the complaint was sent on 27 May 2012. The BBC failed to reply despite reminders. The claimant went outside the BBC and contacted the presenter, who wrote to the editor. The version below was accepted by the BBC as the Stage 1a complaint. During Stage 1a complainants are allowed to make further points. Since the editor of More or Less did not mention the fact that I had complained about other material, I submitted further evidence to the presenter of the Dollar a Day series during Stage 1a.

Underlining added later.

.....

Email

1 November 2012

To: Richard Vadon

Subject: Request for on-air corrections: More or Less

Dear Mr Vadon,

Thank you for your reply.

The original complaint was as follows.

[complaint of 27 May 2012 reproduced]

I append further details below.

The email of yesterday to News Online, which forms the bulk of the text appended, contains further observations, requests and suggestions in light of BBC delays.

My intention in sending these observations and suggestions to you is that they should inform the BBC investigation.

Where relevant, the intention is that the World Service and any BBC staff dealing with these complaints would work in a similarly productive way to what I outlined to News Online: liaison between the parts of the BBC, and prioritising remedy.

The priority I suggest is the following: that the BBC act to nullify the effects of the contribution it has made to confusion in the world as to both what the World Bank evidence is for its claims and any false implications that may have been drawn as a result.

One kind of consequence is on people's beliefs about what kind of information macroeconomists in general in reality have had for claims about the benefits of policies or countries' progress when talking about income or consumption levels or adequacy among the poorest.

There is at least one other error in the programme. It cited the World Bank's claim for the \$1 level as the Millennium Goal indicator trend, which had a faster reported fall; the actual basis of the indicator is at the \$1.25 level.

Is there in addition systematic bias?

Having listed all these errors and problems, I find it hard not to think that there is systematic bias:

- overwhelmingly toward listening to World Bank and ex-World Bank contributors rather than critics of the approach;

- overwhelmingly toward asking economists;
- overwhelmingly toward a current fashion in macroeconomics whose axiom is that the more people spend, the richer they must be - which was proven unwise in the extreme by the financial crisis which followed people spending borrowed money;
- greatly exaggerating the importance of one World Bank indicator among nine monitored by various organisations for MDG1, through wrongly presenting it as "the goal";
- exaggerating the World Bank claim of progress towards the target by using the wrong dollar level;
- exaggerating the relevance of World Bank data to finding out about trends in consumption levels among people who may be severely malnourished, by wrongly talking about a "basket of essential goods" and failing to note either the absence of the use of any such basket before 2005 or that poor people's prices for such "basket" items were not researched;
- exaggerating by wrongly using the word "essential" the known relevance of the data on spending to consumption adequacy in light of demographic trends towards more food being needed per person as child/adult ratios decline, and towards paying rent in cities.

There may be some features of the programme which counterbalance these errors by erring in the opposite direction and so underestimate the quality of work at the World Bank, the relevance of the data to what people could buy, the relevance of the one indicator to the goal, the appropriateness of relying on one fashion in one subdivision of one academic subject and so on; but I am not sure how that would add up.

Other programmes

Several of the problems in relation to BBC guidelines also apply to the article by the More or Less reporter Mukul Devichand in 2007 and perhaps to the programme linked to that article.

Those problems include the error about prices and inflation; and the imbalance of contributors towards World Bank and ex-World Bank employees.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7122356.stm>

There are similar errors on prices and inflation in the programme "Dollar a Day" broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2008 and perhaps in a shorter version on Radio 4 on 5 July 2008.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/aboutus/2008/04/080411_dollar_a_day_china.shtml

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive_20080411-2038.mp3

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0090qmb>

To be fair, at the end of the podcast of that edition of "Dollar a Day", the reporter Mike Wooldridge did raise with the World Bank economist one problem which I mention: the claims ignore declining land ownership levels.

However, the World Bank macroeconomist was left with the last word; he unfortunately represented the issue of land loss as only one of vulnerability rather than as also of economic loss, and then confused the issue by talking about people moving in and out of poverty. He was not challenged again with the obvious idea that if your assets are lower than last year, other things being equal you are clearly worse off economically; or with any of the consequences of having less land, such as having to pay rent.

Further notes

1. I am aware that the programme's publicity raised a question about whether the figures did more harm than good.

But that question was restricted to

a) whether the amount was too low,

b) a related question about whether people's lives were much better if they just crossed the line, rather than

c) whether the method had a sensible relationship to real life or

d) whether it was biased.

Simply by omitting obvious real-life features of people's economic status, it is structurally biased towards countries where costs rise relative to incomes; where people lose land; where food needs go up. The idea that a sceptic would need to prove these things are significant would be crazy, when it is the scientist making claims who is using assumptions that they are not.

2. First minute of the programme: The words "a common standard" and the reference to "the estimates" being updated mislead in the impression given of the variety or otherwise of views or research on this topic.

3. The section "more accurate price information.... they recalculated everything..." may have falsely implied, or have been reasonably taken to imply, that price information for years prior to 2005 was improved.

In conjunction with the overall error that a "basket of essential goods" was used for the long-term trends, this might give a listener reasonable cause to believe a false idea that previous data (which has in reality been compiled for no year) on actual prices faced by the poor was improved in 2008 by better data for those years.

The object of the exercise was ostensibly to compare consumption-adequacy levels in 1990 with subsequent years. Improvement of price data for 2005 or 2008 does not help the World Bank's difficulties that the price inflation data are wholly from the CPIs before the nominal compilation date of 2005 for surveys and of no known relevance to the poor for any year.

Dr Ravallion may reply that the research by Deaton and Dupriez for 2005 prices showed little difference between the CPI and an index for items the poor buy.

My response is that he still does not know price trends for the poor, and he still has not thought about whether people's needs went up or down.

The point of the exercise is about trends, not one year; we do not know what cumulative differences there were between inflation rates for basics versus luxuries over the period 1990-2005, even if it were possible to agree what the basics were; and as Deaton and Dupriez acknowledge, they did not look at prices faced by the poor for those "basket" items even for 2005. The only "basket" exercises that have been done are their estimates for reweightings of items in the CPI which may not reflect actual prices faced by the poor for the quantities they require, and Dr Ravallion's use of food prices since 2005 for some countries.

4. "...this number...it became the first United Nations Millennium Development Goal to "halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day".

Comments: This misleads on what is required officially to assess progress on Goal 1. The goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. It does not mention income. It is not to halve anything. It has indicators monitored by WHO/UNICEF, the ILO, the World Bank and FAO, not just the World Bank.

a) The dollar a day number did not "become" the goal. It became one indicator of a total of nine for progress towards the goal.

b) MDG 1 is not to "halve...the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day". That is a subsidiary target.

Why does this matter? The original complaint said there was a failure to note that the World Bank statistics are outliers for the goal and for all goals' indicators. That means the claimed trend is out in the front of the indicators as a whole. The FAO estimates are not very good either, but it is a gross distortion to single out one indicator which has fast reported progress and say it is the goal.

Similar errors appear later: it is said that if China is removed, the world has not "met" the goal; while the passage "And we've got some news on that first Millennium Goal" is followed by

numbers wrongly limited to one indicator out of nine. These errors are being reinforced in the listener's mind by repetition.

5. The "news on the goal" is also followed by the wrong trend from the World Bank for the Millennium Goal indicator, which error exaggerated the actual claim the World Bank makes about progress on the indicator. The passage, "the global poverty line....31%...2008....less than half...14%" presented figures from the World Bank's claim about the \$1 level. This contradicted both the BBC's and the World Bank employee's mentioning that the \$1.25 statistic is what is used for the MDG indicator.

6. The presenter said "Three cheers for economic growth, then" just after the World Bank research director spoke of worse progress for the trends at a higher level than a dollar a day. The presenter's comment was apparently based on the idea that people must be better off if they spend more.

In the forwarded version of the email below, I have removed blank lines for the sake of clarity. If you receive it again from News Online as I requested them to ensure, please note that the text is the same.

Here is an extract from the email I sent to Ruth Alexander earlier today:

"You will see from the details listed in the complaint of 26 October, also appended below, that the BBC appears to have had some communication or other difficulties in rectifying the situation outlined in the original complaint, and perhaps in sending information to the people who can investigate it.

Given the passage of time since the original complaint, and the possible urgency of a correction by the BBC in time for the current High-Level Panel on post-2015 global goals to be guided by an informed public, perhaps you would agree that the most constructive thing would be if the BBC could act with some speed.

I am therefore sending you this email with the request that you make sure that the appropriate management staff are aware of the original request, which was to take a step which I presume only senior management can decide on - of making a broadcast correction."

What I am referring to is the hope that given its history with this complaint, and the nature of the subject matter, the BBC will choose appropriate principles to guide its response, including direct communication and clarification between parts of the BBC and between the BBC and myself. I say that in the expectation that some of what I say here may need further information or explanation from me.

All communication will need to be by email.

Yours sincerely,

....

[reproduced email to News Online of 31 October 2012]

Unanswered: Complaint, including of failure "since 2000" to inform public correctly of the basis of the world's "vital goal", was sent to the Director of News. 7 November 2012

Fwd: FW: Complaint handling. No response on global poverty.
From: Matt Berkley ...

7 November 2012 10.20

To: helenboaden.complaints@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Boaden,

I append an unanswered complaint for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

....

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <[...](#)>

Date: 31 October 2012 09:21

Subject: Re: FW: Complaint handling. No response on global poverty.

To: NewsOnline Complaints <newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk>

Dear News Online,

Request for on-air correction on global poverty: factual error in the World Service programme More or Less, and its accompanying News Online article

Complaint, including failure "since 2000" to inform public correctly on the "vital goal", sent to Chairman of BBC. 7 November 2012

7 November 2012 at 10:53

Fwd: Request for on-air corrections: More or Less

To: pattenc@parliament.uk

Dear Lord Patten,

I am sending you the complaint below in case it is of interest.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

...

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 1 November 2012 23:58

Subject: Request for on-air corrections: More or Less

To: Richard Vadon <richard.vadon@bbc.co.uk>

....

Unanswered points at Stage 1a: "Dollar a Day" World Service series gives impression that World Bank consider inflation faced by the poor and changes in quantities they need over time [in reality this is what it is criticised for not doing]. BBC wrongly stated that official claims of poverty declines consider the "cost of shelter and other basics". Addition at Stage 1a, 7 November 2012

Email to presenter of A Dollar a Day World Service Documentary series
Emphasis added.

7 November 2012 11:20

Fwd: Request for on-air corrections: More or Less

To: mike.wooldridge@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Wooldridge,

I am writing to you to let you know that I have sent the following passage in the process of requesting correction to BBC items from this year.

I am sending this email in case you would like to play a role in correcting the public's impressions, at a time when leaders are discussing post-2015 goals.

.....

"There are similar errors on prices and inflation in the programme "Dollar a Day" broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2008 and perhaps in a shorter version on Radio 4 on 5 July 2008.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/aboutus/2008/04/080411_dollar_a_day_china.shtml

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive_20080411-2038.mp3

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0090qmb>

To be fair, at the end of the podast of that edition of "Dollar a Day", the reporter Mike Wooldridge did raise with the World Bank economist one problem which I mention: the claims ignore declining land ownership levels.

However, the World Bank macroeconomist was left with the last word; he unfortunately represented the issue of land loss as only one of vulnerability rather than as also of economic loss, and then confused the issue by talking about people moving in and out of poverty. He was not

challenged again with the obvious idea that if your assets are lower than last year, other things being equal you are clearly worse off economically; or with any of the consequences of having less land, such as having to pay rent."

.....

The part of your programme which I called erroneous was:

"China's measure is how much food does a person need for minimal subsistence... the global poverty line takes in the cost of shelter, clothing and other basics; looking at it that way, the World Bank says the decline in poverty isn't quite so steep but it's still the biggest recorded decrease..."

It seems to me that the passage could reasonably, and perhaps most reasonably, be interpreted ("the cost") as saying

that the World Bank has looked at both

- a) prices of essentials over time and
- b) changes in quantities over time.

Neither is true.

I append the complaint below.

Yours sincerely,

...

----- Forwarded message -----

1 November 2012 23:58

Request for on-air corrections: More or Less

To: Richard Vadon <richard.vadon@bbc.co.uk>

[appended the Stage 1a complaint with the original of 27 May 2012 with additions of 31 October 2012 to News Online and of 1 November 2012 to the editor]

Unanswered new complaint: News Online greatly overstated value of the extremely poor's "dollars" by confusing them with real dollars. [Same error as in 2005 Editorial Complaints Unit ruling and throughout the 2007-9 Dollar a Day series]. Sent to News Online after BBC had failed all of the first three times to respond to complaints to Audience Services.

To: NewsOnline Complaints <newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk>

Sun, 16 Dec 2012 15:37:21 +0100

Re: Clarification: Re: Formal complaint: Request for correction to story

Dear News Online,

Further to the two complaints below, I add the following:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13681341>

3 December 2012 Last updated at 18:08 GMT

Kenya profile

The story states,

"some donors estimated that up to \$1bn had been lost to graft between 2002 and 2005. Other pressing challenges include high unemployment, crime and poverty; most Kenyans live below the poverty level of \$1 a day."

This again mixes up two kinds of dollars as described below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

To: newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk

7 December 2012 14:52

Dear News Online,

Further to the email appended below I add the following to what may turn out to be a longer list of BBC items with the same misleading message:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19945071>

China: New leaders to take power at Communist Party congress

By Angus Foster BBC News, Beijing

7 November 2012 Last updated at 14:09 GMT

The story states:

"The gap between rich and poor is glaring, and China is now home to both a million dollar millionaires and 150 million people living on \$1 a day"

The passage, like that mentioned below, gives the wrong impression even of the vaguely correct purchasing power of the latter group.

There are two errors. The first is that the amount cited by the World Bank for that number of people is \$1.25 rather than \$1 as you say.

Other things being equal (to the extent that it makes sense for researchers to decide which things are necessary in which quantities, which is subjective) that error would mean that the story understated the purchasing power of those people.

But that is probably well outweighed by the second error, described in the previous complaint below.

Thank you for attention to this issue.

Best wishes,

Matt Berkley

On 8 November 2012 10:21, Matt Berkley wrote:

Dear News Online,

In the email below, the words

"[The intention is that someone thinking about more than one country can compare] *what money is needed locally for items costing \$1.25 in the USA*"

should read

"people's purchasing power relative to that of \$1.25 in 2005 (the reference year) in the USA".

Best wishes,

Matt Berkley.

On 8 November 2012 10:09, Matt Berkley wrote:

Dear News Online,

This is formal complaint to request clarification to a sidebar for a story. I request a reply.

The misleading material is on the page "Benares' Burning Ghats" of 8 October:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/19813272> .

The main passage is:

"At 142nd in the world, India's average annual salary is \$1,219. In 2010 almost a third of the Indian population lived on less than \$1.25 a day...India's GDP is over \$1.8 trillion, compared with the UK's \$2.4 trillion" .

That mixes up two different kinds of "dollars".

Real dollar values:

GDP or salary figures in an international context are usually given in real dollars, meaning at market exchange rates.

"Purchasing power parity" or "international" dollar values:

The World Bank figure of \$1.25 a day does not represent and is not aimed at representing what a real \$1.25 can buy in India, but a fraction of that.

The reason is that the "dollar" amount the World Bank staff are talking about is ostensibly intended to represent the purchasing power of a real \$1.25 in the USA - much less than the purchasing power of a real \$1.25 in India.

The term they use is "purchasing power parity" or PPP. Economists write of "PPP dollars" or sometimes "international dollars".

The idea is to compensate for the fact that many things are cheaper in some countries for a given exchange rate. The intention is that someone thinking about more than one country can compare not

a) what a real dollar would buy (which would depend on both exchange rates and prices, so that without knowing the exchange rates you could not get an idea of what people can afford in different countries)

but

b) what money is needed locally for items costing \$1.25 in the USA.

I say above "ostensibly intended" and "the idea is". In practice the World Bank have not compiled data on poor people's prices for 1990, so they do not actually know what people could buy in 2010 compared to 1990.

All of their PPP figures before 2005 are simply for aggregates of whole economies, so they have not in fact estimated what poor people could afford.

However, the picture in relation to the different kinds of dollar is still clear.

If you go to India, change \$1.25 a day and spend it, you will ordinarily receive much more than people on the World Bank line.

By juxtaposing real and "PPP" dollars, the passage gives a greatly exaggerated impression of the spending power of the poor (and/or money value imputed to the consumption of own produce, which is also included in standard surveys) in India.

For an explanation of the concept, this page may be helpful:

<http://www.oecd.org/std/pricesandpurchasingpowerparitiesppp/purchasingpowerparities-frequentlyaskedquestionsfaqs.htm>

For evidence that the World Bank use PPP dollars, see:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=0&SeriesId=699>

"Goal: Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target: Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

Indicator: 1.1 Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day"

For the World Bank's conversion rates, you can see the interactive table at:

http://search.worldbank.org/quickview?name=%3Cem%3EPPP%3C%2Fem%3E+conversion+factor%2C+private+consumption+%28LCU+per+international+%24%29&id=PA.NUS.PRVT.PP&type=Indicators&cube_no=2&qterm=ppp

If you enter "India" in the search box and scroll to the result given for 2010 you will see it is 21.2 for LCU (local currency unit - rupees - per "international" or PPP dollar).

By contrast, the market exchange rate for 2010 was about 46 rupees per real dollar - as shown by

for example

<http://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=USD&to=INR&view=5Y>

- on clicking "view chart" and choosing 5 years.

The picture may be slightly complicated by the fact that for some countries, since 2005 the World Bank researchers have taken food price rises into account. Nevertheless, the overall situation in relation to your text being misleading is clear.

Secondly, if the figures labelled as for salary were really for per capita GDP, then I request that that be changed.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Unanswered rebuttal to Stage 1a complaint on More or Less, Dollar a Day series and BBC failures "since 2000". More or Less team mischaracterised complaints, their own output and Office of National Statistics definition. BBC failed to correct other obvious instances of material which More or Less team admits "could be misinterpreted"; failure to address the series falsely claiming the World Bank took the "cost of basics" such as "shelter" into account for its poverty reduction claims - which More or Less page told the public to listen to; no response on allegation of BBC failure "since 2000" to give correct basis of the "vital goal" on poverty. 6 December 2012.

Apparently received by Chief Complaints Editor that day:

The BBC Trustees stated on 19 January 2016 that it was "filed" then.

Trustees also stated this "stage 2 complaint" was received by the ECU on 31 August 2013.

However, that appears highly unlikely, as what I sent on that evening was a request for a progress report.

It appears that contrary to what the Trustees appear to say, the ECU showed no sign of having received this key document at all.

In any case, on 19 April 2016 the ECU informed me that questions of breaches of standards over time - which are what I had alleged at Stage 1a and repeated in the reply to the editor's points and the request of 31 August 2013 to the ECU for an update - were outside its remit.

Italics, underlining, and paragraph spacing added later.

To fraser.steel@bbc.co.uk ; jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk

[Note: Mr Steel, head of the Editorial Complaints Unit, later stated that the email address for him did not function. I used it because of the BBC's failures to respond to complaints not sent to individuals. The editor of More or Less was supposed to specify the next step in the complaints process but failed to do so. The other addressee, Jessica Cecil, was the Chief Complaints Editor, head of the Director-General's office.]

6 December 2012

Subject: Request for further investigation

Dear Mr Steel,

I request further investigation of my editorial complaint of 27 May with additions from November, answered as below by Richard Vadon, editor of More or Less, on 8 November. I comment on his reply.

The complaint was of bias, factual error and/or other breaches of BBC editorial guidelines over an extended period in coverage of global poverty.

I also request investigation into the handling of all my related complaints and complaint-handling complaints.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

RV: I am sorry for the delay replying but I have now had the time to consider and research your complaint.

MB: (CH) That is a pointless apology. There was no significant delay in Mr Vadon's replying after a few days. The complaint-handling complaint had been about the failure of the BBC to reply at all to the editorial complaint and more than one complaint-handling complaint for non-response, over a period of five months. That is a matter which needs an explanation and apology - as is the quality of Mr Vadon's reply. He should have taken longer to get his facts right.

RV: Firstly I think it would be helpful to make it clear what we were trying to do with the radio piece and the online article. The idea was to explain to a non-expert audience the history of dollar-a-day and to raise some of problems surrounding it. We had a few minutes of radio and a few hundred words of text to put across a complex issue. Such limitations mean you cannot cover everything and you have to simplify things.

MB: I am fully aware of the time and space limitations, and that the material was for a general audience and readership, as my point 3 implied.

The BBC stated that the programme examined and scrutinised the statistic. The programme's stated basis is "what do statistics actually measure?". The significance of this can be seen in context: it is not apparent that the BBC has done such an examination about this use of statistics by the World Bank in any coverage.

My email to Mr Vadon had made clear that the allegations were of factual error, bias and/or other problems over an extended period, using examples from 2007, 2008 and 2012. The BBC did not have "a few minutes" but twelve years to get the facts right and provide a reasonably balanced set of contributors. Instead it chose followers of one tradition in one branch of one academic discipline without challenging it.

The argument "we could not cover everything" has nothing to do with the fact that the BBC has given factually wrong information on what the Goal is, its monitoring methodology and results or the fact that the first two of these errors combine to create a misleading bias towards the economic method used by the World Bank.

On available space within the More or Less 2012 programme and article, they used time and words on the BBC's erroneous ideas that the World Bank had taken special steps to collect prices faced by the poor and implying that needs were taken into account over time, which was not true.

It is hard to see how giving the correct information would have taken longer.

Further large amounts of time and words were devoted to the idea that the line was too low, so it seems odd to imply that no other problems could have been discussed.

RV: Take for instance your first point about the use of the term "basket of goods".

MB: That is an inaccurate characterisation of my point, which was not about that term - which I did not use - but in fact "Persistent error that the World Bank adjusts for poor people's inflation: "essential items" etc". The words "persistent" and "etc" indicated other terms with similar meaning, and in several items.

[Later note by MB: I had misremembered the original words, but the sense was the same: "1. Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor: "basket of essential goods", etc. They use CPI."]

RV: You are correct that they use CPI.

MB: Mr Vadon is incorrect. As I had already explained in my email, I later discovered that information from the World Bank on which I based that statement turned out not to be correct: the World Bank researchers subsequently gave a different account of their method. I had given him the details.

RV: We chose not to go into that level of complexity...

MB: But the truth was in fact simpler.

On the idea that the team chose not to talk about the CPI:

If the BBC knew that the World Bank was stating that they used the CPI rather than looking at prices for the poor, why did the BBC imply strongly in the programme and article that the economists had worked out what it would take to buy certain goods that could be bought in the USA for a dollar, which the More or Less team thus knew was impossible?

I cannot exclude the possibility that Mr Vadon is incorrect in saying that the More or Less team decided not to say the obvious and short version of what the World Bank was at that time telling the world, which was that they used national inflation rates.

It is not clear who Mr Vadon is referring to when he says "we". The podcast credits Nicola Meyrick, not him, as editor. Perhaps he had some other role in the programme, or perhaps the podcast credit is wrong.

RV: ...and instead [we chose] just to say an essential basket of goods...

MB: That is not true. The team clearly did not choose to "just say" "an essential basket of goods" - they used other terms with similar meaning. The impression given as a whole by the relevant sections in the programme and article dealing with prices and inflation were misleading, using a range of terms such as "basket of food".

Having mischaracterised my point about inflation as if it related to one term, Mr Vadon here mischaracterises what the BBC said.

RV: ...because we thought it was clearer to the non-expert.

MB: I am unable to exclude the possibility that Mr Vadon is somehow wrongly representing the BBC's decision here.

The sections in the 2012 article and programme about economists - which are naturally taken to refer to the economists looking at the "extremely poor" - collecting hundreds of prices are clearly unnecessarily complex and misleading.

In reality the economists claiming to look at poverty merely (as it turned out according to the World Bank's revised information from later in 2012, only for the period 1990-2005) took the conversion rates already calculated for whole economies by the International Comparison Programme.

At the time of broadcast, the output of the World Bank for public consumption clearly stated, as I wrote originally, that they used the CPI rates. To a non-expert, the programme and articles clearly indicated prices for the poor were researched when they were not.

The BBC wrongly presented a complex story rather than stating the simple fact: the researchers do not have prices faced by the poor.

RV: The Office for National Statistics uses the term basket of goods in describing what CPI [sic]....

MB: Inaccurate. They use the term "basket of goods and services". I am surprised that the editor of Money Box does not know that.

Anyone familiar with the long-running argument between the World Bank research director on the one hand and Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge on the other, which began ten years ago, knows that the latter make the point that it is the cheap services of the poor themselves (because they are paid little) which may be artificially biasing the virtual exchange rates used by the World Bank so that the dollar may be overvalued for the extremely poor. Whether this changes over time - and changes over time are the whole point of the MDG exercise - is not known.

RV...so this seems entirely reasonable.

MB: Mr Vadon's word "this" refers to the inaccurate statement that the team chose "just" to say

"essential basket...".

RV: Many of your other criticisms are because we did not focus on the problems with dollar-a-day that you feel are most important.

MB: what is this ad-hominem argument about someone's motivation doing in an answer to an editorial complaint about inaccuracy and bias?

Mr Vadon has engaged here in speculation without knowing what I think is important.

In fact my criticism was that the BBC has as a whole failed to consider problems which in reality a) academics have stated are important and/or b) are fairly obvious common-sense issues such as whether poverty is adequately assessed by looking at what people spend but not whether that spending is financed by asset sales or debts. It is hardly a big demand to make given the fact that the financial crisis grew in the context of economists ignoring this kind of thing in their assessments of prosperity.

My email did not just say that More or Less in 2012 failed in this regard. It is that More or Less in 2007 and the two Dollar a Day series failed as well. As it turns out, there is a whole lot more BBC output that fails to challenge the World Bank in these ways, which are reasonably obvious to a person who does not assume that official statements are true or comprehensive.

Mr Vadon here also fails to answer the types of allegation I made which are not about problems with the method, but, for example, problems in the BBC's reporting of the wrong statistical trend, or imbalance of contributors.

RV: We raise some problems that even you concede make counterbalancing points.

MB: I do not know what problems he is talking about here, or how many, or what he thinks is counterbalanced.

RV: However we cannot cover every aspect of this topic in journalism of this kind.

MB: Repetitious use of invalid argument "we cannot cover everything therefore we cannot cover X".

RV: Your complaint is far longer than the original article.

MB: Misleading in several respects. Firstly, Mr Vadon ignores the More or Less programme from 2012. Secondly, he ignores the other items mentioned as having similar problems. Thirdly, Mr Vadon appears to refer misleadingly to the email to him as "your complaint". In reality this email contained additional observations and suggestions in the light of the BBC's repeated failure to answer the original complaint or complaint-handling complaints.

The original complaint followed the procedure specified on the More or Less web page, which was to submit a complaint via the 1500-character web form.

That complaint was not answered at all, and nor were two complaint-handling complaints of non-response to that complaint. For all I knew, a reason for non-response could have been that the number of problems alleged mitigated against clarity given the 1500-character limit.

The email to News Online forwarded to Mr Vadon, and some of the text of the email to him, contained not just an editorial complaint but other material including suggestions on how the BBC might proceed given its multiple failures; and an explanation of the current political context.

RV: We chose to write one kind of article you could have chosen to write a different one with a different critique both would be equally valid.

MB: Irrelevant speculation. Again fails to mention any other items.

RV: I think Ruth Alexander's article is an excellent introduction to the subject.

MB: What about the other items I mentioned?

RV: But having considered your points I have decided to make one small change. The use of the word essential in describing the basket of goods could be misinterpreted as I take your point that much of the CPI is not essential for life. I am not sure if it misleads the audience in any real way but I have asked the online team to remove it just in case.

MB: First, on whether the readership is misled, see above and my previous submissions on prices

and inflation. Second, if that word is wrong, why not change it in the 2012 programme and the translated article as well? Third, why leave the other parts which imply the same thing unchanged? Fourth, why no comment about the same error in 2007 and 2008? Do those instances not at least provide a context for the errors in 2012?

Also, the BBC has now introduced another inaccuracy. As well as changing the page without acknowledgement, the page now reads with an inaccurate date for "last updated".

RV: I'm sorry that it took so long for your complaint to reach the More or Less team. Your email to Ruth Alexander went to the BBC Scotland Ruth Alexander unfortunately.

MB: Misleading. There was no delay in the complaint reaching the team, because I sent it myself by email. Mr Vadon wrote to me a few days beforehand that it did not reach him at all. So this should read "did not reach us despite three complaint handling complaints".

[Later note by MB: Strictly speaking, three reminders to the BBC resulting in no response on the broadcast.].

Further, the emails to Ms Alexander and to him were on the same date, so are irrelevant to complaint handling complaints not being answered.

I therefore consider the complaint handling complaints, as well as the editorial complaint of May and my additions of November, essentially unanswered.

Unanswered complaints are "rare", BBC Audience Services again claims. Notes on call of 13 December 2012

[written that day]

I was again told that it is rare for the BBC not to respond to a complaint.

The man told me that on 19 September both World Service and News Online were told of the complaint handling complaint of that date.

I began the call by asking what was happening about the last complaint handling complaint of 26 October and the request to Fraser Steel.

I was told that the former was sent to News Online and it was still assigned to them, with no record of the editor having responded or of the request to Mr Steel.

New complaint is upheld - but unanswered on report claiming "clean" water goal met. BBC corrected several points on News Online pages. Apparent breach by giving impression pages were originally published with the right information. It may be that the effect of this failure was that the BBC repeated errors again and again. After upholding the complaint, the BBC kept making baseless claims about how much progress people had made toward "clean" and "safe" water. Complaint 10 July 2013

Note: BBC replied to a subsequent web form submission rather than the actual complaint text.

Underlining added later.

On 3 November 2015 the BBC supplied a reference number for this complaint: CAS-2236086.

10 July 2013 at 17:55
Subject: Editorial complaint
To: barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Plett,

I am writing about the online article "UN urged to embrace 2030 goal on ending extreme poverty", of 30 May 2013.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22719812>

I am sorry to say that there seem to me problems which amount to breaches of the editorial guidelines on due accuracy, when viewed either separately or in combination.

I hope the BBC will agree that the matters reported on are major matters, and that that is especially true in light of the forthcoming negotiations on new global goals. Currently the public has the opportunity to use information from the media to consider what policies and future goals should be, and inform policy-makers of those views, especially in the next two years. It would be a shame if politicians and bureaucrats made mistakes on policies or goal setting in part because of the media.

I realise that much of the content mentioned below may not have originated from you personally.

The article seems to me likely to give a significant proportion of the audience misleading impressions through the following words:

1. "2015 deadline for achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals".

The passage should refer to the intermediate *targets* rather than goals. Many targets were designed to gauge progress towards the goals. The MDGs themselves are undated, whereas the targets tend to mention specific years:

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

<http://mdgs.un.org/UNSD/MDG/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

The distinction is significant: in the case of MDG1, for example, the overall undated goal is far more ambitious than the dated hunger or income targets. Countries did not simply sign up to the targets, but to the more ambitious goals.

Similarly, "The MDGs sought to **halve** extreme poverty, defined as people earning less than \$1.25 (83p) a day, but the panel called for **a more ambitious goal** over the following 15 years":

The difference in terms of ambition between the goals is not what the article may suggest, since the MDGs sought to eradicate, not halve, extreme poverty. MDG1 also includes a target on full employment.

The misleading impression is perhaps compounded by the words:

"others [ie other goals] on **reducing** povertyunlikely to be met"; "2015 deadline for **achieving** the UN Millennium Development Goals".

2. " extreme poverty, defined as people **earning**..."

The figures are averages per person in households, irrespective of whether they are earning. Perhaps more significantly as regards the difference between the data and the article's statement, some of the statistics are on spending or the researcher-imputed value of items consumed, not on income.

<http://www->

wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/01/21/000158349_20100121133109/Rendered/PDF/WPS4703.pdf

In fact most of the data are not on income, with the notable exceptions in Latin America. Granted, official information often does not make this clear and may refer to "income". But it would not be true to say that poverty is "defined" in the research (ie what the data actually are) as "earnings" or "income".

Further information is at:

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

If people save their income during a period, it is not recorded as "consumption expenditure".

3. "**\$1.25 (83p) a day** "

and

" *one dollar and 25 cents a day*"

seem to give a misleading impression that the purchasing power of the poorest is much higher than it really is - in other words, (especially through the mention of a sterling equivalent at the market exchange rate), that the purchasing power is at market exchange rates.

The \$1.25 is in "purchasing power parity" dollars (see Metadata link above). The article should have made this clear, because the "PPP dollars" have a value equivalent to, in poorer countries, sometimes less than half real dollars. While the World Bank has not compiled prices faced by the poor, the principle and the broad conclusion are uncontroversial. The official ratios are here:

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.PPPC.RF>

4. "*The Millennium Development Goal for access to **clean water** has already been reached*".

This conflates MDG 7,

"*Ensure **environmental sustainability***"

with target 7C,

"*Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to **safe drinking water and basic sanitation***"

and indicator 7.8:

"*Proportion of population using an **improved drinking water source***".

<http://mdgs.un.org/UNSD/MDG/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

The error overstates progress both in terms of the number of goals met, and in terms of the evidence for the water being clean. The research is on "improved", not "clean" water sources, as is evident from the website of the official monitors:

<http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/graphs/>

5. "[other goals] on reducing **poverty**....are **unlikely to be met**"

These words, in so far as they are intended to apply to the target on reducing poverty rather than somewhat misleadingly to the goal, appear to contradict the **World Bank position** - that the target (or "goal" as its staff sometimes state wrongly) has **already been met**:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/01/ozatp-worldbank-poverty-idAFJOE82000A20120301>

6. "others....are unlikely to be met, with progress hampered by the global economic downturn and **growing** pressure from population increases."

It is not clear to me that the claim that "growing pressure from population increases" is hampering progress is well-sourced.

7. All three of the "related stories" to which links are provided twice, have factual errors.

I recognise that the editorial guideline on links refers to links to non-BBC material. However, in this case it seems to me that the errors in the linked material are of relevance to an assessment of whether due accuracy is achieved overall by the article of 30 May.

The overall error is to conflate goals with targets and/or indicators, giving the public the impression that one or two of the eight Goals have been achieved rather than subsidiary targets or components of targets related to specific indicators.

a) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21288823>

"The millennium development goals, designed to be **completed** by 2015"... "The first of them - **reducing poverty** among some of the very poorest - has been **achieved**";

b) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17270014>

"UN meets Millennium Development **Goal** on drinking water" [see above];

c) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20163366>

in the video of which the correspondent says:

"it's easy to be cynical about the goals that have not been fulfilled... but some have [sic]"... "the poverty reduction goal [sic] has been met" [which is not true even of the goal's intermediate targets as a whole].

As you can see, the story of 30 May states *"others on reducing poverty and improving access to education are unlikely to be met"*, whereas the story last mentioned above states *"the poverty reduction goal has been met"*.

All correspondence will need to be by email.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

[From Audience Services to News Online:]

Sent: 11 July 2013 14:58
To: NewsOnline Complaints
Subject: Complaint Reply Required

...{Reference case number:} [omitted]

{Complaint title:} Breach of due accuracy in major matter

{Complaint:} "UN urged to embrace 2030 goal... ", 30 May

Below is an edited version of selected points from a complaint to barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk yesterday, 10 July. I send this version to help the BBC deal with and track the complaint in view of past BBC failure to respond to complaints of inaccuracy in global poverty reports.

Parts of the article seem to breach guidelines on due accuracy and major matters, when viewed either separately or in combination:

1. "2015 deadline for achieving...Goals" should refer to the intermediate "targets". The claim that the new goal is "more ambitious" is not as true as suggested.

3. "\$1.25 (83p) a day" and "one dollar..." give a misleading impression that the purchasing power of the poorest is much higher than it is. The \$1.25 is in "purchasing power parity" dollars.

4. "Goal for access to clean water has already been reached" conflates MDG 7 (environmental sustainability), target 7C (safe drinking water/sanitation) and indicator 7.8 (improved drinking water).

It thus overstates progress in terms of both number of goals met, and evidence for the water being clean. The official monitors' research is in fact on "improved", not "clean" water sources:

<http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/graphs/>

6. The claim that "growing" pressure from population increases is hampering progress appears not to be well-sourced.

7. All three "related stories" conflate goals with targets and/or indicators, wrongly claiming that poverty or water goals were met.

{URL:} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22719812>

Largely unanswered escalation of complaint on More or Less/ Dollar a Day series/BBC failures "since 2000". Suggestion of "systematic bias" from inaccuracies and imbalances. Did Editorial Complaints Unit exceed its remit by taking on this complaint? Did it, by accepting the complaint, effectively misinform the complainant about its remit? Did it ever receive the rebuttal to the "reply" "below" stating that the More or Less team made false statements?

31 August 2013

31 August 2013 at 23:55

Subject: Request for progress report

To: ecu@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Steel,

I am writing to ask for a progress report on my email of 6 December to fraser.steel@bbc.co.uk:

"I request further investigation of my editorial complaint of 27 May with additions from November, answered as below by Richard Vadon, editor of More or Less, on 8 November. I comment on his reply. The complaint was of bias, factual error and/or other breaches of BBC editorial guidelines over an extended period in coverage of global poverty. I also request investigation into the handling of all my related complaints and complaint-handling complaints."

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Complaint of 2013 still, in May 2016, unanswered at Stage 2. Hans Rosling in high-profile programme on BBC2 uses World Bank statistics which even he had recently rubbished. He emphatically claims the "middle billion" of humans are on "ten times" the \$1 a day level. The official claim, based on data he knew were weak, is 3.5 times. His poverty line looks in the wrong place on his charts, apparently because he omitted to adjust his source's numbers as it instructed.

"Don't Panic: The Truth about Population", broadcast 7 November 2013

Complaint 2476017 18 December 2013

1. It was not made clear that dollars were "purchasing power parity" units, worth far less in poorer countries than real dollars.
2. The dollars are not what people "get". They are GDP/person: worth far less than the "dollars a day" audience knows. a) Programme gives median as \$10; World Bank estimates give PPP\$3.40 from 2010 spending/income surveys. b) "Extreme poverty" line is not "a little above one dollar" in these units but much more: Utrecht Univ. paper, a main source for the Rosling figures, says \$2 GDP/pp/day is equivalent to Bank "\$1.25" line. Programme's line is always too far to left to illustrate "proportions" as stated (also uses log scale).
3. No estimates of need, inflation for poor, assets, debts, or shared assets. Income clearly not "wealth" - proved during financial crisis.
4. Part about extreme poverty line showing inability to afford food misleads, since there are a) no estimates of inflation for poorest and b) no adjustments for food needs.
5. Only some economists, not "the economists" use \$1.25 line.
6. Modes of income in Americas look too high: in 1963 higher than Europe?
7. Proposal is not "eliminate" but 3% ie c.250m people..
8. Failure to note unreliability of "extreme poverty" stats despite presenter stating in May: "plus or minus half a billion"; "emperor's new clothes". Similar may apply to other nos./trends.
9. Similar problems in associated web pages: eg Magazine page 24836917 statements re poverty. "Yardstick of wealth" misleads.

Another complaint still unanswered in 2016: BBC "major error" in understating world leaders' Millennium commitments. The complaint of BBC "lack of accuracy and impartiality over time" is also still unanswered in 2016. In 2014 the Editorial Complaints Unit was again told that complaint was on cumulative problems, and yet still dealt with the complaint of failures "since 2000". However, in 2016 after rejecting it, the Head of Editorial Complaints stated, on no factual basis known to the complainant, that the ECU had already informed him that its remit did not cover allegations of breaches over time. Comments 6 February 2014 on ECU provisional response.

[Emphasis and paragraph spacing added; endnotes converted to footnotes]

Comments on BBC Editorial Complaints Unit provisional response

More or Less, World Service 3 and 10 March 2012; Radio 4 3 December 2007

World Service Documentaries series A Dollar a Day Mike Wooldridge series 2007-8

Associated online content

Additional evidence on lack of accuracy and impartiality over time from More or Less 3 November 2012

Errors include:

Wrongly stating that the World Bank "calculated" costs of what a "purchasing power parity" dollar could buy in different countries;

Wrongly implying through a variety of language that the World Bank has taken into account inflation for the poor;

Wrongly implying that the World Bank has taken needs into account;

Wrongly presenting the "dollar a day" indicator as "becoming" Millennium Development Goal 1, when it is in reality only one indicator of nine;

Wrongly implying that MDG 1 is achieved, when in reality it is "eradicating extreme poverty and hunger";

Wrongly implying that MDG 1 is achieved, when in reality the "dollar a day" indicator is an exception in showing fast progress;

Applicable guidelines according to the complaint:

Accuracy, including links.

Impartiality.

Editorial integrity online.

Controversial subjects.

Range of views:4.4.7.

Major matters.

Assumption and bias: 4.4.14.

Range of links: 14.4.19.

Complainant: Matt Berkley

BBC statements

"it is precisely because of the media's impact on what people believe, that it is imperative to make sure reports are accurate and impartial.....audiences have very high expectations of the BBC...."

Alison Hastings, Chair of the BBC Trust's Editorial Standards Committee

BBC Trust - Trusting what you see and hear: the media's role in covering science accurately

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/comment/science_coverage.html

" The root of much poverty and suffering is a lack of accessible, accurate information. And although there has been an explosion of media and creative industries globally, the needs of the poor, marginalised and often illiterate people are often neglected"

Alan Yentob, BBC Creative Director

"For the BBC, the overarching theme that emerged was that questioning, challenge and explaining a lack of certainty was essential, as was ensuring that the BBC continues to reflect the span of opinion."

Diane Coyle, BBC Vice Chair 6 November 2012

Comment on the BBC Trust seminar on impartiality and economic reporting

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/comment/economics_seminar.html

"What do they really measure? What kind of truth, if any, do they capture?... Then, of course, there are the big political arguments about pensions... measuring poverty... We like to think that More or Less has no particular subject. Rather it touches on every subject, with the same calm authority."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/more_or_less/1628489.stm

"It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living on under a dollar a day." "It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living in poverty."

Tim Harford, More or Less, 3 December 2007 ²and 3 March 2012.³

2

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/more_or_less/7124758.stm

3

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/moreorless/moreorless_20120302-2350b.mp3

or

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p00p34zj/More_Or_Less_Living_on_less_than_a_dollar_a_d
ay/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p00p34zj/More_Or_Less_Living_on_less_than_a_dollar_a_day/)

Summary of some key points

A. The ECU wrongly characterised the complaints as only about one edition of one series, when it was in fact about several editions of More or Less, and a documentary series.

B. The ECU failed to take adequate account of the fact that what is "behind the stats" – the More or Less slogan – in the case of economic claims on poverty is clearly a major and controversial matter relevant to public policy, affecting many millions of people.

C. The ECU failed to take account of the true nature of More or Less, which is concerned to a significant degree with accuracy of description and trusted accordingly by audiences – or of the trust generally placed in the BBC by Radio 4 and World Service audiences.⁴ The ECU failed to take adequate account of the trust placed by audiences in the presenter of More or Less due to his status as a professional economist, or his employment at the World Bank.

The ECU failed to address the complaint of systematic bias even within one edition of one programme.

D. The ECU failed to explain how its argument about one example complaint and the accuracy of UN information might apply to other complaints.

E. The ECU failed to take proper account of material inaccuracies in the argument from the editor of More or Less, even though the head of the ECU said he agreed with the editor's position – such as the mischaracterisation of the only example the editor tackled, as if it related to only one term in spite of the words "persistent" and "etc".

4

From the programme of 10 February 2012:

Tim Harford: "This is quite a common situation in More or Less. The experts use a familiar word like 'famine' and they have a technical definition in mind; the rest of us just make our own assumptions, and the media reporting often fails to bridge the divide."

F. In its argument on due accuracy, the ECU failed to achieve due accuracy by presenting a web page from the wrong series as a "signpost" which audiences for More or Less would clearly not have been likely to use as such.

G. The "signpost" presented by the ECU was in itself a misleading signpost for the Wooldridge series as well, since the Wooldridge series, like the ECU itself in a past ruling and the BBC on many occasions, has made a fundamental error as to the value of the World Bank "dollars" and the same series gave a wrong impression that the method took costs into account.

H. The ECU argument misleadingly ignored the actual signposting for the single programme with which it concerned its reply: the radio schedule, the programme pages, the page for that edition, the podcast page, the presenter's introduction and even the signposting for podcast and web users in the next week's edition as mentioned in the complaint.

I. The ECU's argument that it was unreasonable to expect More or Less, a programme about due accuracy, to display greater accuracy than official sources failed to take into account that the latter issue detailed caveats against misinterpretation of these statistics.

J. The ECU failed to take into account the imbalance between treatment by More or Less of statistical claims on famine, water, and ILO statistics on the one hand and World Bank statistics on the other. ⁵

5

In the edition of 10 March 2012, in a far shorter segment, the team made precisely the kind of analysis of what was actually measured for the Millennium Development "goal" on water, and precisely the kind of observation on whether it really was a goal, which were lacking from the programme on the World Bank – even though Mr Harford had worked at the Bank and might reasonably be expected not to make the elementary errors.

Transcribed excerpts from More or Less
10 February 2012

Tim Harford: What needs to be happening on the ground to justify this Level 5 famine designation?

speaker: [indicators are]

... proportion of children... malnourished...weight....excess mortality...massive food deficit...

K. The ECU's approach was inconsistent with the outcome of the BBC seminar on economic reporting of November 2012. ⁶

.....

5.16 Tim Harford: This is quite a common situation in More or Less. The experts use a familiar word like 'famine' and they have a technical definition in mind; the rest of us just make our own assumptions, and the media reporting often fails to bridge the divide.

More or Less , web description
15 June 13

"Ruth Alexander examines the claim that every 15 seconds a child dies of hunger. It's a popular statistic used by celebrities and charity campaigners in support of the Enough Food for Everyone IF campaign. It conjures up the image of millions of young children starving to death. But is this really the case? "

The edition dealing with the ILO referred to "seriously patchy" statistics.

The edition on the water "goal" challenged the civil servant's basis for reporting in a way that was not done with the World Bank. The problems discussed about the World Bank statements were largely those mentioned by the World Bank press release and the research director himself.

6

BBC Trust seminar on impartiality and economic reporting
6 November 2012

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/economics_seminar/impartiality_economic_reporting.pdf

"A consistent theme that emerged was the importance of questioning, challenging and explaining, across all economic sectors, given the complexity and lack of certainty. Another consistent theme was ensuring that the BBC continues to reflect different opinions. As some participants observed, recent history has shown that the consensus in economics may prove not to be correct."

These programmes are part of a small amount of BBC output considering the relationship between the "poverty" statistics and real life.

There appears to have been very little output from the BBC asking about the reliability of the World Bank claims of progress on poverty. There has clearly been output reporting on the lives of the poor, but not obviously much output on to what extent the official statements are based on reality.

Lack of due impartiality in one programme out of the small number, therefore, would seem likely to upset the balance of due impartiality in the set of related programmes and in the BBC's output on this matter as a whole. The same kind of consideration would seem to apply in relation to imbalance of contributors or ranges of views.

The BBC output on global poverty claims has mostly consisted of a large number of items reporting the World Bank statements without comment - reporting neither the caveats of the researchers nor the criticisms of others.

It therefore appears that the BBC's large range of news reporting on this matter was not duly accurate or duly impartial.

1. The ECU wrongly presented the complaint as on only one broadcast item and one article despite the section titled "Other programmes".

In reality the complaint also covered More or Less of 10 March 2012, and alleged more "problems in relation to BBC guidelines" in a More or Less web page from 2007 and "perhaps" More or Less of 3 December 2007. Owing to a BBC error [*later note: not strictly an error, since the page simply stated the programme was not available through that player*], the complainant was at the time unable to listen to that edition. The programme page wrongly stated it was unavailable. [*later note: see above*]. The complainant was later able to find it and considers that it did have the problems mentioned.

The complaint was also of "*similar errors*" in the World Service Documentaries series presented by Mike Wooldridge in 2007-8, "A Dollar a Day". More or Less web pages of March and November 2012 and the "Why Poverty?" strand of November 2012 linked to that series.

The complaint was also of "systematic bias".

The complainant's email of 6 December 2012 to fraser.steel@bbc.co.uk and jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk stated, as quoted to ecu@bbc.co.uk on 31 August 2013:

"The complaint was of bias, factual error and/or other breaches of BBC editorial guidelines over an extended period....."

In response the ECU mischaracterised the complaint.

2. In its approach and conclusions the ECU failed to take adequate account of the fact that the issue is clearly a major and controversial matter. It is obvious that if people think a goal, or even a UN resolution's pledge, has been met when it has not, that has implications for holding governments to account. It is obvious that policy decisions are made on the basis of economic statistics and that if people have the wrong idea about, for example, the availability of relevant price data, they are at risk of making wrong decisions concerning millions of people. The ECU failed to take account of the fact that the presenter of More or Less stated that it was a major matter in his introductions to the programmes of 3 December 2007 and 3 March 2012.
3. The title of the response and the section on signposting confused two series.

The ECU misleadingly titled its response,

"More or Less: A Dollar A Day, World Service, 3 March 2012 and associated online material".

That edition was in fact "Living on Less than a Dollar a Day". The title the ECU gave was of a different series complained of but not addressed in a substantive sense by the ECU.

4. The ECU failed to comply with Accountability guideline 19.4.2:

"When considering complaints on substantive matters the BBC must provide adequate reasoning for its decision, setting this reasoning within the context of any relevant BBC guidelines."

5. The ECU ignored the complaint of systematic bias even within one edition of one programme, instead treating the individual accuracy complaints as if they were assumed to be inaccurate in some kind of random distribution, and failing to respond to the other complaints, without considering whether the problems added up to bias, overall lack of due accuracy, or lack of due impartiality.
6. The ECU wrongly implied that all the complaints are about accuracy. It thus wrongly implied that the complaints as a whole were covered by the ECU argument. The ECU failed to respond to the complaint of lack of balance or any matter outside the scope of the accuracy guideline.

7. The ECU's application of the accuracy guidelines was itself not duly accurate. It applied the accuracy guideline in an inappropriate way, either abusing the concept of "signposting" or confusing More or Less with the Wooldridge series despite having taken four months to research.

The accuracy guidelines clearly associate "signposting" with material likely to influence audience expectations in ways which might reasonably affect the requirement for due accuracy.

The head of the ECU stated he thought content for More or Less of 2012 was "aptly signposted" by a web page from a 2008 documentary series. Listeners in 2012 had no obvious reason to be influenced by this in their expectations of More or Less. The nature of content "in this instance" was clearly not "aptly signposted" by the old page.

The head of the ECU stated that he was in agreement overall with Mr Vadon's position in the context given by Mr Vadon as to the intention of the team in making the programme. Mr Vadon's description conflicted with the actual signposting. ⁷

7

Signposting for More or Less

"Tim Harford explains - and sometimes debunks - the numbers and statistics used in political debate, the news and everyday life"

"Tim Harford presents the series that investigates the numbers in the news."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qshd>

The main news page for More or Less describes it as:

"The radio show that delves into the numbers and statistics behind the news and everyday life"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17707410>

More or Less: Behind the Stats

"Tim Harford investigates numbers in the news. Numbers are used in every area of public debate. But are they always reliable? Tim and the More or Less team try to make sense of the statistics which surround us."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/moreorless>

"What do [figures] really measure? What kind of truth, if any, do they capture?"

From programme introductions:

"statistical sleuths"

"the show that never peddles subprime numbers"

The podcast page states of the edition of 10 March:

"he scrutinises the claim that the Millennium Development Goal on safe drinking water has been achieved ahead of schedule. The World Health Organisation, which along with Unicef announced that the target had been met, concedes that the numbers are not actually that certain."

The programme page for More or Less of 6 November 2012 stated:

"We look at how poverty is measured across the world."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0104h4d>

Signposting for the edition of 3 March 2012

The BBC radio schedule page for that day states:

"Tim Harford examines the dollar-a-day poverty line. How useful a measure is it?"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldserviceradio/programmes/schedules/2012/03/03>

The description on the podcast page states:

"Tim Harford assesses how global poverty is measured, as the World Bank releases the latest figures on the number of people living on less than a dollar a day. What progress has been made, and how useful a benchmark is this "dollar a day" global poverty line?"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/moreorless/all>

The programme for the edition of March 3 2012 states:

"Tim Harford assesses how poverty is measured".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p34zj>

"More or Less presenter Tim Harford assesses how global poverty is measured"

<https://www.facebook.com/BBCRadio4/posts/341127939272732>

The presenter stated the next week:

"we scrutinised the goal [sic] of halving the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day".

Tim Harford introduced More or Less of 3 March 2012 by stating:

"It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living in poverty. "

More or Less of 3 December 2007 contained the introduction to the piece on a dollar a day:

" it's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living on less than a dollar a day."

In the complainant's view, these statements are significant in two respects: they may be taken as evidence that the matter is major, and also as evidence that the audience was given signposts to that effect.

In More or Less of 10 March 2012, as stated in the original complaint, the word "scrutinise" had been used about the edition of 3 March.

The Head of Editorial Complaints did not respond to that point, or mention any signposting as to the nature of either More or Less or that edition.

Here again, the complainant contends that the significance is two-fold: it may be taken as evidence of the nature of the edition of 3 March, and also as evidence of what the audience was led to believe: signposting which influenced listeners to podcast and readers of article. The complainant contends that this and similar statements

The full quotation is:

"This week we've been investigating another vital statistic reported around the world and here on the World Service.

Unidentified speaker, apparently a World Service newsreader or a person reading from a World Service news script: The United Nations says the first Millennium Development Goal, halving the number of people who have no access to clean water, has been reached before the target date of 2015.

Tim Harford: Ruth Alexander's with me. Ruth, this is a really important goal.

Ruth Alexander: Yes, the Millennium Development Goals were agreed by all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in the year 2000.

[More or Less makes a major error. The MDG targets agreed by consensus in 2002 are in fact easier than the pledges in the Millennium Declaration of 2000. The latter is a UN General Assembly resolution. A major difference is that the resolution's pledges were not backdated, and are therefore to, for example halve the proportion of people in 2000 on under "\$1 ", not the 1990 level.]

8. The ECU's quotation from the signposting for the Wooldridge series came from a page which the complaint mentioned as erroneous, but the ECU still managed to fail to address that complaint.

9. The short passage quoted by the ECU as a signpost for the wrong series is clearly not duly accurate:

- a statement about half the world's population which is wildly inaccurate if it refers to World Bank estimates,

- a phrase, "Mike Wooldridge looks at what it's really like", which seems contradicted by what appears to be a huge error throughout the Wooldridge series in confusing real and "purchasing power parity" dollars worth far less, and

- a misstatement of a target.

" Almost half the world's population lives on less than a dollar a day, but the statistic fails to capture the humiliation, powerlessness and brutal hardship that is the daily lot of the world's poor.

In this series, Mike Wooldridge looks at what it's really like to have to live on a dollar a day and how it can mean different things in different countries, and asks whether the global target of halving world poverty by 2015" ⁸

They're a way of measuring progress in tackling poverty, education, health, equality and environmental issues in the developing world.

Tim Harford: And we scrutinised the goal of halving the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day in our last edition. "

[The programme contradicted itself by saying it had scrutinised the goal while confusing it with the more ambitious UN pledge.]

8

The Mike Wooldridge series A Dollar a Day

In view of the signposting on the "Wooldridge" page, the Wooldridge series seems to have failed due accuracy with respect to the audience's expectations. The associated online material appears to give misleading impressions for the same reason.

The sentence,

"Weng Yueshing earns a basic salary of 800 Yuan a month (about \$114)"

is misleading. The reason is that it is in real dollars, not the less-valuable "international" or "purchasing power parity" "dollars a day".

The exchange rate for dollars to yuan was of the order of one to six. It is therefore clear that BBC was giving the exchange rate for real dollars. US \$114 is in fact worth far more than \$114 in World Bank "dollars a day".

I am sorry to say that as far as I can see, the whole of the Wooldridge series – as well as a huge amount of other output from the BBC - presented dollar amounts in real dollars like that, when in reality they are worth typically twice or more what the World Bank's "international dollars" used for the poverty claims are worth.

The ECU has made the same mistake itself in a past ruling, basing an opinion on the mistaken idea that the dollar a day is influenced by fluctuations in market exchange rates.

BBC Editorial Complaints Unit – Quarterly Report

July–September 2005

Summaries of upheld complaints

http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/pdf/ecu_julsep2005.pdf

"The figure for Brazilians living on less than \$1 a day, though ~~subject to exchange rate fluctuations~~, was within acceptable margins of approximation for a summary report of this kind."

The reality is that the "purchasing power parity" rates on which it is based are specifically designed to compensate for differences in purchasing power between countries arising from exchange rates. The "PPP" rates are set for one year in which the international comparisons were done – currently they are based on the surveys for 2005. The changes in the posited value of the "poverty line" over time are determined by changes in consumer price indices in each country, not by exchange rates for real money.

More or Less of 3 December 2007 and 3 March 2012 got some of this right, and some wrong. They would have been correctly reporting the statements of the World Bank researchers about their methodology if they had said the dollar amounts were adjusted for differences in purchasing power at the national level.

I thought there was a lot of good in Mr Wooldridge's series. I would like to believe that Mr Wooldridge did not make this mistake when he looked at "what does [the dollar a day] really mean?" and "what it's really like to have to live on a dollar a day" to live on a dollar a day, but the

10. The ECU's term "the series" applied to both programmes was inappropriate. The use of the wrong title for the edition of More or Less conflated the two series.

11. The ECU argument misleadingly ignored the actual signposting in

the general information in More or Less web content,

the radio schedule for 3 March 2012,

the Radio 4 Facebook page,

Mr Harford's words on Twitter advertising the edition,

the introduction to More or Less of 3 March 2012 stating that the subject matter was major;

the signposting to podcast and web users given in the next week's programme, 10 March 2012, which the complaint had mentioned,

the words advertising the podcast on iTunes and other distributors.

12. The complaint of breaches over an extended period was further justified by misleading content in More or Less of 3 November, just after the team acknowledged receipt of the

only indications I can find in the programme and the web pages are that he was mistakenly talking about hugely different amounts, greatly overestimating what people live on.

The web page linked to the podcast, which stated near the end [later note: as subsequently notified to the ECU, it was about four minutes from the beginning]:

"China's measure is how much food does a person need for minimal subsistence... ~~the global~~ poverty line takes in the cost of shelter, clothing and other basics; looking at it that way, the World Bank says the decline in poverty isn't quite so steep but it's still the biggest recorded decrease..."

That passage is in my view most reasonably interpreted as saying that the World Bank has looked at both:

a) prices of essentials over time

and

b) changes in needs over time.

Neither is true.

complaint. ⁹

13. The ECU response may be liable to mislead or confuse the Editorial Standards Committee, without careful checking, as to which series is which, and what the complaints are.
14. The ECU did not take adequate account of the general audience expectation among many people in poor countries that the BBC will give information adequate for them to make judgements about government performance.
15. The ECU failed to take adequate account of the huge number of potential audience members who are themselves in the World Bank's terms "living on under \$1.25 or \$2 a day".
16. Something which I believe would mislead the Editorial Standards Committee about the complaint, the content and the context was this:

In reality, I supplied a note about the importance of a broadcast error by Mr Harford. The ECU does not dispute that this kind of error is inaccurate. I quoted:

"...this number...it became the first United Nations Millennium Development Goal to "halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day".

In what may appear to be its main or only argument as to why broadcast corrections on a range of errors should not be made, the ECU chose to focus on this area as an example of a complaint which was expecting too much accuracy.

The ECU chose not to quote the broadcast statement from Mr Harford but instead from Ms

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More or Less, 6 November 2012 [later note: seems to be 3 November]

7.30 Ruth Alexander: "...So to make international comparisons you need to measure poverty in **absolute** terms. **This is** where the poverty line depends on a minimum acceptable standard of living - **whether you've got enough money to have a certain level of shelter, clothing and health care**, for example. And this is a constant across countries so it's more easily comparable. **The most common measure of absolute poverty is living on less than a dollar 25 a day.** "

That **wrongly implies the World Bank has estimated needs**. The dollar 25, in respect of comparisons across countries or times, takes **no account of quantities needed of any of the things mentioned**. It is the amount of money (largely spending) which is supposed to be constant for buying equivalent amounts of goods and services, with no account whatsoever taken for differing needs as the programme implies. The passage also **misleads as elsewhere on prices**.

Alexander's article, stating misleadingly to the complainant, "Of such statements, "you have observed...".

It occurred to me that the ECU might have wanted to save time by copying and pasting rather than checking my transcribed words. But there are only 30 of them, which is one for every three working days the ECU has had the complaint.

Mr Harford is an economist who has worked at the World Bank. He has an honorary post at Oxford University. He has presented a BBC programme called "Trust me, I'm an economist". He is known for his specialism "the economics of everyday life".

A question would seem to arise as to whether there is greater burden in respect of due accuracy where a person with such specialist experience and trust from the public gets basic facts about the World Bank statistics wrong, from cases where Ms Alexander does.

In my view is clearly relevant to the request for a broadcast correction that I quoted from and specifically contradicted the broadcast.

In my view it is clearly relevant to the meaning and aptness of my "further note" partially quoted by the ECU, and thus to a competent assessment of whether due accuracy was achieved, that I specifically stated that what Mr Harford said about the "number" "becoming" the goal was not true.

The ECU decided to present something I said as if it related to something else.

17. In view of the fact that the subject of its statements in the relevant section of its response was due accuracy, the ECU misleadingly presented as my "observation" not the "further note" I actually made, but only part of that note which clarified the original complaint. The ECU cut its quotation precisely at the point where I gave a reason for considering that observation important:

"Why does this matter? The original complaint said there was a failure to note that the World Bank statistics are outliers for the goal and for all goals' indicators. That means the claimed trend is out in the front of the indicators as a whole. The FAO estimates are not very good either, but it is a gross distortion to single out one indicator which has fast reported progress and say it is the goal."
The observation is clearly intended to show how I consider the problem relates to the requirement of due accuracy."

[later note: The last sentence appears to be part of the main text, not the quotation, and should not perhaps be in italics or have quotation marks at the end]

Since due accuracy is the subject of that section of the response, I believe that the ECU presentation materially misrepresents mine.

The ECU argument on due accuracy ignored the fact, clearly stated by the complainant, that

the point of including the factual observation was to explain how one complaint reinforced the other. It was the fact that the "poverty" indicator was an outlier, meaning that it was unrepresentative of reported progress on the Goal's indicators as a whole, which made the BBC's confusion of goals and targets important.

18. The ECU failed to take into account that Mr Vadon only specifically responded to one of the original nine areas of complaint and none of the further points.

19. The head of the ECU failed to take into account Mr Vadon's inaccuracies.

Mr Vadon had:

- a) misrepresented the only complaint he dealt with as if it related to one term;
- b) based his argument on the incorrect claim that the ONS use the term "basket of goods";
- c) wrongly claimed that the BBC version, with its strange story of "the" economists – meaning those who were talking about poverty - using "national accounts", "census data" and "household surveys" to estimate prices, was simpler and shorter than the truth, which was that for no year had they made estimates of prices faced by the "extremely poor";
- d) wrongly claimed that the programme team "just chose to say an essential basket" when there was clearly a range of language used which gave the same erroneous impression: in reality the team chose to use *several* different phrases such as "basket of food" and "calculated...how much you would need".
- e) wrongly claimed that the complainant had acknowledged counterbalancing elements to the errors.¹⁰

Mr Vadon claimed that the intention was to raise some problems with the World Bank line.

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The complaint had in reality stated,

"There may be some features of the programme which counterbalance these errors by erring in the opposite direction and so underestimate the quality of work at the World Bank, the relevance of the data to what people could buy, the relevance of the one indicator to the goal, the appropriateness of relying on one fashion in one subdivision of one academic subject and so on; but I am not sure how that would add up."

20. The ECU wrongly implied that the complaint " Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor" was, as Mr Vadon had erroneously claimed, about one term.

"Basket of essential goods", etc." clearly indicated that the term was only an example. "Basket of food" was another. The whole part about "the economists", meaning those talking about poverty, using a "special dollar" contributed to an overall impression likely to mislead at least a substantial proportion of listeners and readers that the World Bank was reporting in the light of inflation rates faced by the extremely poor. The part about the economists using "national accounts", "census data" and "household surveys" did not appear to be well-sourced.

The ECU failed to explain why listeners or readers would draw conclusions which were true about the economists' method, or why, in the absence of inflation rates faced by the poorest over a 20-year period, it does not matter.

21. The ECU implied acceptance of Mr Vadon's failure to respond to the other complaint concerning the word "essential": "2. "Essential" may mislead. Bank does not estimate any consumption-need trend."
22. The ECU took inadequate account in applying the principle of due accuracy, of the subject of the material. The presenter of More or Less stated in the 3 March 2012 edition: "It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people in poverty". Introducing the piece in the edition of 3 December 2007 he stated, "It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living on under a dollar a day".
23. It is hard to imagine that the Guideline means that audience expectation is to be judged to a major degree by "the context of [a BBC staff member's] intention as he summarised it" where that summary was produced eight months after the programme had been broadcast, in response to an editorial complaint, rather than by the actual signposting for audience members during the programme, on the programme's web pages, and on that edition's web page. If instead the ECU meant that the "context" showed the nature of the programme, that is also highly open to question given the way that More or Less is advertised in general. The editor stated that the team aimed to describe the history of the line. That constituted imbalance, since the programmes on famine (10 Feb [2012), water (10 Mar 2012) and the International Labour Organisation (29 March 2013) ¹¹ were all sceptical of the official

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What is the world's average wage?
29 March 2013

claims. In the case of the World Bank, there was no scepticism at all of the claims themselves. The idea of giving the history of the idea without looking at what the statistics are actually on (except for a misleading segment about prices) or what they mean in real life is in sharp contrast to the treatment of famine and water statistics.

24. The ECU misrepresented the complainant's point on goals and targets, instead ending the quotation at the point where the complainant began to explain the significance. Since that significance was clearly intended to be relevant to the issue of due accuracy, this seems to count as failing to give adequate reasons for a decision.

25. The ECU drew a misconceived distinction between discussing "what it's really like" for people living under the line, and "technical" discussions about gauging poverty. Any useful discussion about how to gauge people's deprivation is necessarily concerned with understanding "what it's really like". My detached language, and the space limitations of the BBC complaints website form, may have misled the ECU. The point of the complaint is that policies should be based on a close approximation to real life, rather than on errors about what the evidence is.

26. The ECU failed to give the complainant the opportunity required by the Editorial Complaints Procedure:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/complaints_fr_work_ed_complaints.pdf

"The ECU will reply, usually within 10 working days, setting out the editorial guidelines against which the complaint will be considered. If the ECU considers it helpful, the ECU will also summarise your complaint. You will be given the opportunity to comment on both the summary and selected guidelines and you are asked to do this usually within 10 working days".

27. The ECU presented an inadequately short quotation from the Guidelines on due accuracy. The ECU omitted the part of the guideline which stated what it meant in practice:

"Where appropriate to the output, we should:

- *gather material using first hand sources wherever possible*
- *check and cross check facts*
- *validate the authenticity of documentary evidence and digital material*
- *corroborate claims and allegations made by contributors wherever possible.*"

28. Mr Steel's position appears to be that it was inappropriate to check whether a global goal or target had been officially met; and not to corroborate the research director of the World Bank's claim that the goal had been met.

" to expect greater rigour in this material than the UN itself observes is, I think, to apply too exacting a test of accuracy."

That appears to conflict with the programme's next edition, which did consider it necessary to spend broadcast time pointing out a very similar error in the UN's statement about a water goal.

It also seems to me an undesirable attribute for journalists to have – to count as true what civil servants say is true, even if (as in this case) the true position is also stated on the same UN web page.

I complained that the BBC failed to contradict the Research Director of the World Bank when he said that the Goal was met.

I think I have shown that the BBC's rigour was substantially less than the UN's. The UN did not make up a fact about using household surveys to calculate how much money you would need. The BBC failed to mention the caveats which the World Bank researchers, the World Bank itself, and the UN Statistics Division clearly make about the numbers.

Is Mr Steel saying that if the UK Government mixes up a long-term aspiration and a dated target, and then claims it has met the long-term aspiration because one short-term target of several was met and some missed, the BBC's flagship programme on the truth behind statistics which announced that it was hard to think of more important statistics than those involved in the officially-met target would be achieving due accuracy by actually repeating the bogus claim?

29. The ECU response failed to comply with, and failed to hold to account the content producers and Mr Vadon in his reply in relation to, article 44 (1) of the BBC Agreement:

" The BBC must do all it can to ensure that controversial subjects are treated with due accuracy and impartiality in all relevant output."

30. The ECU failed to take into account the part of the complaint which began:

"Why is this important? Public belief in wrong information on global poverty

"As correctly implied by the presenter's introduction for the World Service programme, this matter affects many people's lives, and perhaps whether some people live or die."

31. It clearly cannot be the case that an editor's claim as to the intention of a programme, written after a complaint is received, necessarily shows the "likely audience expectation" simply because the editor claims it.

Mr Steel must have a reason to agree with the editor's claim that the post-programme statement of intention is an adequate indicator of audience expectation.

I believe Mr Steel misapplies the guideline. It does not say that

"due accuracy is achieved through meeting the description of a programme team's intention which a staff member has drafted following a complaint."

The guideline says:

"The term 'due' means that the accuracy must be adequate and appropriate to the output, taking account of the subject and nature of the content, the likely audience expectation and any signposting that may influence that expectation."

32. The ECU's argument that due accuracy in the case of More or Less "wouldn't mean the same as it would in (for example) a technical discussion of the pros and cons of various measures of poverty and their usefulness as guides to policy" wrongly ignored the fact that the edition of More or Less seems to be, to what should be its great shame, the closest thing the BBC has produced since 2000 to exactly that. That criticism is not simply that the BBC has failed to take up an important topic properly. It is also that the BBC has not bothered to check the basis of its own reporting in large numbers of broadcasts and online articles.
33. The ECU failed to take account of points in the complaint referring precisely to the "usefulness as guides to policy" which the ECU claimed was not relevant. The link arises because the absence of the kinds of data mentioned in the complaint clearly apply also to economists' policy advice, since if they had the data for the advice, they would have used it for the claims about global trends.

I did not simply complain to the BBC about abstract technical issues. I complained because people use statistics to make policy on the basis of errors such as I have explained to the BBC. In order to explain the issues, it is necessary to find out what the statistics actually are. This is the same function which More or Less professes.

I also believe that the ECU have failed to see the coherence of the complaint. I attempted to explain this in the section on systematic bias.

I did not complain to embarrass the BBC. In the last eleven years, on four or five occasions, I have written to the BBC attempting to publicise aspects of the abuse of economic statistics – letting the BBC have information which staff could use as they saw fit. Economists thought that if people spent more, that must mean they are richer. That was part of the intellectual foundations of what led to the financial crash.

The crash is the reason why the seminar on economic reporting of November 2012 concluded that the BBC must not fail to challenge assumptions.

The BBC has a large range of analytical, ideas-based and investigative programmes in several areas such as science, public affairs, news, and so on: examples are Panorama, Analysis, Today, The World Tonight, Newsnight, More or Less, In Our Time, The Forum, The Investigation, In the Balance, etc. So why have none of them looked at the actual basis behind decisions on one of the most important areas - what to do about poverty?

Unanswered Stage 2 complaint: Professor Rosling is "in fact...sceptical of" official figures of the kind he used in the programme. BBC never explains why it was acceptable for him to use them. His poverty line "is in the wrong place"; he conflated "two different units" by ignoring source's warning that you have to make large adjustments. Viewers "may have concluded that very large numbers of people are much better off than they actually are." Professor Rosling "is quite emphatic about it being ten times...He had no evidence for giving such an impression". Request for "a response fully compliant with BBC accountability guidelines" after BBC failures to answer complaints so far. These included ECU failing to answer key complaints on More or Less/Dollar a Day/"failures since 2000", as the complainant's comments of 6 February 2014 had showed.
20 May 2014

Sent: 20 May 2014 23:59

To: ECU

Subject: Request for investigation: BBC2: "Don't Panic – The Truth about Population" and associated web pages

Dear ECU staff,

BBC2: "Don't Panic – The Truth about Population" and associated web pages

This is a request that the ECU investigate a complaint about the above material.

I request a response fully compliant with BBC accountability guidelines.

There are three complaint reference numbers, partly because the BBC replied incorrectly that the complaint was sent after 30 working days.

CAS-2476017-QXKV7S

CAS-2536063

CAS-2602977-RPYJSF

Below is some further information on part of the complaint.

I attach a PDF file which I estimate should take no more than five minutes to understand, illustrating one of the points in section 2.

The problems in section 2 are linked: it seems hard to imagine that the fact that the line is in the wrong place is not linked to the conflation of the two different units.

The ECU may wish to note that the World Bank has recently revised their "purchasing power parity" rates, which may affect this issue. The following relates to the situation at the time of the programme.

The World Bank "dollars a day" were according to the programme's sources worth much more than the "dollars a day".

[later note: the latter refers to the programme's use of the term.]

[The logarithmic scale mentioned in the BBC reply is either not a problem (if it contributes nothing to the wrong proportions shown on either side of the line) or a minor problem (because the worst it does is to distort the visual impression, which the conflation of units seems to be doing in any case).]

One result is that Professor Rosling erroneously talked about people on \$1 a day (which was clearly meant to be related to the official "extreme poverty line") going to the situation of the middle billion - \$10 a day. He said they would be on "ten times" as much. That is clearly wrong if they begin on \$1 in the World Bank units, as those units would be worth much more.

As I said, in the World Bank household-survey-based units (which are the ones the audience has heard about as "dollars a day") the middle person was reported as on \$3.40 (in 2005 "PPP dollars").

In the Utrecht paper's GDP units, which the programme used, the middle person is on \$10 (in 2005 "PPP dollars"). In those units, as the authors make clear, you have to adjust the amounts a long way upwards to correspond to the "extreme poverty" line of the World Bank. That is why the line was in the wrong place.

One other result is that unfortunately, considering the good work he has done, Professor Rosling has given a wrong impression that half the human population is above eight times (\$1.25 x 8 = \$10 for the middle person) the "extreme poverty" level. He explicitly said he was showing how the impression that poorer people were at similar levels was wrong, but then used incompatible and so misleading numbers to make the point which ended up exaggerated. The problem is more severe because he is quite emphatic about it being ten times and this being very different from what people say.

He had no evidence for giving such an impression. The official figures (which he and I are in fact both sceptical of, but serve to illustrate the point here about levels being discussed by others rather than whether the use of such statistics is morally acceptable in particular contexts) would indicate $\$3.40/1.25 = 2.72$ times, not 8 times. He is using the wrong units in the context of having talked about the official line.

The programme makers argue that viewers could follow the link to Professor Rosling's site and find out what the researchers say.

I cannot see how the fact that people could work out that he misled means he did not mislead.

That wrong impression, and any others as a result of that conflation, is in addition to any idea that viewers may have gained that these are real dollars, worth much more than "PPP" dollars, in the

first place. I do not see why viewers would understand from this programme that the World Bank "dollars" are worth, say, 30p in real money in a poor country.

The problem may be to a relatively small extent offset by the fact that the World Bank "dollars a day" are at 2005 nominal prices and adjusted (crudely) for inflation. But in changing the World Bank 3.4 to 10, he is inflating by about 300%. And that is not counting the extra perhaps typical 200% difference due to the "dollars" being nominally worth what they would buy in the USA, not what real dollars would buy in a poor country.

So these are two reasons why viewers may have concluded that very large numbers of people are much better off than they actually are.

As with the complaint already being investigated by the ECU, written communication will need to be by email.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

PDF document: "Illustrations on conflation of Utrecht and World Bank units for complaint CAS-2476017.pdf"

Later note added as the complainant's original document confused global and "developing regions" statistics; this makes no difference to the main point.

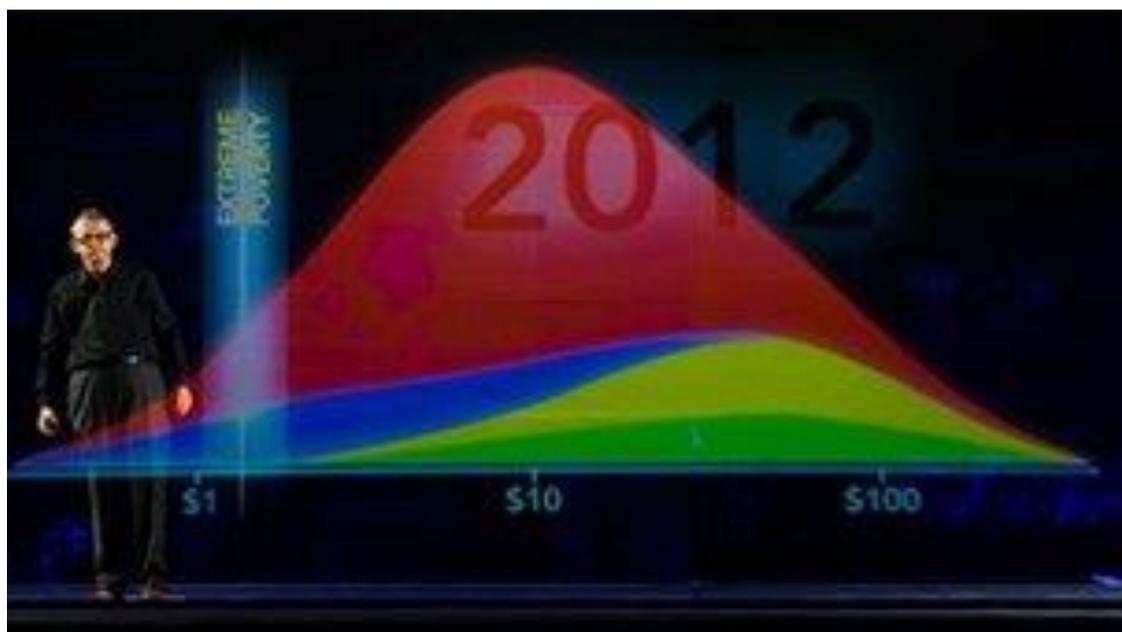
.....

BBC2: Don't Panic – The Truth about Population and associated web pages

Illustrations of one point in complaint to BBC:

CAS-2476017-QXKV7S, CAS-2536063, CAS-2602977-RPYJSF

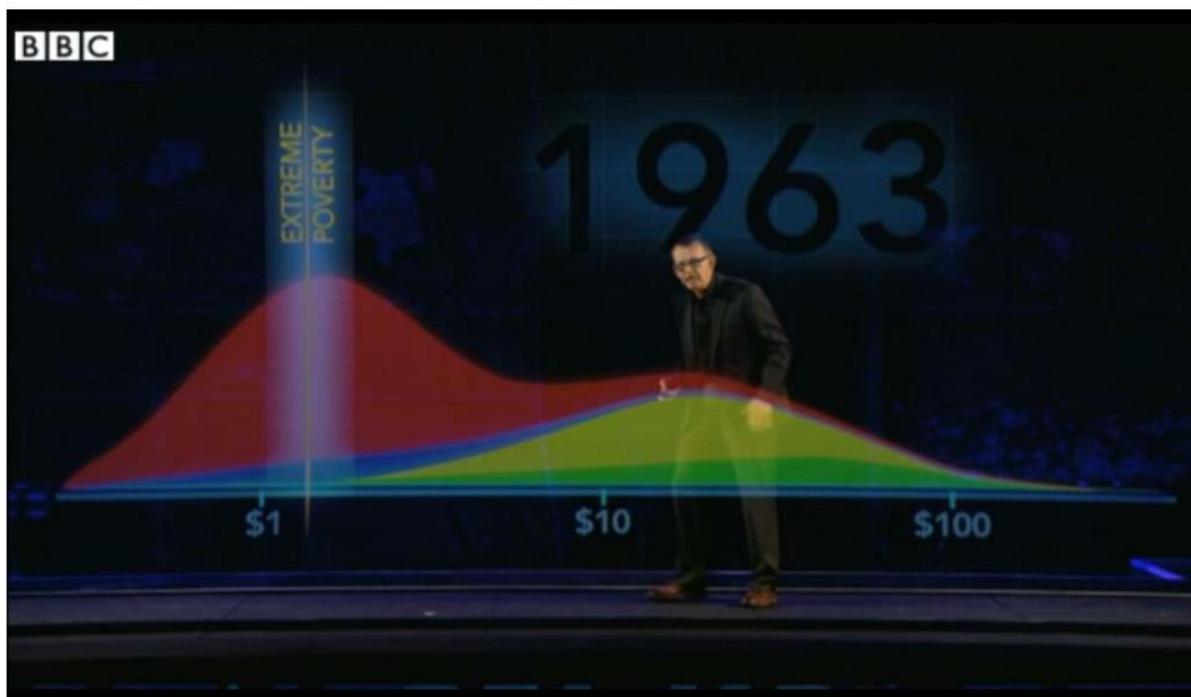
This clearly does not represent a sixth of people as in extreme poverty.



A similar image is at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24835822>

The following does not represent over 50% of people as "extremely poor" in 1963:



The above image is from www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine/24836073.

The World Bank usually give statistics on "\$1.25 a day" going back only to 1981. The World Bank claim over 50% "extremely poor" in 1981.

[Later note: The World Bank estimate 52% "extremely poor" in 1981 in "developing" countries. That works out at 42.5% of world population. But the line clearly still looks in the wrong place.]

Professor Rosling shows this:



Unanswered complaint. BBC understated world leaders' commitments of 2000. More or Less claimed it "covered" criticism of the dollar a day even though it had falsely claimed the World Bank estimated a "basket of food" and implied it took into account such things as "a certain level" of shelter or health care; Further concern at More or Less "imbalance of contributors" towards guests with World Bank links. Complaint sent to ECU, after BBC failures to respond to complaints sent via web form. 28 May 2014

Notes:

Email sent to ECU after repeated BBC failures to respond to other complaints to Audience Services.

ECU promised to reply to this email, but did not do so until August 2015.

It apparently refused to consider this complaint on the ground that it had not gone through Stage 1. But the complainant had made it clear that he was sending this communication about new complaints to the ECU "in view of the existing complaint which provides the context".

If the ECU had read the correspondence on the existing complaint to which they had already supplied a provisional response on 7 January 2014 and the Stage 2 complaint of 20 May, they would have been aware of the failures of the normal complaints process:

a) the BBC's multiple failures to answer complaints sent to Audience Services in case 1300394 (More or Less, Dollar a Day series and failures "since 2000"), and

b) the fact that Audience Services had wrongly claimed the complaint on "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population" was submitted outside the time limit.

The ECU should perhaps not have been surprised that the new complaint was being sent to the ECU in the hope that it would deal with the complaint in a competent manner.

The BBC had clearly committed itself to forwarding complaints to Audience Services where these are received by other parts of the BBC, as the complainant proved (and the Trustees falsely implied he had not) during the Woman's Hour case in 2015.

Email 28 May 2014

Further information: Provisional response 1300394

Dear Mr Steel,

This email deals with two matters, of which I suggest the second is more important.

Firstly, I wish to complain about the edition of More or Less broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2014 and other material making one particular similar mistakes, perhaps too numerous to list.

I am sending this complaint to the ECU rather than Audience Services in view of the existing complaint which provides the context.

a) In my view the programme misled in stating, "this \$1.25-a-day measure has been criticised and that's something we've covered here on More or Less before." I do not see how that was well-sourced. I refer to my previous complaint. Also, this is in my view a signpost to other More or Less podcasts, but as far as I know none of them dealt with the best-known criticisms.

b) The statement "the World Bank says itself that the quality of the surveys varies from country to country but on the whole it does think the numbers are useful" may give an impression that a, or the, main criticism is the quality of the surveys. I do not see how that is well-sourced. Even in the same programme the presenter mentioned a contributor's view that there were too many uncertainties to compare GDP statistics across countries. What reason might there be for thinking that household surveys are comparable? Also, is it not the interpretation as representing poverty - lack - rather than the quality of surveys which is the main subject of criticism? I am afraid that quoting the World Bank on criticisms did not allay my concerns at imbalance of contributors. Also, saying the statistics are "useful" is hardly an answer to a challenge to defend specific statements about poverty made in the past.

c) Like some other BBC output, despite its previous statements on the matter the programme juxtaposed real dollars (\$510 billion GDP) and the less-valuable "purchasing power parity" "\$1.25 a day". In my view the statement, "[the World Bank] says you are in extreme poverty if you live on less than one dollar 25 a day" and/or the other reference at about 7.30 in the podcast, should have been phrased to reflect the fact that it is not a real \$1.25. The More or Less team have stated this several times. Unfortunately the problem here is more than simply not clarifying, because in this particular programme the juxtaposition seems to imply that the extremely poor live on a real dollar 25. If you search the BBC web site for "purchasing power parity" you might not find very much to do with poverty. Some content says "US \$1 [or \$2] a day":

- www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13036732 Dec 22, 2013

"Economy:...most people still live on less than US \$1 a day."

- www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-24831105 Nov 6, 2013 " ... more than 350 million people live on less than US\$1.25 a day (£0.78)"

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-24723411> 29 October 2013 "...[Five years ago] India's GDP per capita exceeded \$1,000....poverty of less than \$1.25 per day... nearly 70% live on less than \$2 per day.

Average incomes...\$1,000 GDP per capita... " [GDP is in real dollars]

I wrote in the document of 6 February,

"I am sorry to say that as far as I can see, the whole of the Wooldridge series – as well as a huge amount of other output from the BBC - presented dollar amounts in real dollars like that, when in reality they are worth typically twice or more what the World Bank's "international dollars" used for the poverty claims are worth."

I don't think this is adequate for a global readership or a global audience.

I propose that in the interests of fairness and effectiveness you consider the new material above alongside the existing complaint.

There is also what you might consider a more serious matter.

The BBC has often conflated easier MDG targets agreed in 2002 with more ambitious (if in some ways more limited) Millennium Declaration promises of 2000, and I know of no evidence that any BBC output has noted the difference.

In my comments to the ECU on provisional response 1300394, I wrote:

"In More or Less of 10 March 2012...Unidentified speaker, apparently a World Service newsreader or a person reading from a World Service news script: The United Nations says the first Millennium Development Goal, halving the number of people who have no access to clean water, has been reached before the target date of 2015.

Tim Harford: Ruth Alexander's with me. Ruth, this is a really important goal.

Ruth Alexander: Yes, the Millennium Development Goals were agreed by all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in the year 2000. "

"More or Less makes a major error. The MDG targets agreed by consensus in 2002 [*Later note: I misled here, apparently by trusting experts. The Monterrey Consensus did not mention MDG targets.*] are in fact easier than the pledges in the Millennium Declaration of 2000. The latter is a UN General Assembly resolution. A major difference is that the resolution's pledges were not backdated, and are therefore to, for example halve the proportion of people in 2000 on under "\$1 ", not the 1990 level.

"....[The programme contradicted itself by saying it had scrutinised the goal while confusing it with the more ambitious UN pledge.] "

If you have inferred that I was requesting the ECU to treat this particular complaint as part of the overall matter in the interests of fairness, not least to those people to whom the commitments of 2000 were made, you are right.

Contrary to a common myth, the Declaration contains no reference at all to 1990. That is why I find no references to 1990 baselines in BBC stories from 2000 about the Summit and Declaration.

I find no references from 2000 in BBC articles to the phrase "Millennium Development Goals" either. The phrase was used in 2001 by the Secretary-General in his "Road Map" document in relation to the "proposed" goals, targets and indicators.

Declaration: Mortality rates reduced from "current rates":

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

MDG4: Mortality rates reduced from 1990 rates:

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/MDGsOfficialList2008.pdf>

This confusion appears to be widespread in BBC reports and analysis.

The BBC could play a useful role in correcting the misinformation and thus enabling people to hold governments to account.

I have not yet gone through properly the editions of More or Less of 16 and 19 May on the World Bank poverty claims, but they may have this same conflation. I propose that the ECU listen to them.

I expect many people tell the BBC their complaints are important. I stated in my comments of 6 February on your provisional response that More or Less here made a major error. The number of child deaths 2000-15 is likely to be over 90 million. The rate went down between the two baselines of 1990 and 2000. You may not be surprised to hear that the difference between steady progress on the Declaration commitment and steady progress on the MDG target over the period 2000-15 amounts to several million child deaths.

I do not know if ECU staff, or editorial staff, have fully taken in what I wrote. As I say, I propose that in the interests of fairness, not least to the people to whom the promises of 2000 were made, the ECU consider this complaint along with the others.

I propose that a staff member let me know within perhaps a week the ECU's considered view as to what this particular complaint is, so that there is no misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

Unacknowledged complaint on More or Less of 16/19 May 2014. It gave "Wrong impression of basis for, and debate over, official claims." Despite economists' failure over the financial crisis, the programme fails to make the most basic observations about the holes in official methods. The programme still discriminates in favour of the World Bank claims and macroeconomists' thoroughness. Despite its usual focus on questioning claims, the programme "still avoids stated purpose (what claims based on) or due impartiality re [World Bank] on poverty." In this edition, the ex-World Bank presenter looked at claims from authors, one of whom is a ex-long-term World Bank economist, at a UK Government-funded "think tank". Its chairman is an ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank. The edition raised a problem for the "think tank" which it had failed to raise about the World Bank. It presented a ludicrous picture in which the current Chief Economist of the World Bank, as a guest, said researchers should not use national prices for poor rather than prices for their items - which was exactly what the World Bank is doing for the MDG monitoring. Also, there are "no safety stats on water" globally, which means economists clearly do not in fact have "purchasing power parity" statistics for global poverty claims. The presenter of More or Less stated in 2008 that it was hard to make meaningful comparisons of housing costs across European countries. This obviously applies across poorer countries and across different times. Yet the programme implied, falsely, on 3 November 2012 that the World Bank took into account such things as "a certain level" of shelter or health care" even though the officials themselves state that they do not take into account the equivalent rental value of living in your own home, or health care. More or Less, World Service and Radio 4, broadcast 16 and 19 May 2014

Text copied from the web form four minutes earlier than the URL confirming that the complaint had been submitted:

.....
R4, WS, assoc'd web pages:

1. ICP press release: new-methodology purchasing power stats "should not be used to compare changes in...GDP over time".

So why in value of people's money?

BBC: "This suggests...a lot more progress...on...[poverty] goal",

"suggest...under...poverty line...almost halved",

"reducing",

"fell",

"how prices...changing",

"gone down":

researchers' joke headline on poverty halving

(on air, schedule, edition pages, eg "changing our understanding", "does it stack up?")

give/contribute to impression.

2. "Correct": Subjective elements to "purch. power parity": eg shelter, food, water, etc differ across countries.

No safety stats on water.

3. WB line not "defined" as 1.25; average of PPP national lines.

Despite complaints incl. to ECU 28 May 14:

A. No mention of need.

B. "Agreed by [UN]" fails to correct easier "1990 baseline" Declaration pledge error.

C. Stats mostly spending, not "income".

D. Impartiality:

Ex-WB [World Bank] econ presenter;
claim and contributor from "think tank"
(chair ex-WB chief econ;
"paid": main funder UK Govt;
stats from WB and WB-hosted);
the other contrib. is WB chief econ.

E. Misleadingly presented chief econ as voice of caution.

He said should not use national prices for poor - exactly what WB doing for MDG baseline;
unchallenged.

Presented as problem for "quick" stats from think-tank:

wrong impression of basis for, and debate over, official claims.

F. MoL still avoids stated purpose (what claims based on) or due impartiality re WB on poverty.

[end of unacknowledged complaint on More or Less of 16/19 May 2014]

.....

On 26 June 2014 the BBC's complaints website showed a page stating:

*"Your complaint has been submitted...Thank you for completing the details on this form...
thank you for contacting BBC World Service...
We aim to respond...
BBC World Service"*.

The page address was

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=R1OMPCG645MCNNT6B5EI1LKT6G&uid=438860581#anchor>

.....

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Complaints

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Your complaint has been submitted

Thank you for completing the details on this form. We're sorry that you needed to complain but thank you for contacting BBC World Service.

We will acknowledge your complaint and then we aim to respond to most complaints within 10 working days (about 2 weeks) although this also depends on the nature of your complaint, the others we need to investigate and practical issues such as whether a production team is on location or otherwise away.

For consistency, and to use our licence fee resources appropriately, if we receive other complaints about the same issue we may send the same reply to everyone. Please read [What happens to your complaint](#) for full details of the BBC complaints procedures and how we consider the issues raised in feedback we receive. Our regular reports about complaints to the BBC and any subsequent rulings or appeals can be found in [Complaints reports on this website](#).

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Unanswered complaint of "institutional failure": "MDG targets....are not the pledges of 2000"; problem needs solving before next UN Summit of 2015. Further evidence of BBC errors, sent to ECU 13 August 2014

Further evidence and complaints to BBC

MDG targets on survival, water, sanitation, hunger and economics are not the pledges of 2000

BBC misled over years that targets proposed in 2001 are the harder targets world leaders pledged in the 2000 Declaration

- * Pledges have harder 2000 baseline, not 1990
- * Pledges use global proportions – harder due to population growth in some countries
- * General Assembly reaffirmed Declaration in 2005

Matt Berkley

12 August 2014

"Baseline year – 1990 or 2000?"

...[The Declaration text] would imply a 2000 baseline year of the Millennium Declaration. After discussions within the UN system and with other partners, the issues have been resolved in favour of 1990 serving as the baseline year."

UN Development Group, Guidance Note to country representatives, October 2001

http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc

Please see notes at the end of this document for context, and Appendix for history of the change in baseline from 2000 to 1990.

Examples of BBC reference and educational output

Material for children's education

Geography

"In 2000

(sic),

the United Nations agreed on some Millennium Goals. Every country...agreed to these. The aim was to achieve them

(sic)

by 2015."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks3/geography/interdependence/development/revision/5>

Note: The reference to 2015 indicates that the text is referring not just to the undated goals themselves but to, or including a reference to, the time-bound targets. These were not agreed by UN member states in 2000.

Modern Studies

"In September 2000,

190 countries signed up to a range of goals and targets ...These

(sic)

are known as the Millennium Goals..."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/modern/int_issues/development_africa/revision/9/

In the case of educational items it may seem particularly appropriate for the BBC to review related material intended for future re-broadcast.

Examples of BBC reference material

Any BBC output may be used by journalists or others in or outside the BBC as reference material.

Millennium Development Goals website

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/

"In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was ratified by 189 heads of state at the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Declaration outlines eight

(sic)

broad goals.

Within these

(sic)

are eighteen targets - most set for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark

(sic)

- and forty-eight indicators.

These Millennium Development Goals represent a global commitment

(sic)

by all nations who signed the Declaration..."

?2004

Linked to by More or Less article in 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20255904>

and Health Check in 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01hf94f>

Key Players in Development

"It was at a United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 that world leaders agreed to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and 18 targets for combating poverty"

"Each year the United Nations General Assembly produces an annual report on the progress towards implementing the Millennium Declaration"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1146_key_players/

Guide to Development Speak

"Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

A set of eight goals, together with specific, quantifiable and time bound targets, that were agreed and adopted by 189 countries at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000."

2004

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/916_dev_speak/page11.shtml

Millennium goals: in statistics

"The United Nations agreed a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, with a view to tackling global poverty.

They include improving living standards...by 2015.

...people living on less than \$1 a day ...down from 1.25 billion in 1990.

...Target: Reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990

(sic)

and 2015.

...Target: Between 1990 and 2005, reduce the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds."

5 September 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6943975.stm>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/030709_witn.shtml

"Do you remember the Millennium Goals? When world leaders celebrated the year 2000 with a solemn pledge

(sic)

to reduce poverty and hunger, check the spread of AIDS, get boys and girls into school, and improve health and sanitation, all by 2015?"

Other BBC output

"Em 2015, chega-se a data-limite para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio – metas de desenvolvimento com as quais muitos países se comprometeram frente a ONU e cujo cumprimento deve ser avaliado.

Com isso, se abrirá espaço para o estabelecimento de novas metas nessa área."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/07/140722_idh_brasil_ru.shtml

"a adoção dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio, em 2000"

"Segundo os pesquisadores, o ritmo do declínio global no número de mortes e infecções das três doenças passou a ser mais forte a partir de 2000, com a adoção dos Objetivos do Milênio por governos ao redor do mundo....O prazo para o cumprimento dos objetivos vai até 2015.

"A única coisa que acho que o Brasil não irá cumprir é em relação a mortalidade materna", diz Lotufo. "(Dos outros Objetivos do Milênio) O Brasil está alcançando tudo. O que significa que está cumprindo com a obrigação. Nada mais que isso."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/07/140721_brasil_hiv_aids_ac_kb.shtml

"Social content from BBC Media Action"

"Fourteen years ago this month, prime minister Jean Chrétien helped launch the Millennium Development Goals in New York "

[quoting from linked article from a non-BBC newspaper]

<http://unjobs.org/items/489717674369638400>

Links to:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/make-press-freedom-a-un-development-goal/article19629923/>

which reads,

"The MDGs, remember those? More than 100 heads of state and government joined Mr. Chrétien at the United Nations to adopt, with great fanfare, the declaration that would become eight international development goals to be reached by 2015."

July 2014

"Os oito Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio foram firmados em 2000... Eles ...se desdobram em metas concretas, como reduzir em dois terços a mortalidade de crianças menores de cinco anos...O prazo para o cumprimento das metas é 2015..."

Brasil lidera racha polêmico sobre novos objetivos do milênio da ONU

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/06/140627_objetivos_onu_ms.shtml

"Criados no ano 2000, os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio...as metas enfrentam críticas quanto a sua concepção e há dificuldades para seu cumprimento até o prazo final, em 2015. Os Objetivos do Milênio foram definidos por todos os países na Conferência do Milênio da ONU.Os oito objetivos, concretos e mensuráveis, subdividem-se em diferentes metas. Uma das metas prioritárias dos Objetivos do Milênio da ONU, a redução pela metade no número de pessoas que vivem em extrema pobreza, foi alcançada cinco anos antes do fim do prazo."

Objetivos do Milênio trouxeram avanços, mas são alvo de críticas

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/06/140627_objetivos_milenio_balanco_lab.shtml

"todos os países devem conseguir cumprir as metas dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio, um conjunto de compromissos adotados em 2000 para melhorar o destino da humanidade. Um deles se referia à saúde da mulher e estipulava uma diminuição de 75% entre 1990 e 2015 na taxa de mortalidade de mulheres durante gravidez ou parto."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/05/140506_queda_mortalidade_materna_lgb.shtml

Children's BBC Newsround

"World leaders had previously pledged...The pledges were part of the Millennium Development Goals

(sic)

that several countries all over the world signed up to - these are promises..."

(sic)

January 2014

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/25935185>

"Bill and Melinda Gates have said ...They said new MDGs - which are pledges

(sic)

set by UN member countries to increase living standards in poorer parts of the world - would be made once the current ones expire in 2015."

25 September 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24277516>

(Are the goals or MDG targets pledges? Surely the actual pledges are in the Declaration - the resolution of 2000. In 2005 the General Assembly reaffirmed the Declaration, so it is difficult to see how MDG targets agreed in 2002 could override related pledges of 2000.)

Democracy Live

"In September 2000, 189 countries made a promise...Commitments

(sic)

made to attaining the MDGs will expire in 2015."

24 October 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/house-of-lords-24643510>

Health Check

World Service

2 Oct 2013

15 minutes 0 sec in podcast:

Kofi Annan: "some countries are going to meet all the eight goals; others will meet one or two..."

Presenter: "...progress towards meeting the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals - a fifteen-year programme instigated at the turn of the century"

(sic)

which set goals"

(seems to imply that MDG targets were set in 2000).

Health Check

"In 2000 the UN introduced the Millennium Development Goals – a set of eight targets – to increase living standards for the world's poorest and to eradicate different areas of human suffering by 2015."

(Web page text)

October 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01hf94f>

"Related links" include

"The Millennium Development Goals" which reads:

"In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was ratified by 189 heads of state at the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Declaration outlines eight broad goals.

(sic).

Within these are eighteen targets - most set for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark

(sic)

- and forty-eight indicators.

These Millennium Development Goals represent a global commitment

(sic)

by all nations who signed the Declaration..."

Millennium Development Goals

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/

Democracy Live

"The Millennium Declaration, which set out the MDGs, was ratified at a UN summit in 2000 and sets out eight broad goals to reduce poverty around the world by 2015."

13 June 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/europe-22885530>

BBC Media Action

"The original Millennium Declaration agreed in 2000 – which articulated the Millennium Development Goals due to expire in 2015"

"That Declaration has tended to be forgotten, however. Instead, it is the eight Goals it laid that have galvanised international attention in the interim years."

5 June 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbcmmediaaction/posts/What-would-a-post-2015-development-goal-on-free-media-mean->

Comment: The Declaration did, in a way, "articulate" the MDGs – most of the undated aims. However, the article is talking about "goals" which expire in 2015 and galvanised attention. The article seems to refer not simply to the undated goals but to, or to what includes, the time-limited targets, and so seems to mislead. The likelihood of this, as elsewhere, is increased by the fact that journalists and others often refer to the targets with end dates of 2015 as "goals".

"The millennium development goals, designed to be completed by 2015

(sic - appears to refer to targets),

are pledges

(sic)

by UN member countries....The first of them - reducing poverty among some of the very poorest - has been achieved"

(The pledge on a dollar a day, which is in the Declaration of 2000, had clearly not been officially achieved as the BBC appears to claim. What was officially met was the easier target with a baseline of 1990, not the pledge without that backdated baseline.

Second, progress towards the goal, "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", officially requires data from the FAO, UNICEF and ILO, not just the World Bank. Only the World Bank has made the claim about its target.

The Research Director of the World Bank has made inaccurate statements that the "goal" has been achieved. However, in reality not only is the goal "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" but also,

a) no agency has claimed that there are data from the four agencies indicating that the Goal's 2015 targets have as a whole been achieved;

b) no agency can sensibly claim that any of the global poverty "pledges" of 2000 in the sense of the individual targets – which do not have the easier baseline of 1990 – were achieved.

(neither the goal nor the pledge has been met, and the easier targets for MDG1 have not been met as a whole either. Progress on the goal is monitored officially by the FAO, ILO and UNICEF – not just the World Bank, which is the only organisation to announce that any MDG1 target has been met)

David Cameron calls on UN to end 'extreme poverty'

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21288823>

Last updated July 2013 according to an anonymous email from News Online Complaints detailing several significant corrections.

[Later note by MB: This should perhaps read "a correction".]

Reads incorrectly "Last updated 1 February".

BBC Media Action

"the key MDGs of reducing maternal mortality by three quarters and reducing the deaths of children under five from preventable causes by two thirds...The 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals....Eight international development goals along with measurable targets were established at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000."

February 2013

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/policybriefing/bbc_media_action_health_on_the_move.pdf

Democracy Live

"The millennium development goals, designed to be completed

(sic)

by 2015, are pledges

(sic)

by UN member countries to increase living standards in poorer parts of the world. The first of them - reducing poverty among some of the very poorest - has been achieved"

(sic – not a goal; nor have the intermediate targets as a whole for Goal 1 (with the easier 1990 baselines) been officially met. But nor was the pledge of 2000 on a dollar a day.)

".... But attempts to reach other goals have been less successful."

EU Development Commissioner insists global poverty can be eradicated

Democracy Live

27 February 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/europe-21601064>

Question: How can you have democracy if the media mislead the public on governments' commitments?

"The eight goals, which cover "halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/Aids and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015", were initially widely

supported by the governments of the 189 countries that adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000."

21 January 2013

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-21088042>

The programme page for the Why poverty? debate on 24 November 2012 includes a link to the Dollar Benchmark article of 9 March 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p010n7vq>

"...objectifs de développement du Millénaire OMD. Ces objectifs établis en 2000 sont les engagements pris par les pays membres de l'ONU, pour améliorer le niveau de vie dans les régions pauvres du monde. Le premier d'entre eux qui était de réduire la pauvreté parmi les plus pauvres, a été atteint"

(sic)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/afrique/monde/2012/11/121101_cameron_poverty_un.shtml

More or Less article

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20255904>

11 November 2012

links to:

Millennium Development Goals

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/

which reads,

"In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was ratified by 189 heads of state at the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Declaration outlines eight broad goals

(sic).

Within these are eighteen targets - most set for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark

(sic)

- and forty-eight indicators.

These Millennium Development Goals represent a global commitment

(sic)

by all nations who signed the Declaration..."

"The Millennium Development Goals, set to be completed (sic) by 2015, are pledges by UN member countries

(sic - the pledges of 2000 are in several cases different)

to increase living standards in poorer parts of the world.

The first of them (sic) - reducing poverty among some of the very poorest - has been achieved (sic)...

...Analysis

...International development correspondent, BBC News

...The UN says that for the first time the number of people living in extreme poverty is falling in every region of the world but the first MDG (sic), cutting in half (sic) the proportion of people living in poverty (sic), has been reached (sic)..."

1 November 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20163840>

Click

World Service

Web page:

"the Millennium development goals, a set of objectives set way back in 2000 by the UN"

08/08/2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00w7pyl>

"UN Millennium Development Goal 4 set in 2000

(sic)

- which calls for the reduction of young child deaths by two-thirds in 2015. "

2 May 2012

<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-17905969>

Religion/Ethics: Sunday, Radio 4

"The Millennium Development Goals were launched by the United Nations in 2000

(sic)

with the noble aims of among other things halving the number

(sic)

of people suffering from hunger target date... 2015"

8 April 2012

11 mins 30 seconds into programme

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01fhnst>

"The Overseas Development Institute finds that of all the United Nations' millennium development goals, the fifth - to reduce maternal mortality - is doing the worst, with figures worsening since the targets were agreed in 2000."

(sic)

25 March 2012

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-17438514>

More or Less

World Service 10 March 2012

"we've been investigating another vital statistic ...this is a really important goal.

- Yes, the Millennium Development Goals were agreed by all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in the year 2000

(sic).

...the whole goal's about halving the proportion.... between 1990 and 2015."

"we scrutinised the goal of halving the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day in our last edition"

(That edition, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p34zj> , had stated "There we are - the target's been met" (several years early); web page states "...assesses how global poverty is measured, as the World Bank releases the latest figures on the number of people living on less than a dollar a day. What progress has been made...?"

More or Less article

Dollar benchmark: The rise of the \$1-a-day statistic

"goal to "halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day". This high-profile target was agreed by the UN General Assembly

(sic)

... Ten days ago, the World Bank declared the goal had been met early."

9 March 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>

also Spanish translation at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/03/120309_economia_politica_un_dolar_bd.shtml

"fourth and fifth Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)...goals to dramatically reduce deaths by 2015...The targets were set by world leaders in 2000."

Misleading.

"MDG4 aims to reduce the death rate for children aged under five by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015."

True, but in context, contributes to misleading conflation.

First, the world leaders did not merely set targets. They "resolved" to achieve them.

Second, the BBC implies that the commitment in the Declaration of 2000 had a baseline of 1990, which is not true.

Millennium Development Goals on health 'will not be met'

20 September 2011

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-14974145>

www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/scienceandtech/2011/09/110919_millennium_health_goals.shtml

Business Daily, World Service

(web page text) "Two of the Millennium Development Goals, announced at a summit attended by 189 world leaders in May 2000, related to the most basic of human needs: clean water and sanitation. The objective was to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the world's population who existed without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation."

18 November 2011

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-15552967>

"Back in 2000, world leaders set a target of cutting child mortality by two thirds, by 2015 (one of the Millennium Development Goals)"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/reporters/ferguswalsh/2011/01/_vanessa_is_struggling_to.html

Business Daily, World Service

1 Nov 2011

Web page:

"to mark the passing of the millennium there was the great gathering of world leaders. The summit was attended by 189 world leaders - the largest meeting of leaders in history - and, to mark this august occasion, the leaders promised to work together to improve...The leaders signed up to a series of eight Millennium Development Goals."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00ldwyj>

"the goals, or targets, the United Nations set in the year 2000

(sic)

...There have been many international goals or targets against poverty that have not been met in the past. So, will these eight goals be any different?

Mark Malloch-Brown, former Head of the United Nations Development Programme:

"It does need...a complete break from business as usual – a hundred and eighty governments meeting at the Millennium General Assembly

(sic)

solemnly adopted these simple straightforward eight goals

(sic)

and as it happens 2015 will pretty much coincide with the end of my, sort of, active years in development so I'll either go out with a big gold watch having met the goals or presumably will be driven off into a humiliated retirement somewhere."

(The guest appears to be referring to targets as goals, since there was no expectation of the actual goals being met. It is then at least unclear why he was referring to the "goals" as being "solemnly adopted" by 180 governments when the General Assembly in fact reaffirmed the Declaration itself in 2005.)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/indonesia/mobile/bahasa_inggris/2011/01/101221_ebyr_worldxtra16.shtml

"Sólo 7% de los países en desarrollo cumplirán con el compromiso

(sic)

de reducir las muertes infantiles y maternas establecido en 2000

(sic)

en las Metas de Desarrollo del Milenio establecidas por Naciones Unidas.

Mortalidad infantil no se reduce al ritmo necesario para cumplir las Metas del Milenio"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/ultimas_noticias/2011/09/110919_ultnot_mortalidad_infantil_milenio_cch.shtml

"Dünya liderlerinin 2000 yılında, yeni binyıla ilişkin vizyonları doğrultusunda belirlediği hedeflerden dördüncüsü, 2015 yılında bes yedi altı çocuk ölümlerinin 1990 rakamlarına göre üçte iki düşürülmesini öngörüyordu."

BBC Türkçe - Haberler - Anne-çocuk sağlığı hedefleri tutturulamadı

http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2011/09/110920_mortality.shtml

"Malengo hayo yalifikiwa na viongozi duniani mwaka 2000.

MDG4 ina dhamira ya kupunguza idadi ya watoto wanaofariki dunia wenye umri wa chini ya miaka mitano kwa robo tatu kati ya mwaka 1990 na 2015.

MDG5 inaelezea kuwa na nia ya kufuta vifo miongoni mwa wanawake wajawazito kwa kiwango cha robo tatu katika kipindi hicho hicho.

Habari - Mataifa mengi 'hayatofikia malengo'"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/swahili/habari/2011/09/110916_utafiti_wanawake_watoto.shtml

BBC World

20 January 2011

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/9368626.stm>

Video, 2m 42s:

"Ten years ago ...world leaders signed up to a new partnership, linking rich and poor nations in an agreement to halve the number

(sic - proportion)

"of people living in extreme poverty or hunger

It was the first of eight Millennium Development Goals"

(sic – misleading. It was a resolution which is in some cases more ambitious than the Goal's targets)

"...Globally..."

(sic – the official statistics now reported are usually on the proportion in the "developing world" which is slightly easier to reduce than the global proportion due to population growth rates)

"...there's been a big fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty from 42% back in the base year of 1990"

(sic – there was no "base year of 1990" for what "world leaders signed up to" "ten years ago" in an "agreement")

"to around 18% today."

(Are these numbers well-sourced even if we ignore the error about the targets being the same as the pledges, and the blind acceptance of the official line?)

One Planet, World Service

Web page:

"Ten years in progress, five years to go - time is running out for the world to achieve its Millennium Development Goals."

Kofi Annan on broken promises

(sic)

and social unrest

26 September 2010

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009sjt0>

"Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)...The goals, created in 2000, aim to reduce poverty and hunger, and improve health standards around the world.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has insisted the goals can be achieved....He said...much more to do if they were to be met by the 2015 deadline."

21 September 2010

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-11380539>

From Our Own Correspondent

Web page text:

"world leaders...They'll be taking stock of promises

(sic)

made a decade ago

(sic)

- in the form of the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs.

(sic)

The plan was to cut global poverty in half by twenty-fifteen.... Bridget Kendall has tracked the last ten years of debate"

18/09/2010

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ts097>

"Ban Ki-moon has hailed progress on the Millennium Development Goals, but warned that "the clock is ticking" if they are to be met by the 2015 deadline.

The UN secretary general's comments came as he addressed world leaders meeting in New York for a summit to review the targets.

The eight goals, set 10 years ago, aim to reduce poverty and hunger and to improve health standards around the world."

Ban Ki-moon: 'Clock ticking' on UN development goals

20 September 2010

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-11377109>

"The United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals were set out in 2000 with the aim of being reached by 2015"

Sep 21, 2010

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11378604

"The goals, created in 2000... much more to do if they were to be met by the 2015 deadline."

Sep 21, 2010

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11380539

Have Your Say: How can global poverty and hunger be reduced?

"The eight goals, established 10 years ago , have a deadline of 2015 . The United Nations agrees that the aims of halving poverty and hunger, and cutting in half the number of people without clean water will be met."

20 September 2010

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/haveyoursay/2010/09/how_can_global_poverty_and_hun.html

"Africa's struggle to meet UN Millennium Development Goals ... if targets are to be met on the continent by the 2015 deadline. Created in 2000, the eight goals aim to reduce poverty and hunger"

Sep 20, 2010

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11378583

"Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown has expressed "anger" at the failure of rich nations to honour pledges

(sic)

to combat global poverty. The United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals were set out in 2000 with the aim of being reached by 2015."

(sic - clearly referring to targets, some of which are different in MDGs)

"I'm angry because we made commitments

(sic)

that we would meet these

(sic)

Millennium Development Goals," he told the BBC at a meeting to review progress towards them.

"I think rich countries have not done enough to honour the promises

(sic)

that we made."

He added that it was "too easy sometimes for the governments to say something else has come up, some other thing has changed our view".

(sic)

Mr Brown, who was UK chancellor at the time the pledges

(sic)

were made, said the governments of wealthy nations needed to face continuing public pressure to ensure they stuck to their pledges."

(sic)

Brown angry at slow work to meet UN poverty goals

21 September 2010

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11378604>

"Drawn up in 2000, with the aim of being reached by 2015, they ... "We now have five years to deliver on the promises

(sic) we made in the year 2000

(sic) .."

Nick Clegg says rich nations must stick to aid pledges

(sic)

Sep 23, 2010

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11386861

BBC World television

MDG Conference Preview

September 2010

Newsreader:

"Ten years ago world leaders pledged to drastically cut poverty and set themselves eight Millennium Development Goals. They're meeting again now at the United Nations to take stock...."

UN correspondent:

"Ten years after world leaders pledged to dramatically reduce poverty [the Secretary General]'s invited them back to the UN to hold them to their promise"

"most of the Millennium Development Goals are not on target to meet the 2015 deadline"

(The Secretary-General was actually comparing performance to the MDG targets, not the pledges of "ten years ago")

"if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met in the next five"

(referring to targets as goals, which makes it more likely that newsreader's statement will be taken by audience to refer to targets)

First 40 seconds:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6kTW0u4sYg>

"The Millennium Development Goals can still be met if enough work is done, the UN secretary general has said.

... insisting they could be achieved by 2015.

...Diplomatic correspondent, BBC News

The aim this week is to reinvigorate the whole process, and to persuade governments to meet obligations...

(sic)

...they have already entered into.

Progress on the narrower goals of maternal health, child mortality and education has been made and must be sustained.

...Created in 2000, the eight goals aim to reduce poverty and hunger and improve health standards around the world.

The UN itself concedes that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to meet some of the targets."

Ban Ki-moon says UN millennium goals 'can be met'

20 September 2010

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-11375847>

BBC World television

Millennium Development Goals: What's Holding Us Back?

September 22, 2010

2 mins 35:

International development correspondent:

"leaders' promises....Ten years ago at the dawn of a new millennium world leaders signed up to a new partnership.... agreement to halve the number

(sic)

of people living in extreme poverty or hunger. It

(sic)

was the first of eight Millennium Development Goals..."

(using the word "goal" to refer to target, which is different from the pledge)

Globally there's been a big fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty from 42% back in the base year of 1990 to around 18% today."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pqRcTcwXbU

"With only five years left to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals

(sic),

can Africa really halve the numbers

(sic)

of people living in extreme poverty by the 2015 deadline?

..UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged delegates to stick to the task to reach 2015 targets

At the summit in the year 2000, cutting child mortality rates, providing universal primary education and improving maternal health were all part of the eight goals placed on the agenda."

BBC World Service - Africa - Are the Millennium Development Goals really achievable?"

20 September 2010

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2010/09/100920_mdg_douane.shtml

Business Daily, World Service article

17 September 2010

"Millennium Development Goals...Some progress has been made on the goals, agreed by governments around the world in September 2000, but many of the targets are way behind schedule."

Hidden hunger: victims of a failed millennium promise

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11297290>

Today

Radio 4

11 September 2010

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8990000/8990502.stm

Audio:

"The world changed in 2000 - at least, that was the intention: the Millennium Development Goals were set.

By 2015 the developing countries would be lifted out of the grinding poverty that made life miserable for billions of people..."

(in context, implies the time-bound targets, not just the undated goals, were set at summit of 2000 - "world changed")

"progress towards those goals [will be assessed at forthcoming summit]"

(implies in context that progress towards targets agreed at summit of 2000 will be assessed)

"First, our international development correspondent....the goals were

(in context, implies asking about what was set in 2000)

what, exactly?"

International development correspondent:

"Well there were eight goals in all, I mean the main one and the key one was cutting in half

(BBC is using "goal" to refer to target)

the number of people in the world ... dollar twenty-five...."

(Several problems here. Target 1A, like the pledge, in fact refers to the easier target of the proportion.

The MDG target as reported is also slightly easier because it is taken to refer to the proportion in "developing" countries, not in "the world" which was the pledge's formulation.

It was not set "in 2000" in the sense that the audience would take the BBC to mean).

Lord Malloch Brown, unchallenged:

"...we are actually going to halve poverty (sic - goal is on extreme poverty) in the world"

(A contributor says targets were set using previous "global trends". But the pledges of 2000, which is what the BBC gave the impression were being discussed, were more ambitious. That is perhaps why the UN Secretariat changed the baseline from what the world leaders pledged.)

"O relatório traz dados sobre o cumprimento das Metas do Milênio, estabelecidas pelas Nações Unidas em 2000. Elas preveem melhoras em vários indicadores até 2015."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2010/04/100420_pobreza_bird_brasil_ac_np.shtml

"...le Fonds Monétaire International et la Banque Mondiale estiment que "l'Afrique ne pourra pas tenir le premier Objectif du Millénaire pour le Développement", à savoir la réduction de moitié de l'extrême pauvreté d'ici 2015 par rapport à ses niveaux de 1990.

Les Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement ont été fixés en l'an 2000

(sic),

lors d'un sommet international que l'ONU avait organisé à son siège à New York

(sic).

"En Afrique, la mortalité maternelle à l'accouchement est de 9 pour 1000, bien au-dessus de l'objectif du Millénaire en la matière qui vise un taux de 2,3 pour 1000."

(sic - the pledges on mortality agreed in 2000 in New York have different targets because of the different baselines)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/french/news/story/2009/04/printable/090424_bm_omd_report.shtml

Hardtalk

18 September 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/8262634.stm>

Web page: "In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was ratified. One hundred and eighty nine nations committed themselves to the Millennium Development Goals - a plan to reduce poverty, tackle hunger and improve education and healthcare by 2015."

Comment: Misleading. The MDGs' "plan" – the targets and indicators – are not as ambitious as what "one hundred and eighty nine nations committed themselves" to in the Declaration mentioned in the previous sentence. It is clear that the BBC has conflated the Declaration's pledges for 2015 with the MDG targets for 2015, some of which are watered down.

Correspondents look ahead to 2009

30 December 2008

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7785262.stm>

"What are you looking forward to least?"

Hearing empty rhetoric from any number of leaders. Worse still "pledges" to deliver at some time in the future ...or promises to deliver the Millennium Development Goals, unless those leaders can show conclusive evidence that they are on track to meet existing pledges."

Comment: The contributor rightly identifies a serious problem. But the BBC has exacerbated that kind of problem. The BBC has helped leaders to get away with failing to make clear the discrepancies between Millennium Declaration pledges, or promises, on the one hand, and what is being reported on in BBC reports – the in some cases easier MDG targets proposed in 2001 – on the other.

The words ""promises" and "existing pledges" mislead as in other content.

Today, Radio 4

Millennium goals 'will not be met'

Broadcast and online

25 September 2008

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_7634000/7634999.stm

a) "the Millennium Development Goals...[what] they're all about is policies made by the rich countries in 2000 to help the poorest countries. The targets were set; 2015 was the date by which the promises

(sic)

were supposed to be kept...."

("promises" clearly refers to what countries "resolved" to do in the Millennium Declaration. That does not refer to an easier backdated start date of 1990 as in the later "MDG" formulation. The passage clearly implies, wrongly, that the MDG targets now used were the same as the Declaration's promises of 2000.)

b) "The eight Millennium Development Goals were agreed here amidst much fanfare in 2000"

(sic - not "here" in New York in 2000 as a group of eight; not with the targets proposed in 2001. The fanfare was not about including achievements in the 20th century but about promises for the

21st. Not duly accurate, especially given the use of the word "goals" to refer to targets (see below. The MDG targets were not all "agreed here" in 2000 in the sense of being agreed by countries at the UN General Assembly, as the BBC implies. The "MDG" targets, including the watered-down versions, were agreed by consensus at Monterrey in 2002.)

c) "[The goals] range from halving

(sic)

the numbers

(sic) living in extreme poverty by 2015..."

d) "...to reducing the deaths of under five by two-thirds"

(The Declaration referred to "current rates", not to the 1990 rates. Again, that latter MDG "goal" was not announced "amidst much fanfare in 2000".)

"...not a single country in Africa is on track to meet all the goals"

(sic)

Text:

"The Millennium Development Goals, a set of promises

(sic)

aimed at halving world poverty

(sic)

by 2015"

Are the MDGs promises? There are promises in the Declaration.

Today, Radio 4

24 July 2008

"...the archbishop warned that most of the Millennium Development Goals agreed by world leaders in 2000

(sic)

to halve poverty by 2015 would ..."

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7522217.stm

http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/canterbury//data/files/resources/688/20080724_ab_c_today_prog_mdgs.MP3

The BBC introduction conflates the harder pledges with the easier targets.

"En l'an 2000, les Nations unies ont défini une série d'objectifs de développement pour le millénaire. D'après vous, que peuvent faire concrètement les ONG pour aider à la concrétisation de ce plan ambitieux ?

Dr Mahamadou Tounkara : Au niveau de mon organisation, il y a un certain nombre de programmes que nous appuyons. Dans le cas du Bénin, nous avons un programme en huit points qui s'articule autour des huit objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement."

BBCAfrique.com | Highlights | Les ONG, l'Afrique et les objectifs du Millénaire
http://www.bbc.co.uk/french/highlights/story/2008/02/printable/080215_developmentgoals.shtml

15 Février, 2008

More or Less, Radio 4

3 December 2007

"when the politicians promise to lift half the world's poor above the dollar-a-day threshold"

("promise" would naturally be taken as referring to the MDG target, since that is what the BBC talked about usually. But the actual promise was in the Declaration. The UN resolution of 2005 was unquestionably a fudge in that it reaffirmed the Declaration (which did not talk about 1990 and mentioned reducing deaths from "current rates") and then went on to talk about the MDGs (some of whose targets were about reducing between 1990 and 2015). While some things were added in the "MDG" formulation, such as sanitation, some of the targets now used are easier than for governments to fulfil what they had "resolved" in 2000 to achieve. The implication of the BBC's words would be that a promise on the easier MDG targets was made in 2000, which is not true.)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/media/avdb/news/uk/audio/139000/nb/139227_au_nb.asx

or

http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_7350000/newsid_7352600/7352691.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&asb=1&news=1&bbcws=1 .

When a dollar a day means 25 cents

2 December 2007

"The struggle to reduce the number of people living on "a dollar a day" tops the list of Millennium Development Goals and trips off the tongues of political leaders.....When politicians promise to lift the world's poor above the dollar a day thresholds, it sounds like a reasonable aim."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7122356.stm>

Millennium goals: in statistics

"The United Nations agreed a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, with a view to tackling global poverty.

They include improving living standards...by 2015.

...people living on less than \$1 a day ...down from 1.25 billion in 1990.

...Target: Reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015.

...Target: Between 1990 and 2005, reduce the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds."

5 September 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6943975.stm>

Reith Lectures 2007 - Lecture 4: Economic Solidarity for a Crowded Planet

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2007/lecture4.shtml>

"...the Millennium Development Goals, the internationally agreed goals set in the year 2000"

Kind of true, but misleading. What is true is that the first seven at least of the undated Goals themselves can be found among what the Declaration calls "objectives". The Goals were not chosen as a group of eight in 2000, or given that name. More significantly, the 1990-2015 targets which people usually associate with the "MDGs" were not "set in 2000".

The date is not what is important. What is important is the symbolism of the year 2000, and any implication which might be given that the Millennium Summit set the 1990-2015 targets, rather than what it actually committed the countries to.

Reith Lectures 2007 - Lecture 5: Global Politics in a Complex Age

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2007/lecture5.shtml>

"Last came the Millennium Development Goals in September 2000, to slash extreme poverty, disease, and hunger by the year 2015. Taken together, I call these six commitments our Millennium Promises

(sic)

... Our most basic task is to hold our governments, each other, and of course ourselves, accountable to our mutual commitments

(sic)

Yet most people haven't a clue as to what we've promised."

(sic)

"the bank's report said that countries including Senegal, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Uganda and Ghana were on course to meet the target of halving poverty by 2010 - five years ahead of schedule.

The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed by 189 countries in New York in 2000 with a target date of 2015. "

30 October 2006

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6099672.stm>

Objetivos do milênio

O Relatório de Desenvolvimento Humano aponta que apesar de apenas 18 dos 177 países analisados terem apresentado uma regressão no IDH desde os anos 1990, o ritmo de desenvolvimento mundial está aquém das metas estabelecidas em 2000 pela Cúpula do Milênio da ONU.

(sic)

Os chamados Objetivos do Milênio, estabelecidos na cúpula, incluem cortar pela metade o número de pessoas vivendo abaixo da linha de pobreza, reduzir a mortalidade infantil em dois terços e atingir a universalização da educação até 2015."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/reporterbbc/story/2005/09/printable/050907_idhrw.shtml

"objetivos del Milenio, que pretendían recortar la pobreza mundial en un 50% para el año 2015.

Estos objetivos, así como otros para reducir el hambre, las enfermedades y el analfabetismo, fueron consensuados en el año 2000 durante la optimista Cumbre del Milenio"

(sic)

La ONU pide más para metas del Milenio

2005

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/international/newsid_4181000/4181031.stm

Have Your Say

"Can we eradicate extreme poverty in six years?"

In 2000 world leaders signed up to The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which intended to eradicate world poverty by 2015. Are we on track? "

<http://newsforums.bbc.co.uk/nol/thread.jspa?forumID=7127&sortBy=2&edition=2&ttl=20140808001004>

Panorama

Dead Mum's Don't Cry

June 2005

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/4626963.stm>

"What follows is a transcript of Panorama's Dead Mum's Don't Cry, broadcast Sunday 26 June 2005, 22:15 BST on BBC One. Although taken from a script, this should be checked against transmission for accuracy and to ensure the clear identification of individual speakers.

...If a healthy woman dies in childbirth in Britain it would be a disaster. Tonight - we report from an African hospital where it can be a daily event. But where promises..."

(sic)

"...to help are being broken. Five years ago world leaders signed up to targets

(sic)

known as the Millennium Development Goals"

"- targets for helping the world's poor"

"Saving three quarters of those lives by Twenty Fifteen is Number Five of the eight Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals were signed in New York five years ago by a hundred and eighty nine world leaders."

(sic)

Panorama

Dead mums Don't Cry

Web page text:

"Cutting maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015 was one of the eight Millennium Development Goals set by 189 countries in 2000."

Jun 26, 2005

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/4114674.stm

Panorama

2005

"What are the MDGs?"

[The eight Millennium Development Goals \(MDG's\) were agreed by 189 countries in New York in 2000.](#)

These goals represent a commitment by rich and poor nations to expand social and economic progress in all regions of the world, as well as creating a global partnership for reducing levels of poverty and suffering in less developed areas by 2015."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/4119098.stm>

"The goals include pledges to halve extreme poverty..."

Life 'worse for world's poorest'

7 September 2005

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4222034.stm>

BBC Learning English

"the millennium goals

eight objectives set by the UN in 2000 to greatly improve life for the the world's poorest people by the year 2015"

18 November, 2005

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2005/11/051118_infosummit.shtml

"One of the eight Millennium Development Goals set by world experts in 2000 was to reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio by 2015. "

Women's health fuelling poverty

2005

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4331996.stm>

Have Your Say

Can life improve for the world's poorest?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/4220572.stm

14 September 2005

"Will the UN's Millennium Development Goals be achieved?"

The international community's "promise to the world's poor is being broken, "according to the United Nations.

Five years ago, members of the UN pledged to tackle extreme poverty, disease and inequality by 2015."

In Depth

What will your world be like in 2015?

"The goals are targets set by the UN in 2000 aimed at reducing ... "

Mar 10, 2004

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/3522715.stm

BBC Brasil

"a meta de reduzir pela metade a pobreza no planeta até 2015, prevista na Declaração do Milênio – assinada por 189 países em 2000.

(sic)

"Se examinarmos as Metas do Milênio levando em consideração itens como educação, saúde, meio-ambiente, os direitos de meninas irem à escola e todo este tipo de coisas, vamos descobrir que o resultado é, na melhor das hipóteses, pouco claro. Não vamos atingir os objetivos que foram definidos na Assembléia do Milênio (em setembro de 2000)"

(sic),

disse o presidente do Banco Mundial, James Wolfensohn, nesta quinta-feira em Washington."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/economia/story/2004/04/printable/040422_fmimileniorg.shtml

Press Release

World Service global online vote to assess public awareness of Millennium Development Goals

16.11.2004

"Five years ago world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit made a pledge to improve lives around the world by 2015, including reducing global poverty by half.

The creation of eight Millennium Development Goals represented a global commitment to addressing issues of hunger, health, child mortality, gender equality, education, environmental sustainability and global partnerships.

Next year the world will have only ten more years left to achieve these goals.

But who knows about them? Could you name them?"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/11_november/16/development.shtml

BBC Learning English

"Do you remember the Millennium Goals?

When world leaders celebrated the year 2000

(sic)

with a solemn pledge

(sic)

to reduce poverty and hunger, check the spread of AIDS, get boys and girls into school, and improve health and sanitation, all by 2015? "

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/030709_witn.shtml

2003

"Nam 1990, dân số Việt Nam có khoa?ng 60% nguô`i nghe`o, thê` nhưng 10 nam sau, con số na`y da~ gia?m xuô`ng co`n khoa?ng 32%.

Va` nê`u chiê`u theo chi? tiêu cu?a Thiên niên ky?, duoc la~nh da?o cu?a hon 180 quô`c gia dôn`g y` ta?i cuô`c ho?p thuoc?ng di?nh tha`ng 9 nam 2000 ta?i Liên Hiê?p Quô`c, Viê?t Nam hâu` nhu da~ di truo`c, hoa?c da~ hoa`n tâ`t chi? tiêu gia?m nghe`o - mu?c tiêu ha`nh dôn`g dâ`u tiên cu?a chuong trìn`h Thiên niên ky?."

2003

http://www.bbc.co.uk/vietnamese/newsaboutvietnam/030522_thiennienkyfeature.shtml

Press release

BBC World Service Trust looks to expand United Nations Millennium Development Goals project

"An ambitious media project to stimulate global debate about the challenge of achieving the Millennium Development Goals will be showcased by BBC World Service Trust in Africa....

The project - 2015 where will we be?- aims to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals through a series of radio programmes broadcast in a range of languages throughout the world.

The Goals set targets for combating poverty, disease, illiteracy...World leaders agreed the Millennium Development Goals three years ago at the UN Millennium Summit.

(sic)

Notes to Editors

1. 2015 where will we be? was developed by BBC World Service Trust with funding from DfID, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the WHO.

..The UN Millennium Summit in 2000 set eight Millennium Goals..."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2003/09_september/29/ws_millennium_trust.shtml

"The Millennium Development Goals - agreed by UN member states three years ago

(sic)

- aim to cut child mortality by two thirds and maternal death rates by three quarters by 2015."

80 million could die needlessly

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3119664.stm>

2003

"In September 2000, a UN summit set a series of targets to improve lives ... with specific targets mostly to be achieved by 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark."

Future goals

news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/africas_challenges/.../5.stm

News Online environment correspondent

The MDGs, agreed by the UN in 2000, aim to halve world poverty by 2015."

World poverty fight 'in danger'

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3052918.stm

Jul 8, 2003

Hardtalk

27 August, 2003

Working to end global poverty

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/3186137.stm>

Web page: "At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, 147 world leaders agreed to eight specific goals to reduce global poverty. The Millennium Development Goals, as they became known, consist of targets for poverty reduction, social development and environmental regeneration to be met by 2015."

In Depth

What will your world be like in 2015?

"...Millennium Development Goals. The goals are targets set by the UN in 2000"

10 March, 2004

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/3522715.stm

News Online economics reporter

19 March, 2002

Fight against world poverty

"Reducing global poverty, and improving health and education in poor countries, are the goals of a summit of world leaders that has opened in Monterrey, Mexico.

The five-day meeting hopes to identify the resources needed to achieve these aims - and to meet the Millennium development goals

(sic)

agreed by the United Nations two years ago."

World Learning series

World Service

2003

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1644_world_learning/page2.shtml

"Jim Clarke introduces the Millennium Development Goals and looks at some of the individuals and initiatives who are working to achieve them by 2015."

http://web.archive.org/web/20060306211315/http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/media/audio/millennium_wlearning1.ram

The series conflated the Declaration with the MDG targets in the first minute.

"In September 2000 the United Nations voted to adopt eight Millennium Goals. Member states pledged

(sic)

to try

(sic)

and fulfil these

(sic)

by the year 2015."

The first sentence is sort of true. Most or all of the eight MDGs themselves were in the Declaration. So were other goals.

The second sentence cannot be true. If "goals" means goals - such as MDG1, "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", clearly there was no pledge to meet them by 2015. So it means "targets" for 2015, but that is not true either. Although the programme's conflation of goals and targets is less important on its own, the list of pledges for 2015 in the Declaration is different from not only the group of eight goals but also the MDG targets. There were 18 MDG targets in 2003, half of which had end dates of 2015.

Also, world leaders resolved to achieve, not to try. In respect of MDG1 itself, they resolved to "spare no effort" to free everyone from want. They pledged to achieve the intermediate aims.

.....

Notes

How this material relates to previous communications to the BBC

The material in this document

a) adds to the as yet unanswered point made in comments of 6 February 2014 to the Editorial Complaints Unit on provisional response 1300394,

and provides supporting evidence for

b) the as yet unanswered complaint in an email of 28 May 2014 to the head of the ECU:

"The BBC has often conflated easier MDG targets agreed in 2002 with more ambitious (if in some ways more limited) Millennium Declaration promises of 2000, and I know of no evidence that any BBC output has noted the difference..."

c) the as yet unacknowledged complaint of 26 June 2014 submitted via the BBC Complaints web form concerning More or Less of 16 May 2014, which included the complaint:

" "Agreed by [UN]" fails to correct easier "1990 baseline" Declaration pledge error."

This is a specific complaint that the BBC failed to clarify the situation in a subsequent broadcast despite being informed of the error on 6 February 2014. The previous notification of the error had been about the same programme.

d) the email of 3 August 2014 to the head of the ECU adding evidence from content published in June and July 2014.

Why did I not complain much earlier?

In 2012 when I complained about BBC coverage of global poverty reports, and on 10/11 July 2013 when I complained about further material (two cases resulted in BBC changes to web pages and the other complaints of 2012 were not answered) - I was unaware of this particular problem.

Scope of this complaint

The complaint previously submitted, "The BBC has often conflated..." and illustrated here is not limited to material mentioned. For reasons given below it seems unlikely that the erroneous impression has been limited to material easily available online now.

Context

I suggest the BBC assess this complaint in the light of the others I have made about global poverty coverage. Although I mention a few other problems below in passing, I do not wish to distract from understanding of the main issue of the present complaint.

Blame

For the avoidance of doubt, this complaint does not allocate blame to particular staff or teams.

What are the differences between the pledges of 2000 and the MDG targets proposed in 2001?

One difference between some of the pledges in General Assembly Resolution 55/2 of 2000 and on the other subsequent corresponding MDG targets proposed in 2001 is that the latter have easier baselines of 1990. Since the statistics looked better in 2000, the 1990 baselines are easier.

Another difference is that the former are on global rates, whereas the latter are on rates in "developing countries". That also makes some of the targets slightly easier, in this case because of slower population growth in the other countries.

[Later note: The MDG targets do not actually mention "developing countries". The problem is that the UN has reported results as if they do.]

Are you complaining about minor errors like calling goals "targets"?

No – unless it makes a material difference.

Often speakers or writers use the term "goal" when they are actually referring to one or more time-bound targets.

If we were to ignore that context, some of the BBC statements about goals might seem unproblematic. The undated goals themselves are things like "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger". These can mostly be found among the many aims which the Declaration of 2000 calls "objectives". So saying the Goals were set in 2000 is not really a problem in itself. But it is a problem if journalists are also referring to the targets, with have specific baselines as "goals".

Ignoring the context would seem unwise if we are interested in considering what impression the BBC is actually giving.

It seems clear that audiences and readers would take, in many cases, what the BBC states about goals to refer to, or include reference to, the targets. A common example is where the BBC talks about "goals" having target dates of 2015.

There is clearly no problem in some contexts from people talking about "goals" when they mean the time-bound "targets". Exceptions might include where an impression is given that, for example, one of eight goals has been achieved rather than one of 21 targets. More directly relevant to the present complaint are cases like this: a broadcast or article refers to "goals" being set in 2000 and in the same broadcast or article talks about a target date of 2015 in a way likely to give an impression that the MDG targets are the actual pledges.

Availability of material

I recognise that some broadcast material mentioned here appears only to be available on non-BBC websites. Even if some material is excluded from investigation, it would seem sensible for the BBC to take the general range of relevant output into account when considering remedial action.

Coverage of summits needs to be sorted out before the next one

It is clear, for example, that coverage of the 2010 summit contained many instances of the conflation. It would seem clear that action is necessary to ensure that the same mistakes are not made in, for example, coverage of the "post-2015" process.

I am not saying every instance is a serious breach on its own.

In view of the number of items listed, it is important that the complaint not be misinterpreted as making some kinds of unreasonable demands on the BBC.

I am not saying that all the items should be investigated to the same extent. I provide this information not only as part of the complaints process but also for the BBC to learn from if it chooses. Clearly, some instances may just contribute to an impression, while others give an impression on their own.

Why complain about old material?

As I state above, any BBC material may be used as reference material. This may apply years after content is produced. For example, the Wikipedia page on poverty links to the More or Less article of 3 December 2007, which juxtaposes MDGs and "When politicians promise...".

Another factor may be that particular programme teams need to be made aware of problems in their own output even years before, partly so that the mistakes are not repeated. The risk may be much lessened with an appropriate - by which I mean appropriately remedial given the long history of this error - public correction.

If I put "millennium development goals" into the BBC search engine, I get the old reference pages from around 2004.

If I put "poverty" I get an "editor's choice" of the multi-error "Dollar Benchmark: Rise of the \$1-a-day statistic" page last updated November 2012 after a complaint, but for some reason still dated "9 March".

Probability of similar errors in other languages

Self-evident.

Probability of broadcast items with similar errors

Often, the same BBC reporters in whose names articles appear also speak in broadcasts covering the same story.

It therefore seems implausible to suggest a situation other than this:

It is highly likely that material easily found online represents only a part of the BBC's misleading output on the pledges of 2000.

I suggest appropriately prominent corrections. This is an institutional failure.

.....

Appendix: History of the change in baseline

March/April 2000: Secretary-General refers to halving rates that obtain "currently" ...and "now"; and within the next 15 years".

"Let us resolve therefore: - To halve, by the time this century is 15 years old, the proportion of the world's people (currently

[sic]

22 per cent) whose income is less than one dollar a day.

- To halve, by the same date, the proportion of people (currently

[sic]

20 per cent) who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water."

"Specifically, I urge the Summit to adopt the target of reducing by half, between now

(sic)

and 2015, the proportion of people who lack sustainable access to adequate sources of affordable and safe water."

www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/We_The_Peoples.pdf

"My Report sets a series of targets...Within the next 15 years

(sic),

I believe we can halve the population of people living in extreme poverty...We need a much better informed public"

Statement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the General Assembly as he presented his Millennium Report,

"We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century". 3 April 2000

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000403.sgsm7343.doc.html>

September 2000:

World leaders "resolve" to achieve the mortality reductions from "current rates"

"We resolve..by the year 2015...to have reduced ...under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates

...We therefore pledge our unstinting support for these common objectives and our determination to achieve them."

(sic)

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

"19. Nous décidons également:

- De réduire de moitié, d'ici

(sic)

à 2015,

la proportion de la population mondiale dont le revenu est inférieur à un dollar par jour et celle des personnes qui souffrent de la faim et de réduire de moitié, d'ici à la même date, la proportion des personnes qui n'ont pas accès à l'eau potable ou qui n'ont pas les moyens de s'en procurer."

<http://www.un.org/french/millenaire/ares552f.pdf>

September 2001: Secretary-General quotes Declaration's "Goals" and then proposes list of "MDGs" and targets with the easier 1990 baselines at page 56:

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf>

October 2001: UN agencies tell country representatives, in effect, that civil servants have changed the baseline:

"Baseline year – 1990 or 2000?"

...This would imply a 2000

(sic)

baseline year of the Millennium Declaration. After discussions within the UN system and with other partners, the issues have been resolved in favour of 1990 serving as the baseline year."

UN Development Group, Guidance Note to country representatives, October 2001

http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc

Sent out with letter signed by heads of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA, November 2001.

http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs_-_letter_-_MDGs_-_letter.pdf

Did the General Assembly agree that the MDG targets supersede the pledges?

Apparently not.

2005: Member states "reaffirm the United Nations Millennium Declaration"

General Assembly Resolution 60/1, 2005

unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

Again, the Declaration stated,

"We therefore pledge our unstinting support for these

(sic)

common objectives and our determination to achieve them."

(sic)

The 2005 resolution says:

"we further resolve:...To assist developing countries' efforts to prepare integrated water... plans as part of their national development strategies and to provide access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including halving by 2015 the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water and who do not have access to basic sanitation"

Sounds like a commitment to the Declaration's target to me. [Note: I am very aware that some of the UN statistics and statements about them are dodgy]

And

"171. We call for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration"

[end of document of 13 August 2014 on widespread BBC errors about UN pledges]

Unanswered complaint 27 October 2014: ECU and World News are told in complaint, "The MDG [water] indicator, and the data, are not on safety."

From: Matt Berkley

3 November 2014 at 16:14

Further complaint: Wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

To: ECUdl@bbc.co.uk, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk, swahili@bbc.co.uk, portuguese@bbc.co.uk, fergus.walsh@bbc.co.uk

Dear all,

Factual error on Millennium Declaration baseline

Further to my previous complaints to the ECU and BBC World News, I am waiting for replies on the problem I first drew to the attention of Mr Steel in February.

...The reality is that in 2000 leaders pledged mortality reductions from "current rates", not the generally easier baseline of 1990.

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

...I do not wish to assign unfair blame to journalists who have reasonably trusted what other parts of the BBC have reported.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

[Forwarded email:]

27 October 2014

To: ECUdl@bbc.co.uk, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Steel and BBC World News staff,

Recent examples of BBC giving impression of wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

As I have stated in previous complaints to the ECU, the easier backdated baseline of 1990 in the "MDG" structure proposed in 2001 is not, as the BBC has repeatedly given the public to believe, in the Millennium Declaration adopted by world leaders in 2000.

BBC World News, BBC America 16/9/14, from around 7.51 am EDT

Caption: "in the year 2000, world leaders made a series of pledges known as the millennium development goals. one was to cut child mortality. the target was a 2/3 reduction."

https://archive.org/details/BBCAMERICA_20140916_110000_BBC_World_News?q=%22millennium+development%22#start/3105/end/3165

....

In 2000 leaders pledged mortality reductions from "current rates".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

The "MDG" mortality targets proposed by the Secretary-General in 2001 specify the same reductions, but with baselines of 1990. Most countries saw falls in mortality rates between 1990 and 2000. So those targets are generally easier than the pledges.

....

I submit that it would have been reasonable to expect BBC journalists to be aware of the need to check the veracity of claims from UNICEF after it claimed in 2012 to know numbers of people who had access to "safe" water.

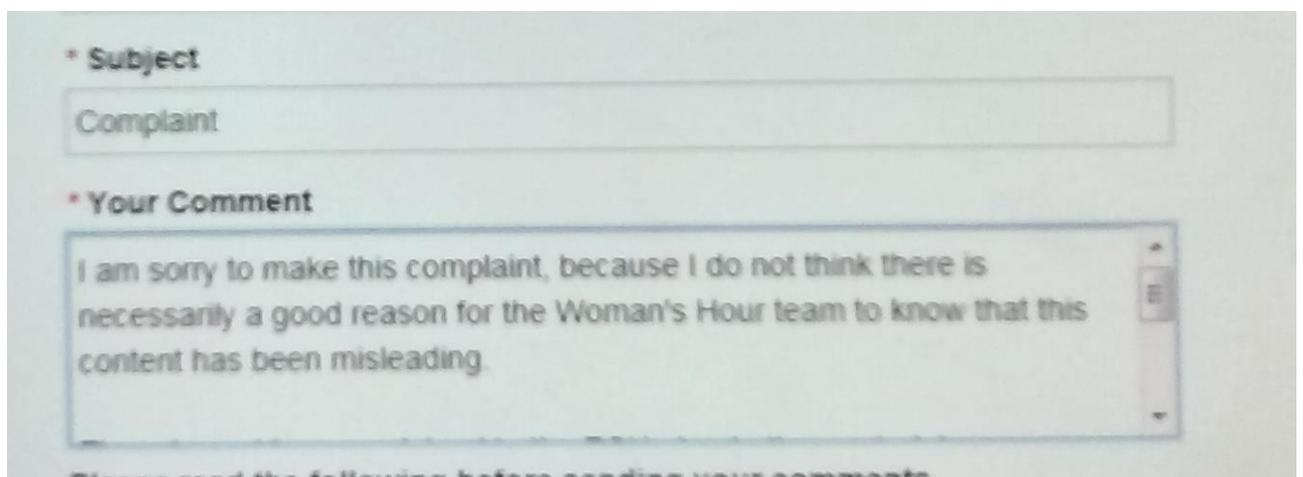
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2012/drinking_water_20120306/en/

The MDG indicator, and the data, are not on safety.

26 January 2015: Woman's Hour team are told what the Millennium pledges on child and mortality actually are. The BBC persists in letting the world's women think leaders pledged something easier.

The complaint begins,

"I am sorry to make this complaint, because I do not think there is necessarily a good reason for the Woman's Hour team to know that this content has been misleading."



* Subject

Complaint

* Your Comment

I am sorry to make this complaint, because I do not think there is necessarily a good reason for the Woman's Hour team to know that this content has been misleading.

Please read the following before sending your comments

10 February 2015: BBC repeatedly breach commitment to forward complaint to central point. Trustees on 19 June 2015 purport to answer complaint while falsely implying the actual complaint did not exist.

From: Matt Berkley

Sent: 10 February 2015

To: Womans Hour; Your views; Alice Feinstein; Rebecca Myatt; Jane Thurlow; Corinna Jones

Subject: Re: Formal complaint: Wrong impression of world leaders' Millennium Summit commitments of 2000

Dear Ms Feinstein, Ms Jones, Ms Thurlow and Ms Myatt,

Please send the complaint of 26 January and email of 28 January in line with the Trust decision: "BBC staff will forward letters of complaint to BBC Audience Services ...as opposed to returning them to the complainant and advising them of the correct address".

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/complaints_framework/2012/complaints_framework_review.pdf

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Matt Berkley

=====
From: Matt Berkley

Sent: 28 January 2015

To: Your views; Alice Feinstein; Rebecca Myatt; Jane Thurlow

Subject: Formal complaint: Wrong impression of world leaders' Millennium Summit commitments of 2000

Dear Ms Feinstein, Ms Myatt and Ms Thurlow,

I hope you will forgive me. I am writing direct for the same reason as I complained via the Woman's Hour web form.

I am afraid that far from guaranteeing a reply, the BBC complaints system web form has in my experience resulted mostly in failure to reply at all.

The complaint is that the programme of 31 December and the iPlayer page give an impression that world leaders in 2000 merely committed themselves to the MDG targets with baselines of 1990.

In fact the date 1990 appears nowhere in the Millennium Declaration. The mortality pledges are from "current rates". The MDG targets with the easier 1990 baselines were proposed after the leaders had already made those pledges.

The number of child deaths fell by several million between 1990 and 2000. So over the period 2000-2015, it is clear that the pledge was more ambitious than the MDG target by several million child deaths.

Yours sincerely,
Matt Berkley

Unanswered complaint of BBC "institutional failure" in reporting of Millennium pledges. 12 March 2015. Executive and Trust still failed to "ensure" due accuracy in BBC reports. On 19 June 2015 Trustees falsely implied there was a UN "commitment" to the MDGs in 2001, that the complainant had not proposed that the Trustees take into account (rather than "consider" on appeal) evidence of explicitly false statements that UN pledges had a 1990 baseline, that Audience Services had replied to the actual complaint which they had not in fact received, and that no handling complaint had been made to the Executive over Audience Services giving false information on BBC procedure.

Complaint Summary:

Complaint handling

Full Complaint:

Handling of CAS-3147591-M2Q953

As I explained on the phone on 17 February to a staff member at Audience Services, the purported reply I received on 11 February was not to my actual complaint.

The Woman's Hour team had forwarded only a later email referring to the complaint. This means, as I think the staff member understood, that I had not received a Stage 1a reply.

Contrary to the claims by Audience Services, the material did not refer correctly to the MDG targets, and the Trust decision on forwarding of complaints has been reiterated during the current complaints framework.

I was therefore fully justified in asking the production team to forward the complaint of 26 February, [later clarified as 26 January] which I stated to the team had been submitted via their web form.

I look forward to a considered and properly researched response to my actual complaint at Stage 1a and an apology for any wrong impression which may have been created as a result of Audience Services' error about the Trust decision.

It is obvious that there was a genuine error in the programme, as a result of an institutional failure.

...

"the first point of contact for a complaint should be BBC Information, although people can contact editorial managers directly if they prefer."

Editorial Guideline 19.4.3

"complaints received by other parts of the BBC will be forwarded on to this central point"

"Date: 30.05.2012 Last updated: 15.10.2014"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2012/complaints_framework_review.html

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

12 March 2015 at 20:37

...CAS-3204842-M13GJS

Five months to UN Summit: Appeal request to the BBC Trust on complaint in context of "institutional failure" of understating world leaders' pledges

From: Matt Berkley...

Sent: 20 April 2015 13:18

To: Trust Editorial

Subject: Fwd: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3204842-M13GJS

Dear Trust Unit staff,

I would like the Trust to consider an appeal on this decision by the BBC.

I wish to include also the unanswered complaints sent to the Editorial Complaints Unit. That complaint is of a widespread, major error over many years to the same effect.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

...

Four months to UN Summit: Request that Trust use discretionary powers "in good time for the UN Summit" in view of repeated BBC understatement of world leaders' pledges. 25 May 2015

Date: 25 May 2015 at 15:00

Subject: Re: Red flag complaint? Widespread error on government commitments. CAS-3204842 and others

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Buckle,

The BBC's "MDG website" and other material notified to the Trust Unit understate key commitments by national leaders in the Millennium Declaration.

The situation is clearly exceptional, and appropriate for any **discretionary powers** of the Editorial Standards Committee or Trustees.

I do not believe any sane Trustee would think it appropriate for the Trust Unit not to give them a clear picture now.

If the BBC do not correct the public's impression in good time for the September 2015 summit, which realistically may mean before the summer holiday period, then **BBC staff will have knowingly allowed a deception to persist** for people who are, through no fault of their own, highly vulnerable.

If the **Trust Unit** has not passed and does not pass the newer complaints to the Executive, then it is **withholding material information from its own journalists.**

I have already notified the Trust Unit of a potential conflict of interest for the Editorial Complaints Unit.

It is not clear to me that, even though the "pledge" error is distinct from the ECU's own error in a published ruling about the "dollar a day", in the circumstances the ECU is free from risk of lack of independence in considering the "pledge" error.

Please confirm that you have told the Trustees and the Executive at an appropriate level - I previously mentioned the Chief Complaints Editor - of the allegations about the widespread error as I indicated, or rather, since it is so obvious that the "1990 baseline" in the 2000 declaration is non-existent - about the error.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

Trust never addressed error by Editorial Complaints Unit on dollar a day

Date: 26 May 2015 at 10:45

Subject: Reminder: Potential conflict of interest at ECU. CAS-3204842 and others

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Buckle,

I refer to your email of 22 May.

I am concerned at its standard of accuracy and relevance. It does not indicate to me a likelihood that the Trust Unit will accurately report other matters to the Trustees.

The present email concerns a single issue.

On 6 February 2014 I notified the ECU of a broadcast error about the Millennium Development Goals. The information I supplied on this, at the time and later, has never been acknowledged by the ECU, the World Service or BBC World to whom I sent complaints.

You wrote to me on 22 May 2015, after I asked the Trust Unit to inform Trustees of the widespread error, that you understand the ECU is "currently" considering the complaints.

Your characterisation of the complaints as being sent to the ECU is materially incomplete.

You may have seen that part of my handling complaint of March in relation to Woman's Hour is that Audience Services misrepresented the Trust decision on forwarding of complaints.

I am fully aware that the BBC, sensibly, cannot guarantee a response if the recommended avenue is not taken. However, according to the Trust's own pronouncements that would not seem to override the duty of BBC staff to read complaints properly and to forward them in line with a commitment by the Executive to the Trust, and by the Trust to the public.

4 July 2014

"....I'm writing primarily to apologise for taking longer to respond to your complaint about Don't Panic: the Truth about Population than I initially led you to expect, and to say that I don't think I'm likely to be in a position to do so for at least another two weeks. ...

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel"

29 April 2015

To: Trust Editorial

Dear Ms Clarke...

...Forwarded message...3 November 2014 ...

...I have suggested that the ECU's own error in a published ruling about official global poverty claims - that the "dollars a day" are influenced by ordinary exchange rates, implying that people are spending far more than the actual "purchasing power parity" units used - may have given rise to a conflict of interest for its handling of related complaints. ...

11 August 2014

From: ECUdl@bbc.co.uk

RE: Possible ECU conflict of interest

Dear Mr Berkley

I'm sorry not to have replied before now. I'm afraid we're unseasonably busy, and my correspondence isn't as punctual as it should be. I'll try to give you a substantive reply this week.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

11 August 2014

Possible ECU conflict of interest

Dear Mr Steel,

I have yet to receive a reply from you on, among other matters, the possibility of past or future conflict of interest for the ECU in dealing with my complaints. ...

Where relevant in the email of 3 August below, references to the ECU role should be taken to refer to the BBC Executive.

I look forward to your replies.

15 July 2014

TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

RE: No ECU reply. Re: Information for appeal; possible ECU conflict of interest

Dear Mr Berkley

...Mr Steel also confirmed that he will respond to your subsequent questions this week.

...Yours sincerely

Christina Roski

Complaints Adviser, BBC Trust Unit

14 July 2014

To: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

No ECU reply. Re: Information for appeal; possible ECU conflict of interest

Dear Ms Roski....

I am slightly uneasy at the ECU's not responding on the issue of possible conflict of interest.

4 July 2014

... I hope to be able to respond to your email of 27 June (in connection with your previous complaint) during the course of next week.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

Head of Editorial Complaints

30 June 2014

From: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

[reply to email of 27 June; no mention of possible conflict of interest]

Yours sincerely

Christina Roski

27 June 2014

To: Trust Editorial

Information for appeal; possible ECU conflict of interest

Dear Trust Unit staff....

The Trust may also wish to consider the issue of possible conflict of interest for the ECU, mentioned in the last part of the email. I am not familiar with BBC procedures in this kind of situation.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

---- Forwarded message ----

27 June 2014

To: Fraser.Steel.PCG@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Steel,

....It seems to me possible that from 6 February 2014 a conflict of interest has arisen for the ECU. I informed you that the ECU made an error in a 2005 ruling, related to some of my other complaints to the ECU. I note that depending on an assessment of importance, there is no formal bar against a future complaint which encompasses that error. Perhaps between the ECU, an appropriate part of the Executive perhaps represented by the Chief Complaints Editor, and the Trust, this could be clarified and any implications considered in respect of any past and future ECU decisions.

.....

6 February 2014

Comments sent to ECU on provisional response 1300394

...I am sorry to say that as far as I can see, the whole of the Wooldridge [A Dollar A Day] series – as well as a huge amount of other output from the BBC - presented dollar amounts in real dollars like that, when in reality they are worth typically twice or more what the World Bank's "international dollars" used for the poverty claims are worth.

The ECU has made the same mistake itself in a past ruling, basing an opinion on the mistaken idea that the dollar a day is influenced by fluctuations in market exchange rates.

BBC Editorial Complaints Unit – Quarterly Report

July–September 2005

Summaries of upheld complaints

http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/pdf/ecu_julsep2005.pdf

"The figure for Brazilians living on less than \$1 a day, though subject to exchange rate fluctuations, was within acceptable margins of approximation for a summary report of this kind."

The reality is that the "purchasing power parity" rates on which it is based are specifically designed to compensate for differences in purchasing power between countries arising from exchange rates.

.....

On 22 May 2015 at 15:03, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Thank you for your email of 21 May. I do appreciate that the complaints process can be confusing and I'll try to set out how it works generally and what's happening in your case.

The BBC receives around a million complaints and comments each year and has to have a process in place to allow them to be efficiently tracked and answered. The complaints process has three stages – complaints are answered initially by Audience Services at stage 1 – Audience Services will often seek the input of the programme makers to address a complaint. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request a further response at stage 1. If the complainant remains unhappy after the further response, they may be able to escalate their complaint to stage 2 for a more detailed investigation. At stage 2, editorial complaints about specific output are handled by the Editorial Complaints Unit, other complaints are dealt with by senior managers in the relevant division. The Trust is the third and final stage of the complaints process and only investigates complaints after the BBC has finished responding.

It is important that the complaints process considers the interests of all licence fee payers and it is open to the BBC to decide not to continue to responding to complaint if, for example, they do not think it raises a matter that is a possible breach of the Editorial Guidelines.

In your case, you complained initially about output on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour. Audience Services responded on 12 and 21 March and in both responses stated that they did not intend to correspond further regarding this complaint. This means you were not given the opportunity to have your complaint further investigated at stage 2. Where complainants appeal to the Trust in these circumstances, the matter that Trustees consider is whether Audience Services have given a good enough response before closing down the correspondence. If they agree with Audience Services' decision not to keep on responding, the case is closed. If they decide that the complaint has not been answered thoroughly enough, the complaint is sent back to the BBC for a further response (and the complainant can then appeal to the Trust if he/she remains unhappy after the BBC's more detailed response).

This means that, in their meeting on 4 June, Trustees will listen to the output complained about and will consider the correspondence that has passed between you and the BBC regarding this complaint. They will then decide whether they agree with Audience Services' decision to close down the correspondence, or whether they agree with you, that there is a significant matter that warrants further investigation.

I note that in your appeal you referred to a number of outstanding complaints that are currently being considered by the ECU and which you would like Trustees also to consider alongside this complaint. However, I understand the ECU is going to be responding to those complaints separately and, as the BBC has not yet finished responding to those complaints, the Trustees cannot consider them. Therefore we will not be providing Trustees with that correspondence in their June meeting. However it will remain open to you, once you receive the ECU's findings, to appeal to the Trust if you remain unhappy – it will also be open to you to complain about the way in which your complaint has been handled.

I hope this is helpful.

Leanne Buckle

Senior Editorial Adviser

BBC Trust

180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

-----Original Message-----

...

Sent: 21 May 2015 12:36

To: Trust Editorial

Subject: Red flag complaint? Widespread error on government commitments. CAS-3204842 and others

Dear Ms Clarke,

Thank you for your correspondence.

I do not understand what the proposed procedure is.

For most of these complaints, the Executive has not made any decision at all. I cannot see a good reason for the Trust to delay passing all of them on to the Executive for answer at Stage 1.

I have yet to receive specific, substantive responses to the following:

a) "Please confirm ... that the Trust Unit has informed the Executive at an appropriate level of seniority, of these recent errors." (12 May)

b) "I strongly suggest that the Trust Unit give serious consideration to informing the Editorial Standards Committee that someone is alleging a widespread error in BBC output on world leaders' pledges of 2000."

(29 April)

Your email of 14 May does not make clear what the Committee is to consider.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 14/05/2015, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

> Dear Mr Berkley,

>

> Further to my below email, we have now reviewed the paperwork in your case

> in full.

>

> Your appeal and the correspondence between you and the BBC will be

> considered by the Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust at their

> next meeting on 4 June 2015.

>

> The Trustees will decide whether to take your complaint or any element of it

> and what sort of investigation they require or whether they consider that

> your case has no reasonable prospect of success, in which case it will

> close.

>

> We will contact you after the Trustees' decision has been drafted and

> approved by the Chairman of the Editorial Standards Committee to inform you

> of the Committee's decision. If the Trustees decide to take your complaint

> or any element of it then your complaint will be passed immediately to an

> Independent Editorial Adviser to prepare appeal paperwork and we will update

> you with an amended timeline.

>

> Yours sincerely,

>

> Kirsty

>

> Kirsty Clarke

> Complaints Adviser

> _____

> BBC Trust

> 180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

>

> From: Trust Editorial

> Sent: 28 April 2015 16:41

> ...

> Subject: RE: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3204842-M13GJS

>

> Dear Mr Berkley,

>

> Thank you for your email of 20 April 2015 to the BBC Trust. I am sorry for

> the delay in replying.

>

> We note that BBC Audience Services have informed you that they are not going

> to respond to you further on your complaint as they do not believe that has

> raised a significant issue of general importance that might justify further

> investigation.

>

> The BBC's Editorial complaints procedure explains that the BBC may not

> investigate your complaint if it fails to raise an issue of breach of the

> BBC's Editorial Guidelines or is trivial, misconceived, hypothetical,

> repetitious or otherwise vexatious, or if you use gratuitously abusive or

> offensive language. You can find details of BBC's Editorial complaints

> procedure here:

> http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/complaints_framework/editorial.html.

>

> The Trust does not adjudicate on every appeal that is brought to it, and we

> will now review your correspondence with BBC Audience Services to check that

> your appeal against their decision not to investigate your complaint further

- > raises a matter of substance, in accordance with its usual complaints
- > admissibility procedure, details of which can be found in the BBC's
- > Editorial complaints procedure.
- >
- > The Trust's Editorial complaints procedure explains that we will write to
- > you with our decision on admissibility within 40 working days of the receipt
- > of your appeal (i.e. by 17 June 2015), but we are usually able to do this
- > sooner. We will also keep you informed if for any reason we meet with delay
- > during this process

"Institutional failure"

1 June 2015

Subject: Risk of Trustees misunderstanding appeal. "Institutional failure" cited in complaint 3204842

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Buckle,

Below are some clarifications on some statements in your correspondence.

I see no formal bar against "informing" Trustees of complaints sent to the Executive for handling. That suggestion is not that Trustees themselves handle complaints. I have yet to receive a Trust Unit response to the suggestion.

I have sent complaints to BBC World, the World Service and the Trust Unit as well as the ECU. Some contain explanations and evidence about the error. It seems to me that these are relevant to Trustees' understanding of the facts underlying my editorial appeal.

The most important words in my communications to the BBC on Woman's Hour are "institutional failure". Trustees may misunderstand this if they do not have what are, arguably, my grounds for appeal.

If Trustees do not know that I informed the BBC of the basic problem in February 2014 rather than January 2015, and that several complaints have been unanswered for months at Stage 1a, they may misunderstand both the tone and content of my communications.

The Trust Unit accounts of applicable procedure and what the ESC will do omit the handling complaint. Audience Services' refusal to correspond, which is what I appealed, was their reply to a communication which called for both the editorial complaint and a handling complaint to be investigated. I mistakenly referred to the "complaint of 26 February" as being submitted by web form to the Woman's Hour team, when it is in fact the complaint of 26 January, as Audience Services quoted me in their response of 11 February.

The Trust Unit summary of events omits the main Audience Services response of 11 February, which had been appended to the appeal request.

I asked the Trust Unit to send new complaints to the Executive. I did so after Audience Services failed to respond to complaints. The Trust had publicised a decision that "other parts of the BBC" would forward complaints to Audience Services.

I did not ask for "Trustees" to consider what the ECU should investigate. I used the word "Trust" in a broad sense covering the Trust Unit. So does the BBC Complaints Framework - to refer to your own role.

In view of these misunderstandings I am concerned that there may be other matters on which the Trustees may be significantly misinformed in relation to my appeal.

I do not know whether you have the original complaint of 26 February. I do not have a complete copy. The relevant editor for Woman's Hour, Nicola Swords, told me in May that she only has the subsequent email. Trustees will need to know that Audience Services' response of 11 February was before receiving the actual complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 28 May 2015 at 15:40, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

I note your further email of 27 May.

As I have previously informed you, Trustees will consider your appeal at their meeting next week. The point they will consider is your appeal against the decision by BBC Audience Services not to correspond further with you regarding your complaint about Woman's Hour of 31 December 2014. While I note that you have other cases outstanding with the Editorial Complaints Unit, they will not be part of the Trustees' considerations as the BBC has not yet finished responding on these matters. I understand the ECU will be writing to you separately regarding the matters that are still with them. As I advised you previously, if you remain dissatisfied with the ECU's decisions about your other complaints, it will be open to you to appeal to the Trust once the BBC has finished responding. I note your concerns that you consider there is a conflict of interest within the ECU. However, on this point too, the Trustees cannot consider this element of complaint until the BBC has finished responding.

I will not be responding further on this matter as it would not be an appropriate use of licence-fee payers' money.

Yours sincerely

Leanne Buckle

From:

Matt Berkley [<mailto:mattberkley@gmail.com>]

Sent: 27 May 2015 15:53

To: Trust Editorial

Subject: No reply from Trust Unit or ECU on potential ECU conflict of interest

Dear Ms Buckle,

I acknowledge receipt of your email of today. The present email deals with one specific issue.

I now request a response from the Trust to my previous and recent communications on the question of potential conflict of interest for the ECU.

I am not clear who should be, or even who is, dealing with my outstanding complaints sent to them.

I append evidence on the ECU's error in a published ruling, and correspondence on a potential conflict of interest and/or risk to its independence.

I wrote to the Trust Unit on 14 July 2014 stating,

"I am slightly uneasy at the ECU's not responding on the issue of possible conflict of interest."

It is now ten months later. Unsurprisingly, it has occurred to me that there may be a link between the failures to respond on multiple complaints, and the fact that I identified a significant error by the ECU.

The other complaints which the ECU has also failed to respond to largely concern the "dollar a day".

As I said, I am not clear that in the circumstances the ECU is the right part of the BBC to be assessing the error about the UN pledges.

I have in mind the fact that I am the same complainant in the "dollar" and "pledge" cases.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

25 May 2015

Unanswered complaint three months before Summit: "Understated impression of UN Summit pledges".

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 9 June 2015 at 10:03

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3340770-ZFKF11

To: Matt Berkley

...

Complaint Summary:

Understated impression of UN Summit pledges

Full Complaint:

Major matter.

There is likely to be little point answering this complaint by referring to secondary sources, because many of them make wrong statements.

Example of BBC output: World Service, The Inquiry, 2/515. [2 May 2015]

The introduction's error gives a generally understated impression of leaders' pledges at the Millennium Summit.

They did not agree a list of eight goals or mention "MDGs", but

"resolved" "by the year 2015...to have reduced...under-five child mortality by two thirds, of ...current rates".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

The MDG targets were proposed in 2001 without leaders discussing them at the UN until 2005.

un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf

Some MDGs, such as on child [mortality] have 1990-2015 targets.

These pages have related mistakes:

bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-32883629

[Later note: BBC page on European Parliament. "The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), first set in 2000, set time-bound targets for reducing poverty, infant mortality and greenhouse gas emissions in the developing world."]

bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-32438104

bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pn9c9

bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-31798171

bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-31851587

The BBC has contributed to a similar wrong impression for years.

I have yet to receive a substantive response from the head of the ECU to correspondence on this matter, with evidence, beginning on 6/2/14 in comments on provisional response 1300394.

I refer also to unanswered handling complaint 3204842 mentioning "institutional failure" appealed to the Trust.

A smaller error: The Inquiry states, similarly to its web page,

"over the past 15 years child mortality has halved".

The official global claim is for 1990-2015.

[Later note: strictly speaking 1990-2013. The programme's web page

bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pn9c9 reads,

"In 2000 the world committed to reduce child mortality rates by 2015. At the time, there were on average 90 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births globally. Now there are 46."

But 90 is the official estimate for 1990, not 2000. The 2000 estimate was 76.]

Two months to UN Summit: "large amount of evidence should make the BBC's decision process easier and shorter." Email to Head of Editorial Complaints on UN pledge error: "BBC misinformed people, including in poor countries, about government commitments"

Date: 1 July 2015 at 12:57

Subject: Re: No reply at Stage 1a: complaints to ECU, BBC World, World Service or Audience Services. CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 and others

To: ECU

Dear Mr Steel,

BBC misinformed people, including in poor countries, about government commitments

I write further to the ECU's lack of response to information on a significant error, in my emails of 6 February 2014, 28 May 2014, 3 August 2014, 11 August 2014, 13 August 2014, 27 October 2014, and 3 November 2014, and further to my email of [30 June] 2015.

...More or Less made its own error to the same effect on 10 March 2012, as I stated.

The fact that I have supplied a large amount of evidence should in my view make the BBC's decision process easier and shorter.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 30 June 2015 at 14:50, Matt Berkley....wrote:

Dear Mr Steel,

It is now over a year since you wrote " I'll reply separately to your email of 28 May."

The BBC has often confused generally easier Millennium Development Goal targets with Millennium Declaration pledges.

I have supplied you from February 2014 onwards with evidence.

The September 2015 UN Summit is approaching.

The BBC has not to my knowledge rectified its errors or misleading information.

It is not difficult to see that the Millennium Declaration does not refer to a 1990 baseline or "proportions in developing regions".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

An example of older BBC output is the "MDG website":

"In September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was ratified by 189 heads of state at the United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Declaration outlines eight broad goals. Within these are eighteen targets - most set for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/index.shtml

The effect is clearly cumulative.

In my view items containing the mistake that, or implying that, MDG targets were set in 2000 contribute to the misconception.

The reason is that a substantial number of people would already have some idea that leaders made pledges in 2000 and/or that there have been reports of specific progress on MDG targets.

It is hard to see what other event in 2000 they might think the BBC is referring to.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Two months to UN Summit: First public comment to Director-General. BBC understated Millennium pledges with false "1990 benchmark"; "wrong impression for years"; "institutional failure"; "No reply at Stage 1a"; ECU possible "conflict of interest" due to own error. After this, BBC persisted in giving impression that the easier MDG targets were the actual Millennium promises.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/6d70efd6-c5ba-4e25-8eb2-69fb35fb5348>

[As of 28 April 2016 there are only four comments on this page, of which this is one. In two years the Director-General has posted six times in this "About the BBC" blog]

Underlining added later.

21 Jul 2015 05:19

[start of comment of 21 July:]

Date: 1 July 2015 at 12:57

Subject: Re: No reply at Stage 1a: complaints to ECU, BBC World, World Service or Audience Services. CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 and others

To: ECU

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It is hard to see what other event in 2000 they might think the BBC is referring to.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Trust Editorial

Date: 28 May 2015 at 15:40

...I note that you have other cases outstanding with the Editorial Complaints Unit.... I understand the ECU will be writing to you separately regarding the matters that are still with them.

...

Yours sincerely

Leanne Buckle

----- Forwarded message -----

From: ECU
Date: 11 August 2014 at 11:27
Subject: RE: Possible ECU conflict of interest
To: Matt Berkley

Dear Mr Berkley

I'm sorry not to have replied before now. I'm afraid we're unseasonably busy, and my correspondence isn't as punctual as it should be. I'll try to give you a substantive reply this week.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

On 2 June 2014 14:28, ECU wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley.... I'll reply separately to your email of 28 May.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

----- Forwarded message -----

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
Date: 9 June 2015 at 10:03
Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3340770-ZFKF11
To: Matt Berkley

...Thanks for contacting the BBC. This is an automated email ...

YOUR COMPLAINT:

Complaint Summary: Understated impression of UN Summit pledges

Full Complaint: Major matter. There is likely to be little point answering this complaint by referring to secondary sources, because many of them make wrong statements. Example of BBC output: World Service, The Inquiry, 2/515. The introduction's error gives a generally understated impression of leaders' pledges at the Millennium Summit. They did not agree a list of eight goals or mention "MDGs", but "resolved" "by the year 2015...to have reduced...under-five child mortality by two thirds, of ...current rates". <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm> The MDG targets were proposed in 2001 without leaders discussing them at the UN until 2005. un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf Some MDGs, such as on child mortalit have 1990-2015 targets. These pages have related mistakes: bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-32883629 bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-32438104 bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pn9c9 bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-31798171 bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-31851587 The BBC has contributed to a similar wrong impression for years. I have yet to receive a substantive response from the head of the ECU to correspondence on this matter, with evidence, beginning on 6/2/14 in comments on provisional response 1300394. I refer also to unanswered handling complaint 3204842 mentioning "institutional failure" appealed to the Trust. A smaller error: The Inquiry states, similarly to its web page, "over the past 15 years child mortality has halved". The official global claim is for 1990-2015.

Seven weeks to UN Summit: Public call on Director-General. BBC false statements: a) that economists have data on prices faced by the extremely poor since around 1990 using a non-existent "basket of food", b) BBC is confusing the public into believing that the easier MDG targets are the actual pledges by world leaders.

2 Aug 2015 06:26

Dear Lord Hall,

A recent search for "poverty" on the BBC website showed one "Editor's Choice" page for global poverty. It was amended following a complaint. It still claims, falsely, that there are data on prices faced by extremely poor people since around 1990 using "household surveys" and a "basket of food".

The BBC's output on Millennium Development Goals, which have a standard baseline of 1990, has consistently and falsely claimed they were set in 2000 - which is when leaders set a 2000 baseline.

I suggest that if you do not ensure these and related complaints are answered in good time for the UN Summit in September, by a part of the BBC which has not itself published an error about an MDG indicator, you personally risk bringing the BBC into disrepute.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

www.millenniumdeclaration.org
poorscience.org

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/4fb15f67-dd06-464c-afd1-5a83ea893200>

This is the only public comment on the web page, replying to this post by the Director-General.

"Systemic failure". "BBC does not report actual pledges of 2000 even though reaffirmed by world leaders in 2013. BBC does not report scandal: MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration."
"Waste of public money to make programmes on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made."

CAS-3430579, 11 August 2015

Complaint:

Conflation of Millennium Declaration and MDGs

"Millennium Development Goals: What are they?"
1 July 2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-33313366>: video wrongly states

"in 2000 UN set 8 targets and named them MDGs."

In reality 2000 Declaration target is c.3M child deaths in 2015.
MDG target proposed later is c.4M.

[Later note: More accurately, the Declaration target set by the UN in 2000 is 3.6 million rather than as the BBC wrongly implies, the later MDG target of 4.3 million.]

"Safe water" claim misleads. UN does not have safe water statistics.

Poverty target met? How do we know? There are no inflation stats for prices faced by the poor.

BBC wrongly juxtaposes 2000 and MDGs:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33356514>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33337787>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-33340517>

BBC does not report actual pledges of 2000 even though reaffirmed by world leaders in 2013.

BBC does not report scandal:

MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-33333094>:

"target - to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25...met five years ahead of schedule in 2010."

How does BBC know this if no inflation stats on poor?

Details: poornews.org

millenniumdeclaration.org

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf, page 128.

Trustees say it would be editorial decision not to mention baselines.

But BBC staff either

a) always make "editorial decision" to omit actual pledge or

b) do not know what pledges are.

Both are systemic failure.

It is a waste of public money for BBC to make programmes to inform people on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made.

Above ref. CAS-3430579 11 August 2015

Unanswered complaint to BBC World News: "BBC seems set to make misleading and/or incorrect statements in its reporting of the September UN Summit"; "institutional failure" conflating Summit pledges with easier targets. 11 August 2015

Currently, the BBC seems set to make misleading and/or incorrect statements in its reporting of the September UN Summit. It did so in 2010.

BBC World News America 30 June and July 2: similar problem of conflating Millennium Summit pledges with some easier MDG targets proposed in 2001.

Summit pledge is for c.3 M child deaths in 2015. MDG target is for c.4M deaths [later note: should read "summit pledge is for 3.6M; MDG target is for 4.3 million"]. I am afraid this is an institutional failure.

<https://archive.org/details/tv?q=millennium&fq=program:%22BBC+World+News+America%22&time=2015> .

For details: poornews.org millenniumdeclaration.org

Unanswered complaint, six weeks to Summit: "BBC seems set to mislead on September UN Summit".

Problems in BBC World News, Newshour.

Further to complaint CAS-3430579-YK1JHW [of 11 August] and unanswered complaint CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 of 9 June 2015:

Currently, the BBC seems set to make misleading and/or false statements in its reporting of the September UN Summit.

It did so in 2010.

BBC World News America 30 June and July 2: similar problem.

<https://archive.org/details/tv?q=millennium&fq=program:%22BBC+World+News+America%22&time=2015> .

Newshour:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02w1ydy>

Audio introduction

"15 yrs since MDGs"

incorrect.

Text incorrect:

"2000...pledge...targets...MDGs".

Today Programme 30 June - 1 July:

perhaps likely to have made same mistake as related web pages in complaint 3430579.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vjpdw>:

Text: the usual confusion.

The incorrect statement is also made around 9 mins 20 seconds into audio.

Ref. CAS-3430697
11 August 2015

Unfulfilled BBC promises to follow up complaints

"Notes from call to Audience Services today 13 August [2015]

The lady gave me case numbers for my recent complaints as I had had no email confirmation or numbers for some submitted this week.

cas 3340770

3428708

3430579

3430697

3433281

I informed her that the first one was from 9 June. She said she, or Audience Services, would make sure it was followed up."

Unacknowledged complaint: Six weeks before UN Summit.
"BBC has not reported correct UN pledges of 2000".

Sent to BBC Audience Services via complaints web form, about 17.06 on 13 August 2015.

Complaint title:

BBC has not reported correct UN pledges of 2000

Complaint description:

Further to complaint CAS-3430579-YK1JHW of 11 August and unanswered complaint CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 of 9 June 2015:

I have received no email acknowledgement of complaints yesterday which may cover similar problems in these two items:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vgft0>

- "*promise back in 2000*";

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vgftd> :

Audio, 14 mins in:

"15 years ago UN made pledges with targets, MDGs [!]"

"the 15 yrs of the UN millennium goals" [?]

- similar error to More or Less on 10 March 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vjpfz>:

Text incorrect:

"15 yrs ago UN pledged to cut global child mortality rate by 2/3 by end of 2015, but it is a

Millennium Development Goal [!] ..."

Audio introduction:

"15 yrs ago"

But UN promise was not "between 1990 and 2010".

See email to ECU 30 June and unanswered complaint 9 June 2015:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/6d70efd6-c5ba-4e25-8eb2-69fb35fb5348>

Six weeks to UN Summit: "BBC has apparently always failed to note the difference between world leaders' pledges in 2000..."of their current rates" and MDG targets "between 1990 and 2015".I propose that you pass all the complaints...to BBC senior management.". ECU fail to acknowledge that they had not replied on impartiality, non-existent "basket of food", contributor imbalance, inaccuracy in linked documentary series, or on possible conflict of interest. Email to ECU 13 August, not acknowledged by the appeal deadline of 18 August.

Underlining and emphasis are as they appeared when the email was appended to the appeal request of 18 August 2015. The ECU had not acknowledged the email by then.

Dear Mr Steel,

I do not think it sensible to rule out the possibility that the ECU's failure to respond to complaints may be due to knowledge, conscious or unconscious, of its **own error in a published ruling on a related matter**.

I cannot appeal a decision to the Trust on any complaints about **lack of impartiality** such as **"Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances, including presenter"** - an ex-World Bank economist assessing World Bank research while asking a World Bank and ex-World Bank economist, the other contributors to a related article being an ex-World Bank economist and a World Bank partner organisation head - if **the ECU has not made a decision**.

Nor can I appeal an ECU decision about the BBC using a **variety of language - "persistent....etc"** - to imply that the World Bank has estimated prices faced by extremely poor people.

I am afraid there may have been further misunderstandings.

The BBC has **hardly begun to answer the complaint of 27 March 2012 or the additions of 1 November** which together with it constitute the complaint at stage 1a.

I complained to the ECU about **impartiality**, not just inaccuracy.

You have written " the other matters you associated with [More or Less of 3 March 2012]".

The first of the guidelines I mentioned in my complaint were **"Accuracy, including links"**. The BBC itself associated the programme with an older series. The **More or Less programme page for 3 March 2012 said, "Listen to the documentary series" and linked to it.**

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120306112550/http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p34zj>

That series made the **same error as the ECU** had in a published ruling, of overvaluing the "dollar a day" by typically perhaps 80-200%.

The series also made a **similar error as More or Less of 3 March 2012**, in claiming the World Bank takes **costs of basics** into account when claiming a poverty decline. Clearly, that implies the researchers considered both **prices faced and amounts needed**. Neither is true.

These matters are important because information about them **influences** not only **citizens' ideas** about the World Bank claims but also beliefs about **their own governments' claims** about progress or **policy success**.

The **BBC has told citizens that economists generally have information on prices faced by the extremely poor**. It has produced no evidence for this. A link in the article of 9 March 2012 is to a World Bank briefing which mentions the **methodology paper**. That paper clearly **does not support the BBC position**.

The BBC website has **one "Editor's Choice" for global poverty**.

It states there are **estimates of prices faced by the extremely poor** over the **last 20 years**, from prices collected **by the World Bank "dollar a day" team** for "goods" in "developing countries", using "household surveys" and "census data" to price a "basket of food".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>

The official World Bank and UN descriptions do not.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/DevelopingworldispoorerQJE.pdf>

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

I consider it **improper** for the ECU to be the final arbiter for the BBC Executive of a complaint which covers a **programme debunking the ECU's own error**, a **programme making the same error**, and other matters.

The Executive has committed itself to reading all older complaints to determine seriousness.

The Trust has decided that complaints to other parts of the BBC will be sent to Audience Services.

The ECU has not denied a possible conflict of interest or threat to independence of mind due to an ECU error on a Millennium Development Goal indicator. The ECU has not commented on whether it is the right part of the BBC to deal with other complaints from the same complainant.

You have stated more than once that you have found the complaints difficult to understand. Apart from incorrect statements, the **BBC has apparently always failed to note the difference between**

world leaders' pledges in 2000 to reduce "of their current rates" and MDG targets "between 1990 and 2015".

The omission is easy to check: the phrase "of their current rates" in the context of mortality pledges occurs either **rarely or never on the BBC website.**

I **propose that you pass all the complaints** from me - including the unanswered complaints about More or Less **falsely referring to a World Bank "basket of food" used by the "dollar a day" researchers from around 1990, to BBC senior management.**

More or Less finally **presented a view on 3 July 2015 that I gave the BBC beginning in 2003** - that the World Bank claims are unreliable.

The BBC might take this as supporting a view that, contrary to what you say, investigating my complaints, including of **failure to ask whether "the target's been met"** or **whether the statistics are reliable**, is not a waste of money.

Unanswered complaint: Six weeks before UN Summit BBC is told again: wrong "UN promise"; "There are no stats for clean water" or needs of the poor, so not clear how it is well-sourced for BBC to claim extreme poverty "halved as UN promised". Business Daily, World Service.

Broadcast 3 July 2015

Complaint submitted 14 August 2015 around 8.30 am similar to the following:

....

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb4z>

Intro: "*number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved as the UN promised*" -

a) not well-sourced: World Bank does not consider changing needs or estimate changing prices faced by the poor. There are no stats for clean water, so not known if basic needs met.

b) The World Bank claim is not on actual UN promise of 2000 in Millennium Declaration - which does not have the easier 1990 baseline.

Leaders reaffirmed promise which has 2000 baseline in 2005 and 2013.

Guest: "*mainly we have to look at money*". But he told Guardian in May 2013 that World Bank poverty claims are "*plus or minus half a billion*". GDP stats for poor countries are known to be unreliable. Professor Rosling has said that only MDG target well measured is child mortality.

c. 13.00: "MDG 1, the most important one" ?

Not easy to see a justification for that.

Not well-sourced.

Lack of balance in views presented.

"700M people fewer in extreme poverty 2010 than 1990".

Not well-sourced.
Lack of balance of views.
Stats known to be unreliable.
UN in 2000 made pledges with 2000 baseline, not 1990.

Details:

UN pledges: millenniumdeclaration.org

World Bank does not use prices for poor for trend:

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/DevelopingworldispoorerQJE.pdf>

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

.....

URL for above complaint confirming acceptance by the BBC complaints system on 14 August 2015:

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=GGU51MRINI6GMQU1I0P8RR8HCU&uid=962454628#anchor>

No email acknowledgement received.

Six weeks before UN Summit: Unacknowledged complaint: More or Less again misled on UN pledges

Complaint on More or Less broadcast 3 July 2015 on the World Service

Submitted 00.10 on 15 August 2015 or before, via BBC complaints system web form.

Text saved at 00.09 on 15 August 2015 from the web form and in a screenshot:

[Check this text against file and screenshot]

Complaint title:

Misleading on UN pledges

Complaint description:

Major matter.

Please see CAS-3340770, 3430579.

More or Less 3/7/15; related text.

Failed to correct error that UN members are committed only to relevant MDG targets.

More or Less 10/3/12 stated that in 2000 members agreed "1990-2015".

In fact 2000 baseline: c.3.5 M child deaths in 2015; MDG target is 1990-2015, 4.3 M.

Widely-distributed 3/7/15 programme/podcast descriptions - signposts for audience:

"at Summit UN set 8 goals [...]...They [...] became known as MDGs...how did we do?".

Programme does not look at Summit goals, though guest said did not want document to be forgotten.

Instead of reporting baseline scandal or correcting errors after complaints, BBC featured ex-civil servant who agreed baseline change without Assembly authority.

Other guest is ex-UN, heads UN expert group, co-leads UNDP survey.

Telling general public the truth could be difficult for both.

\$1.25 was *lowered* from US-inflation-adjusted \$1.45.

UN says hunger "almost halved" but UN stats:1991:18.6%, 2001:14.9%, 2015:10.9%.

"Amount WB [later note: World Bank] thinks you need...to have basic needs met [!]...calc'ns to try to adjust for econ conditions [?] and prices [?] in every country":

may mislead, perhaps not well sourced.

What evidence that WB adjust for needs, costs, or prices faced by poor?

On prices and need see the largely unanswered complaint to Richard Vadon 1 November 2012 and comments on ECU provisional response 1300394.

Guests, BBC were informed in 2000/2/c.2003 of MDG problem: stats look better if poor die.

.....

URL for the BBC web page confirming that above complaint had been submitted; URL recorded 00.10 on 15 August 2015:

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=UJVD7KV3SO9PVNKC25JLUJ09AO&uid=622663514#anchor>

BBC "loses" another World Service complaint? Unacknowledged. In the Balance and other material: "Cumulative effect"; BBC "keeping vulnerable people in the dark"; "Misleading on UN pledges"

Complaint submitted by web form 15 August 2015

No email acknowledgement or reference number received

In the Balance
Broadcast 4 July 2015
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vqp1z

"What is wrong with BBC journalists, managers and trustees that they do not see it is against the principles of journalism to keep vulnerable people in the dark?"

.....

Text of unanswered complaint:

Misleading on UN pledges

In the Balance 4/7/15, bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vqp1z

Please see CAS-3340770, 3430579, complaints of 14 and 15 July; there are others.

Cumulative effect: many examples notified to ECU [Editorial Complaints Unit], other staff from 6/2/14.

Why not tell poor and rich people what their leaders pledged in 2000 and reaffirmed in 2013?

BBC staff talk and write about goals set in 2000, but do not say what they are.

Is that not disempowering, unfair, patronising, undemocratic, or a major journalistic failure?

Did Trustees not tell BBC re 19 Jun decision where they stated difference?

Instead of investigating baseline change and propaganda, BBC features an author of that change, as did More or Less 3/7/15.

Intro: Signpost - *"Long hard look"*.

But MDG targets were not "set up by UN in 2000".

Extreme poverty goal "met in 2010"?

How can I know, if no estimates of need or prices faced?

"Deaths have halved"

- Not in period "set up by UN in 2000".

[Later note: MS is Mark Suzman, ex-UN Development Programme and now at the Gates Foundation, which wrongly tells the public that the generally easier MDG targets were set by leaders in 2000.

MMB is Mark Malloch Brown. In 2001 he was chairman of the UN Development Group, a committee of heads of UN funds and programmes.

On 6 November 2001 he, the head of UNICEF and two other heads instructed UN country staff that the standard baseline for reporting progress would be 1990.

UN staff had no authority from the General Assembly to do this.

Their note stated that the Millennium Declaration text "would imply" leaders' pledges were 2000-2015.

On 14 December 2001 the General Assembly "noted with appreciation" a staff report containing the MDG framework.

It recommended the report as a "useful guide".

It did not mention the annex containing the MDG list.

It did not mention 1990, eight goals, or MDGs.

It called for more publicity for the Declaration.

On 21 December 2001 the General Assembly reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration.

Leaders reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration in 2005 and 2013.]

[Complaint continues:]

4.30: *"when you look back to 2000"*

MS: *"at time MDGs were launched"*.

MMB: "*Unrealistic*" in 2000 then world took ownership?

But UN STAFF CHANGED TARGETS TO SAME AS PAST TRENDS!

MMB: "*At the time of these goals being written in 2000*" [!] .

HE INSTRUCTED EXPLICIT BASELINE CHANGE ON 6 NOV 2001.

Clearly people take "goals" to refer to the MDG targets.

What is wrong with BBC journalists, managers and trustees that they do not see it is against the principles of journalism to keep vulnerable people in the dark?

Newspapers in 2000 stated pledges had 2000 baselines.

Appeal on More or Less, Dollar a Day series and "BBC failure since 2000" as described in complaint of 1 November 2012. After this, the Trust Unit breach procedure by rejecting appeal without addressing the grounds. Trustees falsely claim the complaint on the series was added later, and falsely imply that the complaint on failure since 2000 did not exist. Trustees for unknown reason chose to dismiss other complaints, which the Executive had not finished answering. 18 August 2015

Underlining added.

.....

I wish to appeal the decisions by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of impartiality or take other action in case 1300394.

In the correspondence, I have emphasised in bold text and underlining some points the Trust may wish to consider.

As regards the independence or otherwise of the ECU in dealing with these complaints, I refer the Trustees to my email to the Trust Unit of 27 May 2015 15:53, " No reply from Trust Unit or ECU on potential ECU conflict of interest" and the correspondence mentioned in it.

In light of the BBC's catastrophic error on the Millennium pledges - falsely implying that world leaders pledged 4.3 million child deaths in 2015 when the truth is 3.6, and making other errors on baselines for hunger, water, money and other government commitments - the complaint I made about More or Less confusing goals and targets pales into relative insignificance. But it does contribute to the overall failure to challenge.

We might think that it is unwise to trust official statistics without further thought in any case, and that an investigative programme should have taken more care.

I submit that the complaints are serious enough that the older material deserves consideration.

I attach some draft notes for the appeal which should not be taken as making definitive statements, but which contain relevant evidence.

.....

[Appeal letter appended the unacknowledged email to the ECU of 13 August 2015]

Five weeks before UN Summit: Request to Trust to send unanswered complaints on BBC understating UN pledges, back to the Executive to avoid repeating errors during the Summit

Underlining added:

18 August 2015 at 17:18

Dear Mr Towers and Ms O'Brien,

I have requested an editorial appeal today.

I expect by now you are familiar with the BBC's widespread error as to the content of the Millennium pledges.

You may know that after the Editorial Standards Committee sent out a decision on 19 June stating that the child mortality pledge was more ambitious than the later Millennium Development Goal target, the World Service continued to confuse the pledges with the easier targets.

I have complained to the BBC about material I found with this error.

It may already be clear that providing misleading information to citizens in poor countries - and rich countries - on government commitments is a serious matter, undermining democracy and, if uncorrected, journalistic integrity.

The same might apply to the provision of incorrect information about the factual basis of official statements about progress on poverty, or the evidence available to governments and others when claiming policy successes.

Among the complaints I associated with More or Less of 3 March 2012 in my correspondence on case 1300394, I complained that a fact-checking programme had misstated the baseline for a Millennium Declaration pledge. Perhaps it was not clear to members of the ESC that world leaders reaffirmed this pledge in 2005 and 2013, or that the consensus among Reuters, the Times of India, the Guardian, the Independent and the Economist in 2000 was that pledges other than on survival rates had a 2000 baseline.

As you will appreciate, appeal to the ESC is the course of action which the BBC Trust presents.

However, it may be that Trustees or the Trust Unit have relevant discretionary powers.

If they do, then I propose that the BBC Executive be advised of the complaints with a view to investigation and if considered appropriate, remedial action in good time for the UN Summit in September.

I refer to a message to the Director-General of 2 August, below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 18 August 2015 at 12:54

Subject: Fwd: No reply at Stage 1a: complaints to ECU, BBC World, World Service or Audience Services. CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 and others

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Clarke,

I wish to appeal the decisions by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast...

One month before the Summit: BBC deleted what seems the only accurate account of current UN pledges on the BBC website. Comments on Chairman's blog. 21 August 2015

....

Thanks, your comment has been posted.

...

- Comment number 6. Posted by [Matt Berkley](#)

on *3 minutes ago*

The BBC implies that world leaders in 2000 resolved to bring the number of deaths of children under five years old to below 4.3 million in 2015. The pledge was around 3.5 million. Assuming constant progress, the difference between the pledge and the BBC claimed pledge is about 5 million child deaths.

27 March 2000:

"Let us resolve therefore:

- To halve, by the time this century is 15 years old, the proportion of the world's people (currently 22 per cent) whose income is less than one dollar a day.
- To halve, by the same date, the proportion of people (currently 20 per cent) who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water."

Secretary-General, Millennium Report

www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/We_The_Peoples.pdf

[/web/20150821134711/http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan000923.pdf](http://web/20150821134711/http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan000923.pdf)

8 September 2000:

"We, Heads of State and Government...resolve...by the year 2015...

to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates."

6 September 2001: The Secretary-General proposed the Millennium Development Goal framework in a "Road Map".

6 November 2001: "In two cases—maternal mortality and under-five mortality—the term "current rates" is used, directly specifying a 2000 baseline. For the remainder, the targets are

stated in the form of "to halve by 2015..." This would imply a 2000 baseline year of the Millennium Declaration. After discussions within the UN system and with other partners, the issues have been resolved in favour of 1990 serving as the baseline year."

UN Development Group

[committee of heads of UN funds, programmes and departments concerned with development chaired by head of UN Development Programme, Mark Malloch Brown]

Country Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals

Guidance Note to UN country representatives, October 2001

[/web/20150821134711/http://web.archive.org/web/*/web/20150821134711/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc](http://web.archive.org/web/*/web/20150821134711/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc)

[/web/20150821134711/http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Country%20Reports/MDG%20Reporting%20Guidelines/1.%20English.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Country%20Reports/MDG%20Reporting%20Guidelines/1.%20English.pdf)

Sent by UNDG chairman Mark Malloch Brown and three other heads of UN agencies on 6 November 2001:

[/web/20150821134711/http://web.archive.org/web/20140815174058//web/20150821134711/http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs_-_letter_-_MDGs_-_letter.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20140815174058//web/20150821134711/http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs_-_letter_-_MDGs_-_letter.pdf)

14 December 2001: General Assembly recommended

"that the "road map" be considered as a useful guide in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration."

The resolution did not mention "MDGs", eight goals, or 1990. It called for the Declaration, which has a 2000 baseline, to be better publicised.

[/web/20150821134711/http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/95&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/95&Lang=E)

The next week the Assembly reaffirmed the Declaration - as did leaders in 2005 and 2013.

2011: "The Declaration...should not be confused with the very specific and time-bound set of indicators which comprise the 8 MDGs and 21 targets..."

...2005 World Summit Outcome document [adopted by world leaders] reaffirms the UN Millennium Declaration on the first page, but only begrudgingly recognizes the MDGs in paragraph seventeen"

Andy Sumner and Claire Melamed

2011

Published by Overseas Development Institute and United Nations Development Programme
www.odi.org/resources/docs/7369.pdf

2015: "Fifteen years ago at the Millennium Summit the United Nations set eight goals [!] for addressing extreme poverty.

They [!] became known as the Millennium Development Goals. [!]

A deadline of 2015 was set to achieve what the UN said were 'quantified targets' – so how did we do?"

BBC World Service - More or Less, programme description. The programme deals with 1990 baselines.

3 July 2015

Guest: Claire Melamed

[/web/20150821134711/http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62)

...

Comment number 5. Posted by [Matt Berkley](#)

on 23 minutes ago

"Specifically, I urge the Summit to adopt the target of reducing by half, between now and 2015, the proportion of people who lackaffordable and safe water."
UN Secretary-General, 27 March 2000.

10 March 2012, BBC World Service: "...Millennium Development Goals were agreed by all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in the year 2000.[!]
...the whole goal's about halving the proportion....between 1990 [!] and 2015."
BBC fact-checking radio programme More or Less
10 March 2012.

6 February 2014: "More or Less makes a major error. Millennium Declaration of 2000....pledges...were not backdated, and are therefore to, for example halve the proportion of people in 2000 on under "\$1 ", not the 1990 level"

Unanswered complaint to Head of BBC Editorial Complaints Unit in invited comments on provisional response 1300394.

16 September 2014, BBC: "In September 2000, world leaders signed up to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals [!]...Using 1990 rates [!] as a starting point, the MDG aim has been to cut deaths by two-thirds by the end of 2015."

19 June 2015, BBC Trustees, Editorial Standards Committee:
"Millennium Declaration in 2000...
In the following year, 2001...by changing the base line to 1990...the [child mortality MDG] target...was...less demanding..."

3 July, BBC World Service fact-checking programme description:
"at the Summit the UN set eight goals [!]
...They [!] became known as MDGs"

4 July 2015: World Service:
MDGs were "set up by the UN in 2000". [!]
Guest, who as chair of a UN committee authorised a note on 6 November 2001 stating that the text of the Declaration had a 2000 baseline but UN staff would use 1990 instead:
"At the time of these [MDG] goals being written in 2000" [!]

12 July 2015, CBBC: "In the year 2000...189 countries agreed to work together to achieve eight [!] big goals by 2015 - called the Millennium Development Goals [!]"

.....

From the Internet Archive Wayback Machine:

"As it appeared on August 21, 2015 1:47:11 PM UTC"

<http://web.archive.org/web/20150821152153/http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbctrust/entries/3950cd25-1120-46b3-9fe0-a9259677adfa>

One month before the Summit: Unanswered complaint that BBC understated leaders' pledges to children, and falsely claimed progress on "safe" water. CBBC Newsround.

Date: 23 August 2015
CAS-3445371-NGRCXY

Errors despite BBC/Trust earlier accepting facts

Please see CAS3430579 etc and unacknowledged complaints c.12-15 August.

25/7/13: News Online email stated BBC corrected article: "clean" water statistics to "improved sources".

No final reply or ref. no. yet on complaint 11/7/13 via complaint form, re link to "water goal met" article.

19/6/15:ESC decision: Trustees state MDG4 easier than 2000 pledge.

bbc.co.uk/newsround/33382023 "Have we achieved MDGs?".
"2000 [!]...189 countries agreed 8 [!] by 2015 called MDGs [!]...goal 4...5".

Misleads as elsewhere.

"goal in 2000...cut in half no. [! - %] with hunger...15 yrs later, no. on \$1.25 cut in half."

Well-sourced?

- 1.MDG target is 25 yrs.
- 2.How can we know target met, if no stats on inflation faced by poor?

"safe water, clean home...In 2000, leaders agreed to try [!]...no. [%] suffering in this way by half. This target has been met".

1.MDG target as reported on, is 1990-2015;

2.No stats on water safety.

2nd clip: "1 in 8 don't have enough food".

But estimates are only on calories. FAO state "food inadequacy" is higher.

Report talks of causes of poverty.

BBC are stopping people from holding govts to account by not giving correct information on pledges.

Links to:

/newsround/17282732:

"Safe [!] water targets...reached" "88%...clean [!] water; 2 bn more..safe [!]" ">800m...dirty water".

[later note: complaint should read "almost 800m"]

programmes/p02w3ddk,

newsround/33481418

may imply leaders in 2000 set the generally easier MDG targets.

Clip, 45sec: "set 15 yrs ago" incorrect.

Evidence: by2015.org, [poornews.org]

Nine days to UN Summit: Warning to Chairman: BBC is "set to misrepresent existing UN pledges again during next week's Summit"

16 September 2015 at 20:36

Fwd: Urgent: BBC set to misreport UN pledges again at next week's Summit

To: trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Fairhead,

Thank you for your attention yesterday outside Portcullis House, on the BBC's errors about Millennium Declaration pledges.

The problems might raise questions of governance, news strategy and/or adequacy of the complaints system authorised by the Trust.

The BBC has repeatedly stated, and implied, that Millennium pledges have easier baselines than is in fact the case, and failed to reply to complaints on this since February 2014.

The evidence I mentioned to you is here.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20150821152153/http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbctrust/entries/3950cd25-1120-46b3-9fe0-a9259677adfa>

As you can see, the relevance of my comments to your blog post is that the BBC is proposing to extend iPlayer and/or CBBC output, and I am pointing out defects in quality which might indicate a better target for expenditure and/or consideration.

The BBC has also reported non-existent statistics for "safe" water, and claimed there are price data for a "basket of essential goods" since "a couple of decades ago". The errors have appeared even after the BBC altered web pages in response to complaints from me.

Complaints beginning in May 2012 concerning factual errors, range of views and range of contributors in More or Less have hardly begun to be answered. Other complaints, submitted because the originals were not answered, have been entirely ignored.

In my view broadcasting false information on government pledges and evidence for progress counteracts more useful work done by BBC Media Action and the BBC's charity efforts. It undermines democracy and is astoundingly disrespectful of people the BBC claims to inform.

Further evidence is at:

poornews.org

Yours sincerely

Matt Berkley

One week to UN Summit: Senior staff are warned of likely error. "BBC has understated and given understated impressions of world leaders' Millennium commitments to the poorest" "If you report governments' or intergovernment agencies' statistics without considering whether they make sense, or are reliable, or whether the small print or real-life considerations are important, you risk causing real suffering to real people." "Misconceptions on progress, policy success or trustworthiness of governments can lead to worse policy, worse government or misinformed voting."

18 September 2015 at 12:27

Urgent: BBC set to misrepresent existing UN pledges again during next week's Summit
To: david.jordan@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>, James.Purnell@bbc.co.uk, paul.smith@bbc.co.uk, worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Jordan, Ms Cecil, Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien, Ms Fairhead, Mr Ayre, Mr Steel, Mr Purnell, and Mr Smith,

Broadcast correction before 24 September: International commitments on poverty, and claims of progress.

Is the following not true?

Understating government commitments to the poorest people on earth amounts to taking away some of the little political power they have.

In 2013, David Cameron and other leaders reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration,

[Later correction: Although the document refers to heads of government, it seems David Cameron was not there]

containing pledges with baselines not of 1990 but 2000.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

It should not be difficult to confirm the BBC's error.

The BBC has understated and given understated impressions of world leaders' Millennium commitments to the poorest, which in reality leaders reaffirmed in 2005 and 2013.

It has done so repeatedly, despite complaints and a relevant statement in a BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee ruling.

I attach further documentary evidence on what governments have pledged.

Other relevant evidence is at millenniumdeclaration.org and poornews.org.

UN members did not, as the BBC and the Trust claim or imply, agree generally easier Millennium Development Goal targets fourteen or fifteen years ago. They agreed, and reaffirmed, the Millennium Declaration.

Leaders mentioned the Millennium Development Goals in 2005. However, they at the same time reaffirmed the Declaration which has more ambitious 2000 baselines.

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

In effect they also reaffirmed the still more ambitious World Food Summit goal of reducing the 1996 number of hungry people by half (paragraph 17 states a determination to fulfil goals of other major summits) to, by current official FAO estimates and methods, 500 million people compared to the 800 million now estimated.

From the evidence in the attached document, it may take you no longer than thirty seconds to see that the General Assembly continued to agree the Declaration. The following is a very small selection of the BBC's errors. Others are at and via the websites above.

The leaders' pledges reaffirmed in 2013 do not use "1990 as a benchmark" as the BBC's "MDG website claims:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/

- repeated at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/africas_challenges/html/5.stm

For the 2005 Summit the BBC blurred the line between the 2000-baseline pledges and the easier MDG targets:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1817_wawryw/page5.shtml

For the 2010 Summit the BBC did the same:

"Forged amidst the enthusiasm and optimism of a new millennium, they were the first ever [!] set of shared development goals at international level."

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/ferguswalsh/2010/09/global_health_declaration_-_ten_years_on.html

http://www.bbc.com/mundo/internacional/2010/09/100916_milenio_objetivos_onu_economia_mj.shtml

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11378604>

More or Less of 10 March 2012 wrongly claimed the MDGs were agreed by all the countries of the UN in 2000.

It is not clear on what basis of actual UN resolutions More or Less broadcast 3 July 2015 claimed the MDGs were agreed "around 2000". Its programme page has a clearer error.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62>

The MDG targets were not established by the UN in 2000:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/policybriefing/bbc_media_action_health_on_the_move.pdf, note 1.

After the complaints system repeatedly failed to give responses, I sent complaints on this to the Editorial Complaints Unit beginning on 6 February 2014, and later to other parts of the BBC.

The BBC kept on giving false information: for example, the MDGs were "pledges" agreed in "2000".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-31798171>

The BBC Trust has committed to the public that all complaints on older material will be read to determine seriousness, and that all complaints received by other parts of the BBC will be forwarded to Audience Services for logging.

After my complaint, the BBC continued to broadcast and publish misleading and false information on the international commitments, in a variety of languages.

The complaint of 9 June 2015 is one example of many not answered - in this case despite a message to the Director-General:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/6d70efd6-c5ba-4e25-8eb2-69fb35fb5348?sortBy=Created&sortOrder=Ascending&filter=none>

It may take no longer than ten minutes to see that you need to broadcast a correction before the UN Summit next week.

I have yet to receive from the BBC Executive a specific response as to why it has not risked a lack of independence from the Editorial Complaints Unit

- a) determining the outcome of complaints,
- b) refusing to investigate, and
- c) failing to ensure replies to complaints

on Millennium Goal indicators, after I pointed out its own error in a published ruling of 2005.

In that ruling it overvalued the World Bank "dollar a day" by a factor in the range of typically 80-200%.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/pdf/ecu_julsep2005.pdf

<http://millenniumdeclaration.org/Matt%20Berkley%20comments%20on%20BBC%20Stage%202%>

I propose that BBC Executive inquiries in this area be carried out by people who have not made or allowed related misinformation.

I propose that the BBC Executive and the Trust review the complaints, given implications for journalistic strategy and governance.

It does not seem clear to me that I have, as the Editorial Complaints Unit has claimed, appealed all of the complaints about the baseline to the Trust. But by any common sense such technicalities should not matter. It is obvious that the BBC has misled the public.

In my email of 16 September to Ms Fairhead via trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk I mentioned disrespect to people the BBC claims to inform. Let me be clear:

The BBC has understated government pledges to the poorest people on earth.

The BBC has overstated reliability and relevance of official measures on progress.

The BBC has risked to a significant degree promoting misconceptions on policy success or failure.

The BBC has promoted misconceptions on the trustworthiness of politicians, journalists, academics, civil servants and others.

The BBC has persisted in a variety of misinformation on extreme poverty, including on "safe" water, even after correcting some web pages after complaints.

It is not difficult to see the following:

Misconceptions on progress, policy success or trustworthiness of governments can lead to worse policy, worse government or misinformed voting.

If you persist in broadcasting and publishing error, you are knowingly disregarding potential suffering which may result.

If you report governments' or intergovernment agencies' statistics without considering whether they make sense, or are reliable, or whether the small print or real-life considerations are important, you risk causing real suffering to real people.

I suggest that for next week you prioritise broadcast correction on government commitments, with prominence appropriate to counteracting the wrong impression given over many years.

Otherwise you will have provided misinformation on even your own political leaders' commitments - pledges by Tony Blair and David Cameron - and then failed to provide the facts, in effect stealing political power from hungry people.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: 16 September 2015 at 20:36

Subject: Fwd: Urgent: BBC set to misreport UN pledges again at next week's Summit

To: trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk

...

Four days to the UN Summit: BBC "encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges" despite Trustees accepting on 19 June 2015 that the actual child mortality pledge was more ambitious than the MDG target. Suggestion that BBC "correct errors in time for UN Summit on Friday." Latest errors are in Millennium Children (BBC1) programme page and BBC European Parliament page.

21 September 2015

Complaint Summary: Programme page errs. MDGs easier than 2000 pledge.

Full Complaint: I do not know if programme contains this error.

Programme page encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges.

Undermines democracy.

In reality leaders committed to targets with 2000 baselines, as BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee agreed in June/July rulings from page 128.

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf

Some well-known MDG targets proposed by civil servants later have generally easier baseline of 1990.

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=indicators/officialist.htm>

BBC understates leaders' pledge to the poorest and others:

"In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed...targets...Millennium Development Goals they signed up to..."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06dl1t6>

This contributes to same impression: "(...MDGs) that were set in 2000."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-34270179>

Leaders reaffirmed Declaration (2000 baseline) in 2013.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

Evidence and previous unanswered complaints:

poornews.org ungoals.org

Above complaint was acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

21 September 2015 at 12:32

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3490707-ZCPRTQ

.....

Follow-up: CAS-3490853

21 September 2015

Complaint Summary:

Advance publicity understates UN pledges

Full Complaint:

Acknowledgement email...does not confirm that BBC understands this is a pre-broadcast complaint on a programme to be aired tomorrow.

BBC has not yet indicated is willing to correct errors in time for UN Summit on Friday.

poornews.org

Above complaint was acknowledged by bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
at 14:12

From: [Matt Berkley]

22 September 2015 at 08:53

Fwd: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.

To: alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Kirkham,

I send this in case there is an error in tonight's programme....

22 September 2015 at 15:14

Fwd: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.

To: willanderson@keofilms.com, alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Anderson,

Possibly misleading content in "Millennium Children": UN pledges and use of statistics

Thank you for giving half an hour to our phone conversation today.

As I have indicated to the BBC, the Director-General, the Trust and the Chair of the Trust, I propose that the BBC rectify its long-standing errors on Millennium pledges before the UN Summit begins this week.

I submitted a further message to the BBC yesterday concerning this particular complaint:

"...BBC has not yet indicated is willing to correct errors in time for UN Summit on Friday.
poornews.org".

That should be taken by the BBC as a further complaint that it has not rectified the problems described in earlier complaints.

You have asked me what form of words I would agree for the programme description page.

I suggest that the BBC consider what to do about the institutional failure.

The misinformation undermines people's ability to hold governments to account. So it would seem part of basic journalistic ethics to attempt to remedy the situation. I cannot see that in these circumstances that would mean something other than "to what it would have been had the BBC never misled the public on this".

It seems to me that there might be several possibilities for the BBC in relation to this programme:

- a) amend the film before transmission,
- b) add, amend or remove material to be broadcast before or after it, and/or
- c) add, amend or remove material which introduces it or is broadcast during end credits.

I think I should mention, in case they are relevant to this upcoming broadcast, that the BBC has already upheld complaints on other aspects of global poverty reporting.

I note that the programme may present charts based on official progress indicators. Categorical statements, or other communications, based on these can be problematic.

For example, statistics on maternal mortality are well known to be unreliable; the hunger statistics are based on a particularly low level of calories, and the FAO have a category with more people for

"prevalence of food inadequacy" (millenniumdeclaration.org/hunger.pdf). There are no estimates of "clean" or "safe" water. (millenniumdeclaration.org home page). The World Bank statements are not based on real dollars, and take no account of changing needs; they do not estimate inflation faced by the poor.

A reasonable expectation might be that the BBC would not broadcast material making statements it has already held to be in need of correction.

Two complaints upheld by BBC on global poverty coverage

A. From complaint of 27 May 2012, currently appealed to the BBC Trust

[More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012 and associated material]

"1. Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor: "basket of essential goods", etc. They use CPI.

2. "Essential" may mislead. Bank does not estimate any consumption-need trend.

3. "Consumption" misleads a general audience."

Reply from Richard Vadon, editor of More or Less 8 November 2012:

"having considered your points I have decided to make one small change. The use of the word essential in describing the basket of goods could be misinterpreted as I take your point that much of the CPI is not essential for life. I am not sure if it misleads the audience in any real way but I have asked the online team to remove it just in case."

[Web page: BBC Editor's Choice on global poverty. Spanish version not altered. Podcast not altered. Complaint that variety of language misled not answered.]

Note: Another complaint about this programme was that it failed to ask basic questions of adequacy of the "poverty" claims, instead saying simply "there we are, the target's been met". This complaint has not yet been clearly addressed by the BBC. However, a subsequent edition of More or Less took, to some extent, the approach advised by the complainant:

B. Reply from BBC News Online 25 July 2013 to complaint of 11 July 2013:

...1) We have added the word 'targets' into the line about 2015 deadline.

...4) The clean water reference has been changed to "improved sources of water".

...7) The reference to the poverty line has been amended in the news story amongst the "related stories". The other two are David Loyn authored pieces - I've passed your email on to him to consider whether his piece needs amending.

[No final reply received]

Complaint 11 July 2013:

...Breach of due accuracy in major matter

"UN urged to embrace 2030 goal... ", 30 May

Below is an edited version of selected points from a complaint to

barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk yesterday, 10 July. I send this version to help the BBC deal with and track the complaint in view of past BBC failure to respond to complaints of inaccuracy in global poverty reports.

Parts of the article seem to breach guidelines on due accuracy and major matters, when viewed either separately or in combination:

1. "2015 deadline for achieving...Goals" should refer to the intermediate "targets". The claim that the new goal is "more ambitious" is not as true as suggested.

3. "\$1.25 (83p) a day" and "one dollar..." give a misleading impression that the purchasing power of the poorest is much higher than it is. The \$1.25 is in "purchasing power parity" dollars.

4. "Goal for access to clean water has already been reached" conflates MDG 7 (environmental sustainability), target 7C (safe drinking water/sanitation) and indicator 7.8 (improved drinking water). It thus overstates progress in terms of both number of goals met, and evidence for the water being clean.

The official monitors' research is in fact on "improved", not "clean" water sources:

<http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/graphs/>

...7. All three "related stories" conflate goals with targets and/or indicators, wrongly claiming that poverty or water goals were met.

[URL of story of 30 May 2013] : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22719812>

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

[end of extract from email of 22 September 2015 to Mr Anderson of KEO Films and Ms Kirkham]

Date: 22 September 2015 at 15:27

Subject: Re: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.

To: willanderson@keofilms.com, alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Anderson,

The edition of More or Less which I referred to as going some way to questioning UN claims after a complaint is this:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62>

I do not understand how the removal of the audio download is compliant with BBC accountability guidelines - I attach the file here.

As you can see, the fact-checking programme text description makes an error about the UN pledges. There are some other accuracy, and in my view impartiality, problems with that broadcast - see poornews.org - complaints on which, true to form, the BBC has ignored.

Best wishes,

Matt Berkley

22 September 2015 at 15:35

Fwd: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.

To: alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Kirkham,

I am resending this message as it was rejected with the attachment.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 22 September 2015 at 18:22

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3490707-ZCPRTQ

... Millennium Children, which will be broadcast on BBC One tonight.

...the wording on the BBC programme web page.

...having reviewed the page we are satisfied that the wording on the BBC website is factually accurate.

[? - I had supplied the URLs to prove that the leaders in 2000 did not sign up to the easier MDG targets.

"In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed...targets...Millennium Development Goals they signed up to..."
is clearly not "factually accurate".]

Should you wish to raise a complaint about the programme, we would ask that you please do so after it has been broadcast. ...

to: alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk
22 September 2015 at 08:53
Fwd: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.

Dear Ms Kirkham,

I send this in case there is an error in tonight's programme.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Editor, millenniumdeclaration.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...
Date: 21 September 2015 at 12:11
Subject: Fwd: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.
To: Jon.Alwen@keofilms.com

Dear Mr Alwen,

I have forwarded this to Gavin Searle via his website form.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...
Date: 21 September 2015 at 12:01
Subject: Error in Millennium Children publicity, perhaps in programme.
To: debbie.manners@keofilms.com, andrew.palmer@keofilms.com, simon.huntley@keofilms.com,
willanderson@keofilms.com, keo@keofilms.com

Dear Ms Manners, Mr Palmer, Mr Huntley and Mr Anderson,

I am the editor of millenniumdeclaration.org, which provides documentary evidence on government commitments.

There is a significant factual error in the BBC publicity for "Millennium Children". I do not know if it is in the programme to be broadcast tomorrow.

I have submitted a complaint to the BBC, below.

Since the complaints system appears to have some problems of timeliness and communication, I suggest you inform your BBC contacts of the error.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

London

.....

Your Complaint

Television	Type of complaint:
BBC One	Choose channel:
Millennium Children - pre-broadcast complaint	Programme title:
[22 September 2015]	Transmission date:
Not applicable/Not heard or listened myself	Broadcast type:
Factual error or inaccuracy	Complaint category:
No	Contacted us before:
	Complaint title:

Programme page errs. MDGs easier than 2000 pledge.

Complaint description:

I do not know if programme contains this error.

Programme page encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges.

Undermines democracy.

In reality leaders committed to targets with 2000 baselines, as BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee agreed in June/July rulings from page 128.

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf

Some well-known MDG targets proposed by civil servants later have generally easier baseline of 1990.

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=indicators/officialist.htm>

BBC understates leaders' pledge to the poorest and others:

"In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed...targets...Millennium Development Goals they signed up to..."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06dl1t6>

This contributes to same impression:

"(...MDGs) that were set in 2000."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-34270179>

Leaders reaffirmed Declaration (2000 baseline) in 2013.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

Evidence and previous unanswered complaints: poornews.org ungoals.org

Two days to Summit: Warning to Director-General that BBC "undermines democratic accountability" and is "set to mislead again at UN Summit". BBC had already accepted as a result of complaints that there are no "clean" water statistics or estimates of inflation faced by the poor; Trustees had already accepted that the child mortality promise of 2000 was more ambitious than the MDG target. After the warning to the Director-General, the BBC persisted in the misinformation.

Bold and underlining added later.

Same-day telegram 23 September 2015 to Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC

.....

BBC set to mislead again at UN Summit, on existing pledges and poverty statistics. Please ensure BBC desists, and remedy.

19/6/15: Following complaints, ESC finally recognise that 1990-baseline MDG 4 [proposed in 2001] is not the more ambitious Millennium Declaration pledge. Trustees can point to no resolution for their claim that UN "committed" to the easier baseline in 2001. BBC still persist that the 2000 agreement - which was in fact reaffirmed in 2013 - agreed the easier MDGs. This undermines democratic accountability.

25/7/13: News Online upheld complaint, changing article to reflect that UN do not estimate progress on "clean" water. BBC persists.

8/11/12: More or Less editor upheld complaint, changing Editor's Choice web page on global poverty to reflect that UN do not estimate inflation faced by the extremely poor.

11/11/12: More or Less article same error. Complaint was not correctly described. Other complaints on More or Less and global poverty, and other output, never answered.

BBC has continued to broadcast and publish misleading information despite further complaints. That is why I interrupted the Select Committee meeting last week. Details

are at poornews.org and ungoals.org, and with ECU and Trust Unit. Yours sincerely, Matt Berkley

One day before the Summit: Director-General is again warned "BBC understates current UN pledges to poor"

Same-day telegram 24 September 2015 to Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC

Bold, underlining and paragraph spacing added later.

.....

Dear Lord Hall,

BBC understates current UN pledges to poor

The BBC and Trust have still provided no evidence that the UN agreed the MDG targets around 2000, or addressed the complaints about material with more explicit errors than those considered by Trustees.

The UN Library have so far failed to back up the BBC's version.

millenniumdeclaration.org/unlibrary.htm

I have received a response from the Trust Unit to my appeal on case 1300394. But the ECU had not made decisions on many of my complaints about the baseline, or about the programme "Don't Panic".

Other complaints remain completely unanswered at stage 1

- see poornews.org .

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Email to senior staff: "There are no UN statistics for "clean" water"

25 September 2015 at 14:43

Fwd: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3445371-NGRCXY

To: cheryl.taylor@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Taylor,

This unanswered complaint may be of relevance to BBC coverage surrounding the Global Goals.

There are no UN statistics for "clean" water or for inflation faced by the extremely poor. The MDG targets with easier 1990 baselines were not agreed by the UN in 2000.

Evidence: ungoals.org

On 25 July 2013 News Online accepted that the UN does not have the clean water statistics, and amended an article as a result.

Bold and underlining added later.

Best wishes,

Matt Berkley

Still unanswered complaints to World Service and World News

from: Matt Berkley ...

to: richard.knight@bbc.co.uk

date: 25 September 2015 at 15:15

subject: Fwd: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3428708-N971FD

Dear Mr Knight,

The following unanswered complaints may be of relevance to reporting surrounding the Global Goals. I have had no response from the BBC's recommended course of action.

Best wishes,

Matt Berkley

For evidence on UN resolutions: millenniumdeclaration.org/unlibrary.htm

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 9 June 2015 at 10:03

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3340770-ZFKF11

... YOUR COMPLAINT:

Understated impression of UN Summit pledges

Full Complaint: Major matter. **There is likely to be little point answering this complaint by referring to secondary sources**, because many of them make wrong statements.

Example of BBC output: World Service, The Inquiry, 2/515. [2 May 2015]

The introduction's error gives a generally **understated impression of leaders' pledges at the Millennium Summit**.

They did not agree a list of eight goals or mention "MDGs", but "resolved" "by the year 2015...to have reduced...under-five child mortality by **two thirds, of ...current rates**".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

The MDG targets were proposed in 2001 without leaders discussing them at the UN until 2005.

un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf

Some MDGs, such as on child [mortality] have **1990-2015 targets**.

These pages have related mistakes:

bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-32883629

bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-32438104

bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pn9c9

bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-31798171

bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-31851587

The BBC has contributed to a similar wrong impression for years.

I have yet to receive a substantive response from the head of the ECU to correspondence on this matter, with evidence, beginning on 6/2/14 in comments on provisional response 1300394.

I refer also to unanswered handling complaint 3204842 mentioning "institutional failure" appealed to the Trust.

A smaller error: The Inquiry states, similarly to its web page, "**over the past 15 years** child mortality has halved". The official global claim is for 1990-2015. [strictly speaking 1990-2013]

Unanswered complaint 6 February 2014 to BBC Editorial Complaints Unit

Invited comments on provisional response 1300394

"More or Less of 10 March 2012...Unidentified speaker, apparently a

World Service newsreader or a person reading from a World Service news script:

The United Nations says the first Millennium Development Goal, halving the number of people who have no access to clean water, has been reached before the target date of 2015.

[More or Less commenting on the misleading news report:]

...the Millennium Development Goals were agreed by

all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in

the year 2000."

More or Less makes a **major error**. The MDG targets ...

are in fact easier than the pledges in the

Millennium Declaration of 2000. The latter is a UN General

Assembly resolution. A major difference is that the **resolution's**

pledges were not backdated, and are therefore to, for example halve

the proportion of people in 2000 on under "\$1 ", **not the 1990 level.**"....

[The programme contradicted itself by saying it had scrutinised

the goal while confusing it with the more ambitious UN pledge.] "

*"the Millennium Development Goals were **agreed by all the countries of the United Nations** and the big aid agencies in the year **2000** [!] ...*

*...So the whole [water] goal's about halving the proportion.... **between 1990 [!] and 2015.**"*

"we scrutinised [!] the goal of halving the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day in our last edition"

More or Less, BBC World Service 10 March 2012

http://aod-pod-uk-live.edgesuite.net/mpg_mp3_med/podcast_migrated/p02rzhdh-moreorless_20120309-2350a.mp3?_gda_=1439586159_bc77a4325b50ecbaabc770051104052e

It is not clear on what basis of actual UN resolutions More or Less broadcast 3 July 2015 claimed the MDGs were agreed "around 2000". Its programme page has a clearer error.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 16 August 2015 at 13:20

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3428708-N971FD

....

Reference CAS-3428708-N971FD

Thank you for contacting us about 'BBC World Service' on 10th August 2015.

I understand you've not received a response to your complaint made regarding World Service and World News.

Your complaint was passed to BBC World Service who will respond directly.

You can contact them at; worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk

...

Sean Lonergan

BBC Complaints

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

School questions poverty claim where BBC does not:

https://twitter.com/FramGeog/status/650910746621120512

odd jmb twitter mw w Archv WBctw WayBack Go Wayback Wayback Undo Wayback Analyze Find Mementos

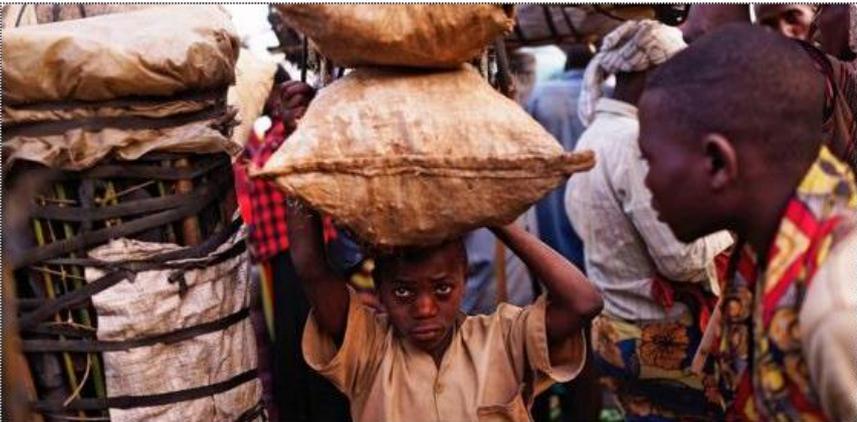
Moments Notifica



Fram Geography
@FramGeog

Follow

Extreme poverty is at an all time low. Are the figures misleading though..?



World Bank: Extreme poverty 'to fall below 10%' - BBC News
The World Bank says that for the first time less than 10% of the world's population will be living in extreme poverty by the end of 2015.
bbc.co.uk

6:49 AM - 5 Oct 2015

Unanswered complaint. Worldwide television broadcast of "Global Citizen Festival" claimed, despite the non-existence of the statistics, that "over 2 billion more got clean drinking water". It claimed MDGs were agreed in 2000, which BBC Trustees had already acknowledged was untrue. It clearly implied leaders agreed easier "MDG" targets than they actually promised. The wrong statements were despite multiple complaints to the BBC - the only answered one on water being upheld - and a warning to Richard Curtis. Broadcast 28 September 2015. Advertised for sale by BBC Worldwide.

CAS-3561236

Complaint Summary:

Inaccuracies/badly sourced captions; imbalance

Full Complaint:

Major/controversial matter.

Problems are more significant because in other output BBC has largely failed to inform citizens of:

a) UN pledges of 2000 or

b) basis of UN poverty claims: eg CAS-3558419.

[Later note: The point is that these inaccuracies and imbalances are more significant given the context. The BBC has basically failed to tell citizens the truth about leaders' pledges and the basis of UN claims on progress.

In fact it is worse than that.

The context is this: The BBC has misinformed citizens about leaders' pledges and about the factual basis of UN claims about progress.]

Short film at 17.50: Captions not well sourced.

If the BBC cannot justify the statements, I suggest:

- a) broadcast correction;
- b) withdrawal of the programme from sale;
- c) corrective action through organisations to which the BBC has sold it.

Here, inaccuracy despite warnings to ECU and D-G.

[Later note: Warnings to others also: David Jordan, Jessica Cecil (Chief Complaint Editor), Paul Smith, BBC World, others.]

ESC ruling 19/6/15 states baseline for later MDG target is easier than pledge of 2000.

I warned Mr Curtis through his agent on 21/9/15.

Caption: "in 2000 UN issued [1990-baseline] MDGs..."

But ESC [Editorial Standards Committee of BBC Trust] agreed that is not true.

UN resolutions of 2001-2013 reaffirmed 2000-baseline pledges.

Evidence: ungoals.org .

Context: Significant % of audience had heard, especially recently, that

- a) MDGs are "1990-2015";
- b) MDG targets "met" in particular years, and/or
- c) UN made promises in 2000.

"In 2000" misleads.

Later, speaker:

"Knowledge is power/ up to us to make sure [promises] are kept/ can't fight for your rights if you don't know what they are/ we need to tell everyone/about the goals/ let's do our job"

Quite.

"over 2 billion more got clean drinking water":

Badly-sourced.

There are no official estimates on clean water:

see upheld complaint CAS-2236086.

Evidence: CAS-3556479.

"in 15 yrs extreme poverty/halved"

is just one opinion.

UN has not estimated changing needs.

[Later note: would be better phrased as "just an opinion".]

Above complaint submitted 8 November.
CAS-3561236-D8SQR0

Audience Services assigned it the number CAS-3561377 on phone after acknowledging they had wrongly categorised it as a follow-up to another complaint.

Senior Trust and Executive staff are notified of unanswered complaint: "BBC does not report scandal" that the official "MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration."; "UN does not have safe water statistics"; BBC claiming poverty target met but "There are no inflation stats for prices faced by the poor."

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 7 October 2015 at 15:36

Subject: Fwd: Urgent. Reminder: Request for clarity on appeal, to enable meaningful response

To: trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk, trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien, Ms Buckle and Ms Clarke

Appeal on More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012 and associated material

I have yet to receive a reply to my requests of 25 September and 5 October for clarity on the Trust Unit's communication of 23 September.

As I understand it, the deadline if the document I received is the correct document would be tomorrow, 8 October, just before 6pm.

I refer to

- the correspondence below,
- the email I understand Audience Services were to send to the Trust Unit this morning (CAS-3512709), and
- the telegram I sent this afternoon.

Please reply by the end of today.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 5 October 2015 at 16:19

Subject: Urgent. Reminder: Request for clarity on appeal, to enable meaningful response

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Clarke and Ms Buckle,

The appeal deadline is approaching concerning More or Less broadcast on the World Service on 3 March 2012 and associated material.

In my view, I cannot reasonably prepare a reply to the Trust Unit response of 23 September unless I receive answers to my queries of 25 September on the scope of the appeal and basic factual matters.

Please respond by the end of tomorrow, and let me know whether some or all of the complaints have been sent back to the Executive as I suggested.

I shall then need time to prepare a response - I suggest four weeks from the time of your clarifications.

....

On 25 September 2015 at 15:54, Matt Berkley <...> wrote:

I also request that you clarify whether the response on case 1300394 has been sent by mistake.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>
Date: 25 September 2015 at 15:54
Subject: Fwd: Urgent. Request for immediate retraction
To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien, Ms Buckle, Ms Cecil and Mr Jordan,

Further to my email of today:

BBC public information on complaints, perhaps specifically sanctioned by Trustees, promises the public that complaints are seen quickly by the right people.

I believe that senior management, Trust Unit staff and the Trustees are the right people for the information at the end of the complaint below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

Unanswered complaint CAS-3430579 11 August 2015:

... "Safe water" claim misleads. UN does not have safe water statistics.

Poverty target met? How do we know? There are no inflation stats for prices faced by the poor.

....

BBC does not report actual pledges of 2000 even though reaffirmed by world leaders in 2013.

BBC does not report scandal:

MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration.

...

Details: poornews.org
millenniumdeclaration.org
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf, page 128.

Trustees say it would be editorial decision not to mention baselines.

But **BBC staff** either

- a) **always make "editorial decision" to omit actual pledge** or
- b) **do not know what pledges are.**

Both are **systemic failure.**

It is a **waste of public money** for BBC to make programmes to inform people on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 25 September 2015 at 11:27

Subject: Urgent. Request for immediate retraction

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle,

If the Trust Unit has sent any of the misleading information below to BBC staff or others, I propose that you retract it.

I also request that you clarify whether the response on case 1300394 has been sent by mistake.

Among the problems are these:

A. The response appears to **wrongly claim that Trustees have made a decision** on the general issue of the **BBC understating Millennium pledges** over many years.

Clearly, the complaint is of a cumulative error.

The complaints that the BBC has explicitly and falsely stated the Declaration has a 1990 baseline have never been answered.

It is not clear to me that it was within the Trust's jurisdiction to issue a formal decision on the Millennium pledges at all, or on all of those complaints.

The ECU stated in their last correspondence before the appeal **that the matter was outstanding.**

Mr Steel said at that time that he did not know what the complaint was.

On 15 September 2015 I wrote to Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Mr Purnell :

"I do not know why Mr Steel has written to me as if I appealed all my complaints to the Trust. I propose that the Trust immediately require the Executive to review the baseline error, using the

evidence I previously supplied to the Trust Unit, for a possible broadcast correction before the Summit. So far both the ESC and the Executive have been misleading not only the public but also the BBC's own journalists."

The same email explains a significant factual error by the Trustees in their decision issued on 19 June.

The Trustees appear to have based their opinion that an error was not duly inaccurate, on a **false premiss that the UN "committed" to the easier MDG targets in 2001.**

The Trust Unit response ignores this.

It only takes 30 seconds to ask the UN librarians:

millenniumdeclaration.org/unlibrary.htm

Nor is it clear to me what the process should be for complaints to BBC World News, or why those should at this stage have been answered by the Trust Unit.

I had suggested to the Trust that Trustees might have discretionary powers in this case.

B. The response **omits the impartiality complaints** entirely after I repeatedly drew attention to them over the three years the BBC has failed to answer. The response seems to imply that there were only complaints on accuracy.

C. The response wrongly implies that the complaint on inflation was limited to two or so words. It ignores both the signposts given to the audience about "assessing" the measure and so on, and the other problems listed such as the non-existent "basket of food".

The context for due accuracy is clearly the **controversy in which critics repeatedly state that the World Bank has no such "basket"** to judge poverty and by, extension, policies.

The Adviser states that she spent an hour watching a programme on which there has been no appeal to the Trust.

Please retract immediately any misleading information which may lead to a lack of due accuracy or impartiality in BBC coverage of coming events, or which may influence BBC replies to complaints.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

On 14 October 2015 at 15:15, Matt Berkley <...> wrote:

Dear Ms O'Brien,

I have requested clarifications on the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction in this case.

I have yet to receive substantive replies, or replies to the suggestion of basic errors in the Trust Adviser's response.

As I think is clear from my emails and telegram, and from the phone call via Audience Services on 7 October, the information is necessary if I am to provide a clear, concise and relevant request for review.

The range of errors and omissions in the response is so great that it seems to cause problems for equal footing between the complainant and the BBC.

"BBC spends millions on Media Action helping people hold power to account but fails to give them the information to do so"

From: Matt Berkley
To: Trust Editorial
19 October 2015

...Since [the Head of Editorial Standards] has not defended the Adviser's letter against the allegation of bias, I renew my request for a replacement and wish to pursue the handling complaint.
...

I complained that the **Trust Adviser's letter has a clear pattern of inaccuracies tending to wrongly diminish the complaint.**

It is in my view highly inappropriate to waste Trustees' time with a letter fifteen times the length of the appeal letter, which omits nearly all the points in the appeal.

A strange alleged quotation from the ONS which is clearly untrue but makes it look as if a programme was right is not the kind of thing Trustees' time should be used on.

I have persisted because of the Trust Unit's failure to acknowledge the importance to democracy of accurate and impartial coverage of these matters.

Clearly, **people cannot hold power to account if they are misled on pledges, or progress.**

Clearly, **there is something wrong if the BBC spends millions** on Media Action helping people hold power to account but **fails to give them the information** to do so.

It is blindingly obvious that the **BBC's false statements on the Millennium Declaration baseline** are an important error.

The Trust Unit has refused to put more explicit errors before Trustees, on the **clearly wrong ground that Trustees have already ruled on this.** ...

The Editor's Choice article for global poverty has a farcical preponderance of World Bank and ex-World Bank contributors.

And yet the article manages to misdescribe the research method and avoid a main debate about the World Bank line, which is that it purports to measure poverty but does not take costs into account. ...

These matters are too serious to be crowded out by irrelevant issues. It is untenable that the Trust Adviser's letter is impartial. ...

To: Trust Editorial
21 October 2015

...I cannot reasonably respond to a Trust Unit decision which ignores nearly all of the appeal letter.

...

The Trust Unit has yet to defend the Trust Adviser letter against the suggestions that

- a) it has an **excessive number of inaccuracies**,
- b) that it is **biased**, or that
- c) these problems would **confuse, distract or mislead Trustees**.

It is statistically implausible that the inaccuracies in the Trust Adviser's letter are simply errors, because those would include some in favour of the complainant. ...

The Trust is committed through its complaints framework to providing an admissibility decision which is largely based on the appeal letter:

"5.5 This appeal request is particularly important...

your letter will be the main basis on which it decides whether to consider your appeal and (if it does) will also form the basis of its investigation."

However, **the decision** sent **appears to mention** none, or **close to none, of the 9 or so points** in the appeal letter - or the 23 or so points in the email appended to it. ...

From: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

21 October 2015

...Your email [of 21 October] will be provided to Trustees.

Sent: 13 November 2015 14:29

To: Trust Editorial

Subject: Re: Request for review of decision not to place appeal before Trustees: ECU ref. 1300394

...Fourthly, I have still not received clarification on Trust Unit or **Trustees' discretionary powers** to return unanswered complaints to the Executive **without formal consideration by the ESC. I am unaware of any clear published information on this.** ...

On 16 November 2015 at 17:56, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

...Section 5.9 of the editorial complaints procedure (http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/protocols/2014/complaints_framework_complaints.pdf) **sets out the circumstances** in which the Trust may refer a complaint back to the BBC Executive.

...we will not correspond further with you with regard to your request that we send material back to the Executive.

Trust and Adviser mislead: Telegram 8 October 2015

Telegram to the Director of the BBC Trust, the Head of Editorial Standards and the Senior Editorial Adviser.

Underlining added, formatted for readability:

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle,

Something has gone badly wrong with the appeal on BBC coverage of global poverty.

On 8 November 2012 the editor of More or Less accepted on behalf of the BBC that an email to him of 1 November 2012 was the complaint at Stage 1a.

I have yet to receive a response to the impartiality complaints, or to the accuracy complaints as stated in the complaint.

On 18 August 2015 I asked the Trust to consider sending unanswered complaints back to the Executive.

I have received no explanation as to why complaints on the BBC's understating of Millennium pledges, which the ECU confirmed on 21 July were still outstanding, have been mentioned in a Trust response of 23 September.

I cannot give a proper response unless I know the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction.

I have also indicated that the Trustees' suggestion in their June/July bulletin that there was a General Assembly "commitment" to MDGs in 2001 is significantly misleading. I propose that Trustees withdraw it.

The Trust Adviser's response is not a response to the appeal as written.

I look forward to an accurate and reasonably comprehensive response so that I may know what the BBC or Trust objections are to the actual complaints.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Unanswered complaint of inaccuracy in BBC Trust publication: statement in 19 June 2015 ruling that there was a 2001 General Assembly "commitment" to the easier 1990 baseline. Trustees mentioned this while dismissing the complaint. Trust persisted in claiming the allegation of a Trust error is a "matter for the Executive"; after a renewed request on 9 October 2015, Trust acknowledges the complaint but again fails to respond by May 2016.

Email to Chairman of Editorial Standards Committee and Head of Editorial Standards.

9 October 2015

Dear Mr Ayre and Ms O'Brien,

Request for Trustees to correct error in published ruling

The Millennium Declaration, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013, has a 2000 baseline.

Evidence for statements in the present account is at:

millenniumdeclaration.org/pledges.htm

The Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust stated in a decision issued on 19 June 2015:

*"In the following year, 2001, **the UN***

[clarification: the UN Secretary-General: the Trustees' words might be taken as meaning the nations themselves]

published

[clarification: "published proposals in"]

a Road Map...

*It can be seen therefore that by changing the **base line for** measuring the reduction of **under-five child mortality deaths***

[correction: "by proposing a different baseline for child mortality, maternal mortality, hunger and

the "dollar day" "]

to the year 1990, the target set

[correction: "proposed"]

in 2001 was a less demanding commitment

[correction: "proposal"]

than that

[clarification: "than the commitment"]

made in 2000."

[correction: "made in 2000, on 21 December 2001, in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013"].

Even if there had been a formal "commitment" by member states to the MDGs in 2001, or even if there can be said to be such in any year such as 2010, such a commitment is clearly outweighed by the reaffirmation of the more demanding commitment, in 2013.

Since nations did not rescind or modify the commitments in the Declaration, the notion that there was any lesser commitment in a year subsequent to 2000 - or is now - appears redundant.

I refer to previous unanswered correspondence on this error - see below.

I have previously indicated my puzzlement at the Trust Unit appearing to propose on 23 September a final decision on complaints never assessed by the Executive.

I propose that unless the Trust can find evidence to back up its claim, it inform the Executive of the problem so that both reporting and complaints can be dealt with by reference to reliable information.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....
[Email appended the telegram of 8 October 2015]

Emphasis added:

Same-day telegram 8 October 2015:

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle,

Something has gone badly wrong with the appeal on BBC coverage of global poverty.

On 8 November 2012 the editor of More or Less accepted on behalf of the BBC that an email to him of 1 November 2012 was the complaint at Stage 1a. I have yet to receive a response to the impartiality complaints, or to the accuracy complaints as stated in the complaint. On 18 August 2015 I asked the Trust to consider sending unanswered complaints back to the Executive. I have received no explanation as to why complaints on the BBC's understating of Millennium pledges, which the ECU confirmed on 21 July were still outstanding, have been mentioned in a Trust response of 23 September.

I cannot give a proper response unless I know the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction. **I have also indicated that the Trustees' suggestion in their June/July bulletin that there was a General Assembly "commitment" to MDGs in 2001 is significantly misleading. I propose that Trustees withdraw it.** The Trust Adviser's response is not a response to the appeal as written. I look forward to an accurate and reasonably comprehensive response so that I may know what the BBC or Trust objections are to the actual complaints.

Yours sincerely, Matt Berkley

Sent to:

1 - EDITORIAL COMPLAINTS, BBC TRUST UNIT - 180 GREAT PORTLAND STREET
LONDON W1W 5QZ

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 24 September 2015 at 17:10

Subject: Re: Urgent: BBC set to misrepresent existing UN pledges again during next week's Summit

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Fairhead and Mr Ayre,

The repeated assertions by the Trust Unit that the email of 18 September concerns the BBC and not the Trust are contradicted by the evidence.

The "urgent **need to review past output, including from the BBC Trust, for accuracy and completeness** - and for **the Trust** to address the question I raised of what **discretionary powers the Trustees may have** to help ensure further misleading content is not broadcast or published during or after the UN Summit";

[decisions on] "**Trust** or Executive responsibility for making use of the evidence previously supplied: "**It does not seem clear to me that I have**, as the Editorial Complaints Unit has claimed, appealed **all of the complaints about the baseline to the Trust**. But by any common sense such technicalities should not matter. It is obvious that the BBC has misled the public." "

the statement that the email "**clarifies matters raised in the email to the Chair of the Trust**" refer to matters for the Trust.

I refer to **previous correspondence**, including on a particular **inaccuracy in the Trustees' decision issued to me on 19 June** and the **unanswered correspondence on discretionary powers**.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 24 September 2015 at 16:19, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Thank you for your email. As set out in my previous email, **this is currently a matter for the BBC**. However, if you remain dissatisfied once the BBC has finished responding, it will be to you to appeal to the Trust.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty

Kirsty Clarke
Complaints Adviser

BBC Trust
180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

From: Matt Berkley [...]
Sent: 22 September 2015 21:02
To: Trust Editorial
Subject: Re: Urgent: BBC set to misrepresent existing UN pledges again during next week's Summit

Dear Ms Fairhead and Mr Ayre,

The email below of 18 September relates to an urgent **need to review past output, including from the BBC Trust, for accuracy and completeness** - and for **the Trust** to address the question I raised of what **discretionary powers the Trustees may have** to help ensure further misleading content is not broadcast or published during or after the UN Summit.

It also relates to an urgent matter concerning Trust or Executive responsibility for making use of the evidence previously supplied:

"It does not seem clear to me that I have, as the Editorial Complaints Unit has claimed, appealed all of the complaints about the baseline to the Trust. But by any common sense such technicalities should not matter. It is obvious that the BBC has misled the public."

Thirdly, it clarifies matters raised in the email to the Chair of the Trust.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 22 September 2015 at 15:45, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Thank you for your email of 18 September. I note that your email relates to future BBC output and it is therefore not a matter for the Trust at this stage. I note you have also sent it to the BBC and I trust you will receive a response in due course.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty

Kirsty Clarke
Complaints Adviser

BBC Trust
180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

From: Matt Berkley ...
Sent: 18 September 2015 12:28

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>
Date: 18 September 2015 at 12:27
Subject: Urgent: BBC set to misrepresent existing UN pledges again during next week's Summit
To: david.jordan@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk,
trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>, James.Purnell@bbc.co.uk,
paul.smith@bbc.co.uk, worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Jordan, Ms Cecil, Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien, Ms Fairhead, Mr Ayre...

...**UN members did not, as the BBC and the Trust claim or imply, agree generally easier Millennium Development Goal targets fourteen or fifteen years ago. They agreed, and reaffirmed, the Millennium Declaration.**

Leaders mentioned the Millennium Development Goals in 2005. However, **they at the same time reaffirmed the Declaration** which has more ambitious 2000 baselines.

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

In effect they also reaffirmed the still more ambitious World Food Summit goal of reducing the 1996 number of hungry people by half (paragraph 17 states a **determination to fulfil goals of other major summits**) to, by current official FAO estimates and methods, 500 million people compared to the 800 million now estimated.

From the evidence in the attached document, it may take you no longer than thirty seconds to see that **the General Assembly continued to agree the Declaration**.

...I propose that the BBC Executive and the Trust review the complaints, given implications for journalistic strategy and governance.

It does not seem clear to me that I have, as the Editorial Complaints Unit has claimed, appealed all of the complaints about the baseline to the Trust. But by any common sense such technicalities should not matter. It is obvious that the BBC has misled the public.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 16 September 2015 at 20:36

Subject: Fwd: Urgent: BBC set to misreport UN pledges again at next week's Summit

To: trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Fairhead,

...The problems might raise questions of governance, news strategy and/or adequacy of the complaints system authorised by the Trust.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 15 September 2015 at 16:40

Subject: Urgent: BBC set to misreport UN pledges again at next week's Summit

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>, James.Purnell@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Mr Purnell,

I am afraid **the ESC**, as well as the BBC Executive, **seems to have misled the public**.

There was no UN "commitment" to the MDGs in 2001. That is why the UN Statistics Division does not list any such resolution.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=/Products/GAResolutions.htm>

The resolution which some people think agreed the MDGs is 56/95 of 14 December 2001.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/56_95/a_res56_95e.pdf

It mentions the Secretary-General's 58-page "Road Map" but **does not say whether it was interested in other parts or the annex containing the MDGs**.

The ESC stated on 19 June 2015:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf

*"In the following year, 2001, **the UN** published a Road Map..."*

I am afraid that does not seem clear enough when we are discussing UN commitments. **It was the Secretary-General's Road Map, not the nations'**. It was a document written by civil servants, making **proposals** to the General Assembly.

The ESC stated,

"It can be seen therefore that by changing the base line for measuring the reduction of under-five child mortality deaths to the year 1990, the target set in 2001 was a less demanding commitment than that made in 2000."

Firstly, **there were no 1990 baselines for any of the goals in the Declaration**. Reuters, The

Economist, the Times of India, the New York Times and so on said it had 2000 baselines. **The BBC's error is not only about child mortality.**

Secondly, **the ESC's statement seems clearly to say that there was a commitment in 2001 to the easier baseline.**

In reality, far from changing the commitment, the **same resolution of 14 December 2001 called for the Declaration to be publicised;** and **more than one resolution of 21 December 2001 reaffirmed the Declaration** - as did **leaders in 2005** at the World Summit, in **2013** and in effect in **July 2015**, when the Addis Ababa conference reaffirmed the Monterrey Consensus.

But all you really need to know for this particular point is that the **BBC Trust is unable to produce any evidence for its message to the public that the easier baselines were agreed by the UN in 2001.**

Even when they mentioned the MDGs in 2005 leaders reaffirmed the Declaration in the same resolution.

....

I do not know why Mr Steel has written to me as if I appealed all my complaints to the Trust. I propose that the Trust immediately require the Executive to review the baseline error, using the evidence I previously supplied to the Trust Unit, for a possible broadcast correction before the Summit. So far both **the ESC** and the Executive **have been misleading not only the public but also the BBC's own journalists.**

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

On 28 August 2015 at 15:41, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

...Please accept this as acknowledgement of receipt of your three emails to the Trust, with attachments, received on 18 August 2015.

We will review the correspondence in the case and reply more fully in due course.

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 18 August 2015 at 17:18

Subject: BBC Trust discretionary powers in cases of serious and/or urgent editorial problems

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

"Dear Mr Towers and Ms O'Brien, ...

Perhaps it was not clear to **members of the ESC** that **world leaders reaffirmed this pledge in 2005 and 2013**, or that the consensus among Reuters, the Times of India, the Guardian, the Independent and the Economist in 2000 was that **pledges other than on survival rates had a 2000 baseline.**"

[end of request of 9 October 2015 for correction of Trust decision of 19 June 2015 with appended emails; attached was the evidence document below]

[Document attached to renewed request 9 October 2015 for correction of Trustees' misleading reference in their decision of 19 June 2015 to a "commitment" to the MDGs in the context of 2001:]

Evidence supplied with complaint on Trust decision. Some international commitments on poverty

Documentary evidence

With comments

Matt Berkley

18 September 2015

In 2000 national leaders pledged in the Millennium Declaration to reduce child mortality by two-thirds not from 1990 rates, but from 2000 rates.

On 6 September 2001, the Secretary-General proposed generally easier "Millennium Development Goal" targets with 1990 baselines – reducing the number of children's lives to be saved in 2000-15 by about 5 million.

Contrary to popular belief, the United Nations General Assembly did not commit to the easier targets in 2000 or 2001.

On 16 December 2002 the Assembly encouraged "interested parties...to continue to pursue vigorously the achievement of the objectives and goals contained in the Millennium Declaration".

Leaders reaffirmed the Declaration in 2005 and 2013.

In July 2015 national leaders reaffirmed a statement that countries would bring economic conditions to fulfil agreed goals, including Millennium Declaration pledges. Several of those are, at a global level and for most countries, more ambitious than the "Millennium Development Goal" targets which were publicised instead of the actual pledges. The document also stated that countries would help publicise agreed goals including the Declaration's pledges with 2000 baselines.

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf>

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/57_144/a_res57_144e.pdf

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/313

http://www.ycsg.yale.edu/assets/downloads/monterrey_consensus.pdf

July 2015:

"We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives...**reaffirm** and build on the 2002 **Monterrey Consensus**"

2002 Monterrey Consensus:

"...economic conditions needed to **fulfil** internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**...**will be our first step** to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all."

"**we should encourage**...coordination....and coherence...to **meet the Millennium Declaration** development **goals**"

"**We shall support** ...a global **information campaign** on the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**."

http://www.ycsg.yale.edu/assets/downloads/monterrey_consensus.pdf

In 2013 leaders renewed some more ambitious global pledges than the Millennium Development Goals.

"We, the Heads of State and Government and heads of delegation...reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration".

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

Contrary to popular belief, the UN General Assembly did not mention the MDGs in 2000 or 2001.

On 21 December 2001 and in later resolutions it reaffirmed the 2000-baseline Declaration.

The internationally agreed goals include this:

1996, World Food Summit, Rome Declaration on World Food Security:

We, the Heads of State and Government, or our representatives, gathered at the World Food Summit...

pledge our political will...

with an immediate view to reducing the **number** of undernourished people to **half their present level** no later than 2015."

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

In 2006 the BBC understated the commitment by wrongly claiming the baseline is "1990-2":

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6099460.stm>

Millennium Declaration, 8 September 2000:

"We resolve...by the year 2015...

to have reduced maternal mortality by three-quarters, and child mortality by two thirds, of their **current rates**"

[to about 3.6 million child deaths in 2015, or 10,000 deaths a day]

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

"The declaration endorsed...**halving** by the year 2015 the 22 percent of the world's population **now existing** on less than a dollar a day."

Reuters, 8 September 2000

<http://www.itnsources.com/en/shotlist/RTV/2000/09/08/009080017/?s=millennium%20summit>

"secretary-general...suggests...that the world could try to **halve** by 2015 the figure of 1.2 billion people or 22% of its population, **who currently exist** in extreme poverty on less than \$1 a day."

6 April 2000

<http://www.economist.com/node/299914>

"A main target, set by Mr Annan and agreed to by the summitters, is to halve by 2015 **the 22% of people who live** on less than a dollar a day"

Editorial

7 September 2000

<http://www.economist.com/node/359559>

"Baseline year – 1990 or 2000?"

...In two cases - maternal mortality and under-five mortality - the term "**current rates**" is used, directly specifying a 2000 baseline. For the remainder, the targets are stated in the form of "to halve by 2015..." This would imply a **2000 baseline** year of the **Millennium Declaration**. After discussions within the UN system and with other partners, the issues [?] have been resolved in favour of **1990** serving as the baseline year."

Guidance Note sent by heads of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP to country offices
United Nations Development Group
Reporting on the Millennium Development Goals at the Country Level
October 2001

http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc

US Government after the easier 1990-baseline MDGs were proposed:

"Justice demands that global terrorism be silenced so that the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations can be heard."

October 1, 2001

<http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/io/rls/rm/2001/5127.htm>

"...PEOPLE...ASSUME THAT THE "MDGS" ARE AGREED DEVELOPMENT GOALS FROM THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION, WHICH THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS. OFTEN THE UN SECRETARIAT AND REPRESENTATIVES OF A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, HOWEVER, USE IT TO REFER TO THE SECRETARIAT GOALS....."

SUBJECT: THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) -- WHAT ARE THEY?

04/26/05

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE

pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB560.pdf

2005: "We, Heads of State and Government...reaffirm the United Nations Millennium Declaration...."

we commit ourselves to: ...integrating [the reproductive health] goal in strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, aimed at reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality...."

"We therefore resolve to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world and to undertake concrete measures to continue finding ways to implement the outcome of the Millennium Summit"

"We emphasize the critical role of both formal and informal education in the achievement of poverty eradication and other development goals as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration"

"We call for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration"

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

"...Charter of this United Nations...Universal Declaration of Human Rights...a decade ago, at the dawn of a new millennium, we set concrete goals... These are the standards that we set."

Remarks by the President at the Millennium Development Goals Summit

22 September 2010

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/remarks-president-millennium-development-goals-summit-new-york-new-york>

.....

What are countries now committed to?

In **July 2015** leaders renewed some relevant commitments:

a) to **ensure economic conditions to meet agreed pledges** including those in the Millennium Declaration

and

b) to **publicise the pledges**.

Some of these pledges are generally more ambitious than the Millennium Development Goals first mentioned by leaders in 2005, because their baselines were not backdated.

In July 2015 leaders and the Assembly reaffirmed commitments to:

1) economic conditions to fulfil agreed goals including those in the **Millennium Declaration** – which has a 2000 baseline -

and

2) a global **information campaign** on the **Millennium Declaration** and other agreed goals.

The other agreed goals include the 1996 **World Food Summit** pledge to work on halving the 1996 number of hungry people to, by current official FAO method and estimates, about **500 million**.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/313

The current estimate is around 800 million: millenniumdeclaration.org/hunger.pdf .

The child mortality target pledged in the Millennium Declaration is about 3.6 million child deaths in 2015, not the 4.3 million implied by the MDG target.

millenniumdeclaration.org

The difference in 2000-15 with constant progress is about 5 million deaths or children saved, and rising as time goes by. It is very roughly 2,000 children per day in 2015.

July 2015:

"We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives...**reaffirm** and build on the 2002 **Monterrey Consensus**"

2002 Monterrey Consensus:

"...economic conditions needed to **fulfil** internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**...**will be our first step** to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all."

"**we should encourage**...coordination....and coherence...to **meet the Millennium Declaration development goals**"

"**We shall support** ...a global **information campaign** on the internationally agreed development **goals** and objectives, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**."

http://www.ycsg.yale.edu/assets/downloads/monterrey_consensus.pdf

"I am pleased that the Declaration we are about to adopt at this Summit has such a broad range of commitments, and the **specificity** of the language and **the time scales** mean that we can and **will be held accountable** for delivery."

Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of Ireland 6 September 2000

"...**let us be honest** at this Millennium Summit, too many times we have set **new deadlines** to reach old goals."

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark 8 September 2000

<http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/55/PV.7&Lang=E>

"We resolve...by the year 2015...to have reduced **maternal mortality by three-quarters, and child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates**"

[to about **3.6 million child deaths** in 2015, or 10,000 deaths a day]

Millennium Declaration

8 September 2000

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

*"The Co-Chairperson (Namibia): We have come to the close of this historic Millennium Summit... We cannot, therefore, afford to go back home from here and continue **business as usual**."*

*"The declaration endorsed...**halving** by the year 2015 the 22 percent of the world's population **now existing** on less than a dollar a day."*

Reuters, 8 September 2000

<http://www.itnsource.com/en/shotlist/RTV/2000/09/08/009080017/?s=millennium%20summit>

"Millennium Development Goals...

The proposed formulation of the 8 goals, 18 targets and 40+ indicators are listed below. ...

*...the normal **baseline** year for the targets will be **1990**..."*

"proposed list of goals, targets...listed below...between 1990 and 2015"

[Relevant targets mention 1990 except for water]

Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration
6 September 2001

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf>

(MDG target is for c. **4.3 million child deaths in 2015**)

*"Staff from...the UN...,IMF, OECD-DAC, and the World Bank...reached agreement on a presentation of the Millennium Development Goals...
...standard **baseline** year of 1990...
(with an **exception of using 2000 for the safe water goal** as that was agreed in a recent UN conference)." [!]*

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Note by the Secretariat

17 September 2001

http://www.mofat.go.kr/webmodule/common/download.jsp?boardid=106&tablename=TYPE_DAT_ABOARD&seqno=075ffcfdafa0fa2ff1fd103b&fileseq=05b06bfb1fd504dfa303b07b

[.pdf document which may need the extension .pdf to be added] ; or

<http://millenniumdeclaration.org/mdgwaterbaseline.pdf>

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN L. POWELL AT WORLD SUMMIT ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

September 4, 2002

Here in Johannesburg, we have recommitted ourselves to achieving, by 2015, the development **goals** set forth **in the Millennium Declaration**.

<http://wfile.ait.org.tw/wf-archive/2002/020904/epf306.htm>

16 December 2002:

"The General Assembly...

Reaffirming the importance of the implementation of and follow-up to the **Millennium Declaration** in a **comprehensive**.....manner...

2. Recognizes the uneven progress made so far in achieving the objectives agreed upon in the

Millennium Declaration, and **urges** Member States to continue to undertake with **determination** appropriate measures towards its implementation;

3. Invites the organizations and agencies...and encourages other interested parties...to continue **to pursue vigorously** the achievement of the objectives and **goals** contained **in the Millennium Declaration...**"

23 December 2003:

"The General Assembly...

Reaffirming the United Nations Millennium Declaration...

2005: "We, **Heads of State and Government...**
reaffirm the Millennium Declaration"

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

*"Let us resolve therefore: - To **halve**, by the time this century is 15 years old, **the proportion** of the world's people (**currently 22 per cent**) whose income is less than one dollar a day.*

- To halve, by the same date, the proportion of people (currently 20 per cent) who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water."

"Specifically, I urge the Summit to adopt the target of reducing by half, **between now and 2015**, the proportion of people who lack sustainable access to adequate sources of affordable and safe water."

Secretary-General

Millennium Report

27 March 2000

www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/We_The_Peoples.pdf

"The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has worked hard to build international support **for the UN Secretary-General's proposals for the Millennium Summit.**"

UK Parliament. House of Commons, Written Answers for 15 May 2000. Mr Hain.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000515/text/00515w09.htm>

"**The Clinton Administration strongly supports** Secretary General Kofi Annan's call to action on poverty alleviation, on economic and social development"

U.S. Efforts on the **Millennium Report** "Call To Action" on Poverty and Economic Development Issues

The White House September 7, 2000

http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/new/html/Wed_Oct_4_132349_2000.html

"**President Clinton** is **strongly committed** to working...to meet the vision of a sustainable future outlined in the Secretary General's **Millennium Report.**"

The White House September 7, 2000

http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/new/html/Wed_Oct_4_133235_2000.html

"in September 2000...Annan...In his report ...

The assembly ...accepted his report wholesale."

Mark Malloch Brown
Head of UN Development Programme in 2000
The Unfinished Global Revolution
Penguin Books, 2011

"His **Millennium Report**...offers concrete, accomplishable and far-sighted recommendations. **Austria** welcomes this roadmap for the future course of UN activities and **will follow its guidelines.**"

Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner
<http://www.un.org/ga/webcast/statements/austriaE.htm>

Speeches at the Millennium Summit:

*"...**Millennium Report** serves as an excellent reference for checking whether our homework has been properly done."*

Mr Persson, Prime Minister of **Sweden**

*"Secretary-General...**the report he presented**...sets out clear and precise objectives. **Belgium** fully supports it. My country **commits itself** ...to support all actions that can help attain those objectives"*

*"I am pleased that the Declaration we are about to adopt at this Summit has such a broad range of commitments, and the **specificity of the language and the time scales mean that we can and will be held accountable for delivery.**"*

Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of **Ireland**
6 September 2000

*"...**let us be honest** at this Millennium Summit, too many times we have set **new deadlines** to reach old goals."*

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of **Denmark**
8 September 2000
<http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/55/PV.7&Lang=E>

"... we must overcome poverty.... **It would be unforgivable** if we do not gather the means to do it. We heartily support the objectives set out to this end in the **Secretary-General's report** for the Millennium Summit..."

Spain

"The Co-Chairperson (Finland): I now give the floor to the Chairman of the round table held yesterday afternoon..."

President Chávez Frías (spoke in Spanish): ...round table with heads of State, representatives of Governments of **America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania**. ...we spent about four hours there...I am going to make a major effort in these first few minutes to reflect the spirit that prevailed...

My colleagues and I **agree** on one question **based on** the deliberations we are witnessing here and on the excellent **report submitted by the Secretary-General** to guide us at this Millennium Summit. **How can the goals determined there** be met? ...

Let us inform our peoples about what was discussed here, about the conclusions that were drawn in this Summit..."

"We resolve...by the year 2015...to have **reduced maternal mortality by three-quarters, and child mortality by two thirds, of...current rates**"

[to about **3.6 million child deaths** in 2015, or 10,000 deaths a day]

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

"The Co-Chairperson (Namibia): We have come to the close of this historic Millennium Summit..."

We cannot, therefore, afford to go back home from here and continue business as usual. We, as heads of State or Government, have the mandate and the responsibility individually and collectively to take bold steps....

We must act now by translating our commitments into action. It is time to combine our vision and our renewed commitment with the increased resources for the United Nations in a purposeful manner....We must fulfil our promises..."

[The following text of the co-chairperson's statement is from a press release, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000908.ga9758.doc.html> , since the official record refers to a non-existent paragraph in the Declaration:]

"I ... call upon [the new President of the General Assembly, Harri Holkeri] to ensure the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and pay particular attention to paragraph 31."

Paragraph 31 of the Millennium Declaration reads:

"We request the **General Assembly to review** on a regular basis the progress made in **implementing the provisions of this Declaration**..."

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN L. POWELL AT WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

September 4, 2002

Here in Johannesburg, we have recommitted ourselves to achieving, by 2015, the development **goals** set forth **in the Millennium Declaration**.

<http://wfile.ait.org.tw/wf-archive/2002/020904/epf306.htm>

2005: "We, **Heads of State and Government... reaffirm the Millennium Declaration**"

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

"The United Nations General Assembly embraced the eight Goals

[target about **4.3 million child deaths in 2015**, or 11800 a day: see millenniumdeclaration.org]

only as late as October 2005."

Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals in Practice:
A review of country strategies and reporting

United Nations, 2010

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HRAAndMDGsInPractice.pdf>

A former UK Department for International Development Director-General:

"(MDGs), of which the authoritative version was contained in an Annex to a 'Road Map' produced by the Secretary-General in September 2001...

the Annex to the 'Road Map' was **not formally endorsed by the UN membership**, but merely described as 'a useful guide' in the relevant Resolution"

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00098.x/abstract>

[Note by MB: That is not quite accurate.

The General Assembly in the resolution of 14 December 2001 recommended the 58-page "Road Map" be considered as a useful guide. It **did not mention**, as Richard Manning states, **the Annex containing the MDG framework**. The 2001 resolution did not mention the MDG targets as some academics have claimed. The Assembly did not make clear whether it was referring to the MDGs as a useful guide, or other parts of the report.

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/56_95/a_res56_95e.pdf]

Richard Manning is however correct here:

"...despite this **less than robust formal basis**, there can be no doubt that the MDGs have become highly influential at least at the level of international discourse about development."

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00098.x/abstract>

2010

The Impact and Design of the MDGs: Some Reflections

Richard Manning

Former UK Department for International Development Director General

The same author wrote correctly in 2009 that it was the Road Map, not the MDGs, which the Assembly mentioned:

"The results of this exercise, a framework containing 8 Goals, 18 Targets and 48 Indicators, were annexed to the Secretary-General's Road Map of 2001. This list became the authoritative statement of the MDG framework, despite the fact that, ironically, it was never endorsed as such by the General Assembly, not least because of both US and G77 reservations (from different perspectives)

about aspects of Goal Eight. Instead the relevant resolution, though adopted without a vote, recommended that the Secretary-General's report 'Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration' be considered 'a useful guide', ... mandate to the Secretariat, adopted in the same Resolution, to monitor progress towards implementing the goals of the Millennium Declaration."

Richard Manning, former Director General, UK Department for International Development
2009

<http://www.oecd.org/site/progresskorea/44117550.pdf>

"Millennium Development Goals...

*The **proposed** formulation of the 8 goals, 18 targets and 40+ indicators are listed below. ...
...the normal baseline year for the targets will be 1990..."*

*"**proposed** list of goals, targets...listed below...**between 1990 and 2015**"*

[relevant targets mention 1990 except for water target]

Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration
6 September 2001

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/sgreport2001.pdf>

(MDG target is for c. **4.3 million child deaths in 2015**)

"OECD

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

(Note by the Secretariat)

17 September 2001

...Staff from the Secretariats of the UN (Secretary General's Office and UNDG), IMF, OECD-DAC, and the World Bank met in New York on 21 June 2001 to discuss aligning the goals"

[MB note: That means:

a) civil servants' generally easier 1990-baseline International Development Goals whose seven-goals-21-indicators structure and baseline were the basis of the MDG framework,

and

b) the world leaders' 2000-baseline Declaration goals for 2015; there were some other differences].

*"In subsequent correspondence **they reached agreement on a presentation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**..."*

*It was agreed that there should be a standard baseline year of 1990 against which to measure progress (with an **exception of using 2000 for the safe water goal** as that was agreed in a recent UN conference)."*

http://www.mofat.go.kr/webmodule/common/download.jsp?boardid=106&tablename=TYPE_DAT_ABOARD&seqno=075ffcfdafa0fa2ff1fd103b&fileseq=05b06bfb1fd504dfa303b07b

[.pdf document which may need the extension .pdf to be added]

or

<http://millenniumdeclaration.org/mdgwaterbaseline.pdf> .

On 6 November 2001 the heads of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA announced to UN country representatives,

"The International Development Goals (IDGs) and the development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration have recently been merged under the designation of "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs). They have been agreed by the United Nations system, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and OECD/DAC."

They attached a guidance note for country reporting. This stated that the text of the Declaration "would imply" a baseline of 2000 for both the mortality and other relevant pledges.

[http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs - letter - MDGs - letter.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs_-_letter_-_MDGs_-_letter.pdf)

"The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)...

*For the purpose of monitoring progress, the normal baseline year for the targets will be **1990**...
...the Secretary-General is to report annually to the General Assembly on progress towards a subset of the MDGs..."*

"Baseline year – 1990 or 2000?"

*...In two cases - maternal mortality and under-five mortality - the term "current rates" is used, directly specifying a 2000 baseline. For the remainder, the targets are stated in the form of "to halve by 2015..." This **would imply a 2000 baseline year of the Millennium Declaration**. After discussions within the UN system and with other partners, the issues have been resolved in favour of 1990 serving as the baseline year."*

Guidance Note sent by heads of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP to country offices
United Nations Development Group

http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc

In December 2001 the General Assembly did not say it "adopted" the new targets but recommended "that the "road map" be considered as a useful guide in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration".

Even then it requested

*"the Secretary-General to prepare an **annual report** and a comprehensive report every five years on progress...towards implementing the Millennium Declaration, drawing upon the "road map" map" and in accordance with resolution 55/162...while the quinquennial comprehensive reports examine **progress achieved towards implementing all the commitments made in the Declaration**".*

It looks like member states were asking the Secretary-General to report not just on the generally easier MDG4 and MDG5 but on their pledges of 2000.

This interpretation is boosted by the fact that they at the same time invited **"specific measures to give widespread publicity to the Millennium Declaration"**.

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/56_95/a_res56_95e.pdf

Resolution 55/162 reads:

"The General Assembly...requests the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report every five years, supplemented by an annual report on progress achieved towards implementing the Millennium Declaration...

*(a) The annual reports should reflect the broad array of specific goals and **commitments enunciated in the Millennium Declaration**...*

*(b) All reports should focus, in this respect, on the results and **benchmarks** achieved, identify gaps in implementation....*

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
55/162 Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
14 December 2000
<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/55/162>

National leaders did not make any explicit statement at the UN on MDGs until September 2005.

The USA's position earlier in 2005 emphasised that the MDG framework was "solely a Secretariat product" and not formally endorsed by the UN membership.

pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB560.pdf

2013: "We, the **Heads of State and Government and heads of delegation... reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration**"

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

"Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
55/2. 8 September 2000
United Nations Millennium Declaration

...We, **heads of State and Government**, have gathered...As leaders we have a duty therefore to...in particular, the children...

We **resolve**...

- To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. ...

- By the same date, to have reduced **maternal mortality** by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, **of their current rates**.

We **request the General Assembly** to **review** on a regular basis the progress made in implementing **the provisions of this Declaration**...

We therefore pledge our **unstinting support** for **these common objectives** and our determination to achieve them."

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

"On behalf of Canada I would like to voice strong support for the Monterrey Consensus. A consensus that is unprecedented in scope and participation. That seeks to take an indispensable step forward together in securing a fundamental common cause of the United Nations. As expressed in the Millennium Declaration."

Monterrey, Mexico March 2002

"To achieve the aims of the Millennium Summit, the World Bank estimates it will be necessary to double the amount currently spent on poverty eradication."
Jacques Chirac, President of France
<http://www.un.org/ffd/statements/franceE.htm>

"We are conscious of the absolute moral imperative of combating the extreme poverty suffered by one fifth of humanity and we have **fully endorsed** the historic development **goals** written into the **Millennium Declaration**. We know that in order to attain these objectives it is necessary...."

European Community
Romano Prodi President of the European Commission at the International Conference on Financing for Development
Monterrey, Mexico
March 22, 2002
<http://www.un.org/ffd/statements/ecE.htm>

"Something must be done to galvanize the global political will for an accelerated drive to meet the **Millennium Declaration** targets. ... I am convinced that the UN **Millennium Declaration** points the way forward."

Han Seung-soo
President of the General Assembly of the United Nations
International Conference on Financing For Development, Monterrey, Mexico
March 2002
<http://www.un.org/ffd/statements/gaunE.htm>

On 27 July 2015 the UN General Assembly reaffirmed member states' commitment to

1) economic conditions to fulfil goals of the **Millennium Declaration** - the Declaration is in at least one respect more ambitious than later "Millennium Development Goal" targets, since it has a 2000 baseline -

and

2) a global information campaign on the **Millennium Declaration** and the other agreed goals, which include the **World Food Summit** goal of halving the 1996 number of **hungry** people to, by current official FAO method and estimates, about **500 million**.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/313

The target pledged in the Millennium Declaration is about 3.6 million child deaths in 2015, not the 4.3 million implied by the MDG target.

July 2015:

"We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives...**reaffirm** and build on the 2002 **Monterrey Consensus**"

2002 Monterrey Consensus:

"...economic conditions needed to **fulfil** internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**...**will be our first step** to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all."

"we should encourage...coordination of international institutions and coherence...to **meet the Millennium Declaration development goals**"

"We shall support the United Nations in the implementation of a global **information campaign** on the internationally agreed development **goals** and objectives, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**."

http://www.ycsg.yale.edu/assets/downloads/monterrey_consensus.pdf

"The declaration endorsed targets set by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in a near-Utopian report last April that called for **halving** by the year 2015 the 22 percent of the world's population **now existing** on less than a dollar a day."

Reuters, 8 September 2000

<http://www.itnsource.com/en/shotlist/RTV/2000/09/08/009080017/?s=millennium%20summit>

"A main target, set by Mr Annan and agreed to by the summiteers, is to halve by 2015 **the 22% of people who live** on less than a dollar a day"

The Economist, editorial. 7 September 2000

<http://www.economist.com/node/359559>

"A declaration to be signed on Friday when the summit meeting ends has set ambitious benchmarks....

One such goal proposes to reduce **by half over the next 15 years** the number of people earning less than a dollar a day. To achieve that, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela reckoned, "we should increase that income to levels of fairness and dignity for 140,000 persons each day of each month and of each year from the present until Dec. 31, 2015."

"The Italian prime minister, Giuliano Amato, agreed that radical efforts were required. "

"Published: September 8, 2000 United Nations, Sept. 7"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/08/world/summit-in-new-york-the-orators-un-speakers-urge-increase-in-charity-to-the-poor.html>

"Setting out to **halve in fifteen years** the number of poor people **we now have** is an undoubtedly remarkable endeavor..."

Felipe Perez Roque, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Debate of the 55th General Assembly

<http://www.un.org/ga/webcast/statements/cubaE.htm>

15 September 2000

"Proponernos reducir a la mitad, dentro de quince años, el número de pobres que hoy tenemos, es un empeño sin duda encomiable..."

<http://www.un.org/ga/webcast/statements/cubaS.htm>

"the targets set by the Millennium Summit, including the target to halve, by the year 2015, **the current proportion** of the world's poor people"

Nguyen Dzy Nien, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vietnam,
General Debate of the 55th Session of the UN General Assembly

13 September 2000

<http://www.un.org/ga/webcast/statements/vietnamE.htm>

"PLEDGES MADE AT 2000 MILLENNIUM SUMMIT MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO REALITY, SPEAKERS STRESS..."

JEAN DE RUYT (Belgium), speaking on behalf of **the European Union**, said the Union would like the **Millennium Declaration** to be the **touchstone** for any practical steps taken by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and by all governments."

19 November 2001

Press Release

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/GA9973.doc.htm>

"Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
56/95. Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, by which it adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration as the outcome of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, held at Headquarters from 6 to 8 September 2000,

Recalling also its resolution 55/162 of 14 December 2000, in which it, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a long-term “road map” towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration within the United Nations system and to submit it to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session,

Reaffirming **the need to maintain the will and momentum of the Millennium Summit**, as well as the importance of a comprehensive and balanced approach in the implementation of and follow-up to the Millennium Declaration,

1. **Takes note with appreciation** of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “**Road map** towards the implementation of the United Nations **Millennium Declaration**”;

2. **Recommends** that the “**road map**” be considered as a **useful guide in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration** by the United Nations system, and **invites** Member States, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and other interested parties to **consider the “road map”** when formulating plans for implementing **goals related to the Declaration**;

3. **Requests the Secretary-General** to prepare an annual **report** and a comprehensive report every five years on progress achieved by the United Nations system and Member States towards implementing the **Millennium Declaration, drawing upon the “road map”** and **in accordance with resolution 55/162**, and requests that the annual reports focus on cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issues, as well as on the major areas set forth in the “road map”, while the **quinquennial comprehensive reports** examine **progress** achieved **towards** implementing **all the commitments made in the Declaration**;

4. Invites the United Nations system, in cooperation with Member States, to adopt specific measures to give **widespread publicity to the Millennium Declaration** and to **increase the dissemination of information on the Declaration**;

5. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session the item entitled “Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit”.

86th plenary meeting

14 December 2001

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/95&Lang=E

2000: "As leaders we have a duty therefore to...in particular, the children...
We resolve...by the year 2015...to have **reduced child mortality by two thirds, of...
current rates**"

[to about 3.6 million child deaths in 2015, or 10,000 deaths a day]

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

2005: "We, **Heads of State and Government...
reaffirm the Millennium Declaration**"

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

2013: "We, the **Heads of State and Government and heads of delegation...
reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration**"

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>

World Summit on Sustainable Development

2-4 September 2002

(Earth Summit)

Johannesburg Declaration:

“We, the representatives of the peoples of the world...
commit ourselves to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to expedite the achievement of
the time-bound, socio-economic and environmental targets contained therein.”

Plan of Implementation:

"Reduce, by 2015, mortality rates for infants and children under 5 by two thirds, and maternal mortality rates by three quarters, of the **prevailing rate in 2000**"

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaration.htm

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2309_planfinal.htm

"(MDGs), of which the authoritative version was contained in an Annex to a 'Road Map' produced by the Secretary-General in September 2001...the Annex to the 'Road Map' was **not formally endorsed by the UN membership, but merely described as 'a useful guide'** in the relevant Resolution,

[Clarification by MB: **The General Assembly** in the resolution of 14 December 2001 recommended the "Road Map" as a useful guide. It **did not mention the Annex containing the MDG framework**. The full text is later in this document]

and that the subsequent updating has been carried out by the so-called Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators, a body whose status is pleasingly unclear. Nevertheless, despite this **less than robust formal basis**, there can be no doubt that the MDGs have become highly influential at least at the level of international discourse about development."

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00098.x/abstract>

2010

The Impact and Design of the MDGs: Some Reflections

Richard Manning (former UK Department for International Development Director General)

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General:

"The norms and values embedded in the Millennium Declaration and international human rights instruments must continue to provide the foundation for engagement, in particular the key human rights principles of non-discrimination, meaningful participation and **accountability**".

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/MDG/Pages/Quotes.aspx>

"...the deputy secretary general pointed out. "What the Summit will do is elevate the level of commitment to make it a **commitment by the leaders themselves. This makes a big difference.**"

30 August 2000

<http://wfile.ait.org.tw/wf-archive/2000/000830/epf304.htm>

"Let us resolve therefore: - **To halve, by the time this century is 15 years old, the proportion of the world's people (currently 22 per cent)** whose income is less than one dollar a day.

- To halve, by the same date, the proportion of people (currently 20 per cent) who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water."

"Specifically, I urge the Summit to adopt the target of reducing by half, **between now and 2015**, the proportion of people who lack sustainable access to adequate sources of affordable and safe water."

www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/We_The_Peoples.pdf

In 2001 member states at the UN did not refer to the Secretary-General's proposed MDG structure at all.

The resolution of 14 December 2001 only referred to the 58-page "road map" containing the MDGs, not the MDGs themselves.

The "road map" has many more suggestions. Member states did not say which parts they welcomed, recommended as a useful guide, or invited the Secretary-General to take into account for his reports on implementing the Declaration.

Far from formally adopting the easier 1990-baseline MDGs, the next week **member states reaffirmed the 2000-baseline Declaration** more than once:

"The General Assembly...Reaffirming also the United Nations **Millennium Declaration"**

Resolution 56/188. Women in Development

21 December 2001

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/188

"**Reaffirming** also the United Nations **Millennium Declaration** adopted by heads of State and Government"

Resolution 56/189.

Human resources development

21 December 2001

www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGARsn/2001/272.pdf

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/189

"**Reaffirming** the United Nations **Millennium Declaration**, in particular the targets and **commitments** relating to development and poverty eradication

Requests the Secretary-General to provide the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session with an **overview** of the challenges and constraints as well as **progress** made towards achieving the major development **goals and objectives adopted** by the United Nations during the past decade"

Resolution 56/191.

Implementation of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade

21 December 2001

<http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGARsn/2001/274.pdf>

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/191

- as well as, for example (in addition to leaders' reaffirming the Declaration in 2005 and 2013):

Resolution 62/206 of 2008,

Women in Development

css.escwa.org.lb/GARes/62-206.pdf .

While the Assembly on 14 December 2001 did invite the Secretary-General to draw on the "road map" for his reports, it also invited him to submit reports in accordance with Resolution 55/162:

"The General Assembly...

requests the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report every five years, supplemented

by an annual report on progress achieved towards implementing the **Millennium Declaration**, taking into account the following:

(a) The annual reports should reflect the broad array of **specific goals and commitments** enunciated **in the Millennium Declaration**...

(b) All reports should focus, in this respect, on the results and benchmarks achieved, identify gaps in implementation..."

55/162 Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

14 December 2000

<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/55/162>

So any idea that the Assembly in 2001 was giving up the pledges and replacing them with the easier MDG targets seems to be misplaced.

The Assembly agreed the 2000-baseline Declaration, and again in 2001 and later.

"The General Assembly adopted resolution 56/192...on 21 December 2001. **Reaffirming the Millennium Declaration goal** of reducing by **half, between 2000 and 2015**, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water, the Assembly welcomed..."

Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Governing Council of the UN Environmental Programme

Note by the Secretariat

30 January 2002

<http://www.unep.org/GC/GCSS-VII/Documents/k0260039.pdf>

The General Assembly debate on the Secretary-General's Road Map on implementing the Millennium Declaration, which contained the proposed easier MDG targets, took place on 19 November 2001.

19 November 2001

"PLEDGES MADE AT 2000 MILLENNIUM SUMMIT MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO REALITY, SPEAKERS STRESS, AS GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDERS SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP

Takes Up

[? – the resolution for this debate was not until 14 December, and the mention of the Road Map in that resolution, 56/95, was not exactly that the Assembly "took it up"]

‘Road Map’ to Millennium Declaration Implementation

...Before the Assembly there is a report of the Secretary-General on the **road map** towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (document A/56/326). The report contains an integrated and comprehensive overview of the current situation. It outlines **potential strategies** for action that are designed to meet **the** goals and **commitments** made by the 147 heads of State and government, and 189 Member States in total, who adopted the **Millennium Declaration**"

"Speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Belgian representative said that one must not forget the **goals of the Millennium Declaration**. ... The Millennium Declaration offered the opportunity to make multifaceted action more effective and coherent, with a view to realizing the objectives that governments had set themselves, particularly in the area of development and human rights.

One must not forget that the **goals of the Millennium Declaration** were ambitious, he continued."

"JEAN DE RUYT (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the **European Union**, said the Union would like the **Millennium Declaration** to be the **touchstone** for any practical steps taken by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and by all governments. The Millennium Declaration offered the opportunity to make multifaceted action more effective and coherent, with a view to realizing the objectives that governments had set themselves, particularly in the area of development and human rights.

One must not forget that the goals of the Millennium Declaration were ambitious, he continued. The road leading to the Millennium objectives was a difficult one, as it was both foggy and much travelled, which was why it needed to be clearly and precisely marked. "

"KISHORE MAHBUBANI (Singapore) said that the history of the United Nations was replete with summits and declarations. They came, they went, and nothing much changed. It was, therefore, easy to become cynical about such summits and their results. If the **Millennium Summit and its results were not to be tarnished** with such cynicism, the international community would have to be serious about matching beautiful words with beautiful deeds. To ensure that the United Nations did not once again fail to **implement agreed commitments**, Member States should complement the

excellent “road map” produced by the Secretariat with an objective analysis of the “roadblocks” that had prevented the implementation of **previous commitments**.”

"GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) said ...His delegation, however, observed that in requesting, in its resolution 55/162, a “road map,” the General Assembly may have erred, for the **Millennium Declaration itself constituted such a map**.”

[General Assembly](#)

[Press Release](#)

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/GA9973.doc.htm>

"If the **Millennium Declaration** of the United Nations were not to become another waste paper lying buried in the archives, it would have to be **implemented in** all sincerity and **entirety**, said the representative of Pakistan this afternoon, as the General Assembly continued its consideration of the follow-up to the Millennium Summit."

"The pace of the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit fell far short of **the goals set in the Millennium Declaration**, said the representative of China. ...WANG YINGFAN (China) said ..."

"Switzerland, said...Road Map presented by the Secretary-General. ...closely followed the main guidelines of the Millennium Declaration. ...The best way forward would be to concentrate on **the objectives** put forward during the **Millennium Summit**."

"(Brazil) said that the road map prepared by the Secretary-General was extremely useful. ... Many of the goals of the Millennium Declaration had been with us for years, he said. Brazil believed that to be effective, assessment must be continuous and it therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal to follow up the road map with yearly reports, supported by strategic five-year evaluations on the long-term implementation of the millennium goals."

"(Argentina) **reaffirmed the commitments of the Millennium Declaration** and said it was a matter of political will for States to implement the road map the Secretary-General had set out."

Kazakhstan "supported the strategies of the “road map” prepared by the Secretary-General. It was committed to a peaceful, stable and environmentally safe world, and **supported all of the objectives of the Millennium Summit**."

"(Cameroon) said that in the Millennium Declaration, a year ago, the world's leaders had embodied all the highest aspirations of the world's people for peace and development. The documents before the Assembly today represented the Secretary-General's roadmap for implementing the ideal then set out."

United Nations

Press Release 19 November 2001

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/GA9974.doc.htm>

"The General Assembly...

Reaffirming the goal of reducing by **half, between 2000 and 2015**, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water..."

Resolution 56/192

21 December 2001

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/192

<http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/2001/301.pdf>

"The General Assembly...Endorses the Addis Ababa Action Agenda...

Addis Ababa Action Agenda...We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, gathered in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2002...**reaffirm** and build on the 2002 **Monterrey Consensus**..."

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/313

Monterrey Consensus 2002:

"...achieving the...economic conditions needed to **fulfil** internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**...**will be our first step** to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all."

"commitments of the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development targets can help countries to set short- and medium-term national priorities..."

"we should encourage...coordination of international institutions and coherence...to meet the Millennium Declaration development goals"

"We recognize the link between financing of development and attaining internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**, in **measuring development progress** and helping to guide development priorities. We welcome **in that regard** the intention of the United Nations to prepare a **report annually**. We encourage close cooperation between the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization in the preparation of **that report**. **We shall support** the United Nations in the implementation of a **global information campaign** on the internationally agreed development **goals** and objectives, including those contained in the **Millennium Declaration**. In that respect, we would like to encourage the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector."

Final text of agreements and commitments adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development

Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002

http://www.ycsg.yale.edu/assets/downloads/monterrey_consensus.pdf

.....

**UNITED
NATIONS**



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

30 January 2002



Seventh special session

Cartagena, Colombia, 13-15 February 2002

GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM...

Note by the secretariat

...The General Assembly adopted resolution 56/192 on 'Status of preparations for the International Year of Freshwater, 2003', on 21 December 2001. **Reaffirming the Millennium Declaration goal of reducing by half, between 2000 and 2015**, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water, the Assembly welcomed...

By its resolution 56/95 on the 'Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit' of 14 December 2001, the Assembly, reaffirming the **need to maintain the will** and momentum **of the Millennium Summit** as well as the importance of a comprehensive and balanced approach in the implementation of and follow-up to the Millennium Declaration, recommended that the "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" submitted by the Secretary-General (document A/56/326) be considered as a useful guide in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration by the UN system. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare, drawing upon the road map and **in accordance with its resolution 55/162**, an annual report and a comprehensive report every five years on progress achieved by the UN system and Member States towards **implementing the Millennium Declaration**, and requested that the annual reports focus on cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issues, as well as on the major areas set forth in the road map, while the quinquennial comprehensive **reports** examine progress achieved towards implementing **all the commitments made in the Declaration**. In this regard, the Assembly invited the UN system, in cooperation with Member States, to adopt specific measures to give widespread **publicity to the Millennium Declaration** and to increase the dissemination of information thereon.

World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002

(Earth Summit)

Johannesburg Declaration 2002:

"We, the representatives of the peoples of the world...commit ourselves to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to expedite the achievement of the time-bound, socio-economic and environmental targets contained therein. ... we **solemnly pledge** to the

peoples of the world and the generations that will surely inherit this Earth that **we are determined to ensure** that our collective hope for sustainable development is realized. ”

Plan of Implementation:

""**We also commit** ourselves to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations **Millennium Declaration** and in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992"

"Develop programmes and initiatives to **reduce, by 2015, mortality rates** for infants and children under 5 by two thirds, and maternal mortality rates by three quarters, of the **prevailing rate in 2000** "

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaratio_n.htm

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2309_planfinal.htm

“How will Government adherence to **commitments made in Johannesburg** be monitored?

Following decisions made at the Summit, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will now have an enhanced role in respect of reviewing and monitoring ...”

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic_info/faqs.html#joburg12

“2. Endorses the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development”

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/738/17/PDF/N0273817.pdf>

"... the need to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those set out in the Millennium Declaration..."

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
57/7.

Final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa
in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development
4 November 2002

"We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China...at the United Nations
Headquarters in New York on 25 September 2003, adopted the following declaration:

...We **reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration** and call upon the
international community to fully and speedily implement the **provisions set out therein** and
in **other major United Nations conferences and summits**"

www.g77.org/doc/decg77-xxvii-mm%28english%29.pdf

"The General Assembly...

Reaffirming the United Nations Millennium Declaration...

Recognizes that a substantial increase in official development assistance and other resources
will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development
goals and objectives, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium
Declaration...

Encourages the international community, the United Nations system, the private sector and
civil society to continue to provide the necessary financial resources to assist national
Governments in their efforts to meet the development targets and benchmarks agreed upon at
the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the
International Conference on Population and Development, the Millennium Summit..."

23 December 2003

A/RES/58/206

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/460/64/PDF/N0346064.pdf>

"We reaffirm our commitment to fight global poverty and to help countries achieve the international development **goals of the Millennium Declaration**"

Statement by G-7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, 2004

<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js1979.aspx>

2005:

"We strongly reiterate our determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the development goals and objectives agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including **those agreed at the Millennium Summit that are described as the Millennium Development Goals...** " [!]

"Mr. Chairman, Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
At the **Millennium Summit**, leaders across the world declared they would spare no effort...
The peoples of the world are looking to us in anticipation. They expect real steps towards
realising **the goals in the Millennium Declaration.**"

Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of Norway
International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico
March 2002

"1.2 billion people around the World live in extreme poverty. They live on less than one dollar-a-day. They constitute approximately **one fifth** of the World population. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration we decided to reduce **this share by half in 2015.** ...the target of halving the number of poor by 2015."

Per Stir Møller, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.
Statement at the International Conference on Financing for Development Monterrey, Mexico
18th-22th March 2002

"...in the year 2000 we had 150 heads of states and government and princes come to the UN ...They have challenged us to reduce abject poverty **by 50 per cent between now and 2015.**"

Secretary-General

Press conference

Boston, 6 May 2002

<http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/?nid=67>

<http://www.un.org/sg/cuffarch/sgcu0402.shtml>

"Dozens of heads of government from Africa, Asia and Latin America came to what was billed as an effort to **halve the number of hungry people, from more than 800 million to 400 million** ...

The summit was called to generate money and momentum for a flagging effort, launched at a similar gathering in 1996, to halve the number of hungry people by 2015. Those who did come to Rome yesterday admitted that, six years on, little progress had been made.

The UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, said 24,000 people died each day from hunger. "In a world of plenty, ending hunger is within our grasp. **Failure to reach this goal should fill every one of us with shame.** The time for making promises is over. It is time to act."

Western leaders snub UN food summit

UK sends lowest-ranking delegation to event...

Rory Carroll in Rome

Tuesday 11 June 2002 16.05 BST Last modified on Thursday 13 June 2002 16.05 BST

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jun/11/famine.rorycarroll>

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN L. POWELL AT WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

September 4, 2002

Here in Johannesburg, we have recommitted ourselves to achieving, by 2015, the development **goals** set forth **in the Millennium Declaration.**

<http://wfile.ait.org.tw/wf-archive/2002/020904/epf306.htm>

On behalf of the European Union...the world community still has far to go if we are to meet the **goals of the Millennium Declaration**.

For many countries, the United Nations is first and foremost about combating poverty. How to ensure everyone access to the essentials of life; the next meal; the medicine and health care to survive; and access to basic education. These are **the promises contained in the Millennium Declaration**. And we must not let the world down."

Statement by H.E. Anders Fog Rasmussen
Prime Minister of Denmark on behalf of the European Union
Fifty-Seventh Session Of The General Assembly
General Debate
New York, 12 September 2002
<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/57/statements/020912denmarkE.htm>

"The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana.

President Kufuor: The eyes of the people of Africa are on us today. For so long they have heard pledges and promises from their leaders and their development partners, and they have seen those **promises broken**.

We appeal to this Organization, and through it to the world, to seize this opportunity to work together with Africa to implement NEPAD, which is our framework for **achieving the vision of the Millennium Declaration**."

"Unless we can speed things up dramatically, we shall find when we get to 2015, that the **words of the Declaration** ring hollow."

Kofi Annan
Associated Press
1 Oct 2002

<http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/UN-Annan/98e563abc1f9ea8f00130359afb0f962>

16 December 2002:

57/144. Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The General Assembly...**Reaffirming the importance** of the implementation of and follow-up to the **Millennium Declaration** in a **comprehensive**, integrated, coordinated and balanced manner...

2. Recognizes the uneven progress made so far in achieving the objectives agreed upon in the **Millennium Declaration**, and **urges** Member States to continue to undertake with **determination** appropriate measures towards its implementation;

3. Invites the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, and encourages other interested parties, including civil society and the private sector, to continue **to pursue vigorously** the achievement of the objectives and **goals** contained **in the Millennium Declaration**...

6. Decides to consider...a high-level plenary meeting...[in 2005-6] on the review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and consideration of the quinquennial comprehensive **report** of the Secretary-General **on** the progress achieved towards **implementing** the **Millennium Declaration**;

7. Also decides that the review process of the implementation of the development **goals** contained in the **Millennium Declaration** will be considered within the framework of... follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, while taking into account the need to attach **more importance**, coherence and visibility to the implementation of the **Millennium Declaration** and its review process;

8. Invites the United Nations system, in cooperation with Member States, to **promote awareness of the Millennium Declaration**, and the development **goals** contained therein, through increased dissemination of information and widespread publicity...

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/57_144/a_res57_144e.pdf

23 December 2003:

"The General Assembly...

Reaffirming the United Nations Millennium Declaration...

...resources will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development **goals** and objectives, including those contained **in the United Nations Millennium Declaration...**

Encourages ...to continue to provide....resources...to meet the development **targets... agreed upon at** ...the **Millennium Summit...**"

A/RES/58/206

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/460/64/PDF/N0346064.pdf>

6 May 2004

Resolution 58/291

"The General Assembly,

1. Decides to convene in New York in 2005....a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly with the participation of heads of State and Government...
2. ...this major event will undertake a comprehensive **review** of the progress made in the fulfilment of **all the commitments** contained in the United Nations **Millennium Declaration...****and** of the progress ...of the outcomes and **commitments** of the major United Nations **conferences and summits** in the economic, social and related fields, on the basis of a comprehensive report to be submitted by the Secretary-General"

http://www.umd.org/en/images/a_res_58_291.pdf

2005:

"We, Heads of State and Government...call for strengthened cooperation..., in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the **Millennium Declaration**"

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/ares60_1_2005summit_eng.pdf

"The MDGs were informally endorsed at the UN Conference on International Financing for Development at Monterrey in 2002..."

MB note: Very informally if so. I think the sentence is misleading. The 2002 Monterrey outcome document does not mention MDGs at all, but does mention the Declaration. So did speakers representing countries.

*"...The **Declaration** has a longer and higher set of aspirations, and **should not be confused with the very specific and time-bound set of indicators which comprise the 8 MDGs and 21 targets** through with progress towards the Declaration is to be measured. ...*

MB note: That account omits the fact that the Declaration had already set specific, time-bound indicators – as Prime Minister Ahern stated at the Summit.

*"As late as 2005, in the build up to the World Summit, the government of the **United States argued** for removing the references to the MDGs in the draft Summit Outcome Document, with the rationale that **they had never been agreed** (although they were eventually persuaded to retain them). The final **2005 World Summit Outcome** document **reaffirms the UN Millennium Declaration** on the first page, but only **begrudgingly recognizes the MDGs** in paragraph seventeen"*

A post-2015 global development agreement: why, what, who?
Claire Melamed and Andy Sumner
www.odi.org/resources/docs/7369.pdf

"The commitment by world leaders at this month's United Nations Millennium Summit to halve global poverty and hunger ...These and other goals that the world signed up to are...**best-case scenarios...might be called a "stretch target."**

Mark Malloch Brown
Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

September 21, 2000

http://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/21/opinion/21iht-edbrown.t_0.html

"[**MDG**] targets were formulated **based on historical trends**....projections to 2015 **based on the global trends in the 60s, 70s and 80s.**"

Yongyi Min

United Nations Statistics Division

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Capacity/manila/Presentations/S6_P6.2_2_MDG%20monitoring%20Post%202015%20rev.1.ppt

"The Co-Chairperson (Namibia): We have come to the close of this historic Millennium Summit...

We cannot, therefore, afford to go back home from here and continue **business as usual.**"

*"**few observers ever noticed** that the Millennium Declaration left considerable room for interpretation as to the level of ambition of the global targets.*

It was left to the group of UN experts

[MB note: It was UN, World Bank, OECD, IMF]

*to set the baseline year. The choice quickly fell on 1990, for two reasons. First, **it proved unrealistic***

[MB note: How did they know it "proved unrealistic" less than a year into 15-year pledges? Is leadership not about leadership?]

to reduce hunger, poverty and the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by half, infant and child mortality by two-thirds, and maternal mortality by three-quarters between 2000 and 2015."

Jan Vandemoortele, co-chair of group in 2001 agreeing MDG framework, 2011

<http://courses.arch.vt.edu/courses/wdunaway/gia5524/vandem11.pdf>

[MB note: I cannot agree with Dr Vandemoortele that the Declaration left room for interpretation on the baseline. If someone says "I will double your salary" and then later says "I meant from its level ten years ago" that would not be fair. The leaders knew perfectly well that what they said would be taken as meaning from 2000. The Secretary-General's recommendations, the speakers' words at the Summit, and arguably the fact that the focus of the Summit was the 21st century and not the 20th confirm what common sense might say. In any case, even where the politicians did make the baseline clear – for the mortality goals and for the 1996 hunger pledges – the civil servants, and later others, began falsely claiming that the politicians set 1990 or "1990-2" baselines.]

*"MDGs, 18 targets and 40 indicators...were **decided by measuring global trends in human development over a 25-year period from 1965-1990, and applying them to living standards over the 1990-2015 period, assuming that rates of progress stayed the same.***

*The MDGs were **not intended to increase rates of progress** in human development so much as maintain them. "*

<http://www.euractiv.com/development-policy/mdg-designer-fears-un-goals-dege-news-530429>

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 25 September 2015 at 15:54

Subject: Fwd: Urgent. Request for immediate retraction

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien, Ms Buckle, Ms Cecil and Mr Jordan,

Further to my email of today:

BBC public information on complaints, perhaps specifically sanctioned by Trustees, promises the public that complaints are seen quickly by the right people.

I believe that senior management, Trust Unit staff and the Trustees are the right people for the information at the end of the complaint below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

Unanswered complaint CAS-3430579 11 August 2015:

... "Safe water" claim misleads. UN does not have safe water statistics.

Poverty target met? How do we know? There are no inflation stats for prices faced by the poor.

....

BBC does not report actual pledges of 2000 even though reaffirmed by world leaders in 2013.

BBC does not report scandal:

MDG list falsely claims 1990-baseline targets come from Declaration.

....

Details: poornews.org

millenniumdeclaration.org

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf,
page 128.

Trustees say it would be editorial decision not to mention baselines.

But **BBC staff** either

- a) **always make "editorial decision" to omit actual pledge** or
- b) **do not know what pledges are.**

Both are **systemic failure.**

It is a **waste of public money** for BBC to make programmes to inform people on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 25 September 2015 at 11:27

Subject: Urgent. Request for immediate retraction

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk,
david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle,

If the Trust Unit has sent any of the misleading information below to BBC staff or others, I propose that you retract it.

I also request that you clarify whether the response on case 1300394 has been sent by mistake.

Among the problems are these:

A. The response appears to **wrongly claim that Trustees have made a decision** on the general issue of the **BBC understating Millennium pledges** over many years.

Clearly, the complaint is of a cumulative error.

The complaints that the BBC has explicitly and falsely stated the Declaration has a 1990 baseline have never been answered.

It is not clear to me that it was within the Trust's jurisdiction to issue a formal decision on the Millennium pledges at all, or on all of those complaints.

The ECU stated in their last correspondence before the appeal **that the matter was outstanding.**

Mr Steel said at that time that he did not know what the complaint was.

On 15 October 2015 at 12:02, Matt Berkley <...> wrote:

Dear Mr Towers and Ms O'Brien,

No clear response from Trust Unit on factual errors and omission in Trust Adviser letter

As you may know, **I have proposed to the BBC that it broadcast some simple statements on world poverty and UN pledges.**

Underlining added:

14 October 2015

Dear Ms O'Brien,

I have requested clarifications on the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction in this case.

I have yet to receive substantive replies, or replies to the suggestion of basic errors in the Trust Adviser's response.

As I think is clear from my emails and telegram, and from the phone call via Audience Services on 7 October, the information is necessary if I am to provide a clear, concise and relevant request for review.

The range of errors and omissions in the response is so great that it seems to cause problems for equal footing between the complainant and the BBC.

On 15 October 2015 at 12:02, Matt Berkley <...> wrote:

Dear Mr Towers and Ms O'Brien,

No clear response from Trust Unit on factual errors and omission in Trust Adviser letter

As you may know, I have proposed to the BBC that it broadcast some simple statements on world poverty and UN pledges.

I propose again that the Trust Unit return unaddressed points to the Executive, as may be implied by section 5.9 of the editorial complaints framework as the normal course of action.

From: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

20 October 2015

... Your email [of 19 October] is noted. It will be placed before Trustees. ...

From: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

21 October 2015

...Your email [of 21 October] will be provided to Trustees.

From: Matt Berkley

To: Trust Editorial

21 October 2015

...I cannot reasonably respond to a Trust Unit decision which ignores nearly all of the appeal letter. ...

The Trust Unit has yet to defend the Trust Adviser letter against the suggestions that

- a) it has an **excessive number of inaccuracies**,
- b) that it is **biased**, or that
- c) these problems would **confuse, distract or mislead Trustees**.

It is statistically implausible that the inaccuracies in the Trust Adviser's letter are simply errors, because those would include some in favour of the complainant. ...

The Trust is committed through its complaints framework to providing an admissibility decision which is largely based on the appeal letter:

"5.5 This appeal request is particularly important...

your letter will be the main basis on which it decides whether to consider your appeal and (if it does) will also form the basis of its investigation."

However, **the decision** sent **appears to mention** none, or **close to none, of the 9 or so points** in the appeal letter - or the 23 or so points in the email appended to it. ...

From: Matt Berkley
To: Trust Editorial
19 October 2015

...Since [the Head of Editorial Standards] has not defended the Adviser's letter against the allegation of bias, I renew my request for a replacement and wish to pursue the handling complaint. ...

I complained that the **Trust Adviser's letter has a clear pattern of inaccuracies tending to wrongly diminish the complaint.**

It is in my view highly inappropriate to waste Trustees' time with a letter fifteen times the length of the appeal letter, which omits nearly all the points in the appeal.

A strange alleged quotation from the ONS which is clearly untrue but makes it look as if a programme was right is not the kind of thing Trustees' time should be used on.

I have persisted because of the Trust Unit's failure to acknowledge the importance to democracy of accurate and impartial coverage of these matters.

Clearly, **people cannot hold power to account if they are misled on pledges, or progress.**

Clearly, **there is something wrong if the BBC spends millions** on Media Action helping people hold power to account but **fails to give them the information** to do so.

It is blindingly obvious that the **BBC's false statements on the Millennium Declaration baseline** are an important error.

The Trust Unit has refused to put more explicit errors before Trustees, on the **clearly wrong ground that Trustees have already ruled on this.** ...

The Editor's Choice article for global poverty has a farcical preponderance of World Bank and ex-World Bank contributors.

And yet the article manages to misdescribe the research method and avoid a main debate about the World Bank line, which is that it purports to measure poverty but does not take costs into account. ...

These matters are too serious to be crowded out by irrelevant issues. It is untenable that the Trust Adviser's letter is impartial. ...

Email

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21 October 2015

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Global poverty and UN commitments

Omissions, impartiality, and
accuracy of BBC coverage

Handling complaint to BBC Trust,
and proposal

Complaint on BBC Trust Unit handling of appeal and unanswered complaints
Including handling of appeal on More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012 and associated
material, ECU reference 1300394

Matt Berkley
14 October 2015

Note

The fact that the BBC does not give citizens the following information seems to indicate a lack of impartiality.

A complaint at stage 1a suggested corrections along these lines. These simple statements, not the technical explanations meant for BBC experts to assess complaints, are what the complainant suggested for broadcast.

They are also what he by implication told the BBC would have been appropriate for a World Service broadcast to a general audience, for a programme cited by university departments as providing accurate information on statistics, and for the article which is currently the BBC "Editor's Choice" for global poverty.

"the World Bank does not have information on...trends in poor people's prices."

"economists ...cannot know what people consumed."

"the World Bank do not consider how much...is essential...as people grow up, or...rent if they move to cities."

"the BBC...should have challenged the World Bank research director's erroneous claims that he had measured consumption adequacy and that Millennium Goal 1 had been achieved... [progress] towards the goal could not be reported by one organisation."

Similarly, it would be easy for the BBC to broadcast the truth about what leaders pledged in 2000. It is not clear what the objections are.

A complaint of

"Economist and Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances, including presenter. Links unbalanced"

like all the complaints of lack of impartiality in global poverty coverage, has been ignored by the BBC and Trust.

It is not clear why the Trust Unit may have decided these were insignificant problems.

BBC: *"people who live on \$1 a day do not spend all of it on **that basket of food**"* [Editor's Choice for global poverty: "Dollar benchmark", 9 March 2012]

World Bank "dollar a day" team, 1991: *"**Ideally one would like** to construct new PPP rates for the prices most relevant to the absolute poor, in which the prices of **food-staples would** clearly carry a high weight."*

Proposal

In view of the lack of response from the BBC to complaints on omission and impartiality, and failure to address the accuracy complaints as written or their cumulative nature, I propose that the Trust Unit send all the complaints on global poverty back to the Executive

- unless the Trust Unit can show the BBC has sufficiently addressed the main complaints.

The main complaints include those of

an accumulation of problems causing a lack of due accuracy, and

cumulative error and/or omission causing a lack of impartiality.

It is important to understand the complaints of BBC omissions as well as others relating to inaccuracy and impartiality.

For example, the email to the ECU of 28 May 2014 reads:

"The BBC has often conflated **easier MDG targets**...with **more ambitious** (if in some ways more limited) Millennium Declaration **promises of 2000**, and **I know of no evidence that any BBC output has noted the difference.**"

The situation is in fact more serious.

I see no evidence that the BBC has ever reported accurately the UN commitments on poverty made in September 2000, even though leaders reaffirmed them in 2013.

It seems to me that is a significant failing. The errors on the UN commitments need to be seen in that light.

A related point on lack of BBC coverage is in the complaint on More or Less and associated material at Stage 1a, of 1 November 2012.

"Problem: BBC has, for instance, falsely stated that the World Bank uses a "basket of essential items" to determine prices paid by poor people in different countries at different times, and **has never stated the correct position in its reporting since 2000**. BBC has failed to ask basic questions of those providing the information".

It is not unreasonable to think that might indicate a problem needing investigation.

The BBC failed to inform citizens – or apparently its own journalists - of the truth, even after complaints. The Trust Unit decided not to inform Trustees of any of the large number of complaints or refer them for further investigation by the BBC.

The Trust on 19 June refused to take action on material alleged to give a wrong impression of UN commitments. The Trust decision mentioned that one instance of BBC content did not specifically mention a baseline. It stated that omission of the baseline was an editorial decision.

The Trust Unit on 23 September dismissed complaints of a clearly cumulative effect of material some of which does explicitly and falsely claim the Millennium Declaration has a 1990 baseline.

I refer to, among other material:

- the unanswered same-day telegram of 8 October 2015 to Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle, included in the unanswered email of 9 October to Mr Ayre and Ms O'Brien: "I cannot give a proper response unless I know the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction", requesting "an accurate and reasonably comprehensive response" to the appeal , to replace the document containing multiple errors and omissions;
- the unanswered request of 18 August and 28 August that the Trust Unit return the unanswered complaints on misstatement of UN commitments to the BBC;
- the unanswered appeal on impartiality, explicitly mentioned from 2012 to the first sentence of the appeal letter of 18 August but ignored by the editor, ECU and Trust Adviser;
- the unanswered emails of 25 September clarifying the alleged breach in BBC coverage of UN commitments, asking the Trust to retract any misleading statements and showing errors and omissions in the Trust Adviser's letter.

It would not be reasonable to expect this document to give a comprehensive account of the problems with the Trust Unit handling. I mention some of the problems.

Some main points

The Trust Unit statement that its response "stands as written" conflicts with the evidence.

The actual complaints as written have to a substantial extent not been answered.

The errors and omissions in the Trust Adviser's letter show a clear tendency to wrongly diminish the complaint, as shown later in this document.

It is obvious that the BBC and Trust have not yet addressed the impression given to people around the world by the clear and repeated BBC errors on United Nations commitments.

It is not appropriate for the Trust Unit to invoke time limits on serious complaints.

It is obvious that the errors on the UN commitments are important enough to warrant investigation of older material – especially as **some is reference and educational material.**

The Trust Adviser's letter risks distracting, misleading and/or confusing Trustees in relation to the complaints, which in reality largely concern **impartiality** , including by **omission**, and **cumulative error** .

The nature and extent of the problems, and potential for distracting Trustees from the actual complaints, make it impractical for the complainant to achieve an equal footing with the BBC through the normal appeal process.

The failure of the BBC to represent adequately the view that the official approach to poverty "measurement" is illustrated by this, from the prominent poverty researcher Peter Townsend:

*"The World Bank's adoption of the crude criterion of \$1without regard to the changing conditions of needs and markets, **affronts science as it affronts reasoned development of priorities in international policies.**"*

BBC explicit understatement of UN pledges

The Trust Unit appears to have wrongly dismissed complaints on the BBC understating UN pledges to the poorest.

- The Trust Unit fails to address that **the ECU stated in its last communication before the appeal that those complaints were outstanding;**

- **The Trust Unit wrongly claims that the problem raised had been considered by Trustees.**

It is clear from the June 2015 Trust decision on Woman's Hour material that they in fact only considered one relatively minor error in a particular context. They specifically mentioned that that material did not explicitly state the wrong baseline. Clearly, Trustees did not address the major or explicit errors or the effect of repeated errors on the audience's understanding of the pledges.

The Trust Adviser wrongly represented the allegations that the BBC had explicitly understated Millennium pledges as answered by Trustees. She did not take adequate account of the Trustees' precise wording:

*“Trustees noted that **no information** was given **about the base line** for the targets and that **child mortality was not mentioned in the item.** They also agreed that if **this point** were to be taken on appeal they would be likely to conclude that the **omission** of such information was a **matter of editorial judgement** and did not engage the Editorial Guidelines.*

*....Trustees considered that this was **not a material error in the context of this item** and that if they took this complaint on appeal they would be likely to conclude that **the wording** was duly accurate **in context**”*

- **The Trust Unit wrongly claims that these complaints were all out of time.**

Some including those to Fergus Walsh, BBC World and BBC Swahili were within the time limits.

The complainant had only complained direct to them and the ECU after the BBC failed three times to respond to complaints submitted via the web form and telephone in 2012, and failed to respond to the web form complaint concerning More or Less of 26 June 2014;

- The Trust Unit does not address the fact that some are unanswered complaints to BBC World;

- The Trust Unit appears to rely on a Trust decision based on a false premiss that there was in

2001 a "commitment" to an easier baseline than that in the Millennium Declaration;

- The Trust Unit appears to fail to take proper account of the clear importance of the errors for democratic scrutiny.

The Trust Unit has misstated the complaints and appeal.

I do not wish Trustees to be distracted by Trust Unit errors.

The **Trust Adviser's omission of the impartiality complaints** despite the complainant's repeated emphasis on the BBC failure to answer them, together with the **unsubstantiated claims that complaints were out of time or already dealt with by the Trust** and other problems, gives an impression of possible wilful disregard.

Appeal on accuracy and impartiality of More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012 and associated material:

"I wish to appeal the **decisions** by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of **impartiality** or take other action **in case 1300394**."

[Note: The appeal of 18 August 2015 is restricted to complaints about which the ECU had notified the complainant of a decision. As previously stated in unanswered correspondence to the Trust Unit, the ECU specifically stated that **the complaint on the BBC understating global pledges**, for example, was **still outstanding** with the Executive.]

The web form complaint which the BBC had the chance to answer from 27 May 2012, but failed to respond to for unknown reasons, began:

"Guidelines: Accuracy, **including links. Impartiality**. Editorial integrity online. Controversial subjects. **Range of views**:4.4.7. Major matters. **Assumption and bias**: 4.4.14. **Range of links**: 14.4.19."

The complaint at Stage 1a of 1 November 2012 referred to the possibility that individual problems added up to "systematic bias" and was reinforced by material in the documentary series to which the programme page for More or Less of 3 March 2012 linked.

.....

Notes on handling complaint

In my view it is not reasonable for the Trust Unit to waste Trustees' time on a substantially misconceived account of the complaints and appeal; or to ask the complainant to waste Trustees' time countering it.

The Trust Unit has not responded to the actual appeal, the complaint of 1 November accepted by the BBC as the complaint at Stage 1a, or the complaints to the ECU on this case, which concern a **combination of inaccuracy and other problems contributing to an overall lack of accuracy and impartiality.**

The BBC and Trust show little sign of having taken on board **the importance of citizens of poor countries as well as rich being given accurate information on global pledges and reports of global progress.**

The accuracy complaints have not been addressed in that context, and the impartiality complaints have not been addressed at all.

The Trust Adviser has for seemingly weak reasons dismissed complaints not in fact within the scope of the appeal.

The Trust Unit appears to have counted the ECU as having made decisions on material outside that associated with More or Less , and outside what the ECU actually notified to the complainant.

I therefore propose that the Trust Unit return all the complaints to the Executive.

Since 2012, I have stated that I was complaining about impartiality as well as accuracy. The BBC and Trust have never responded to this complaint.

In order for the BBC or Trust to assess due accuracy in this case, an understanding of the controversies would seem necessary. **Failing to investigate the impartiality concerns may have impeded the assessment of due accuracy.**

The complainant alleged that a set of errors and other factors combined to make a **lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty.**

Neither the BBC nor the Trust has responded to the allegation.

The Trust Unit has failed to answer requests for clarification of its response to the appeal.

The Trust Unit has not responded to the request that the Trust Unit return unanswered complaints to the Executive.

The Adviser's letter includes the statement

"We read the correspondence in each case". It is hard to see how that has been done.

The correspondence shows that in the case of the BBC understating UN pledges to the poorest, the complainant specifically proposed that the Trust return the complaints to the BBC.

The appeal letter itself, like previous correspondence, emphasises what the complainant stated from the beginning: the **complaints are on impartiality, not only accuracy.**

The Trust Adviser's letter in my view contains so many material inaccuracies and omissions that the only reasonable courses for the Trust Unit, if it has the power, are to

return the complaints to the Executive as not sufficiently investigated,

return some and supply a revised response that places the complainant on a roughly equal footing to the BBC, or

supply the revised response.

Main proposal

None of these have been through Stages 1 and 2:

The impartiality complaints, complaints that the BBC has understated UN pledges, and the editions of More or Less of 11 April and 16 May 2014 have not been answered at Stage 1a.

Complaints on "Don't Panic "have not been answered at Stage 2.

The requirement for due accuracy in this case clearly depends on the existence of controversy, as argued in the impartiality complaints.

I therefore propose that the Trust Unit send all of the complaints straight back to the Executive.

The appeal

The short appeal letter begins,

"I wish to appeal the decisions by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of **impartiality** or take other action in case 1300394."

The appeal letter does not "include 90 programmes and websites". These, or most of these, seem never to have been answered by the Executive even at Stage 1a.

The complainant in fact wrote a supplementary email on the day of the appeal, **specifically asking the Trust to return all the complaints on the UN commitments to the Executive.**

No answer has been received, and no answer to the specific suggestion that the Trust may not have jurisdiction over those complaints.

Clearly, the complainant cannot reasonably be asked to prepare for a request to reconsider without being clear on what is the Trust's responsibility.

Failure to investigate impartiality may have impeded investigation on accuracy

In my submission, the BBC and Trust cannot assess due accuracy without an understanding of the importance or otherwise of the controversies and what critics say about the official methods.

Staff would find out about this if they investigated the impartiality complaints. The complainant stated at Stage 1a a concern that the inaccuracies added up to systematic bias. Clearly, the overall complaint has not been addressed by the Executive.

"the bank's global poverty line has long generated its own controversies. "

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f599b75c-6042-11e5-a28b-50226830d644.html>

Unreasonable extent of problems in the Trust Unit response

As with the editorial complaints and appeal, it is important to understand that the handling complaint and request for alternative means of dealing with the appeal and complaints relates to overall problems.

As with the editorial complaints, the fact that individual problems may not breach guidelines or warrant action does not detract from the overall complaint.

In my view the Trust Adviser's letter displays a **pattern of inaccuracies and omissions which shows a clear tendency to unjustifiably diminish the complaints**; and which may well if uncorrected distract, confuse or mislead Trustees away from the actual complaints of cumulative error and cumulative problems with impartiality.

I do not consider that the letter is consistent with the commitment that complainants and the BBC should be on an "equal footing".

I believe the errors and omissions are excessive to the point where the letter would justifiably be called "vexatious" or "misconceived" were the BBC to receive an account with problems at the same level.

For one thing, in a short submission required by the Trust, it is not practicable to counter the errors and omissions while attempting to keep Trustees informed without distractions from the actual complaints.

For another, it is obvious from the appeal letter that I was appealing against the BBC's failure to respond on impartiality.

Corrections and clarifications in square brackets:

"Berkely" [Berkley]

*"You appealed to the Trust...You considered the programme (and an associated online article) to be **inaccurate** [?]"*

[Correction: ...and other material including material to which the programme page linked... and **not impartial.**]

" in its reporting of global poverty."

*"Your request **must** be in one document and in fewer than a thousand words." [not what the procedure states]*

*"BBC Radio 4" [**World Service: significant** as due accuracy may be different for non-native speakers or poor people]*

*"The complainant believed the BBC had made errors in its reporting" [overall the letter wrongly implies there were no **impartiality** complaints]*

The Adviser's second point should read that the complainant stated ""Essential" may mislead".

The Adviser's fourth point omitted a complaint relevant to the overall complaint of bias: "No challenge to Bank research director's errors..."

The Adviser's fifth point in her account of the complaint is unclear, and not reasonably complete. The complaint stated,

"8. Reasonable steps not taken to "scrutinise" (More or Less, 10 Mar) or assess, statistic for ...relationship to real life (assets, debts, needs)".

Clearly, this related to another listed point:

"Bank does not estimate any consumption-need trend."

It would be odd if there were no controversy over this approach taken by the World Bank, so it would seem that in the interests of assessing impartiality the BBC should have investigated the controversy. That in turn might have informed its decisions on due accuracy.

Even the More or Less presenter has stated that it is wrong only to update for inflation:

"The World Bank...

All these are absolute income standards...

*absolute standards of poverty are **creepy**...*

The US definition....threshold has changed only to take account of inflation. ...

This cannot be right."

<http://timharford.com/2008/07/at-last-a-sensible-way-to-measure-poverty/>
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2124e920-5158-11dd-b751-000077b07658.html>

The UN itself indicates a problem:

"Most survey data now include valuations for consumption or income from own production."

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

Clearly, that problem applies often to claims about how much people are better off, comparing of countries' past - or in this case the world's past - with the present.

In context, it seems not insignificant for the assessment of BBC standards that two days after receiving the complaint, the More or Less team repeated the error:

More or Less, 3 November 2012:

*"...measure poverty in absolute terms. This is where the poverty line depends on the minimum acceptable standard of living - whether you've got enough money to have a **certain level of shelter, clothing and health care**, for example. And **this is a constant across countries***

[! – misleading: clearly needs may vary across countries and times, and the \$1.25 takes no account of needs or prices faced over time]

*...The most common **measure of absolute poverty** is living on less than a **dollar 25 a day**."*

What is more, for that coverage More or Less consulted, instead of a critic of the World Bank method, another official – this time not even an expert, but a UN Development Programme public relations employee. He was hardly likely to counter UN or World Bank bias, and he did, unsurprisingly, support the World Bank/UN position without question.

The Adviser wrote, *"the programme did not take reasonable steps to assess the data"*

In fact the complaint stated that it had not looked at the statistic's relationship to "real life": "assessing how poverty is measured" was the stated aim of the programme. This was clearly in the context of an **impartiality** complaint, since the programme presents itself as challenging, and does, challenge other organisations than the World Bank on, official claims. Examples are later in this document.

"The producer [editor] made the following points"

Adviser misquotes the editor as misquoting the ONS, tending to diminish the complaint:

"this term [ie "essential basket of goods"] was used by the Office of National Statistics in describing CPI".

The editor did not say that, and it is not true. He made a different wrong statement, that the ONS used the term "basket of goods". They in fact use the term "basket of goods and services".

That is an example of the Adviser including content which may mislead or confuse Trustees. So is the quotation from the OECD: the fact that there is a stage of collecting individual prices has little to do with the question of whether the BBC account gave an accurate account.

The Trust Adviser distracts from the real problem here: *"this [ECU] error was corrected in the finding which was finalised on 3 June 2014"*.

The problem was in fact that **the ECU did not address due accuracy given the audience's expectations in light of the signposts given by the BBC**. This problem was not corrected by the ECU. The Adviser distracts from the actual problem, which the Adviser does not mention even though the complainant specifically raised it in comments on the ECU provisional finding.

An example of a signpost for the article is that it is the Editor's Choice for global poverty. An example of a signpost for the podcast is:

*"**we scrutinised the goal** of halving the proportion of those living on less than a dollar a day in our last edition".*

More or Less is clearly presented in general as getting facts right.

It was highly appropriate for the complainant to ask the ECU to consider also the error in the edition of 10 March 2012 that in 2000 the UN had agreed a 1990 baseline.

The adviser's "example" from the ECU of a complaint which is in fact clearly only a contributory error ignores the impartiality complaint.

The next week, the programme did make exactly the point about a water target which was raised by the complainant about the World Bank statistic. The complainant in fact said that this might contribute to **systematic bias**, not that this minor problem on its own was a breach of standards.

The complainant had stated in the appeal letter that the minor complaint "paled into insignificance". The appeal letter pointed out that this example "contribute[d] to the **overall failure to challenge**." This was clearly a reference to a **problem with impartiality**. The Trust Adviser was therefore wrong to portray this as purely an accuracy problem.

A decision that one part of one individual complaint did not itself breach of accuracy guidelines has little bearing on the actual strength of the complainant's case.

The actual complaint was of multiple accuracy problems combining to make a cumulative breach, and contributing to a lack of impartiality.

Overall, the Adviser shows a tendency to simply repeat assertions from the editor and ECU without mentioning where the complainant provided evidence against those assertions.

For example, the team clearly did not "just" choose to say an essential basket of goods: they used the phrase "basket of food"; the editor wrongly quoted the ONS; the editor and ECU wrongly claimed that the complaint was that the BBC had not included enough detail. In reality the complaint was in part that the **BBC included too much misleading detail which**

combined to create a misleading impression.

It is clearly not possible to assess the material for accuracy without consulting the evidence on what the World Bank had actually done.

Had the Adviser looked at the methodology documents mentioned from the UN and World Bank, she would have seen that **the idea implied in the material that the same economists worked out the prices as were interested in poverty was in fact not true.**

She would also have found that the prices were not specifically collected for "developing" countries, and that the passage about prices being calculated using "census data" and "household surveys" was in fact a wrong citation of the World Bank methodology paper statement about the whole process rather than the procedures for estimating prices.

Combined with the idea that the economists "calculated" equivalence across countries for the purchasing power of a "dollar", the material clearly gave an **overall impression that the World Bank economists had a more thorough and reliable idea of costs faced by the poor, and inflation, than was in fact the case.**

The Trust Adviser's letter misleads: *"Since the original complaint, the complainant has asked the BBC to consider a number of points about other programmes and webpages as "additional evidence" of inaccurate reporting of the Millennium Development Goals."*

In reality following the BBC's multiple failures to respond, **the editor accepted, on behalf of the BBC, the email to him of 1 November 2012 as the complaint at Stage 1a** ("your complaint is far longer than the original article").

This complaint at Stage 1a included **"Accuracy, including links"**.

The programme page linked to the documentary series, which **wrongly implied that the World Bank looked at a global poverty decline by way of information on costs of shelter and other basics.** This was clearly untrue in respect of both prices and needs.

The Adviser wrongly implies that this was not in the complaint at Stage 1a.

The same applies to other problems mentioned in the actual complaint.

The Adviser's account of the appeal is misleading

The Trust Adviser wrote,

"The complainant appealed to the BBC Trust on the substance of his complaint. In a supporting document he also asked the ESC to consider "all complaints which the Editorial Complaints Unit has refused to answer".

In reality the request to the ESC was:

"I wish to appeal the **decisions** by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of **impartiality** or take other action **in case 1300394**."

The supporting document did not ask the ESC to do anything. I stated of it, "I attach some draft notes for the appeal which should not be taken as making definitive statements, but which contain relevant evidence."

The Trust Adviser's wrong statement distracts from the **evidence in that document of a major controversy relevant for assessing due accuracy.**

It was an unfinished document. The complainant had no desire to appeal to the Trust at that stage.

He appealed only because by the appeal deadline, the ECU had not answered the request made in view of an allegation of a potential conflict of interest and by the appeal deadline the ECU had not acknowledged a clarification on the issue of the UN commitments which the ECU had itself requested.

Clearly, in hindsight he might have contacted the Trust Unit to explain the ECU's failure to answer.

At the time of the appeal deadline, 18 August, the complainant was waiting for the ECU to acknowledge his request and clarification of 13 August.

The ECU had failed to respond on the possible conflict of interest since May 2014. The Trust Unit had itself stated that he would reply to the questions, which were on that matter

and – in view of the omission of a response on the impartiality complaints and others – on the gist of the basis for the ECU response.

The complainant considers the request for the gist of the reasons for refusal reasonable in light of the **BBC failure to address the impartiality complaints** - or to address to a reasonable degree points made in correspondence to the ECU, including invited comments on the provisional response.

The Adviser omits key information easily visible in the appeal letter

The Adviser's account of the appeal clearly omits to a material extent the entirety of the information on the **basis for appeal** laid out in the appeal letter and the email appended to it, which together in substantive content amounted to 1006 words.

The circumstances include the BBC repeatedly ignoring the **cumulative nature of the alleged errors** and the **impartiality complaints**.

It is hard to see how the Trust Adviser can have failed to see the words "impartiality" and "decisions" in the appeal letter.

Similarly, the short appeal letter referred to the lack of response from the ECU to the suggestion of conflict of interest.

Since the appeal letter itself was only 230 words or so, it seems reasonable that the Trust Unit should have read properly the email appended to it. That was the email sent to the ECU proposing that senior management assess the complaints. Like the blog comment left for the Director-General on 2 August, this was not answered by the BBC.

.....

The Adviser inexplicably omits impartiality concerns on More or Less material

It is not difficult to see that More or Less presents itself as providing accurate information and countering official spin. The Trust Unit seems not to have taken these basic facts into account.

"World Bank says...there we are - *the target's been met*":

"we investigate whether the [WHO/UNICEF water] target's been met... small print...*not entirely true, is it?*"

From More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012 and 10 March 2012

Ex-World Bank presenter wrote script for both?

The Trust Adviser omitted to mention the context for the complainant's point about confusing a goal with a target -which was that the World Bank indicator was far ahead of others for the same goal - and his mention in the appeal letter of an "overall failure to challenge":

BBC:

More or Less: *"We've got some good news on that Millennium Goal"...*

Research Director of World Bank: *"We think we've now achieved the first Millennium Development Goal a good few years ahead of 2015."*

Ex-World Bank presenter, future session chairman at World Bank conference: *"There we are, the target's been met"*

Guardian podcast on same World Bank news:

*" the bad news on that Millennium Goal - it's income poverty, it's employment and it's nutrition. And **on the second two we are way behind.**"*

Jayati Ghosh. 27 March 2012

http://download.guardian.co.uk/audio/kip/global-development/series/global-development-podcast/1332853395540/1731/gdn.gdv.120327.ic.Global_Development2.mp3

The ex-World Bank presenter, who went on to chair a conference session and speak at the World Bank conference in 2014, treated the World Bank differently from other organisations:

On World Bank claim:

"dollar a day..adjusted to reflect the different prices of goods all over the world...adjusted for inflation ...

"There we are - the target's been met"

More or Less broadcast to poor countries, 3 March 2012

On think-tank claim:

"Are we sure that this quick estimate from a think tank is correct? One issue is that the ICP wasn't specifically looking at the price of goods bought by very poor people."

More or Less 16 May 2014

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01ys3t5>

The edition of 16 May 2014 presented the Chief Economist of the World Bank as making the point that you need to be careful if you do not have those prices – ignoring the fact that the World Bank itself makes claims about poverty without them. The programme failed to point this out.

.....

2008:

*"The World Bank...All these are absolute income standards...
absolute standards of poverty are creepy..."*

The US definition dates back to early 1963....the threshold has changed ***only to take account of inflation***. ...***This cannot be right.***"

<http://timharford.com/2008/07/at-last-a-sensible-way-to-measure-poverty/>
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2124e920-5158-11dd-b751-000077b07658.html>

BBC on the World Bank line:

Tim Harford, ex-World Bank: "***dollar a day***...it's adjusted to reflect the different prices of goods all over the world; but it's also ***adjusted for inflation***" ...

World Bank guest: "We think we've now achieved the first Millennium Development Goal a good few years ahead of 2015." ...

Tim Harford: "***There we are - the target's been met*** [how can he know without prices for the poor?...***the*** question remains: ***how much better off*** [are people if they cross the line]?"

More or Less, BBC World Service, 3 March 2012

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/moreorless/moreorless_20120302-2350b.mp3

"Tim scrutinises the claim that the Millennium Development Goal on safe drinking water has been achieved ahead of schedule.

*The **World Health Organisation**, which along with Unicef **announced that the target had been met**, concedes that the numbers are **not actually that certain.**"*

Programme information for 10 March 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p98ms>

More or Less approaches to other claims:

"the claim that every 15 seconds a child dies of hunger. ...is this really the case?"

*"...claimed a recent edition of *The Economist*. Ruth Alexander and Hannah Moore look at whether this is true."*

Life expectancy programme March 2015: *"dodgy data"*

Famine programme: considers definition.

On global wages: *"ILO relying on patchy statistics"*

.....

From the complaint at Stage 1a:

"There is at least one other error in the programme. It cited the World Bank's claim for the \$1 level as the Millennium Goal indicator trend, which had a faster reported fall; the actual basis of the indicator is at the \$1.25 level.

Is there in addition systematic bias?

Having listed all these errors and problems, I find it hard not to think that there is systematic bias:

- overwhelmingly toward listening to World Bank and ex-World Bank contributors rather than critics of the approach;

- overwhelmingly toward asking economists;
- overwhelmingly toward a current fashion in macroeconomics whose axiom is that the more people spend, the richer they must be - which was proven unwise in the extreme by the financial crisis which followed people spending borrowed money;
- greatly exaggerating the importance of one World Bank indicator among nine monitored by various organisations for MDG1, through wrongly presenting it as "the goal";
- exaggerating the World Bank claim of progress towards the target by using the wrong dollar level;
- exaggerating the relevance of World Bank data to finding out about trends in consumption levels among people who may be severely malnourished, by wrongly talking about a "basket of essential goods" and failing to note either the absence of the use of any such basket before 2005 or that poor people's prices for such "basket" items were not researched;
- exaggerating by wrongly using the word "essential" the known relevance of the data on spending to consumption adequacy in light of demographic trends towards more food being needed per person as child/adult ratios decline, and towards paying rent in cities."

"Other programmes

Several of the problems in relation to BBC guidelines also apply to the article by the More or Less reporter Mukul Devichand in 2007 and perhaps to the programme linked to that article.

Those problems include the error about prices and inflation; and the **imbalance of contributors towards World Bank and ex-World Bank employees.**

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7122356.stm>

There are similar errors on prices and inflation in the programme "Dollar a Day" broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2008 and perhaps in a shorter version on Radio 4 on 5 July 2008. ...**the World Bank macroeconomist was left with the last word; he unfortunately represented the issue of land loss as only one of vulnerability rather than as also of economic loss,** and then confused the issue by talking about people moving in and out of poverty. **He was not challenged again** with the obvious idea that if your assets are lower than last year, other things being equal you are clearly worse off economically; or with any of the consequences of having less land, such as having to pay rent."

.....

The complaint referred from the start to:

"Range of views" "Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalance, including presenter".

The Adviser ignored the problem that the focus in the edition on the World Bank statistics, 3 March 2012 on "how this [World Bank] number... had come about" contrasts sharply with More or Less' usual critical approach.

The complainant had supplied evidence on this concerning other editions' treatment of claims on water, hunger, famine and wages. Strangely, the World Bank edition did not ask whether the main claim was true, simply saying "there we are, the target's been met" and stating at the end that "the" question remained of "how much better off" people were if they crossed the line. This clearly ignored the problem that they might not be better off, if the World Bank assumptions about inflation and needs were not right.

The complainant was clearly indicating an impartiality concern where an ex-World Bank presenter was billed as "assessing" the World Bank measure and "scrutinising the goal" with a World Bank economist, an ex-World Bank economist, and as would have been discovered by a proper investigation, an economist whose organisation's projects receive funding from the World Bank, and for the article another ex-World Bank economist.

Another impartiality concern was clearly that the material failed to represent major controversies over global poverty claims.

In the other cases, the programme asked whether the main claims were true. In the World Bank case, even with all these experts, the presenter simply said "there we are, the target's been met".

It is not clear how the Adviser could miss all the evidence in the longer document supplied for the appeal, showing the intense criticism and so evidence of a lack of impartiality.

The programme's "big critic" in fact simply proposed a higher line using the same method. He is advocating an older World Bank idea of not helping the poor but helping economies.

The points listed by the Adviser as illustrating the "complicated and controversial" nature of the statistic are in fact mostly those made by the World Bank itself – as would have been discovered by an investigation into impartiality. The programme did not, as it claimed, "discover" something about the "goal" not being met outside China. That was in the World Bank's own press release.

The "criticism" about focusing on the poor rather than whole economies is not fundamentally

anything to do with the stated aim of this edition – assessing how poverty is measured – or with assessing the World Bank claim about extreme poverty.

The Trust Adviser's idea that Trustees would consider the complainant had raised issues which he personally found important seems to indicate a **disregard for the evidence, which is clearly that academics and others make similar points to the complainant.** She did not mention the impartiality complaints at all.

The complainant did not simply make other points on "statistical reliability". He made points that the programme made no coherent or accurate attempt to relate the statistic to "real life" – or what we might describe as common sense.

From the complaint at Stage 1A:

"I am aware that the programme's publicity raised a question about whether the figures did more harm than good.

But that question was restricted to

- a) whether the amount was too low,
- b) a related question about whether people's lives were much better if they just crossed the line,

rather than

- c) **whether the method had a sensible relationship to real life** or

- d) whether it was biased.

Simply by omitting obvious real-life features of people's economic status, it is structurally biased towards countries where costs rise relative to incomes; where people lose land; where food needs go up."

In the complainant's view, that was enough information to give the BBC and Trust an idea that there might be a significant controversy over the official claims, which should be investigated to ensure impartiality.

On similar lines, the complaint stated,

"The presenter said "Three cheers for economic growth, then" just after the World Bank research director spoke of worse progress for the trends at a higher level than a dollar a day. The presenter's comment was apparently based on the idea that people must be better off if they spend more."

Again, this indicated a need for the BBC to challenge what could turn out to be an idea from economists with little justification – rather than a presenter saying "there we are, the target's been met" and that "the" question remained of "how much better off" people were if they crossed the line.

The presenter himself had written that the US approach of a line adjusted for inflation "cannot be right". But he failed to make the same point about the World Bank approach.

The statement "The Trust Adviser noted the complainant's view about the use of the terms "basket of essential goods" and "consumption"" omits **the actual complaint, which is of a "persistent error"** that the World Bank estimate inflation for the poor – "essential..**etc**". This clearly indicated a variety of terms implying the same thing. For example, clearly the economists could not in fact "calculate" what the equivalent of one dollar could buy in each country without prices faced by the poor.

The Adviser wrongly omitted that the edition was broadcast on the World Service. The fact that non-native English speakers were a significant part of the audience may be significant for the assessment of due accuracy.

The fact that the Adviser is able to find a passage talking about the collection of prices in similar language to the BBC material makes no difference to the actual point in the complaint. The point is that the material **wrongly implies, overall, that the World Bank do have prices faced by the poor – "basket of food" and so on.**

As the complainant had stated to the BBC:

"The sections in the **2012 article and programme** about economists - which are naturally taken to refer to the economists looking at the "extremely poor" - collecting hundreds of prices are clearly **unnecessarily complex and misleading**. ...

The BBC **wrongly presented a complex story** rather than stating the **simple fact**: the **researchers do not have prices faced by the poor.** "

The Adviser could not, in my submission, have come to the conclusion that there was no possible breach had she addressed the impartiality complaints and so informed herself of the controversies.

The passage quoted by the Adviser on the "calculations", and the corresponding passage in the article, have inaccuracies as described above.

An issue ignored by the Adviser is the fact that with all the World Bank and ex-World Bank experts contributing, it might be reasonable to expect the material to attain a higher level of precision.

The idea that "the programme makers had operated their editorial judgment" does not take into account the point made by the complainant:

If they had been adequately conscious that there were no inflation estimates for the poor, the programme makers could not reasonably have made the choices they did make. It is hard to see that someone who knows there was no "basket of food" would say there was.

The BBC has not even been impartial on what World Bank information states:

*"there are a number of methodological problems of which **one needs to be aware**. The first problem is that the computation of **PPP exchange rates** is based on comparing the costs, in different countries, of a basket of goods and services...that reflects the average consumption patterns in a country. This is **not generally appropriate** when our concern is with comparing living standards **for the poor**"*

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPA/Resources/429966-1259774805724/Poverty_Inequality_Handbook_Ch10.pdf

Trust Adviser misrepresents appeal

The Trust Adviser again misrepresents the appeal. Aside from the direct misquotation:

"The Trust Adviser noted that in his appeal letter the complainant had asked Trustees to consider "all complaints which the Editorial Complaints Unit has refused to answer"

the statement immediately following,

"She noted that the complainant had included complaints about more than 90 programmes and webpages"

conflicts with the email written about the appeal, of later the same day, 18 August.

In that email the **complainant asked the Trust to use discretionary powers to return the complaints on the UN commitments to the Executive.**

The Trust Adviser's account may mislead that the complainant simply failed to appeal at the time. In reality the Trust Unit had authorised the complainant to wait for ECU replies. The ECU delayed for a year answering the suggestion that it might have a conflict of interest. The conflict, or threat to its independence, could have arisen from its error in a published ruling and/or following the complainant's notification to the ECU of the error. The ECU also failed to reply for a year on the gist of its responses, which again the Trust Unit had suggested the complainant was entitled to wait for.

The handling complaint should not be misunderstood as alleging many individual breaches. This handling complaint, as with the substantive complaints, is clearly of cumulative problems amounting to an overall breach. The fact that one part does not breach guidelines is not relevant to the actual case made.

The statement "The Trust Adviser noted that the complainant had not appealed to the Trust after receiving the ECU's finalised finding of 3 June 2014" ignores the actual situation. The Trust itself stated that the complainant would have time to respond following the ECU replies in relation to the gist of the response and the possible conflict of interest – neither of which arrived for a year. It was therefore not legitimate for the Trust Adviser to present the complainant as having simply failed to appeal.

The statement

"The Trust Adviser noted that the Complaints Framework included time frames with good reason because it was increasingly difficult to investigate editorial complaints as time passed"

is not in a proper context of the BBC's delays and errors.

Here again, the question is not whether one problem in isolation makes for a breach of standards. **The question is whether overall there is roughly equal footing between the complainant and the BBC.**

The combination of problems in the Adviser's letter suggests to me that there is not, and that if the Trust does not intend to send the complaints straight back to the Executive, the only reasonable course of action is to supply a replacement letter as requested in the telegram of last week.

The statement "She noted the complainant had been advised by the ECU in 2014 that the many references he had made to BBC output were out of time" appears to lack evidence to support the suggestion. **Some of the complaints, including on other editions of More or Less and on the UN pledges, were clearly within the time period specified.**

The statement "the complainant had not appealed against this decision at the time" is not a reasonable point to make, since it may mislead.

It omits the material fact that the Trust had told the complainant he could appeal after the ECU responded on the gist and on possible conflict of interest.

It does not seem unreasonable for the BBC to investigate impartiality or accuracy problems with further material, for example this passage giving a similar wrong impression:

More or Less, 3 November 2012:

*"...measure poverty in **absolute terms.** **This is** where the poverty line depends on the minimum acceptable standard of living - **whether you've got enough money to have a certain level of shelter, clothing and health care,** for example. And this is a constant across countries so it's more easily comparable. The most common **measure of absolute poverty is living on less than a dollar 25 a day.**"*

The complainant is unaware of a decision which the Trust Adviser states the ECU made on "Don't Panic"

The complaint about "Don't Panic" includes the points that it used World Bank poverty claims, but the presenter himself had said a few months before that the World Bank numbers were "plus or minus half a billion"; and that his "poverty" line was visibly in the wrong place and his claim that the middle billion were on ten dollars a day were based on confusing two different "dollar" units. The official number is 3.4, not 10.

The Adviser stated that she had spent an hour watching a programme which was not to the complainant's knowledge part of the appeal. The complaint on "Don't Panic" has not yet resulted in a provisional response at Stage 2. The ECU has not to the complainant's knowledge refused to answer it, or made any decision about it.

The Adviser appears to have used substantial time and resources investigating "Don't Panic" even though the appeal had not mentioned it. The appeal was restricted to material about which the ECU had made decisions.

The ECU had not to the complainant's knowledge, as the Trust Adviser seems to imply, notified the complainant of any refusal to act on this programme.

The complainant was still waiting for a provisional response from the ECU.

Here again, the Trust Adviser was distracting from the actual appeal.

The Trust Adviser stated,

"The Trust Adviser noted that the ECU had chosen not to respond further to this appeal".

The complainant knows of no such choice. This was a complaint which the ECU told the complainant it was dealing with separately.

In any case, the Trust Adviser's account of this complaint was clearly materially inadequate. It was clear that the complainant

- objected to the presentation of statistics which the presenter himself stated were "plus or minus half a billion" - which raises a question of impartiality -

and

- had notified the BBC that the programme had confused two very different "dollars",

resulting in the statement that half the world lived on over ten times the "dollar a day" level. The official statistic was 3.4 times, not 10.

.....

The Adviser's letter thus risks misleading, distracting and/or confusing Trustees to an unreasonable degree.

The Adviser showed no evidence of having addressed the real-life importance of citizens in poor or rich countries being given accurate information

This is a controversial matter relating to public policy.

From the complaint at Stage 1a:

"Why is this important? Public belief in wrong information on global poverty

As correctly implied by the presenter's introduction for the World Service programme, this matter affects many people's lives, and perhaps whether some people live or die.

That is because if **the public and/or public servants and/or others are misinformed** on official information about global poverty, they may accept or urge **policies which are not helping the poor, worse than alternatives, or damaging to the poor.** They may do this because either:

i) they believe on the basis of false media reports that there is more reliable information about progress than there is in reality, thus acquiring false ideas about what has been achieved by current politicians and policies;

and/or because

ii) they are led to believe, by implication from those false media reports, that economists' information is better than it is in reality as to which policies have more positive effects on the consumption adequacy, assets, debts, and/or other aspect of economic life of the poor.

Point (ii) follows because unsurprisingly:

Economists use the same kind of survey data - without relevant price data, or any estimate of changing needs or any estimate of how far the people are spending money they have earned or money they have borrowed or raised by selling assets rather than becoming richer - **for policy recommendations.**

That should not surprise anyone because if the World Bank which compiles the data from the national statistical offices do not have information about poor people's prices, needs, assets, shared assets or debts over the last 20 years, then clearly it is unlikely that any economist had such information when they advised governments or the public that a policy is better or worse for the poor. ...

The BBC's reporting of the situation as regards the truth behind the World Bank statements

therefore has further implications for democratic scrutiny and contributions to solving or otherwise the problems of world poverty."

Statistics on progress of the human species are clearly used to justify policy.

Further, statements about numbers give the public impressions of the trustworthiness of public institutions and individuals.

The fact that those in power have made statements whose basis is unclear is an important fact which a responsible news organisation would report.

Both More or Less and BBC Media Action have used the phrase "speaking truth to power".

The failure to tell the public what leaders have actually pledged and reaffirmed in 2013 – and the September 2015 Summit again referred to previous commitments - is in itself a significant journalistic failure.

The email appended to the short appeal letter makes the same point as the complaint at Stage 1a:

"These matters are important because information about them influences not only citizens' ideas about the World Bank claims but also beliefs about their own governments' claims about progress or policy success."

Annex

Appeal letter of 18 August 2015, with added emphasis

I wish to appeal the **decisions** by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of **impartiality** or take other action in case 1300394.

In the correspondence, I have emphasised in bold text and underlining some points the Trust may wish to consider.

As regards the independence or otherwise of the ECU in dealing with these complaints, **I refer the Trustees to** my email to the Trust Unit of 27 May 2015 15:53, " No reply from Trust Unit or ECU on **potential ECU conflict of interest**" and the correspondence mentioned in it.

In light of the BBC's catastrophic **error on the Millennium pledges - falsely implying that world leaders pledged 4.3 million child deaths in 2015 when the truth is 3.6, and making other errors on baselines for hunger, water, money and other government commitments** - the complaint I made about More or Less confusing goals and targets pales into relative insignificance. But it does contribute to the overall failure to challenge.

We might think that it is unwise to trust official statistics without further thought in any case, and that an investigative programme should have taken more care.

I submit that the complaints are serious enough that the older material deserves consideration.

I attach some draft notes for the appeal which **should not be taken as making definitive statements**, but which **contain relevant evidence**.

.....

Unacknowledged request 13 August 2015 to ECU that it pass the complaints to senior management in view of its own possible conflict of interest, appended to appeal letter, which together with it amounts to in substance 1006 words:

I do not think it sensible to rule out the possibility that the **ECU's** failure to respond to complaints may be due to knowledge, conscious or unconscious, of its **own error in a published ruling on a related matter**.

I cannot appeal a decision to the Trust on any complaints about **lack of impartiality** such as **"Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances, including presenter"** - an ex-World Bank economist assessing World Bank research while asking a World Bank and ex-World Bank economist, the other contributors to a related article being an ex-World Bank economist and a World Bank partner organisation head - if **the ECU has not made a decision**.

Nor can I appeal an ECU decision about the BBC using a **variety of language - "persistent...etc"** - to imply that the World Bank has estimated prices faced by extremely poor people.

I am afraid there may have been further misunderstandings.

The BBC has **hardly begun to answer the complaint of 27 March 2012 or the additions of 1 November** which together with it constitute the complaint at stage 1a.

I complained to the ECU about **impartiality**, not just inaccuracy. You have written " the other matters you associated with [More or Less of 3 March 2012]".

The first of the guidelines I mentioned in my complaint were **"Accuracy, including links"**. The BBC itself associated the programme with an older series. The **More or Less programme page for 3 March 2012 said, "Listen to the documentary series" and linked to it.**

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120306112550/http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p34zj>

That series made the **same error as the ECU** had in a published ruling, of overvaluing the "dollar a day" by typically perhaps 80-200%.

The series also made a **similar error as More or Less of 3 March 2012**, in claiming the World Bank takes **costs of basics** into account when claiming a poverty decline. Clearly, that implies the researchers considered both **prices faced and amounts needed**. Neither is true.

These matters are important because information about them **influences** not only **citizens' ideas** about the World Bank claims but also beliefs about **their own governments' claims** about progress or **policy success**.

The **BBC has told citizens that economists generally have information on prices faced by the extremely poor**. It has produced no evidence for this. A link in the article of 9 March

2012 is to a World Bank briefing which mentions the **methodology paper**. That paper clearly **does not support the BBC position**.

The BBC website has **one "Editor's Choice" for global poverty**.

It states there are **estimates of prices faced by the extremely poor** over the **last 20 years**, from prices collected **by the World Bank "dollar a day" team** for "goods" in "developing countries", using "household surveys" and "census data" to price a "basket of food".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>

The official World Bank and UN descriptions do not.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/DevelopingworldispoorerQJE.pdf>

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

I consider it **improper** for the ECU to be the final arbiter for the BBC Executive of a complaint which covers a **programme debunking the ECU's own error**, a **programme making the same error**, and other matters.

The Executive has committed itself to reading all older complaints to determine seriousness.

The Trust has decided that complaints to other parts of the BBC will be sent to Audience Services.

The ECU has not denied a possible conflict of interest or threat to independence of mind due to an ECU error on a Millennium Development Goal indicator. The ECU has not commented on whether it is the right part of the BBC to deal with other complaints from the same complainant.

You have stated more than once that you have found the complaints difficult to understand. Apart from incorrect statements, the **BBC has apparently always failed to note the difference between world leaders' pledges in 2000 to reduce "of their current rates" and MDG targets "between 1990 and 2015"**.

The omission is easy to check: the phrase "of their current rates" in the context of mortality pledges occurs either **rarely or never on the BBC website**.

I propose that you pass all the complaints from me - including the unanswered complaints about More or Less **falsely referring to a World Bank "basket of food" used by the "dollar a day" researchers from around 1990, to BBC senior management**.

More or Less finally **presented a view on 3 July 2015 that I gave the BBC beginning in 2003** - that the World Bank claims are unreliable.

The BBC might take this as supporting a view that, contrary to what you say, investigating my complaints, including of **failure to ask whether "the target's been met"** or **whether the statistics are reliable**, is not a waste of money.

Unanswered request that the Trust return the complaints on the UN commitments to the Executive

From: Matt Berkley <...>
Date: 28 August 2015 at 13:07
Subject: Reminder. Re: BBC Trust discretionary powers in cases of serious and/or urgent editorial problems
To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

On 18 August 2015 at 17:18, Matt Berkley <...> wrote:
Dear Mr Towers and Ms O'Brien,

I have requested an editorial appeal today.

I expect by now you are familiar with the BBC's widespread error as to the content of the Millennium pledges.

You may know that **after the Editorial Standards Committee sent out a decision** on 19 June **stating that the child mortality pledge was more ambitious than the later Millennium Development Goal target**, the **World Service continued to confuse the pledges with the easier targets**.

I have complained to the BBC about material I found with this error.

It may already be clear that providing misleading information to citizens in poor countries - and rich countries - on government commitments is a serious matter, undermining democracy and, if uncorrected, journalistic integrity.

The same might apply to the provision of incorrect information about the factual basis of official statements about progress on poverty, or the evidence available to governments and others when claiming policy successes.

Among the complaints I associated with More or Less of 3 March 2012 in my correspondence on case 1300394, I complained that a fact-checking programme had misstated the baseline for a Millennium Declaration pledge. Perhaps it was not clear to members of the ESC that world leaders reaffirmed this pledge in 2005 and 2013, or that the consensus among Reuters, the Times of India, the Guardian, the Independent and the Economist in 2000 was that pledges other than on survival rates had a 2000 baseline.

As you will appreciate, appeal to the ESC is the course of action which the BBC Trust presents.

However, it may be that Trustees or the Trust Unit have relevant discretionary powers.

If they do, then I propose that the BBC Executive be advised of the complaints with a view to investigation and if considered appropriate, remedial action in good time for the UN Summit in September.

I refer to a message to the Director-General of 2 August, below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley <...>

Date: 18 August 2015 at 12:54

Subject: Fwd: No reply at Stage 1a: complaints to ECU, BBC World, World Service or Audience Services. CAS-3340770-ZFKF11 and others

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Clarke,

I wish to appeal the decisions by the Editorial Complaints Unit not to authorise broadcast corrections, rule that there was a lack of impartiality or take other action in case 1300394.

Examples of unanswered complaints which the Trust Adviser may have wrongly stated were out of time:

From: Matt Berkley <...>
Date: 3 November 2014 at 16:14
Subject: Further complaint: Wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges
To: ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk, swahili@bbc.co.uk, portuguese@bbc.co.uk, fergus.walsh@bbc.co.uk

Dear all,

Factual error on Millennium Declaration baseline

Further to my previous complaints to the ECU and BBC World News, I am waiting for replies on the problem I first drew to the attention of Mr Steel in February.

This page has the same error:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/swahili/habari/2014/09/140929_child_mortality_afrika

"Hapo septemba mwaka wa 2000, viongozi kutoka kote duniani walitia saini mkataba wa kutiumiza Malengo nane ya kimaendeleo ya Milenia (Millennium Development Goals (MDG)).....Tangu 1990,MDG imekuwa ikilenga kupunguza vifo hivyo kwa thuluthi mbili 2/3 kufikia mwisho wa mwaka 2015."

The reality is that in 2000 leaders pledged mortality reductions from "current rates", not the generally easier baseline of 1990.

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

I have suggested that the ECU's own error in a published ruling about official global poverty claims - that the "dollars a day" are influenced by ordinary exchange rates, implying that people are spending far more than the actual "purchasing power parity" units used - may have given rise to a conflict of interest for its handling of related complaints. None of my communications should be read as implying any assumption as to who at the Executive should respond to the complaints.

I would like to make clear that I do not wish to assign unfair blame to journalists who have reasonably trusted what other parts of the BBC have reported.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 27 October 2014 at 22:16

Subject: Further complaints: BBC giving impression of wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

To: ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Steel and BBC World News staff,

Recent examples of BBC giving impression of wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

As I have stated in previous complaints to the ECU, the easier backdated baseline of 1990 in the "MDG" structure proposed in 2001 is not, as the BBC has repeatedly given the public to believe, in the Millennium Declaration adopted by world leaders in 2000.

BBC World News, BBC America 16/9/14, from around 7.51 am EDT

Caption: "in the year 2000, world leaders made a series of pledges known as the millennium development goals. one was to cut child mortality. the target was a 2/3 reduction."

https://archive.org/details/BBCAMERICA_20140916_110000_BBC_World_News?q=%22millennium+development%22#start/3105/end/3165

<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-29228448>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-29161620>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29045065>

(video)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/2014/newsspec_8621/content/english/index.html

(fails to make the distinction).

Thought for the Day, Radio 4, 26/9/14

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p027dcxs>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zsnmn39/revision/3> : Google dates the page as 23/9/14. "In 2000 [MDGs] were adopted..."

In 2000 leaders pledged mortality reductions from "current rates".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

The "MDG" mortality targets proposed by the Secretary-General in 2001

specify the same reductions, but with baselines of 1990. Most countries saw falls in mortality rates between 1990 and 2000. So those targets are generally easier than the pledges.

Dr Walsh's video report of 16 September mentions at the beginning: "met...target" and at the end "global leaders... promise".

I submit that it would have been reasonable to expect BBC journalists to be aware of the need to check the veracity of claims from UNICEF after it claimed in 2012 to know numbers of people who had access to "safe" water.

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2012/drinking_water_20120306/en/

The MDG indicator, and the data, are not on safety.

In February 2014, and in subsequent communications, I requested the BBC Editorial Complaints Unit to investigate other instances of the baseline problem.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: Sun, 3 Aug 2014 19:17:24 +0200

Subject: Wrong UN Millennium baseline: Fresh complaints

To: ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Mr Steel,

I add the following to my complaint that the BBC has given a wrong impression in a large amount of coverage that the easier 1990 baselines of Millennium Development Goal targets proposed in 2001 are in the Millennium Declaration.

I refer to my email of 28 May.

I put it to you that if the BBC do not correct the error, BBC journalists will keep making it.

I put to you a second time my proposal that ECU staff let me know what the

Unit understands the complaint to be, so that there is no misunderstanding.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/06/140627_objetivos_onu_ms.shtml

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/06/140627_objetivos_milenio_balanco_lab.shtml

(also gives wrong impression that "\$1 a day" commitment, not just target, officially met five years early)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/07/140721_brasil_hiv_aids_ac_kb.shtml

(also MDG targets are not the obligation, "obrigação".)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/07/140722_idh_brasil_ru.shtml

(MDG targets are not what countries committed to, "compremeteram frente a ONU")

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 2 June 2014 14:28, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley.... I'll reply separately to your email of 28 May.

>

>

>

> Yours sincerely

>

>

>

> Fraser Steel

>

>

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>

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>

On 28/05/2014, Matt Berkley ... wrote:

Dear Mr Steel,

This email deals with two matters, of which I suggest the second is more important.....

.....There is also is what you might consider a more serious matter.

The BBC has often conflated easier MDG targets...with more ambitious (if in some ways more limited) Millennium Declaration promises of 2000, and **I know of no evidence that any BBC output has noted the difference.**

Same-day telegram 8 October 2015, formatted for readability

Dear Mr Towers, Ms O'Brien and Ms Buckle,

Something has gone badly wrong with the appeal on BBC coverage of global poverty.

On 8 November 2012 the editor of More or Less accepted on behalf of the BBC that an email to him of 1 November 2012 was the complaint at Stage 1a.

I have yet to receive a response to the impartiality complaints, or to the accuracy complaints as stated in the complaint.

On 18 August 2015 I asked the Trust to consider sending unanswered complaints back to the Executive.

I have received no explanation as to why complaints on the BBC's understating of Millennium pledges, which the ECU confirmed on 21 July were still outstanding, have been mentioned in a Trust response of 23 September.

I cannot give a proper response unless I know the scope of the Trust's jurisdiction.

I have also indicated that the Trustees' suggestion in their June/July bulletin **that there was a General Assembly "commitment" to MDGs in 2001 is significantly misleading. I propose that Trustees withdraw it.**

The Trust Adviser's response is not a response to the appeal as written.

I look forward to an accurate and reasonably comprehensive response so that I may know what the BBC or Trust objections are to the actual complaints.

Yours sincerely, Matt Berkley

Sent to:

1 - EDITORIAL COMPLAINTS, BBC TRUST UNIT - 180 GREAT PORTLAND STREET
LONDON W1W 5QZ

.....

"Kofi Annan has set out a detailed blueprint for world leaders in the 21st century, urging a sharp reduction in poverty and disease...."

*The report's range of proposals includes **halving the proportion of the world's population existing** on less than a dollar a day by 2015"*

Text box:

"Global facts

22% of world population lives on less than \$1 a day

*One in five **have** no access to safe drinking water"*

3 April, 2000

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/700609.stm>

"the Millennium Development Goals were agreed by all the countries of the United Nations and the big aid agencies in the year 2000" [!]...

*"So the whole goal's about halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation between **1990** [!] and 2015."*

"Yes"

More or Less, fact-checking programme about statistics: "behind the stats"; "statistical sleuths"

BBC World Service 10 March 2012

Note: More or Less did not take into account that **there is no 1990 baseline in the official MDG list either.**

***In September 2000, world leaders** signed up to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals ...*

*Using **1990 rates** as a starting point [!], the MDG aim has been to cut deaths by two-thirds by the end of 2015."*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29161620>

16 September 2014

*"En **septembre 2000**, les dirigeants du monde entier ont souscrit à une série de huit Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement (OMD) qui doivent être atteints d'ici à 2015. ... En utilisant les taux de **1990** comme point de départ, l'objectif des OMD est de réduire la mortalité de deux tiers d'ici à la fin de 2015."*

http://www.bbc.co.uk/afrique/region/2014/09/140929_surviving_childhood_africa

*"**In September 2000, world leaders** signed up to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals...*

Key among these was the aim to reduce the number of children in developing countries who died before their fifth birthday.

*Malawi is one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa to have already **met the target**."*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29228448>

16 September 2014

*"**in September 2000, leaders** from around the world have signed a memorandum of kutiumiza eight development goals of the Millennium ...*

***Since 1990**, the MDG has been focused on reducing deaths by two-thirds **2/3 by the end of 2015**. The country of Malawi is among the few countries from this region to fulfill this goal."*

bbc.co.uk/swahili/habari/2014/09/140929_child_mortality_afrika

September 29, 2014.

Computer translation.

*"**In September 2000, world leaders** signed up to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals ... Using **1990 rates as a starting point**, the MDG aim has been to cut deaths by two-thirds by the end of 2015."*

16 September 2014

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29161620>

BBC: [machine translation of BBC Hausa]:

*"**In September 2000, world leaders agreed** with eight other treaties and against the title of the UN Millennium or MDGs English. ...*

*If used in the statistics of the **1990** UN World Dinikin is **reduced mortality by two-thirds by the end of 2015**. Malawi is among the few African countries to achieve this purpose.*

...When will you achieve the UN Millennium?

Between 1990 and 2013, 223 million children have died worldwide before their fifth anniversary - the equivalent amount of Brazilian society. The situation will not be able to achieve the interests of the United Nations reduce child mortality by the year 2026."

https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&ie=UTF8&prev=t&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http://www.bbc.co.uk/hausa/news/2014/09/140925_maternal_mortality_malawi

25 September 2014

The Trust Unit response failed to take into account that the BBC had repeated the falsehood after the complaint of 6 February 2014 – for example:

"todos os países devem conseguir cumprir as metas dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio, um conjunto de **compromissos adotados em 2000** ["all the countries should fulfil the targets of the MDGs, **a set of promises adopted in 2000**"] para melhorar o destino da humanidade. Um deles ["one of those"] se referia à saúde da mulher e estipulava uma diminuição de **75% entre 1990 e 2015** na taxa de mortalidade de mulheres durante gravidez ou parto."

["maternal mortality by **75% between 1990 and 2015**". The actual promise was from "current rates". Neither the BBC nor the BBC Trust have provided any evidence for their claims that the UN "committed" to the easier targets in 2000 or 2001, or that the UN agreed in any year to change the baseline for the pledge.]

http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/05/140506_queda_mortalidade_materna_lgb.shtml

.....

*in this system, an Indian living on less than "a dollar a day" is **actually living on** less than 25 cents a day, or **just 9 Indian rupees** - because that's how much it would take an Indian to buy **the same thing as an American would buy** for a real dollar."*

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7122356.stm>

"the costs of these diets vary enormously although they are all treated equivalently in inferring the dollar a day poverty line. "

Robert Allen, Oxford University

*"flaw in the way the retail price index (a key inflation measure) is calculated is dry and technical - but **far more important than you might think.**"*

BBC Radio 4 - More or Less

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b011v7yn>

*"in this [World Bank] system, an Indian living on less than "a dollar a day" is **actually living on** [?] less than 25 cents a day, or **just 9 Indian rupees** - because that's how much it would take an Indian to buy **the same thing as an American would buy** [?] for a real dollar."*

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7122356.stm>

"the costs of these diets vary enormously although they are all treated equivalently in inferring the dollar a day poverty line. "

Robert Allen, Oxford University

*"The **poorer** and less capitalized a society or a community, the larger is their reliance on non-monetary resources of all kinds, and the **harder** it is to translate these resources into meaningful prices."*

UN Statistics Division

The Statistical Measurement of Poverty

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc99/rio.pdf>

*"PPP rates are based on prices and [weights] of commodities that are **not representative** of the consumption baskets of poor people."*

Nanak Kakwani, Director, International Poverty Centre, United Nations Development Programme, 2004

*"**not constructed** based on a notion of an international basket of goods required to achieve basic capabilities"*

Draft? UN Handbook on Poverty Methods.

Chapter by Jonathan Morduch: Concepts of Poverty.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/poverty/pdf/Chapter-2.pdf>

*"computation of PPP exchange rates is based on...**basket of goods and services**...that reflects the average consumption patterns...This is **not generally appropriate** when our concern is with comparing living standards for the poor."*

World Bank Handbook on Poverty and Inequality

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPA/Resources/429966-1259774805724/Poverty_Inequality_Handbook_Ch10.pdf

*"Over two decades the bank has also **failed** to correct its own poverty estimates reliably for inflation."*

Peter Townsend, LSE/Bristol

theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/19/world-bank-reform-recession

*"...**failure to specify** an international poverty line (or national poverty lines) that are meaningful in the sense that they correspond to the real cost of achieving **basic human requirements**"*

Sanjay Reddy

Letter to Financial Times. Nov 19, 2007

ft.com/cms/s/0/9c9aa4f6-9640-11dc-b7ec-0000779fd2ac.html

*"...[the World Bank] estimate of the purchasing power of the poor is based on the measure of their **ability to buy...also...airline tickets, pedicures and personal fitness training.** ...while basic goods are often more expensive in poor nations than they are in rich ones, services tend to be much cheaper, as the wages of the people providing them are lower."*

George Monbiot

theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/06/globalisation.world

Contributors to BBC broadcast to poor countries "assessing how poverty is measured", 3 March 2012:

1. **World Bank economist**, author of dollar line and co-designer of official methodology.

Director of World Bank Development Research Group.

Became Acting Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank in June 2012.

"Joined the Bank in 1988 and worked in almost all sectors and all regions over the following 24 years."

<http://explore.georgetown.edu/people/mr1185/>

No employment listed outside universities and World Bank.

2. **Ex-World Bank economist** known for proposing similar line at higher level.

CV lists World Bank for entire career since university, from 1988 to 2007.

<http://apps.hks.harvard.edu/faculty/cv/LantPritchett.pdf>

3. **World Bank partner since 2004, World Bank publications author and lecturer in 2014-5, academic economist**

(<http://economics.mit.edu/faculty/banerjee/cv>

<http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/category/author/Abhijit%20V.%20Banerjee>

<http://live.worldbank.org/experts/abhijit-banerjee>)

Cited in associated More or Less article:

"Professor Banerjee agrees that the \$1.25 a day figure plays a useful role".

His organisation is a "partner" with the World Bank for many projects:

<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/partners/world-bank>

His organisation receives funding from the World Bank for projects.

In his best-known work he wrote,

"we identified the extremely poor as those living in households where the consumption per capita is less than \$1.08 per day"

The Economic Lives of the Poor

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo

2007

<http://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.21.1.141>

- the World Bank line.

The other contributor to the associated More or Less article:

4. World Bank Economic Review editorial board member 2007-9, economist.

World Bank book editor, contributor to other publications.

World Bank employee 1985-6.

Chief Economist's Lecture, Finance and Private Sector Development, World Bank, September 2010.

http://wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/cv/jonathan-morduch-cv_0.pdf

Request 22 October 2015 for Trustees to reconsider appeal request

[Main text]:

I refer Trustees to the appeal letter and the email appended to it, which together amount to 1006 words. The BBC spends millions through BBC Media Action and on other output on global development.

How are these matters of substance?

Some ideas:

1. The BBC has over many years claimed that the Millennium Declaration has 1990 baselines.

That seems at odds with a public purpose of enabling democracy. It hinders democracy.

Trustees already know it is not true.

Leaders reaffirmed the Declaration in 2013.

I cannot see any reason to keep older material – including reference material - online with the errors.

Other material seems liable, especially in combination, to confuse people into thinking that in 2000 leaders only pledged the easier MDG targets. This includes educational content.

The errors seem more significant because the BBC has not made the pledges clear in other content.

I cannot find the actual pledges on the BBC website.

It is disappointing that after a Trust decision of 19 June 2015 the BBC continued to

make statements Trustees know are not true.

It would seem easy and cost-effective for the BBC to broadcast and publish details of what leaders pledged in 2000.

It is not clear to me what the objections are.

It does seem clear to me that a sensible approach would be to examine the most misleading content first.

I cannot see any good reason for quibbling over who complained to who, or when. I was not conscious of the baseline error in 2012 when More or Less made it. I think it is clear that I have made a reasonable effort to inform the BBC of problematic material at various times. I told the Editorial Complaints Unit of the problem in February 2014.

To the best of my knowledge the BBC is committed to reading all complaints to determine whether seriousness overrides the age of the material, and to forwarding complaints to Audience Services.

“where a complaint is deemed to be serious, BBC management is likely to respond to any complaint made outside the 30-day limit.”

downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/complaints_framework/2012/audience_research.pdf

This complaint should not be misunderstood as on individual instances. I suggest the BBC needs to take an overview.

The pledges, which are still current, do not use the generally easier "1990 as a benchmark" as the BBC's "MDG website" claims:

bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1112_mdg/

The ESC has not considered the explicit statements that the Declaration has 1990 baselines, or the cumulative effect of inaccuracies.

In its decision of 19 June on Woman's Hour material the ESC noted only one specific wording in one context.

2. There is a major academic and political controversy over the World Bank claims on extreme poverty, beyond "data gaps".

It is hard to see that the BBC has covered this to a reasonable extent. The omission of controversies in More or Less material seems to be more important as a result.

3. If people think economists know prices faced by the poor, they are more likely to accept or promote bad policies – and poor use of data.

4. If people think, as the BBC seems to have implied, that the World Bank takes into account costs of shelter, health care and other basics, they are more likely to accept or promote bad policies – and poor use of data.

5. The More or Less material shows patterns of inaccuracies and imbalances of views and contributors. Complaints of 2014 and 2015 to Audience Services on More or Less have not been answered. In order for the BBC to gain a clear view, it would seem sensible for the BBC to consider the older material as well.

6. Some of the complaints are quite technical. I stated on 1 November 2012 that I expected to be asked to clarify points.

To assess due accuracy would seem to need a more thorough investigation of without a basic understanding of the controversies, and methodology documents.

.....

*"flaw in the way the retail price index (a key inflation measure) is calculated is dry and technical - but **far more important than you might think.**"*

BBC Radio 4 - More or Less

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b011v7yn>

*"there are a number of methodological problems of which **one needs to be aware.** ...the computation of PPP exchange rates is based on comparing the costs, in different countries, of*

*a basket of goods and services...that reflects the average consumption patterns in a country. This is **not generally appropriate** when our concern is with comparing living standards for the poor"*

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPA/Resources/429966-1259774805724/Poverty_Inequality_Handbook_Ch10.pdf

.....

World Bank "dollar a day" team, 1991: *"Ideally **one would like** to construct new PPP rates for the prices most relevant to the absolute poor, in which the **prices of food**-staples would clearly carry a high weight."*

BBC: *"people who live on \$1 a day do not spend all of it on **that basket of food**" [!]*
Current BBC Editor's Choice for global poverty: "Dollar benchmark".

.....

Proposed text is simple

In the email accepted by the BBC as a Stage 1a complaint on 1 November 2012, I proposed broadcasting simple information such as:

"the World Bank does not have information on...trends in poor people's prices."

"economists [using the official "poverty" claims]...cannot know what people

consumed."

"the World Bank do not consider how much...is essential...as people grow up [and so need more food], or...[if they need to pay] rent if they move to cities."

The Trust Adviser seems to have omitted nearly all of the points in the appeal letter and the email appended to it, which together came to 1006 words and about 30 points.

The inaccuracies include misquoting the ONS and the appeal letter, and wrongly claiming that the ESC had ruled on the general issue of the UN pledge error. I cannot easily see inaccuracies tending to diminish rather than bolster the BBC position.

.....

A comprehensive overview of the inaccuracies in the BBC content complained of and in the Trust Adviser's letter would be of book length.

I limit the remarks and evidence to some selected issues as illustrations.

Annex: How is More or Less material on costs and poverty inaccurate?

Answer: A variety of inaccuracies contribute to the overall problem. The context is of a controversy over the World Bank claims.

I submit that the material cannot be assessed without consulting the World Bank methodology papers, the UN metadata on the indicator, and the views of others: due accuracy is increased for controversial matters.

Some inaccuracies which may not be obvious in the More or Less material of March 2012?

Wrong economists - those collecting prices were not "Ravallion and his colleagues" ie dollar a day team as implied by the article, but those looking at whole-country GDP. "Census data", "household surveys" are mentioned in wrong context from World Bank methodology paper. Economists do not "calculate" cost of "comparable" basket which a dollar would buy for a real person. Economists guess and make value judgements on equivalence of different foods and non-comparable accommodation.

Editor misquoted ONS.

Trust Adviser misquotes ONS: UK inflation rates do not use "basket of essential goods".

The **BBC has told citizens that economists generally have information on prices faced by the extremely poor.** It has produced no evidence for this. A link in the article of 9 March 2012 is to a World Bank briefing which mentions the **methodology paper**. That paper clearly **does not support the BBC position.**

The BBC website has **one "Editor's Choice" for global poverty.**

It states there are **estimates of prices faced by the extremely poor** over the **last 20 years**, from prices collected **by the World Bank "dollar a day" team** for "goods" in "developing countries", using "household surveys" and "census data" to price a "basket of food".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17312819>

The official World Bank and UN descriptions do not.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/DevelopingworldispoorerQJE.pdf>

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx>

From comments on provisional response 1300394

"Errors include:

Wrongly stating that the World Bank "calculated" costs of what a "purchasing power parity" dollar could buy in different countries;

Wrongly implying through a variety of language that the World Bank has taken into account inflation for the poor;

Wrongly implying that the World Bank has taken needs into account"

"The ECU failed to take adequate account of the fact that what is "behind the stats" – the More or Less slogan – in the case of economic claims on poverty is clearly a **major and controversial matter relevant to public policy, affecting many millions of people.**"

"true nature of More or Less, which is concerned to a significant degree with accuracy of description and trusted accordingly by audiences"

"The ECU's argument that it was unreasonable to expect More or Less, a programme about due accuracy, to display greater accuracy than **official sources** failed to take into account that the latter **issue detailed caveats** against misinterpretation of these statistics."

"The ECU failed to take into account the **imbalance** between treatment by More or Less of statistical claims on **famine, water,** and **ILO statistics** on the one hand and **World Bank statistics** on the other."

"These programmes are part of a small amount of BBC output considering the relationship between the "poverty" statistics and real life.

There appears to have been **very little output from the BBC asking about the reliability of the World Bank claims** of progress on poverty. There has clearly been output reporting on the lives of the poor, but not obviously much output on to what extent the official statements are based on reality.

Lack of due impartiality in one programme out of the small number, therefore, would seem likely to upset the balance of due impartiality in the set of related programmes and in the BBC's output on this matter as a whole. The same kind of consideration would seem to apply in relation to **imbalance of contributors or ranges of views.**

The BBC output on global poverty claims has mostly consisted of a large number of items reporting the World Bank statements without comment - **reporting neither the caveats of the researchers nor the criticisms of others.**

It therefore appears that the BBC's large range of news reporting on this matter was not duly accurate or duly impartial."

"In its approach and conclusions the ECU failed to take adequate account of the fact that **the issue is clearly a major and controversial matter.** It is obvious that **if people think a goal, or even a UN resolution's pledge, has been met when it has not, that has implications for holding governments to account.** It is obvious that **policy decisions are made on the basis of economic statistics** and that **if people have the wrong idea about, for example, the availability of relevant price data,** they are at risk of making **wrong decisions concerning millions of people.** The ECU failed to take account of the fact that the **presenter of More or Less stated that it was a major matter** in his introductions to the programmes of 3 December 2007 and 3 March 2012."

"Basket of essential goods", **etc.**" clearly indicated that the term was only an example. **"Basket of food"** was another. The whole part about **"the economists", meaning those talking about poverty,** using a "special dollar" contributed to **an overall impression likely to mislead at least a substantial proportion of listeners and readers that the World Bank was reporting in the light of inflation rates faced by the extremely poor.** The part about the economists using "national accounts", **"census data" and "household surveys" did not appear to be well-sourced.**

The ECU failed to explain why listeners or readers would draw conclusions which were true about the economists' method, or why, in the **absence of inflation rates faced by the poorest over a 20-year period**, it does not matter.

"The ECU took inadequate account in applying the principle of due accuracy, of the subject of the material. The presenter of More or Less stated in the 3 March 2012 edition: **"It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people in poverty"**. **Introducing the piece in the edition of 3 December 2007 he stated, "It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living on under a dollar a day"**. "

"The editor stated that the team aimed to describe the history of the line. That constituted **imbalance**, since **the programmes on famine (10 Feb [2012]), water (10 Mar 2012) and the International Labour Organisation (29 March 2013)** ¹² were all **sceptical of the official claims**. **In the case of the World Bank, there was no scepticism at all** of the claims themselves. The idea of giving the history of the idea without looking at what the statistics are actually on (except for a misleading segment about prices) or what they mean in real life is in **sharp contrast to the treatment of famine and water statistics**."

"The ECU's argument that due accuracy in the case of More or Less "wouldn't mean the same as it would in (for example) a **technical discussion of the pros and cons of various measures of poverty and their usefulness as guides to policy**" wrongly ignored the fact **that the edition of More or Less seems to be, to what should be its great shame, the closest thing the BBC has produced since 2000 to exactly that**. That criticism is not simply that the BBC has **failed to take up an important topic** properly. It is also that the BBC has **not bothered to check the basis of its own reporting in large numbers of broadcasts and online articles**. "

"Mr Vadon ...based his argument on the **incorrect claim that the ONS use the term "basket of goods"** "

¹²

What is the world's average wage?

29 March 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17512040>

"In truth, the economists at the ILO have had to rely on **very patchy statistics**..."

.....

More or Less, World Service 3 March 2012

Transcribed.

"Economists look at the price of hundreds of goods"

[! - May contribute to misleading impression. Should say "and services". Inclusion of services is one reason for the controversy over World Bank numbers (authors Pogge and Reddy etc). Reason is that rich people's services with high "weight" in the index because they are expensive, may be irrelevant to the poor]

"in developing countries"

[! - contributes to misleading impression of relevance to poor. In fact in all countries they can find data]

"...and then with reference to national accounts, household surveys and census data"

[misinterprets World Bank methodology paper, which says those are used in the whole process, not for estimating costs in different countries. This error may contribute to false impression of World Bank method's thoroughness, precision and ("household surveys") relevance to the poor (the price surveys are in fact done at outlets, not in household surveys) ,

"they"

[in fact different economists. Those who look at prices are looking at whole country GDP - nothing to do with how much you would need to buy if you were poor. This error may contribute to an overall false impression of the World Bank estimates' relevance to the poor]

"calculate"

[! - They cannot possibly "calculate" across countries or often across decades. In fact they guess and make value judgements on equivalence of food, shelter etc.]

"how much money you would need"

[may mislead or contribute to misleading impression, like documentary series to which the programme page linked, and More or Less 3 Nov 12, that Bank take changing needs into account]

"to have in each country to buy a comparable basket of essential [!]"

"goods that would cost you"

[not in fact knowable]

"a dollar in America."

[In fact different types and/or quality of food, water, shelter may make for a very different "basket". Highly questionable that there are in a significant sense "comparable" baskets also because no-one seems to live on that amount in the USA.]

[Untrue. They cannot have "calculated" money needed, because they have not looked at prices faced by the "extremely poor" for any year. Prior to the nominal survey date of 2005, the intercountry comparisons are for purchasing power in whole economies, not for items the poor buy or cannot afford to buy.]

..."Something that puzzled me was thinking that the basket of goods"

[incorrect - for 1981 to 2005 it is for all goods and services in the economy; this is yet another reference to the fictitious "basket of essential goods"]

"that the economists price up

[again, referring wrongly to poverty-focused economists]

must surely, I thought, be more expensive now than it was when a dollar-a-day was coined a couple of decades ago because of inflation - and yet we still talk about people living on less than a dollar a day."

Tim Harford: Yes. So this is the second way in which the dollar a day figure needs to be tweaked.

[The first "way" was not a "tweaking" of the "figure" but an unclear description by the World Bank as to whether it was a real dollar, with an inaccurate description by the BBC of the method of inferring purchasing power differences among the poor in different countries]

"We've already heard that it's adjusted to reflect the different prices of goods"

[Incorrect - in reality, prices for goods and services in whole economies, not for the poor]

"all over the world; but it's also adjusted for inflation because a dollar buys less and less over time."

"But in 2008 the World Bank made a major change to how they calculated [?] the poverty line."

"Martin Ravallion, the man who came up with the dollar-a-day measure, says that in 1990, 31% of the population of the developing world lived on less than one dollar a day"

[? - Those figures are not the MDG "news" - see below]

"- close to 1.4 billion people. In 2008 less than half that proportion did - 14%, or about 800 million people."

[The BBC here gives the wrong figures for the MDG indicator. The figures of \$1 in 2005 "PPP dollars" do not relate to either the Millennium Declaration pledge or the MDG target.

The official trend used since 2008 for MDG indicator 1a uses PPP \$1.25 using 2005 as the base year for inflation - not PPP\$1.

The "\$1" figures cited by the BBC would other things being equal be worth less than the old "\$1 a day" at 1993 prices because of inflation.

This error is odd because Mr Harford goes on to question the concentration on such a low line (which is liable to give an exaggerated impression of progress for poor people as a whole), when he himself has just used the wrong, too-low level for the MDG indicator - exaggerating reported progress even more.]

Annex: Evidence of controversy over “income” statistics and poverty – or perhaps rather of general agreement that they are not what they seem

Readers may note that newspapers have published criticism of the World Bank method which the BBC seems to have omitted.

*"It must be pointed out that the international poverty line is **not based** on a global common basket of basic goods and services"*

Jan Vandemoortele, UN Development Programme, 2002

<http://wstf.go.ke/watersource/Downloads/001.%20Are%20We%20Really%20Reducing%20Global%20Poverty.pdf>

"Even Jan Vandemoortele, the principal adviser for the Social Development Group of the UN Development Program, admits the dollar-a-day measure lacks an easy interpretation.

*"....**why not basing it on a basket of goods and services one needs to survive?**"*

nytimes.com/2003/04/26/arts/does-a-dollar-a-day-keep-poverty-away.html

" Supposing, for example, that when a third world country opened up its economy to the world its agricultural workers were required to become more mechanised.

If...workers...moved to city slums ... the incomes of the people who moved could well be higher than they were in their villages.

However... they might have to pay rent and fares for the first time... "

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2000/jun/14/guardiansocietysupplement3>

*"...[the World Bank] estimate of the purchasing power of the poor is based on the measure of their **ability to buy...also...airline tickets, pedicures and personal fitness training.** ...while basic goods are often more expensive in poor nations than they are in rich ones, **services tend to be much cheaper**, as the wages of the people providing them are lower."*

George Monbiot

theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/06/globalisation.world

*"The [World Bank] purchasing-power estimates...incorporate the prices of **goods and services** -- such as air travel or computers -- **beyond the reach of the world's poor.** The inclusion of services tends to make prices look lower in poor countries because of cheap labor, but poor people typically spend most of their money on goods, particularly food."*

Flaws in Measuring The World's Poor May Hinder Solutions

The Numbers Guy - Wall Street Journal 2007

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB118064578670320492>

*"...**failure to specify an international poverty line (or national poverty lines) that are meaningful in the sense that they correspond to the real cost of achieving **basic human requirements****"*

Sanjay Reddy

Letter to Financial Times

November 19, 2007

ft.com/cms/s/0/9c9aa4f6-9640-11dc-b7ec-0000779fd2ac.html

*"criticized for using a poverty rate that is **not rooted in theory**; for being **overly sensitive to measurements of PPP** exchange rates; for **not using poor-person price indexes** to inflate poverty lines locally; and for **not adequately recognizing the uncertainties** in poverty measurement in India and China, where half of the population of the developing world lives."
"*

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPA/Resources/429966-1259774805724/Poverty_Inequality_Handbook_Ch10.pdf

*"PPP rates are based on prices and [weights] of commodities that are **not representative** of the consumption baskets of poor people."*

Nanak Kakwani, Director, International Poverty Centre, United Nations Development Programme, 2004

*"**not constructed** based on a notion of an international basket of goods required to achieve **basic capabilities**"*

Draft? UN Handbook on Poverty Methods.

Chapter by Jonathan Morduch: Concepts of Poverty.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/poverty/pdf/Chapter-2.pdf>

*"the World Bank **refuses** to propose a **basket of goods** to define the international poverty line"*

<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/editorial/call-improve-global-%E2%80%98poverty-line%E2%80%99-measure>

*"**Over two decades** the bank has also **failed** to correct its own poverty estimates reliably for **inflation.**"*

Peter Townsend, LSE/Bristol

theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/19/world-bank-reform-recession

*"(now \$1.25) a day....This methodology... **differs from** [a method]...in which the poverty income line is measured in terms of a **basket of goods needed** to meet basic needs."*

Canadian Association for the Study of International Development

<https://www.casid-acedi.ca/sites/casid-acedi.ca/files/100827%2520-%2520Poverty%2520Report%2520-%2520Final%2520-%2520Small.pdf>

*"**not connected to any basket** of goods that makes sense for measuring poverty, such as food and other **essentials**"*

Robert Wade, LSE, 2002

<http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/confs/2002/pdf/wade.pdf>

*"this "basket" **does not** represent the "**basket**" of goods and services the poor purchase. It contains services and other non-tradables that the poor do not buy – the poor primarily purchase food"*

harvey.binghamton.edu/~nhassoun/Disclaimer_FreeTradePovertyInequality.php

Annex: Evidence of imbalance of views and approach in More or Less content

More or Less, 3 March 2012 World Service:

Ex-World Bank economist presenter/scriptwriter "scrutinised" World Bank poverty claims.

Guests: World Bank economist,

ex-World Bank economist,

World Bank partner economist.

Article of 9 March 2012, now Editor's Choice for global poverty:

Above guests as contributors, and additional ex-World Bank economist.

The edition presented points already made by the World Bank research director rather than by critics of the approach. The "big critic" was in fact advocating trickle-down economics.

Unanswered complaint sent to ECU 28 May 2014

"I wish to complain about the edition of More or Less broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2014...

a) In my view **the programme misled in stating, "this \$1.25-a-day measure has been criticised and that's something we've covered here on More or Less before."** I do not see how that was well-sourced. I refer to my previous complaint. Also, this is in my view a signpost to other More or Less podcasts, but as far as I know none of them dealt with the best-known criticisms.

b) ...**quoting the World Bank on criticisms did not allay my concerns at imbalance of contributors.**"

"The wiser alternative, the engaged response, is to find the means **of seeing through what the politicians are up to, some way of challenging and understanding the numbers.** If we fail, the debate on the big political issues becomes meaningless - on everything from health risks, foreign aid...to targets...comparisons, surveys..."

Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot, former More or Less presenter
http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/the_numbers_game_statistics_and_politics

"It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living on under a dollar a day."

"It's hard to think of a more important figure than the number of people living in poverty."

Tim Harford, More or Less, 3 December 2007 and 3 March 2012.

"More or Less... What do [statistics] really measure? What kind of truth, if any, do they capture?... Then, of course, there are the big political arguments about pensions... measuring poverty..."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/more_or_less/1628489.stm

More or Less of 3 March 2012 to a significant extent reflected points made by the World Bank research director himself from 2004 onwards:

"estimates indicate that the number living on less than \$2 a day has risen..."

"outside China, the number of poor has changed very little."

<http://www.economist.com/node/2571960> , last section.

From complaint at Stage 1a:

Is there in addition systematic bias?

Having listed all these errors and problems, I find it hard not to think that there is systematic bias:

- overwhelmingly toward listening to **World Bank and ex-World Bank contributors rather than critics of the approach;**

- overwhelmingly toward asking **economists;**

- overwhelmingly toward **a current fashion in macroeconomics** whose axiom is **that the more people spend, the richer they must be** - which was proven **unwise** in the extreme by the **financial crisis** which followed people spending borrowed money"

greatly **exaggerating the importance of one World Bank indicator among nine** monitored by various organisations for MDG1, through **wrongly presenting it as "the goal";**

- **exaggerating the World Bank claim of progress** towards the target by using **the wrong dollar level;**

- **exaggerating the relevance of World Bank data** to finding out about trends in consumption levels among people who may be severely malnourished, by wrongly talking about a "basket of essential goods" and **failing to note** either the absence of the use of any such basket before 2005 or that **poor people's prices for such "basket" items were not researched;**

- exaggerating by wrongly using the word "essential" the known relevance of the data on spending to consumption adequacy in light of **demographic trends towards more food being needed per person** as child/adult ratios decline, and towards **paying rent in cities.**

*"basket of essential goods [!] ...used since a couple of decades ago [!]...World Bank says...there we are - **the target's been met**"*

BBC World Service 3 March 2012. Presenter/scriptwriter: Ex-World Bank economist.

*"**Over two decades** the [World] bank has also **failed** to correct its own poverty estimates reliably for **inflation.**"*

Peter Townsend, LSE/Bristol

theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/19/world-bank-reform-recession

More or Less, World Service 3 Mar 2012: "We've got some good news on that Millennium Goal"

Research Director of World Bank: "We think...goal...met"

Ex-World Bank presenter/scriptwriter, future session chairman at World Bank conference:
"There we are, the target's been met"

"... the bad news on that Millennium Goal - it's income poverty, it's employment and it's nutrition. And on the second two we are way behind."

Jayati Ghosh.

Guardian podcast on same World Bank news, 27 March 2012

http://download.guardian.co.uk/audio/kip/global-development/series/global-development-podcast/1332853395540/1731/gdn.gdv.120327.ic.Global_Development2.mp3

Tim Harford 2008:

"The World Bank...

All these are absolute income standards...

absolute standards of poverty are creepy...

The US definition dates back to early 1963....

the threshold has changed only to take account of inflation. ...

This cannot be right."

At last, a sensible way to measure poverty

<http://timharford.com/2008/07/at-last-a-sensible-way-to-measure-poverty/>

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2124e920-5158-11dd-b751-000077b07658.htm> 1

More or Less, BBC World Service 3/3/2012: Tim Harford, ex-World Bank presenter/scriptwriter, future session chairman at World Bank conference:

"dollar a day...it's adjusted to reflect the different prices of goods [? and services, which may be irrelevant] all over the world; but it's also adjusted for inflation...

There we are – the [World Bank] target's been met" [!]

More or Less, BBC World Service, 3 March 2012

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/moreorless/moreorless_20120302-2350b.mp3

More or Less, BBC World Service 10/3/12:

"Tim [Harford] scrutinises the claim that the Millennium Development Goal on safe drinking water has been achieved ahead of schedule. The World Health Organisation, which along with Unicef announced that the target had been met, concedes that the numbers are not actually that certain."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00p98ms>

Complaint sent to BBC More or Less editor, 1 Nov 2012:

"Bank does not estimate any consumption-need trend."

BBC More or Less, 3 Nov 2012:

7 mins 30: ... poverty in absolute terms... is where the poverty line depends on the minimum acceptable standard of living - whether you've got enough money to have a certain level of shelter [?], clothing and health care, [?] for example. And this is a constant across countries" [???

...The most common measure of absolute poverty is living on less than a dollar 25 a day."

8 November 2012: Editor of More or Less states "I have now had the time to consider and research your complaint."

11 November 2012: **More or Less article again quotes someone with ties to official agency**, and again a **supporter of World Bank method**:

"...\$1.25 a day. Orme [UN civil servant] says this absolute poverty measure is the best for international comparisons, "because it's a constant across countries, it's useful because you can look at that measurement regardless of what country you're in". By this standard, according to the UN, there are 1.3 billion people worldwide living in poverty. "**We can say with confidence** that, whereas as recently as 1980 more than half of the world fell into that category, **today it is less than 25%**. And it's probably getting closer to 20% which is a huge amount of progress across countries," says Orme."

[article made vague and perhaps confusing reference to criticism]

Is one in eight Australians really poor?

11 November 2012

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20255904>

Pattern of error and bias in More or Less coverage of world poverty

*"...failure to specify an international poverty line (or national poverty lines) that are meaningful in the sense that they correspond to the real cost of achieving **basic human requirements**"*

Sanjay Reddy

Letter to Financial Times

November 19, 2007

ft.com/cms/s/0/9c9aa4f6-9640-11dc-b7ec-0000779fd2ac.html

BBC:

*"in this system, an Indian living on less than "a dollar a day" is **actually living** [!] on less than 25 cents a day, or **just 9 Indian rupees** - because that's how much it would take an Indian to buy **the same thing as an American would buy** [!] for a [!] real dollar."*

More or Less article.

Presenter/scriptwriter: Ex-World Bank economist/Financial Times leader writer.

December 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7122356.stm>

*"**the costs of these diets vary enormously** although they are all treated equivalently in inferring the dollar a day poverty line. "*

Robert Allen, Oxford University

Stage 1a complaint:

"other programmes.... article by the More or Less reporter...in 2007 and perhaps...the programme linked to that article.

...error about prices and inflation; ...imbalance of contributors towards World Bank and ex-World Bank employees.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7122356.stm>"

"There are similar errors on prices and inflation in the programme "Dollar a Day" broadcast on the World Service on 11 April 2008 and perhaps in a shorter version on Radio 4 on 5 July 2008.

[Note: The complaint mentioned "Accuracy, including links". The programme page for More or Less of 3 March 2012 urged the public to listen to the documentary series which wrongly states,

*"**the global poverty line takes in the cost of shelter, clothing and other basics; looking at it that way, [!] the World Bank says the decline...".]***

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/aboutus/2008/04/080411_dollar_a_day_china.shtml

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive_20080411-2038.mp3

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0090qmb>

... **the World Bank macroeconomist was left with the last word**; he unfortunately represented the issue of **land loss** as only one of vulnerability rather than as also of **economic loss**, and then confused the issue by talking about people moving in and out of poverty. He **was not challenged again** with the obvious idea that **if your assets are lower** than last year, other things being equal **you are clearly worse off economically**; or with any of the consequences of having less land, such as **having to pay rent.**"

Annex: Procedural and other notes

Complaints submitted direct to the ECU and other parts of the BBC

To the best of my knowledge, the BBC has committed itself to forwarding complaints to Audience Services if they are sent to other parts of the BBC.

Mr Steel indicated on numerous occasions that he would reply to my emails. He gave me no reason to think that he would not treat the complaints submitted direct to the ECU, if not as part of the existing complaints, then as new complaints at Stage 1a.

The BBC had previously written to me several times as if it was perfectly acceptable to send complaints to the editor of More or Less, News Online or a reporter. I only did so because the BBC had ignored three out of five submitted to Audience Services.

None of my three complaints submitted on More or Less to Audience Services (2012, and two reminders; 2014; 2015) resulted in any reply.

.....

While I keep an open mind, I have not seen any evidence against the following position in my handling complaint of 12 March 2015 on forwarding complaints:

Handling of CAS-3147591-M2Q953

...the Trust decision on forwarding of complaints has been reiterated during the current complaints framework. I was therefore fully justified in asking the production team to forward the complaint...

"the first point of contact for a complaint should be BBC Information, although people can contact editorial managers directly if they prefer."

Editorial Guideline 19.4.3

"complaints received by other parts of the BBC will be forwarded on to this central point"

"Date: 30.05.2012 Last updated: 15.10.2014"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2012/complaints_framework_review.htm

1

30-day limit

"During the period under review, no complaints about web content were rejected on the grounds that the content was more than 30 days old."

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/complaints_framework/2013/complaints_framework_followup.pdf

Trust Review of BBC Complaints Framework:
Conclusions
May 2012

"The Trust was reassured [by the BBC Executive] that all complaints received outside the 30 day limit would be read, in order to determine whether there were sufficient grounds for investigating them notwithstanding"

Timeliness of appeal

Although the Trust Adviser's letter might be read as implying that I delayed the appeal for a year, I was in fact waiting for the promised replies from the ECU which never came.

Last response from ECU on conflict of interest

Although I have received a general statement that a conflict of interest would not "follow" from the ECU being aware of a related past error, I have received no specific denial from the BBC of an ECU conflict of interest in this case or an explanation of why it has no such conflict of interest.

Date: 11 August 2014 at 11:27

Subject: RE: Possible ECU conflict of interest

To: Matt Berkley <...>

Dear Mr Berkley

I'm sorry not to have replied before now. I'm afraid we're unseasonably busy, and my correspondence isn't as punctual as it should be. I'll try to give you a substantive reply this week.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

On 2 June 2014 14:28, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley.... I'll reply separately to your email of 28 May.

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

Unanswered complaint to BBC World

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 27 October 2014 at 22:16

Subject: Further complaints: BBC giving impression of wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

To: ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Steel and BBC World News staff,

Recent examples of BBC giving impression of wrong baseline for Millennium Declaration pledges

As I have stated in previous complaints to the ECU, the easier backdated baseline of 1990 in the "MDG" structure proposed in 2001 is not, as the BBC has repeatedly given the public to believe, in the Millennium Declaration adopted by world leaders in 2000.

BBC World News, BBC America 16/9/14, from around 7.51 am EDT

Caption: "in the year 2000, world leaders made a series of pledges known as the millennium development goals. one was to cut child mortality. the target was a 2/3 reduction."

https://archive.org/details/BBCAMERICA_20140916_110000_BBC_World_News?q=%22millennium+development%22#start/3105/end/3165

Annex: “Don't Panic”

This complaint has not yet resulted in a provisional response at Stage 2.

Last communications from BBC were from Head of Editorial Complaints Unit .

2 June 2014: “I hope to be able to give you our provisional finding by 30 June”

4 July 2014: “I don’t think I’m likely to be in a position to do so for at least another two weeks”.

Note: ECU’s own error on the “dollar” may be relevant here: possible conflict of interest.

ECU promised reply on conflict of interest in summer 2014. Has not replied on possible conflict of interest re this programme.

Trust Adviser omits the matters outlined in that Stage 2 complaint.

Professor Rosling's emphatic statement that the middle billion of people are on ten times the dollar a day level is based on a confusion of two different units. The official figure is 3.4 times.

He had previously stated the World Bank "poverty" figures were plus or minus half a billion people, so it is not clear why it was justifiable using them.

<http://www.gapminder.org/news/sources-for-data-shown-in-dont-panic/> , point 8 shows the source for the numbers behind the “middle billion” claim.

The source is a University of Utrecht paper:

“It is important to stress that our world poverty estimates are lower than most other contemporary estimates.

...Ravallion (2004) has shown that both methods result in roughly similar results provided we accept 2 USD a day as poverty line. Hence, if one wants to compare our estimate to those in the literature [ie the World Bank “dollars a day”], one best use this threshold.”

http://www.cgeh.nl/sites/default/files/WorkingPapers/CGEH.WP_No1_Vanzandenetal.jan2011_0.pdf , page 22.

The academic paper directs readers to an article by Dr Ravallion in the Economist:

“It is not clear how much higher Mr Sala-i-Martin's poverty line should be to assure comparability with the Bank's \$1-a-day standard. However, a good guess might be that his poverty threshold should be doubled”.

<http://www.economist.com/node/2571960>

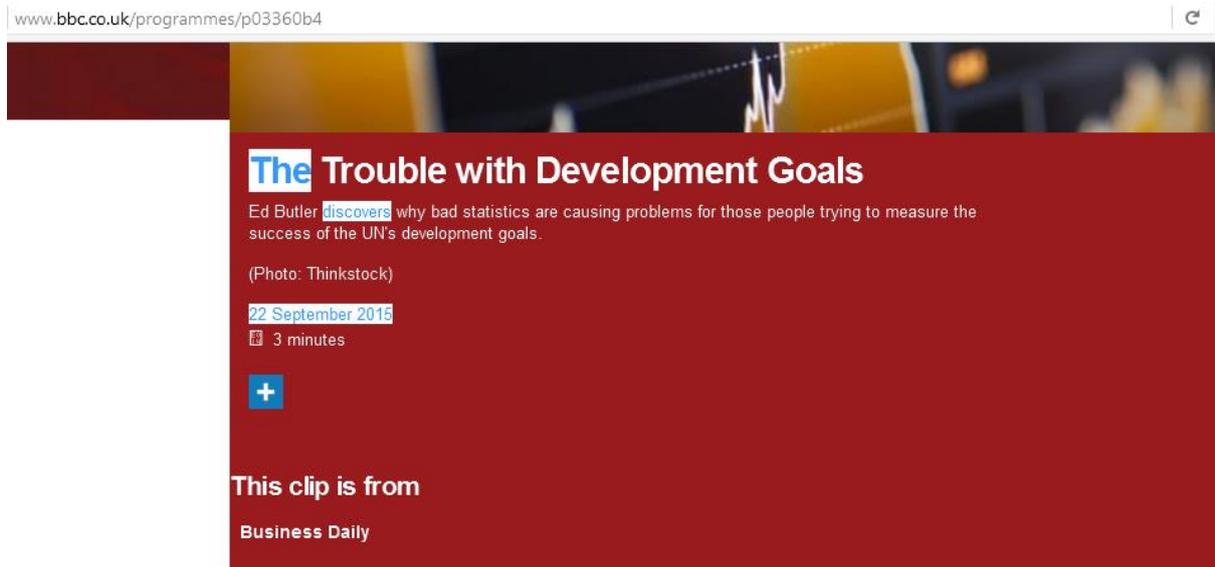
Pedantic note

The complainant made some minor errors which do not affect the complaints:

- a) he confused proportions for “developing countries” and “world” in illustrations for 1963 and 1981;
- b) he referred to the World Bank \$1.25 being equivalent to the Utrecht/Gapminder \$2 GDP. In fact the 2004 Economist article above concerns the old “dollar a day” which needs adjusting for inflation.

But neither of these errors makes much difference to the principles described in the complaints. The passage from the academic paper above does not make clear whether they have taken the change from the “old” to “new” dollar into account.

Unacknowledged complaint: World Service presents view that "we do know number in extreme poverty has halved" but no estimates of inflation faced, need or water quality; hunger statistics say 1 billion to 800 million.



World Service Radio

Complaint category:

Factual error or inaccuracy

...

Complaint title:

Contributes to failures: accuracy and impartiality

Complaint description:

Business Daily 22 Sep 2015.

Contributes (with other material complained of) to misleading impressions on UN pledges and poverty, and to imbalance of views.

See CAS-3340770, 3430579 etc, unacknowledged complaints:

poornews.org/somebbcunanswered.zip.

Idea that "data are poor" does not cover criticism of official statements.

1.15: *"pioneered...at UN 15 yrs ago"*

contributes to misinformation that easier 1990-baseline MDGs are what leaders pledged in 2000.

Leaders reaffirmed 2000-baseline pledges in 2005; nations in 2013 etc.

Evidence: ungoals.org;

BBC Trust ESC acknowledged difference in July 2015 bulletin page 128.

Guest's statement not well-sourced; no other views aired:

"we do know...number...in extreme poverty has halved".

That is just an opinion.

In fact UN does not estimate changing need, inflation faced or water quality.

siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/DevelopingworldispoorerQJE.pdf
mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx

UN chronic hunger estimates not reliable either, but

1991:1011 million;
2001:930M;
2015:795M

far from *"halved"*.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4646e.pdf> page 8.

BBC wrongly presents problem as only of data gap.
Omits point that statistics misused.

Guest is from ODI, some of whose major funders would be embarrassed by the truth:
UK Govt;
US,
other govts,
UN,

EU,
OECD,
World Bank

- some of which have clearly misused statistics.

Evidence:

ungoals.org

odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/list_of_donors.pdf

No email acknowledgement from Audience Services after web form complaint confirmed as received on 3 Nov 2015 at about 7.15 am. URL for confirmation web page was:

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=M7592VCC4RJ6O2HMTQVBKCCBA6&uid=695467160#anchor>

Unanswered complaint begins: "These are systemic BBC problems". "BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements". Millennium Children (BBC1) wrongly associates "world leaders in 2000" with the easier MDG framework; it claims the number of the poorest "halved" but official hunger numbers only fell from 930 to 800 million.



Millennium Children and web page "contribute to wrong impressions"

BBC1 broadcast 22 September 2015

CAS-3553582

...

Complaint Summary:

Inaccuracy and imbalance of views

Full Complaint:

These are systemic BBC problems.

Programme used 2000 baseline - correct for pledges of 2000.

But it and web page contribute (with other BBC material) to wrong impressions: see unanswered/unacknowledged complaints eg CAS-3340770.

CAS-3490707 re programme page resulted in reply. But incorrect:

"In 2000/leaders agreed/targets/[MDGs] they signed up to".

Trustees agree that is not true: ESC Jul 2015 bulletin page 128.

Leaders were and are committed to more ambitious 2000 baseline;

MDGs are easier (ungoals.org).

BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements.

Introduction:

"at beginning of/new millennium/world leaders/came up with/goals".

Not the MDGs.

Understandably, Will Anderson of KEO Films was unaware of difference when we spoke on 22 Sept.

Should BBC staff not be aware of it?

56.00: *"At turn of millenniumgoals they came up with".*

11.30:caption "MDG1" then audio: *"in 2000 world's leaders/wanted to halve number [%] of very poorest by now and they have":*

Well-sourced?

No estimates of inflation faced or needs.

It is matter of opinion: controversial.

Programme's statistics on children (125 down to 90 million) conflict with it.

World Bank and FAO statistics are known to be unreliable, but FAO estimates are nowhere near "*halved*": chronically hungry people estimated at 930 million in 2001 and 795M in 2015.

"*Halved*" claim contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims.

[above complaint acknowledged in email from: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
3 November 2015 at 15:40]

No substantive answer: "Part of BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism" [of official claims on global poverty]

Don't Panic: How to End Poverty in 15 Years
BBC2, first broadcast 23 September 2015

Complaint CAS-3555570

Complaint Summary:

Part of BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism

Full Complaint:

Contributes to BBC imbalance, giving "poverty" numbers/charts from widely-criticised World Bank method without proper challenge/other views.

See previous complaints including CAS-2476017 18/1213, unanswered by BBC at Stage 2.

Official stats in poor countries are obviously not of very high quality. But still:

A.

6.10: *Middle billion on "\$10"*:

As explained in 2476017 and at Stage 2, they are officially on c. \$3.50, not \$10.

[Later note: The presenter had just stated that the "extreme poverty" line is a little over one dollar. He therefore seems to be saying that the middle billion have incomes about nine times the "extreme poverty" level. It is not clear how that can be well-sourced.]

"Depends on value of dollar"

may mislead that real \$.

<http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNetPPP2005/index.htm?1>

Presenter seems again to conflate GDP \$10 and Bank household survey "\$/day".

[Later note: The Gapminder website now acknowledges what I told the BBC in 2013 in the as-yet-substantially-unanswered complaint about Professor Rosling's previous programme:

He has used one source for GDP and a different source (World Bank compilations of national household surveys) for the "extreme poverty" claims.

<http://www.gapminder.org/news/data-sources-dont-panic-end-poverty/> .

The problem is that he appears to have put estimates of GDP for the "middle billion", which includes more transactions than the household surveys, together with the estimates based on household surveys for the poorest.

GDP includes much more than the household surveys]

B.19.30 *"poverty tracker...time to look at data"*:

in fact these numbers reflect opinion, built on assumptions and value judgements about food quality, housing quality etc.

C. *"importance of UN goal 1.1"*:

Balance of views?

That indicator is severely out of step with hunger and other indicators, so clearly may well be a problem with it.

(Hunger claims also not necessarily reliable, but do not count paying rent as a benefit).

Chart said to be on *"extreme poverty"*.

But that is only an opinion.

These figures take no account of changing needs, or inflation faced.

"There is an uncertainty" is not enough to balance view presented:

visual effect/

wide publicity BBC has given to chart as showing "poverty"

D. *"Not the first time UN has set goal...at that time"*

may contribute to misleading idea: omits 1996 hunger pledge and the actual pledge of 2000 with 2000 baseline:

ungoals.org

.....

Above complaint was acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

4 November 2015 at 20:48

...Case number CAS-3555570-6V99HQ

Unanswered complaints: Another Rosling error and use of statistics he himself had rubbished.

"Pattern of imbalance of views";

Inaccuracy and imbalance towards official sources in coverage of global poverty.

BBC categorical statement on poverty "presents opinion as fact". We cannot in fact know basic needs are met because there are no statistics on water quality.

BBC categorical claim about extreme poverty despite lack of clean water statistics or estimates of needs.

Rosling quiz strangely claims extreme poverty "halved in Africa since 1990", appearing to exaggerate the official claims themselves based on ignoring need.

5 November 2015
CAS-3555804

"With other output, accuracy/impartiality lacking"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34312879>

A.

Contributes to pattern of imbalance of views on world poverty goal and progress reports, **in context of other BBC output**.

BBC tends to present official "\$/day" claims as on "*extreme poverty*" **without adequate questioning or other views**.

Official claims are widely criticised: eg they fail to take changing needs into account.

\$/day claims are out of step with progress reports on hunger and other MDG indicators.

Extreme poverty is supposed to be inability to meet basic needs.

But we cannot know basic needs are met: eg there are no stats on water quality (see upheld complaint CAS-2236086).

Categorical statement,

"proportion/in extreme poverty has shrunk – from 85%/in 1800 to 12% today"

presents opinion as fact.

Context; unanswered complaints eg on More or Less, including

email to ECU 28/5/2014;

to Audience Services 26/6/14;

CAS-3555570;

unacknowledged complaints 11/8/15 and 14/8/15.

B.

1.

CAS-2476017 (2013, still unanswered at Stage 2) stated, "8. **Proposal is not "eliminate" but 3% (c.250m people).**"

BBC 2015:

UN "aims to lift **every single one/out /within 15 years**";

"eradicated".

Similar BBC text :

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JiYcV_mg6A .

Evidence - first part of:

<http://strikingpoverty.worldbank.org/conversations/commission-global-poverty-share-your-ideas-measuring-extreme-poverty> .

2:

Quiz answer: "*fallen by more than half in/Africa since 1990*" .

Even World Bank only said 58% in 1990, 47%: in 2011 :

<http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNetPPP2005/index.htm?1>

[Later note: As I made clear in subsequent communication, this World Bank claim refers to Africa south of the Sahara.

The quiz is clearly making a point that the BBC cannot substantiate from what economists usually say about poverty in Africa.

That is not to say any economists are right, just that the BBC is making an apparently baseless claim. As the claim is so unusual, it looks like a straightforward error by Professor Rosling or someone else.]

.....

Above was acknowledged:
From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
5 November 2015 at 00:18
Case number CAS-3555804-5NJVYK

BBC "pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact". Wrong reports on government pledges "tend to let governments off". Difficult to find much evidence of other views on BBC website." Other media organisations have covered flaws in official method. This complaint noted other unacknowledged complaints.

CAS-3558419, 6 Nov 2015

Complaint Summary: Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact

Full Complaint: Apparent pattern in BBC output on world poverty: imbalance of official versus other views on progress.

Excess overstatements of official claims on progress; inaccuracies on UN pledges - tending to let governments off the hook.

bbc.co.uk/news/world-34363556, video 1.40:

"Extreme poverty/halved over/last 15 years".

But that is only one opinion, apparently presented as fact.

Difficult to find much evidence of other views on BBC website. Video report perhaps likely broadcast as well as placed online.

Unanswered complaints eg:

CAS-3445371 Newsround:

"goal in 2000/15 yrs later, number on \$1.25 cut in half."

2000 goal has 2000 baseline.

CAS-3430579: poverty target met "five years ahead of schedule".

How can BBC know, if no estimates of inflation or needs?

Recent complaints after similar problems repeated: CAS-3555804; CAS-3553582.

Unacknowledged complaints:

14/8/15: Business Daily "extreme poverty has been halved as UN promised".
"700m fewer in extreme poverty" Well-sourced?

Evidence: ungoals.org .

- Complaint 15/8/15, In the Balance 4/7/15: Extreme poverty goal "met in 2010". "Deaths have halved"

- Not in period "set up by UN in 2000" which has 2000 baseline.

Complaint 15/8/15: More or Less 3/7/15.

Coverage of flaws: nytimes.com/2003/04/26/arts/does-a-dollar-a-day-keep-poverty-away.html theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/06/globalisation.world
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB118064578670320492> ft.com/cms/s/0/9c9aa4f6-9640-11dc-b7ec-0000779fd2ac.html

.....

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 6 November 2015 at 20:52

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3558419-XZ7DX0

...This is an automated email acknowledging that we've received the attached complaint sent in this name. ...

We'll normally include the full text of your complaint to BBC staff in the overnight reports we compile for them about the complaints and other reaction we've received today (with all your personal details removed). This ensures it will reach the right people quickly tomorrow morning. We'll then aim to reply to you within 10 working days, or around 2 weeks, but it

also depends on the nature of your complaint and whether the relevant people can respond to us in time.

...

"Not tenable for the Trust Unit to claim Trustees had already dealt with overall complaint" on "false information to citizens in poor and rich countries about their governments' pledges."

From: Matt Berkley

Date: 13 November 2015 at 14:27

Subject: Re: Request for review of decision not to place appeal before Trustees: ECU ref. 1300394

To: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

[Underlining added later:]

Dear Ms Clarke,

Thank you for your email of 29 October.

Please clarify the following:

a) "we shall provide the Committee with your appeal dated 18 August 2015". I am not clear which text you mean by "appeal".

I wrote on 22 October, "I would be grateful if you could place the appeal letter before Trustees together with the email of 13 August appended to it."

The appeal letter and the email of 13 August appended to it are 1006 words of text. I would be grateful if you could confirm that the Committee will be provided with both.

b) "...and your request for a review of the decision not to proceed dated 22 October 2015."

It is not clear to me whether "request" means the annexes are to be placed before Trustees.

Thirdly, I based the contents of my request on what appear to be commitments by the Trust Unit on 20 and 21 October, below, to place two emails before Trustees.

I have no objection to the Unit providing Trustees with the extracts below instead of the entire emails.

As my emails of 19 and 21 October make clear, I submitted my response to the Trust Adviser's letter under protest.

Fourthly, I have still not received clarification on Trust Unit or Trustees' discretionary powers to return unanswered complaints to the Executive without formal consideration by the ESC. I am unaware of any clear published information on this.

Before the ESC decision notified to me on 19 June 2015, there had been extensive correspondence between the Trust Unit and myself.

The Trust Unit made clear that the ESC was not going to consider the wider allegation about the UN pledges.

The allegation was that the BBC had understated Millennium pledges over an extended period, through more explicitly false information than that in the Woman's Hour material, and through an accumulation of errors.

It is clear from the ESC decision that the Trustees limited their ruling to one instance of one form of words in one context.

It is therefore clearly not tenable for the Trust Unit to claim, as the Trust Adviser's letter did, that the ESC has already dealt with the overall complaint about the BBC giving false information to citizens in poor and rich countries about their governments' pledges.

Since this is a matter which affects people's ability to hold their governments to account, I request again that unless there are formal bars against doing so, the Trust Unit or Trustees take action now to send these complaints back to the Executive for the investigation which has not yet taken place at Stage 1.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Unanswered complaint: BBC repeatedly claimed humans met "clean" water goal, after upheld complaint that statistics do not exist

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-34347198>

Complaint Summary:

Not duly accurate: UN "clean" water goal "met"

Full Complaint:

A. Video, 00:08:

"The goals on....and clean water were met ahead of time".

Not duly accurate.

The statistics are not on clean water but on "improved sources".

Why does this matter?

Evidence:

*"indicator does not measure quality directly....the assumption that improved sources are more likely to provide safe water than unimproved sources is * misleading *."*

Human Rights and MDGs in Practice: A review of country strategies and reporting UN 2010
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HRAndMDGsInPractice.pdf>

*"At/current rate/672 million people will not use improved drinking water sources in 2015. It is likely that * many hundreds of millions more * will still lack sustainable access to * safe * drinking water"*

UNICEF/WHO 2011

www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/report_wash_low.pdf

BBC has already upheld complaint on this:

CAS-2236086 resulted in email from News Online 25/7/2013:

"4) The clean water reference has been changed to "improved sources of water"."

Same error as:

- unanswered complaints CAS-3430579 and CAS-3445371;
- unacknowledged complaint 14/8/15 on Business Daily;
- mentioned in unanswered complaint emailed to BBC World News 27/11/14.

B: Handling complaint:

BBC repeating same error and failing to respond to complaints despite previous correction.

Please answer the other complaints.

Thank you.

Above was acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

5 November 2015 at 15:04

...CAS-3556479-42JQTW

Unanswered complaint: BBC seems to repeatedly use wrong baseline for MDG water target as well as the wrong baseline for the Millennium pledges and false claims that progress reports are on "clean" or "safe" water

Addition at Stage 1a.

Ref. CAS-3568729
[Original ref. CAS-3556479]

Complaint Summary: Complaint does seem within time limit

Full Complaint: I have received a response that the complaint was submitted outside the 30-working- day period. It was submitted within 30 working days of the only date on the page.

Further notes:

The video on the page claims that MDG "goals" on poverty and water have been met ahead of time.

But these are not two of the eight "goals" as a viewer may well conclude.

The target on hunger, part of MDG1, has not been officially met ahead of time.

The target on water is not even a whole target.

The video on the page claims that an MDG "goal" on "clean" water has been met ahead of time.

It was clear even in 2005 that the idea that there were data on "clean" water was far-fetched:

<http://www.oecd.org/environment/outreach/35372500.pdf>

An additional problem for this claim is that the MDG target does not have the easier 1990 baseline.

According to an OECD document of September 2001 this is because it has a 2000 baseline: millenniumdeclaration.org/mdgwaterbaseline.pdf, page 4.

The requirement for BBC output is that it be well sourced.

It is not clear that the BBC has statistics suggesting either

that the proportion of people without clean water has halved, or

that the proportion without "improved sources" according to the UNICEF/WHO definition has halved.

within the period of 2000 to 2015 suggested by the MDG target as written and apparently confirmed by the OECD document of 2001.

If any specific parts of my complaints are unclear, please contact me.

Thank you.

[Above response acknowledged:

"From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 13 November 2015 at 19:09

...CAS-3568729-KN5W2Y

...We are sorry that you were not satisfied with our earlier response to your complaint... we aim to investigate and reply to you normally within up to 20 working days..."]

Unanswered new complaint 13 November 2015: "accuracy problems about goals on poverty and "clean" water" as in previous unanswered complaint; "there is no 1990 baseline...in the MDG target for water". There was not an official "halving" between 2000 and 2015 even of the proportion without so-called "improved sources". So even an "improved sources" target - easier than the actual MDG target - was not "met". BBC Youtube video.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK2lr2yOXm4

Tube^{GB} Search

The goals on poverty and clean water were met ahead of time

'End poverty' - and 16 more UN Global Goals - BBC News

BBC NEWS BBC News 759,200

2,596 views

+ Add to Share More 16 27

Published on Oct 3, 2015

Ending poverty is one of 17 goals outlined by the UN to replace the Millennium Development Goals which expire at the end of this year. The 17 goals aim

13 November 2015
CAS-3568785

Complaint Summary:

Accuracy problems as in [unanswered] CAS-3556479

Full Complaint:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK2lr2yOXm4>

The video has accuracy problems about goals on poverty and "clean" water being met, as described in CAS-3556479-42JQTW and follow-up CAS-3568729-KN5W2Y.

Further note for both this complaint and those:

Contrary to popular belief, there is no 1990 baseline given in the MDG target for water:

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=indicators/officialist.htm> .

The OECD Secretariat stated a 2000 baseline was agreed:

millenniumdeclaration.org/mdgwaterbaseline.pdf , page 4.

From the UNICEF/WHO database, the estimates for proportions of people without "improved sources" of water are:

1990: 23.6%;

2000: 17.5%;

2015: 9.1%.

There was not an official "halving" between 2000 and 2015 of the proportion without so-called "improved sources".

Data from:

<http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/tables/>

Please see the last three lines on the left hand side, third column of data.

The figures I give above are the result of subtracting from 100% to give proportions of people estimated as lacking access.

Also, the Youtube text description states that the global aim is to

"eliminate poverty...over the next 15 years".

But as I wrote in CAS-3555804: "CAS-2476017 (2013, still unanswered at Stage 2) stated,

"8. Proposal is not "eliminate" but 3% (c.250m people)."

...

Evidence - first part of:

<http://strikingpoverty.worldbank.org/conversations/commission-global-poverty-share-your-ideas-measuring-extreme-poverty>"

.....

Above acknowledged as received:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 13 November 2015 at 19:33

...CAS-3568785-BXSMCL

...

...we aim to investigate and reply to you normally within up to 20 working days...

13 November 2015 to BBC Trust Unit:

"I have still not received clarification on Trust Unit or Trustees' discretionary powers to return unanswered complaints to the Executive without formal consideration by the ESC. I am unaware of any clear published information on this."

Unanswered complaint: Are accuracy and balance across BBC output on global poverty enough for people in a democracy?

16 November 2015
CAS-3571759

Complaint Summary:

Due accuracy/balance in output on poverty claims

Full Complaint:

The question I ask is this:

"Does the BBC take reasonable steps to provide the basics - across its output on progress on world poverty - of accurate and clear enough information, and at least crudely balanced views, to inform audiences' ability to take part in the democratic process?".

Please see CAS-3561236/CAS-3561377;
CAS-3558419;
CAS-3553582.

The article bbc.co.uk/news/world-34440567 seems to contribute to a pattern of inaccuracy and lack of impartiality, including by omission of other views, in BBC output on world poverty claims.

1. It gives a misleading impression of precision, certainty and non-controversial nature of the claims:

eg. "60%...999.2...in extreme poverty...1,959..37.1%.";

"In numbers: the decline...".

The claims are mostly based on surveys on spending and grown food.

They use researchers' judgements about the relative worth of different food, accommodation,

unsafe water and so on.

They use no estimates of changing need.

Is that unimportant information for audiences?

2. The global goals video has problems as in CAS-3556479 and an unanswered complaint emailed 27/10/2014 to bbcworld@bbc.co.uk.

3. The line is not simply "\$1.90...up from \$1.25".

"1.90" is in 2011 prices, while \$1.25 was in 2005 prices.

(please click on "*it forecasts*" in article, paragraph 2).

This page has the same error:

<https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=ru&u=http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p034fkzc> .

4. The article links to material mentioned in other complaints.

.....

Above complaint acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 16 November 2015 at 00:24

...CAS-3571759-0DHZDW

...We'll normally include the full text of your complaint to BBC staff in the overnight reports

we compile for them about the complaints and other reaction we've received today (with all your personal details removed). This ensures it will reach the right people quickly tomorrow morning. ...

Above complaint mentions this article:

World Bank: Extreme poverty 'to fall below 10%'

5 October 2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-34440567>

"The bank said it was using a new income figure of \$1.90 per day to define extreme poverty, up from \$1.25." [!]

"In 1990, 60% of the area's population (999.2 million)

[! - strange categorical, precise claim about something which is clearly a matter of opinion, and based on widely-criticised World Bank claims]

lived in extreme poverty."

"In numbers: the decline of global extreme poverty

1990: 1,959 billion = 37.1% of world's population.

1999: 1,747 billion = 29% of world's population.

2012: 902 million = 12.8% of world's population.

2015: 702 million = 9.6% of world's population."

The article links to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p032nq98> , the subject of another complaint, CAS-3555570.

Unanswered follow-up on another Rosling error and BBC imbalance:
"I cannot easily find in BBC output: a) accurate enough description of the basis of official statistics on world poverty to enable me to take a view on the official claims or b) alternative views to the official claims.". Subsequent BBC responses on "Millennium Children" and "How to End Poverty" fail to take proper account of this: "Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items."

Complaint Summary:

Inaccuracy and imbalance **in context of BBC output**

Full Complaint:

I request further investigation.

I have yet to see how the response answers, or accurately describes, the complaints.

The series of complaints I have submitted to the BBC on its coverage of progress on global poverty is in this context:

I cannot easily find in BBC output:

a) **accurate enough description** of the basis of official **statistics on world poverty** to enable me to take a view on the official claims

or

b) **alternative views to the official claims.**

Recent BBC output mentioning a "data gap" reflects the recent official position, and does not cover the critical views.

The BBC appears not to properly represent the academic and political debate.

See "coverage of flaws" in CAS-3558419-XZ7DX0.

This particular complaint is titled

"With other output, accuracy/impartiality lacking".

It states that the material

*"Contributes to imbalance....**in context of other BBC output"**".*

Please see CAS-3553582, and also CAS-3558419, which states this article is part of a

"Pattern of repeating spin...as fact"

...and mentions an

"imbalance of official versus other views".

Related complaints include CAS-3555570 ; CAS-3561236/CAS-3561377.

I cannot find a source for the quiz answer that extreme poverty has

"fallen by more than half in/Africa since 1990".

The World Bank numerical claims I gave are on "sub-Saharan" Africa.
(I am not saying World Bank claims are valid.)

Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items.

Thank you.

....

[Above was acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 20 November 2015 at 15:11

...Case number CAS-3579660-46726C

.... you were not satisfied with our earlier response...[ie on CAS-3555804-5NJVYK]..."

Unanswered complaint: Addition to concern on worldwide "Global Citizen" broadcast's errors. "Difficult to see much in BBC output to counterbalance the official claims."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34490054>

Complaint category:
Bias

Complaint title:

Inaccurate and imbalanced in context of BBC output

Complaint description:

It seems that CAS-3561236-D8SQR0 was submitted within the 30-working-day period, so I request a response.

I wish to complain also about this page:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34490054> .

The categorical statement

***"Fewer than 10%** of the world's population now live in extreme poverty"*

has an **unclear factual basis**,
since this is essentially a **matter of opinion** rather than verifiable fact;
in this case there are **no estimates of changing need or inflation faced**.

It seems to **contribute further to imbalance of BBC coverage** on progress on global poverty **towards World Bank sources**.

It is difficult to see much in BBC output to counterbalance the official claims.

Case number CAS-3579521
20 November 2015

Previous reference:

CAS-3561236-D8SQR0

.....

Instead of investigating Hans Rosling's use of statistics he himself had rubbished and his baseless claim that the "middle billion" "get" ten times the dollar a day level, or a possible Editorial Complaints Unit conflict of interest because it had itself made a similar but worse error related to another problem in the programme it was supposed to investigate, the BBC repeats the programme.

Note: Editorial Complaints Unit made same inaccuracy suggested as possible in this programme, in a ruling of 2005 - overstating, other things being equal, the value of the "dollar a day" by implying it was a real dollar. The first point I had made about this programme is that it failed to make clear that the dollars were the "international" dollars worth far less. That is why I suggested a possible conflict of interest - not, as Trustees claimed on 19 January 2016, because the ECU had dealt with any other complaints of mine.

CAS-3589152

Follow-up ref.: CAS-3628016

Second follow-up ref: CAS-3695207

Complaint Summary:

Programme repeated despite unanswered complaint

Full Complaint:

The previous complaint has not yet been answered by the BBC at Stage 2.

The last communications were from the Head of the Editorial Complaints Unit:

2 June 2014:

"I hope to be able to give you our provisional finding by 30 June";

4 July 2014:

"I don't think I'm likely to be in a position to do so for at least another two weeks".

It is not clear why it was justifiable for the programme to use World Bank poverty claims in the way it did, given the presenter's comments elsewhere:

"Rosling is strikingly upfront about the limitations of data. ...real uncertainties in the data that _must_ be assessed:...global poverty measurements are infrequent and uncertain....The uncertainty of 1.3 billion [people living in poverty] is plus or minus half a billion. ...These issues are well known, he says..... "It's like the emperor's new clothes, and I'm the little child saying 'He's nude! He's nude!'"

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/may/17/hans-rosling-data-population-fertility> ;

"When it comes to the MDGs, the only one we measure quite well is child mortality."

Hans Rosling, 2013.

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/91/12/13-031213/en/> .

On the programme's confusing two "dollar" units:

<http://www.gapminder.org/news/sources-for-data-shown-in-dont-panic/> , point 8

shows the source for the numbers behind the “middle billion” claim.

The ECU has not yet answered concerning a possible conflict of interest in respect of its adjudicating on this complaint.

.....

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 27 November 2015 at 17:53

...CAS-3589152-LRBD0G

....We'll normally include the full text of your complaint to BBC staff in the overnight reports we compile for them....

This ensures it will reach the right people quickly tomorrow morning. ...

.....

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
1 December 2015 at 14:30
...CAS-3589152-LRBD0G

...I would advise that you get in touch with the ECU directly....

.....

Unanswered complaints of BBC failures since 2000, emphasised to Trustees: BBC fails to inform the public of leaders' commitments of 2000, or the basis of "the world's number one goal". 2 December 2015

Dear Mr Ayre,

Statement on appeal to ESC: Global poverty

The following may make the Committee's work today [later note: the meeting was in fact the next day] easier. You may wish to read it out at the meeting or distribute it.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

An unanswered Stage 1a complaint of 1 November 2012 is: "*The BBC appears **never** to have **reported correctly** the facts about official claims of progress on global poverty since 2000. ... BBC has **failed to ask basic questions** of those providing the information. ... likely damage from the BBC's **failures over many years** to report the correct situation.*"

An unanswered Stage 1a complaint of 28 May 2014 to the ECU (because complaints to Audience Services had been ignored) is:

*"The BBC has often conflated easier MDG targets...with more ambitious...Declaration promises of 2000, and I know of **no evidence that any BBC output has noted the difference.**"*

As I informed the Trust Unit on 14 October 2015 in the handling complaint read by the Head of Editorial Standards:

"The situation is in fact more serious.

*I see **no evidence that the BBC has ever reported accurately the UN commitments** on poverty made in September 2000, even though leaders reaffirmed them in 2013."*

It appears that anyone relying on the BBC may be in the dark on what the new Global Goal 1.1 actually is, and what their government is still committed to.

In the handling complaint I documented a large number of inaccuracies in the Trust Adviser's letter. None of the mentioned complaints about the UN pledges have been answered at Stage 1a. The ECU stated in the last communication before the appeal (21 July) that they appeared to be outstanding. The ECU did not reject all further complaints as out of time.

But in any case, the BBC have not answered the complaints of failure to report important facts - or important views. I suggest this is essential context for the specific complaints on accuracy and impartiality, and the request that the BBC investigate further.

Thank you for your attention.

Unanswered public-interest appeal to restore evidence on UN pledges to BBC website

From: Matt Berkley ...

Date: 16 December 2015 at 08:03

Subject: Re: Reminder. Appeal against moderation decision

To: Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Moderation Services Team,

On 19 June 2015 the Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust issued a decision acknowledging that the Millennium Development Goal target of 2001 was "less demanding" than leaders' pledge of 2000. Leaders reaffirmed that more ambitious pledge in 2005, as did the high-level UN Special Event and the General Assembly in 2013 and the European Union member states in 2015. Evidence is at <http://millenniumdeclaration.org/pledges.htm> .

Following that BBC Trust decision, the BBC persisted in conflating the MDG targets with the actual pledges. Since February 2014 persistently failed to answer complaints on its errors on this matter, including blatantly false statements that the Millennium Declaration has the easier 1990 baseline.

I wish to challenge the decision below. Please inform me how.

I have not yet received acknowledgement of the public interest arguments, which as I have explained make this in my view a special case.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 15 December 2015 at 18:00, Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley,

We write to inform you that on Monday the 7th of December 2015, the Managing Editor of BBC Online decided that your appeal did not meet the necessary criteria to be escalated to the Social Media Complaints Group.

It needed to concern a matter of substance, not be vexatious or trivial, and there needed to be sufficient evidence to suggest that your appeal against a moderation decision had a reasonable prospect of success.

Regards,
BBC Moderation Services Team

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

From: Matt Berkley ...
Sent: 15 December 2015 15:49
To: Central Communities Team
Subject: Reminder. Appeal against moderation decision

Dear Moderation Services Team,

I request acknowledgement of the appeal request of 4 December.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...
Date: 4 December 2015 at 12:55

Subject: Fwd: Appeal against moderation decision

To: Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Moderation Services Team,

I request that the appeal be considered for escalation to the Social Media Complaints Group.

I add further remarks below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

I refer to previous correspondence and wish the arguments in it to be taken into account.

I recognise that the comments' relevance may not be obvious at first.

However:

1. There is relevance, as I have explained.

The House Rule is,

"Comments that are ***unrelated*** to the subject of discussion are considered 'off-topic'."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/house-rules#faqitem-4-8>

The evidence of BBC reporting failures, including on CBBC, is related to the subject of the post: proposals to spend money on expanding output.

The proposals included spending money on more output rather than improving quality. The Chair of the Trust had written,

"the BBC...asked us to look at....adding a BBC One+1 channel, extending the hours of CBBC and adding new content to iPlayer.

"we want what they want – a strong, sustainable BBC which stays relevant and reflects audience needs"

"We are in favour of plans to extend CBBC's hours...We also felt new content for iPlayer....will make this much-loved service even better."

My comments supply evidence of a problem with quality, including CBBC output. The misreporting relating to world leaders' pledges is a systemic problem.

I suggest it is clear that proposals to extend the quantity or availability of output need to be weighed against, resources to prevent false information being given, for example, to children.

It is not clear to me that the BBC is correct in publishing categorical statements that my comments "broke the house rules".

The BBC has not shown that the content is unrelated to proposals to spend more money on extending services.

The evidence I supplied as comments clearly shows that the BBC has produced content which contradicts a) UN information and b) the Editorial Standards Committee decision of 19 June.

I suggest that BBC and Trust staff can see on reflection that the BBC's repeated contradiction of a UN statement and also a statement by the BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee is of some relevance to the allocation of scarce resources.

I wrote to the Chair of the Trust on 16 September:

"As you can see, the relevance of my comments to your blog post is that the BBC is proposing to extend iPlayer and/or CBBC output, and I am pointing out defects in quality which might indicate a better target for expenditure and/or consideration."

2. The fact that the Trust has now made a relevant decision does not in itself mean that the removal was appropriate.

Among other reasons for preserving the comments is they are a public record of an audience member's evidence relevant to the proposals to spend extra money on further output and repeats.

3. The BBC has not responded to my argument that it is in the public interest for this particular content to be left intact.

The public interest would be less if the BBC could show that it had during the last fifteen years, with a reasonable degree of prominence, correctly stated world leaders' pledges of 2000.

The General Assembly reaffirmed the pledges in 2013 and the EU in 2015: see millenniumdeclaration.org/pledges.htm.

This is not a trivial matter.

I can see no evidence that the BBC has informed citizens of those pledges. In that context, the idea of removing information about them from a BBC website seems to go against the spirit of BBC purposes, as stated both formally and informally.

4. There is another aspect to this case. The comments are a public record of a historical fact: an attempt to notify the Chair of the BBC Trust, and/or other Trustees or Trust and BBC employees who may read them, of a BBC failure to inform citizens of pledges relevant to their holding governments to account, despite editorial complaints.

The BBC failed to inform citizens accurately of historic commitments by national leaders. The comments are evidence that the BBC and Trust were given the potentially embarrassing information about that failure, for all Trustees, Trust employees and BBC employees to see, on this occasion.

The BBC has removed that evidence.

5. The fact that the BBC failed to correct the errors after the comments were published is also potentially embarrassing for the BBC and/or Trust.

The comments' being visible, other things being equal, might embarrass the BBC or Trustees.

I would therefore argue that the BBC and Trust should give due consideration to, and if necessary view themselves as erring on the side of, transparency.

.....

From: **Central Communities Team** <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>

Date: 6 November 2015 at 17:07

Subject: RE: Appeal against moderation decision

...

Dear Matt,

We are sorry to hear that you are dissatisfied with our decision.

If you wish, you can take this matter further by requesting your appeal be considered for escalation to the Social Media Complaints Group via this address Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk.

For more information about our appeals process, please visit the linked page:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/faqs/appeals>

Regards,

BBC Moderation Services Team

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

From: Matt Berkley ...

Sent: 05 November 2015 00:31

To: Central Communities Team

Subject: Re: Appeal against moderation decision

Dear Moderation Services Team,

The criterion which the BBC advertises for relevance is not that a comment should "refer" to the subject matter but that it be "relevant".

Please clarify whether the rules state that material should be removed if it does not "refer" to particular matters.

The comment is relevant to the proposal to extend CBBC hours, because it shows an important area of work where CBBC could usefully devote some resources. It is perhaps relatively cheap to let staff know some key facts about the world.

It is not clear to me that the response answers the point made in the appeal, which is basically this:

There is an overwhelming public interest case for leaving the evidence as originally published by the BBC, because the BBC has not told the public what world leaders are actually committed to.

As a speaker noted at the Global Citizen festival broadcast by the BBC on 28 September:

"promises...it is up to us to make sure they are kept...you can't fight for your rights if you don't know what they are, so we need everyone to tell everyone in the world about the goals...let's do our job so politician have to do theirs"

The context for my comment is that I cannot find any reference at all on the BBC website to leaders' commitments to the people - which the General Assembly reaffirmed in 2013 - to reduce, for example, child mortality, by 2015, to a third of its rate in 2000.

The only places on the website were the Trustees' decision of June 2015, which as I have explained to the Trust is not supported by the facts of UN resolutions, and my comment. The BBC and apparently the Trust have removed the only accurate version of leaders' pledges and the relationship of those pledges to the easier, later MDG targets.

Please confirm whether in your view the response dealt with the appeal as written.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 5 October 2015 at 14:16, Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr. Berkley,

The Moderation Services Team and the site owner of the BBC Trust blog have reviewed your appeal for both comments.

Both of your comments are considered off-topic because they do not refer to the topic of the post, which is about provision decisions on whether BBC Three should be broadcast online, CBBC hours should be extended, iPlayer could host third party content and premieres, and whether a BBC One +1 channel should be launched.

The blog post was not related to UN Millennium Development Goals.

In this instance we believe that the moderators were correct to remove your comments and so we will be unable to uphold your appeal.

Full details of our appeals process can be found here –

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/faqs/appeals>

Regards,
BBC Moderation Services Team

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

From: Matt Berkley ...
Sent: 05 October 2015 12:20
To: Central Communities Team
Subject: Re: Appeal against moderation decision

Dear Moderation Services Team,

Thank you for your reply.

I request a reply at the first stage to the appeal I submitted.

The text I sent via your web form is below. I cannot speculate on why you have sent me non-English characters.

If the team did not assess this text for its decision, then I propose that the decision process be restarted.

I do not have the technical knowledge to insert a large number of non-English characters easily, so perhaps this indicates a problem with the BBC's systems.

Please answer the question on timescale for appeal.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley.

.....

Appeal against decision to remove comments

Matt Berkley
20 September 2015

My comments were removed on the grounds that they were considered off-topic.

In my submission:

1. The comments are relevant to the subject matter (proposals to extend CBBC hours and to possible use of new iPlayer content), because they address the need to balance new services with attention to quality.
2. Even if they were not relevant, there is an overriding public interest in the information being available to the public.

URLs of content removed:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/trustcomments/F30909962?thread=8476392&post=122677687#p122677687>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/trustcomments/F30909962?thread=8476392&post=122677829#p122677829>

Subject: BBC Trust decision on proposed changes to BBC television and online services

Date of comments: 21 August 2015

The Chair of the BBC Trust, author of the blog post, wrote:

"proposals put to us by the BBC...They asked us to look at...extending the hours of CBBC..."

"The Trust's role is to listen and consider the public's views"

"We are in favour of plans to extend CBBC's hours".

"These are still provisional conclusions and our final decision could be different"

"we want what they want – a strong, sustainable BBC which stays relevant and reflects audience needs"

The relevance of my comments is to

- a) the discussion on the proposal to extend CBBC hours and/or introduce new iPlayer content - and other proposals to extend other services which may be considered in future - and
- b) the stated wish of the Chair for a strong, sustainable BBC which stays relevant and reflects audience needs.

It seems to me that the question of whether existing BBC output is accurate is relevant to audience needs, especially if democracies are to function properly.

My first comment ends:

"12 July 2015, CBBC: "In the year 2000...189 countries agreed to work together to achieve eight [!] big goals by 2015 - called the Millennium Development Goals [!]" "

The second comment states,

"The BBC implies that world leaders in 2000 resolved to bring the number of deaths of children under five years old to below 4.3 million in 2015. The pledge was around 3.5 million. Assuming constant progress, the difference between the pledge and the BBC claimed pledge is about 5 million child deaths."

The BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee, replying on a complaint, confirmed that world leaders in 2000 did not agree what CBBC was later to state on 12 July.

The ESC stated:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf

"In the following year, 2001, the UN published a Road Map..."

(As I have stated to the Trustees, I am afraid that does not seem clear enough when we are discussing UN commitments. It was the Secretary-General's Road Map, not the nations'. It was a document written by civil servants, making proposals to the General Assembly.)

The ESC stated,

"It can be seen therefore that by changing the base line for measuring the reduction of under-five child mortality deaths to the year 1990, the target set in 2001 was a less demanding

commitment than that made in 2000."

At the moment, the BBC has stated that the comments categorically broke the House Rules, which is not clearly the case. The purpose is stated as follows:

"We've established these House Rules for your safety and to keep the BBC messageboards a healthy environment for discussion."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/house-rules>

I understand that careful reading and thought may be required to see the relevance of the comments to the proposal of extending CBBC hours.

A reasonable inference from Ms Fairhead's words might be that the BBC and Trust are considering spending more money, resources or thought on CBBC or iPlayer.

<http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/cbbc-urged-to-fill-extra-hours-with-new-shows/5089942.article>

Unfortunately, some important existing BBC output, including from CBBC and on iPlayer, seems to contradict official documents, and even a statement by BBC Trustees.

Fixing this kind of problem is, in itself, perhaps relatively cheap and easy, and perhaps better value for the purposes of the BBC than extending services without considering audience members' contributions on such important matters of quality.

As can be seen from the evidence at poornews.org, the BBC has failed to fix the problems on global poverty reporting.

I have not complained via the blog - merely supplied evidence. This is in line with UN resolutions calling for publicity for the pledges of the Millennium Declaration. I note that the BBC seems not to have carried this out.

.....

16 September 2015

Fwd: Urgent: BBC set to misreport UN pledges again at next week's Summit

To: trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Fairhead,

Thank you for your attention yesterday outside Portcullis House, on the BBC's errors about Millennium Declaration pledges.

The problems might raise questions of governance, news strategy and/or adequacy of the complaints system authorised by the Trust.

The BBC has repeatedly stated, and implied, that Millennium pledges have easier baselines than is in fact the case, and failed to reply to complaints on this since February 2014.

The evidence I mentioned to you is here.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20150821152153/http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbctrust/entries/3950cd25-1120-46b3-9fe0-a9259677adfa>

As you can see, the relevance of my comments to your blog post is that the BBC is proposing to extend iPlayer and/or CBBC output, and I am pointing out defects in quality which might indicate a better target for expenditure and/or consideration.

...Further evidence is at:

poornews.org

Yours sincerely

Matt Berkley

.....

"The BBC Executive's statement also asserted that the changes to iPlayer would results in its evolution from a predominantly catch-up service to one which includes more online-first and online-only content. Many of these online premieres, it is suggested, will be...commissioned by CBBC and CBeebies."

<http://www.tvbeurope.com/bbc-trust-launches-consultation-proposed-changes/>

"Proposals to include selected third party content in iPlayer were welcomed by Ofcom..."

<http://www.tvbeurope.com/bbc-trust-launches-consultation-proposed-changes/>

"...the Trust is therefore required to conduct a public value test, including a public consultation, so licence fee payers, audience groups and industry stakeholders have an opportunity to have their say on the proposals. "

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/bbc-three-proposal>

.....

On 5 October 2015 at 12:09, Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr. Berkley,

Please find the correct email address below.

If you wish, you can take this matter further by requesting your appeal be considered for escalation to the Social Media Complaints Group via this address Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk.

For more information about our appeals process, please visit the linked page:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/faqs/appeals>

The original email we received from you can be found at the end of this email chain.

Regards,
BBC Moderation Services Team

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

From: Matt Berkley ...
Sent: 04 October 2015 11:30
To: Central Communities Team; Central Communities Team
Subject: Fwd: Appeal against moderation decision

Dear Central Communities Team,

I am resending the message below as the email address you have supplied for the appeal seems not to be correct.

Please confirm the correct email address with the answers to the queries.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Matt Berkley ...
Date: 2015-10-04 10:59 GMT+01:00
Subject: Fwd: Appeal against moderation decision
To: Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>, centralcommunitiesteam@bbc.co.uk

Dear Central Communities Team,

Thank you for your response.

Firstly, I would be grateful for an answer to this in my previous email:

"Please send me a copy of my complaint so that I can be sure your system resulted in the correct text reaching you."

The reason for the request is the garbled text appended to your email.

Secondly, the page you mention states:

"you can ask that it is considered again by the BBC's Social Media Complaints Group."

I see no time limits for such requests. Please advise.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>

Date: 2015-09-28 12:58 GMT+01:00

Subject: RE: Appeal against moderation decision

...

Dear Matt,

We are sorry to hear that you are dissatisfied with our decision. If you wish, you can take this matter further by writing to the Managing Editor of BBC Online via this address centralcommunitiesteam@bbc.co.uk

For more information please visit point three of our Moderation Appeals FAQ "How does the appeal process work?" at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/faqs/appeals>

If they decide to investigate a complaint, the Social Media Complaints Group will inform you of its decision, explaining its reasons.

Regards,
BBC Moderation Services Team

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

From: Matt Berkley [mailto:mattberkley@gmail.com]

Sent: 21 September 2015 15:04

To: Central Communities Team

Subject: Re: Appeal against moderation decision

Thank you. Please send me a copy of my complaint so that I can be sure your system resulted in the correct text reaching you.

The page you mention states,

"you can ask that it is considered again by the BBC's Social Media Complaints Group".

Please tell me how I do this.

Thank you.

2015-09-21 14:37 GMT+01:00 Central Communities Team <Central-communities-team@bbc.co.uk>:

...Your comment was removed for being off-topic because the blog does not mention the United Nations and their statistics regarding the deaths of children under five years.

Comments posted to the blog article must discuss the content of the article itself.

...we believe that the moderators were correct to remove your comment and so we will be unable to uphold your appeal...

BBC Moderation Services Team
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation>

-----Original Message-----

...

Sent: 20 September 2015 13:43
To: Central Communities Team
Subject: Appeal against moderation decision

{Referer:} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/social/moderation/contact>

{Webpage:} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbctrust/entries/3950cd25-1120-46b3-9fe0-a9259677adfa>

...

----- Message -----

{Subject:} Appeal against moderation decision

{Comment:} Appeal against decision to remove comments

Matt Berkley

20 September 2015

My comments were removed on the grounds that they were considered off-topic. In my submission:

1. The comments are relevant to the subject matter (proposals to extend CBBC hours and to possible use of new iPlayer content), because they address the need to balance new services with attention to quality.
2. Even if they were not relevant, there is an overriding public interest in the information being available to the public.

URLs of content removed:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/trustcomments/F30909962?thread=8476392&post=122677687#p122677687>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/trustcomments/F30909962?thread=8476392&post=122677829#p122677829>

Subject: BBC Trust decision on proposed changes to BBC television and online services

Date of comments: 21 August 2015

The Chair of the BBC Trust, author of the blog post, wrote:

"proposals put to us by the BBC...They asked us to look at...extending the hours of CBBC....

Still no answer on specific possibility of ECU conflict of interest.
BBC repeated programme despite complaint not being answered at
Stage 2

BBC Two

"Don't Panic: The Truth about Population"

broadcast 18/10/2015

Bias

Contacted us before Yes

Haven't received a response yet

[Previous] Reference 3589152

Complaint title

Repeat despite complaint; possible ECU conflict

Complaint description

This complaint is titled "*Programme repeated...*".

It is not clear to me that the decision to repeat is purely an ECU matter.

I request a response on the Stage 1a complaint about this repeat.

Secondly, I complained that

"The ECU has not yet answered concerning a possible conflict of interest in respect of its adjudicating on this complaint."

I request a response on this point from a different part of the BBC.

Thirdly, as staff are aware from other complaints, I allege patterns of inaccuracy and imbalance in BBC output over an extended period. The allegations include imbalance towards official sources - even where not duly accurate - in BBC coverage of global poverty and official pledges to poor people.

The issue is not merely the ECU's response to an isolated complaint but wider.

The BBC has acknowledged that I have made a series of complaints:

"From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk 9 November 2015 at 20:52

...CAS-3556479...

...we'll review your complaints history and if there any found to be requiring a response....then we will investigate further and hopefully...as soon as possible. ...you have made a number of complaints to the BBC on broadly the same issue".

Please see other complaints, for example CAS-3579660 which details others and includes,

"Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items."

One section where Professor Rosling confuses two dollar units is in the clip "Yardstick of Wealth": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01kjmyz> .

At 2:15 he states

"the most important...is this",

then he is quite emphatic at 3:15 that the middle billion are on ten times their dollar-a-day level.

But the official number is [later note: in any case, was] 3.4, not 10.

.....

Above text acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 29 December 2015 at 09:18

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case Number CAS-3628016-PF3F2M

.....

Complaint of 2013 still unanswered that Professor Rosling "himself has cast significant doubt on the statistics he presented".
Replies on "Pattern of imbalance on world poverty claims" "cannot be adequate without reference to the related complaints".

Follow-up, 18 January 2016

New reference: CAS-3666635

Don't Panic: How to End Poverty

Broadcast 18/10/2015

Most applicable category of those listed on BBC complaints web form:

Bias

Previous reference: 3555570

Complaint title:

Pattern of imbalance on world poverty claims

Complaint description:

I request a response to the specific points.

The complaint is not about this programme in isolation.

The complaint summary is: "Part of BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism [of the official statistics]".

Clearly, replies cannot be adequate without reference to the related complaints: including CAS-2476017;

CAS-3561236; [later note: complaint title is "Inaccurate and imbalanced in context of BBC output"]

CAS-3558419, "Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact" which lists examples of other unanswered complaints.

BBC reply of 9 Nov to CAS-3556479 recognised that I have made a set of related complaints;

CAS-3571759 "Due accuracy/balance in output on poverty claims";

CAS-3555804 "With other output, accuracy/impartiality lacking";

CAS-3579660.

Please see CAS-3589152 for evidence that Professor Rosling himself has cast significant doubt on the statistics he presented in "How to End...".

Unanswered complaint: material inaccuracy, failure to address points, and procedural impropriety in Trustees' decision of 19 January. 25 January 2016.

Underlining added; paragraph spacing adjusted for readability.

25 January 2016

Subject: Urgent. Trustees mislead in proposed publication.

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, trust.enquiries@bbc.co.uk

Dear Mr Towers,

Objections to misleading content in proposed Trust publication

The following is for the attention of Mr Ayre and the other Trustees as well as yourself.

I object strongly to the Trust publishing the decision on case 1300394 as written. I have in mind the risk of Trustees misleading BBC staff as well as the general public around the world.

I give a few examples out of a larger number.

1. Perhaps most importantly, Trustees appear to say wrongly that they dealt with the major allegations about UN commitments in their June decision. They limited that decision to the Woman's Hour wording in one context.

In any case, the last ECU communication before the appeal stated that those complaints appeared to be outstanding - perhaps on the basis that they were at Stage 1a.

The Trustees omit that complaints to BBC World News, which are not yet the province of the ECU or as yet apparently the Trust, remain unanswered at Stage 1a.

The complaints of worse errors about UN pledges than Woman's Hour had made - and about programmes and articles which have a more mortality- or accuracy-focused remit such as More or Less - have never been answered at Stage 1, 2 or 3. All of these complaints therefore appear still to be outstanding.

2. Trustees state there was a complaint that the "presenter [of More or Less] was biased". In fact there was a complaint of: "Economist and Bank/ex-Bank speaker imbalances,

including presenter. Links unbalanced."

That is quite different from the idea used by the Trustees as a reason to reject the application.

3. Trustees wrongly claim that I appealed a decision of the ECU on "Don't Panic". There had been no such decision, and so it seems Trustees had no jurisdiction to assess it.

4. The accuracy complaints about More or Less material of March 2012 were not limited, as the Trustees imply, to "terms in the programme". For example, I informed the BBC that that edition gave the wrong statistics in the context of MDG1.

5. Trustees do not accurately describe the point "Persistent error that World Bank estimate inflation for the poor: "basket of essential goods", etc. They use CPI."

In reality, in light of the fact that economists use national CPI rates, More or Less' story of economists calculating what a dollar can buy collapses.

The editor accepted that the economists in fact use the national CPI for their claims on global poverty.

Clearly, if More or Less' story were true, economists would have used the poor people's prices.

But they do not use poor people's prices. So the More or Less story is implausible.

So it is factual claims, as well as "terms" which are wrong in the More or Less material.

The " "basket of essential goods" issue", as they put it, which Trustees say "was of relatively minor importance here" is not, in the context of the whole decision, adequately described as such outside the relevant context.

The complaint quoted above means More or Less wrongly claimed that economists have estimated inflation rates for the poorest since around 1990.

In reality no-one has estimated such inflation rates over that long period.

Trustees in effect say they know this is "relatively minor".

I do not here address the obvious question how they can know that.

But clearly they have presented the issue in a way which misleads as to the actual complaint, and as elsewhere they give the impression that they have responded to the actual complaints when they have, to a material degree, not done so.

6. I had suggested that the ECU might have a conflict of interest because of a previous error in a published ruling related to the dollar a day. That suggestion is not properly represented by the Trustees' apparently untrue claims that the ECU had dealt with previous complaints from me. This is part of a pattern of the Trustees understating the actual complaints and obscuring the evidence of BBC errors.

7. Trustees' introduction, like their analysis, misleads by omitting the complainant's actual point about due accuracy: that the BBC advertises More or Less of 3 March 2012 as "assessing" how poverty is measured. This was clearly relevant to the question of due accuracy in the programme - as was the next week's edition stating that the edition of 3 March 2012 had "scrutinised the goal".

8. The accounts of the further correspondence appear to be significantly misleading, since they omit pertinent details such as that the BBC is committed to reading complaints about older material to determine seriousness and to forwarding complaints to Audience Services.

9. Trustees' references to my "attempting to extend the complaints", and to "ostensibly related" programmes and "purported complaints" and the references to the documentary series appear to misrepresent the situation in a significant way.

The programme page for More or Less of 3 March 2012 linked to the documentary series of 2007-9 and urged readers to listen to it. The complaint had begun, "Accuracy, including links". The complaint accepted by the BBC as the Stage 1a complaint, the email of 1 November 2012 to the editor, contains a section titled "Other programmes" of which this is one, detailing the problems.

In relation to other complaints submitted to the ECU, Trustees omit the relevant context, which is in the correspondence for complaint 1300394: the BBC had repeatedly failed to respond to complaints submitted to Audience Services. They did so again in respect of a new complaint about More or Less in 2014. After the initial failures to respond, I submitted other complaints (about something More or Less got right but News then got wrong) to News Online. Again, no reply. In the circumstances, I hoped to get some reply if I notified the ECU. The BBC is publicly committed to forwarding complaints to Audience Services where submitted to other parts of the BBC, as I mentioned in the handling complaint appealed to the Trust in the Woman's Hour case.

Although Trustees might point out that I sent new complaints to the ECU rather than Audience Services, the BBC has failed yet again to respond to numerous complaints submitted to Audience Services from 9 June 2015 onwards.

10. The references to the complaints being complex appear to misrepresent the situation. They omit my clear statement that the BBC story about what economists did was far more complex than the simple truth: They claim to know a poverty trend, but in fact do not look at inflation for the poor.

11. The Trustees may be read as saying that the suggestion of "systematic bias" was based only on the factors mentioned by Trustees. This is not the case. The Stage 1a complaint clarifies in the section on possible systematic bias.

12. The various references to the complainant repeating the editorial complaints in subsequent correspondence are misleading, especially in the context of the Trustees' understating the scope of the complaints at Stage 1. In reality I emphasised points not answered at earlier stages, made procedural points about BBC commitments, and provided further evidence - which the Trustees largely ignored. For example, I provided Trustees with ample evidence that experts thought it was important to note that the World Bank did not estimate prices for the poor. I provided evidence that problems with the dollar a day presented by More or Less were to a significant extent those already identified by its author.

13. Trustees misled by omitting the context for due accuracy - the points reiterated in the statement to Trustees of 2 December 2015 that the BBC appears not to have covered these controversial issues of importance for public understanding of official statements, at all.

To be clear, I am not advocating censorship of the historical record - I am in favour of the Trust eventually publishing what it sent me, after proper fact-checking and consideration, with appropriate corrections.

The remarks concern the proposed publication of misleading information, rather than the reasonableness of the Trust decision. It will however be obvious that one is relevant to the other.

The remarks should not be taken as a comprehensive statement of misleading content in the Trust decision, due to the short time between reading the decision on 21 January and the date of proposed publication on 28 January.

They are submitted without prejudice to further comment.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Still unanswered complaint: "BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements"; "systemic BBC problems" including "Millennium Children"

4 February 2016

Complaint Summary:

Inadequate reply on systemic BBC problems

Full Complaint:

The complaint is not about this programme in isolation. It is of "systemic BBC problems"; "BBC should not always omit..."; that the programme and web page "contribute (with other BBC material) to wrong impressions"; "see unanswered/unacknowledged complaints eg CAS-3340770"; " "Halved" claim contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage....too little coverage of...controversy over official claims."

The BBC has already acknowledged that I have made related complaints. This complaint is in the context of others including 3490707. 3579660 states, "Please see CAS-3553582", this complaint, and "Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items." 3666635 gives examples of others which form part of the overall complaint.

I wrote in CAS-3553582, "*Should BBC staff not be aware of [the difference between the MDGs and the actual pledges]?*". The fact that BBC employees making editorial decisions about this material show no sign of knowing the difference indicates a systemic problem.

The reply quotes Trustees, but they only considered a different wording in a different "context" not including mortality. That decision of June, on Woman's Hour material, only "noted" one wording. It did not deal with the cumulative effect. The Millennium Children programme page, for example (stating that leaders agreed the [1990-baseline] MDGs) is more misleading than the Woman's Hour statement.

I have notified the Trust of a significant factual problem in their decision. There was in fact no General Assembly commitment to MDG targets in 2001.

The reply to CAS-3553582 states the "figures...are well-documented". But the references it gives are all from the same official sources. Doing so without balancing views does not diminish my complaint of systemic BBC problems: inadequate accuracy and balance of views concerning global progress on poverty.

The "numbers halved" claim does conflict with the MDG "numbers" claims from WHO and FAO.

.....

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

4 February 2016 at 14:39

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3690848-W26SGM

Still unanswered call for a part of the BBC outside the Editorial Complaints Unit to rule on possible conflict of interest. ECU chose to deal with allegations of similar inaccuracy as it had made itself. 7 February 2016

Second follow-up on repeat of "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population"

7 Feb 2016

Complaint category

Bias

[previous] Reference

3628016

Complaint title

Repeat despite complaints; possible ECU conflict

Complaint description

This relates to CAS-3589152 and the follow-up CAS-3628016.

I am unable to understand the reply: *"you should normally complain within 30 working days of the transmission...so...we'll be unable to address your complaint"*. CAS-3589152 on the repeat was within the time limit for the repeat.

Audience Services may have now for the fourth time wrongly claimed that I submitted a complaint outside the limit. A screenshot from 16.55 on 27 November of a BBC web page just after I submitted it states, "Your complaint has been submitted".

The other instances where Audience Services made this wrong claim are the 2013 complaint on the same programme still unanswered at Stage 2, CAS-2476017, and CAS-3561236. In

CAS-3556479, Audience Services made the wrong claim according to the only date on the page.

I stated in the follow-up, CAS-3628016,

a) "It is not clear...that the decision to repeat is purely an ECU matter."

b) "I request a response on [possible ECU conflict of interest in this complaint] from a different part of the BBC."

c) "[in other complaints] I allege patterns of inaccuracy and imbalance in BBC output over an extended period. ...imbalance towards official sources...in BBC coverage of global poverty and official pledges to poor people. The issue is not merely the ECU's response to an isolated complaint but wider."

The BBC repeated the programme in the context of other misleading material and failures to challenge official statements, described in other complaints.

The last sentence of the follow-up should read, "But the official number was 3.4, not 10."

The response on CAS-3628016 is inaccurate since there is in fact no "reply" from the ECU on the previous broadcast. I stated in CAS-3589152, "The previous complaint [of December 2013] has not yet been answered by the BBC at Stage 2."

On 7 January 2014 the ECU quoted to me a BBC passage stating half the world is on \$1 a day. "Don't Panic" said the middle billion are on \$10 a day. Something is wrong.

.....

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

7 February 2016 at 19:58

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3695207-F5DTQN

Appeal against use of "trivial complaints" procedure to dismiss without further investigation a complaint that programme was part of BBC underrepresenting criticism of official claims on global poverty - despite BBC failing to provide any evidence of balance in coverage. 25 February 2016.

Appeal request to BBC Trustees

BBC refusal to provide specific answers to complaints:

"Part of BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism"

The context makes clear that this refers to criticism of official claims on global poverty.

Don't Panic: How to End Poverty in 15 Years

BBC2, broadcast 11 October 2015

CAS-3555570; follow-up: CAS-3666635

The complaint refers the BBC to the complaint of 20 May 2014 unanswered at Stage 2, CAS-2476017 on "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population".

Transcript:

<http://www.gapminder.org/videos/dont-panic-end-poverty/>

links to transcript:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B72viFTZK-hyb1lOek5RWTFBb1U&usp=sharing>

Appellant: Matt Berkley

.....
“Pattern: underrepresenting criticism”

It is not clear how the BBC can reasonably claim to have answered the complaint of a "pattern" across BBC output without answering the related complaints currently at Stage 1.

This programme is part of a pattern of the BBC omitting important information.

Unanswered complaints include that

- the BBC has failed to challenge official propaganda that in 2000 leaders merely pledged to achieve the easier 1990-baseline MDG targets - for example CAS-3340770 of 9 June 2015 - and that

- the BBC has repeated the wrong claims about “clean” water despite upholding complaint 2236086 on the same inaccuracy.

The BBC has not answered the specific points in CAS-3555804 including an apparent error in an answer for Professor Rosling's BBC quiz.

CAS-3430579 states: “It is a waste of public money for BBC to make programmes to inform people on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made.”

We might think the same about failure to inform the public of the actual basis of the “extreme poverty” claims.

The BBC reply of 28 January 2016 on CAS-3666635 appears to dismiss the complaint of imbalance on global poverty claims. But it shows no evidence of balancing the official claims, or claims based on similar methods, or official spin.

Unclear how BBC can answer without reference to previous complaint covering similar issues

The BBC has yet to explain how the specific points in the complaint or those in CAS-2476017 to which this complaint refers, might not raise the possibility of a breach.

The reply of 23 April 2014 stated, *"Your concerns were raised with the makers of ["Don't Panic: The Truth about Population]"*.

Yet similar problems appear in "How to End..".

.....

As I explained at Stage 1a of the case decided by the Trust on 19 January 2016 (More or Less and other material), economic statistics of the same kind as for the "dollar a day" claims have been used to justify policies. Accurate reporting of the basis of economic reporting has implications beyond the global poverty claims.

.....

In "How to End...":

At 1.05 Hans Rosling asks whether *"facts"* or *"rhetoric"* are *"at the heart of this?"*

and quotes the UN:

"By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere." "

But in reality there is a significant "rhetoric" component to the UN text. Poverty is lack of resources to meet needs, but the "\$1.25" exercise omits part of the equation by omitting changes in needs. The UN do not in reality have a baseline of needs to judge "eradication".

Further, contrary to what the programme and its BBC publicity imply, the goal according to the World Bank is not really to "eradicate" but to bring below 3% or 250 million people.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

<http://newsletters.worldbank.org/newsletters/listarticle.htm;jsessionid=2y9v8eUaqRZYiaP--7G8XobC?aid=387966>

I had referred the BBC to CAS-2476017 which makes this point.

7.43: The statement that the line is "*Just a little more than one dollar*"

reinforces the impression in "The Truth About Population" that people in the middle "live on" about seven or eight times the "extreme poverty" level. But even Gapminder's own chart contradicts this. www.gapminder.org/tools/mountain .

It looks more like four times.

"Just a little more than one dollar"

conflicts with "\$1.85"

<http://www.gapminder.org/news/data-sources-dont-panic-end-poverty/>

and "\$1.90"

www.gapminder.org/tools/mountain

Those are based on 2011 prices.

Case 2476017 includes "Illustrations on conflation of Utrecht and World Bank units"; the Annex on "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population" sent to the Trust on 22 October 2015 clarifies.

.

7.47: "*The exact position depends on the value of the dollar.*"

with the other references to dollars, risks misleading non-experts that these are real US

dollars – often worth far more in poor countries than the international "PPP dollars" Gapminder in fact uses.

<http://www.gapminder.org/news/sources-for-data-shown-in-dont-panic/>

For example the official ratio for Malawi, for which he shows a chart, sets the PPP dollar at about 30 US cents.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.PPPC.RF>

"Just a little more than one dollar. It's called "extreme poverty". The exact position depends on the value of the dollar. But the meaning here is clear and this doesn't change. This is about the daily struggle to get enough to eat. It's about survival..."

That could reasonably be taken to mean that the line takes food needs into account, which is not true. Nor does the line look at prices faced by the poor.

There is weak evidence that the middle billion are on three or perhaps four times the official "extreme poverty" level in terms of "expenditure" or "income". There is not strong evidence that they are on seven or eight times that level in terms of "poverty".

As in CAS-2476017, this may combine with the audience's belief that these are real dollars to create a significantly misleading impression of the purchasing power of very large numbers of people.

19.40: *"look at data....This shows the percent in extreme poverty in the world"*, repeated references to the charts as showing *"extreme poverty"*, and *"importance of goal 1.1"*:

The numbers are the product of assumptions and value judgements, not merely "data".

The chart shows estimates of what is largely "expenditure". Clearly, the fact that people spend more does not show they must be better off.

As with much BBC output on global poverty, it is not clear why the WHO and FAO slower reported MDG trends are omitted.

32.15: *“Unexpected medical costs often cause serious financial shocks”*

But government health care is not included in the “extreme poverty” measure.

Gapminder has collaborated with UN agencies and has received large amounts of funding from the Swedish government. This background may not be conducive to balance in BBC coverage of official claims.

Appeal against Executive decision apparently based on the wrong programme. The decision was not to provide a response from outside the ECU on why a programme was repeated, or on the possibility of ECU conflict of interest. The request is for answers on a) the decision to re-broadcast programme with statistics the presenter had rubbished, and vastly overstated "income" of the "middle billion", despite an unanswered Stage 2 complaint, and b) the suggestion that Editorial Complaints Unit might have a conflict of interest due to its having made a worse error in a published ruling than an alleged problem in the broadcast. The Trust had wrongly claimed there was an ECU decision and an appeal on this programme. The Trust had purported to answer it while omitting the key Stage 1 complaints, ignoring the Stage 2 complaint, and omitting the key point about the ECU error.
25 February 2016

.....

Request for appeal to BBC Trustees

CAS-3589152 "Programme repeated despite unanswered complaint"

Follow-up: CAS-3628016

Second follow-up: CAS-3695207

Appellant: Matt Berkley

I complained that the BBC repeated "The Truth about Population" despite a complaint being unanswered at Stage 2.

I also requested a response from a different part of the BBC to the suggestion of possible ECU conflict of interest.

The BBC has refused to correspond further on the puzzling grounds that it has responded to CAS-3666635 and CAS-3555570, which relate not to this programme but to "How to End Poverty...".

I have stated to the Trust Unit and Trustees that I believe complaint 2476017 on "The Truth..." should be sent back to the BBC for a response at Stage 2. The ECU have not specifically mentioned any decision about it; I have not appealed it to the Trust.

.....

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

18 February 2016 at 14:25

...CAS-3695207

We believe Audience Services, at stage 1 of the BBC's complaints process, have addressed your concerns in our response to CAS- 3666635-5RPD1D and CAS-3555570-6V99HQ.

As explained in our last response on 28 January 2016, we do not believe your complaint has raised a significant issue of general importance that might justify further investigation. We will not therefore correspond further...

If you wish to submit an appeal you must write within 20 working days of receiving this reply (sent on 28 January 2016) [?], explaining why you wish to appeal.

In refusing to investigate, "BBC ...justified their decision using case numbers for a different complaint." "The appeal...simply requests a) that the BBC also consider how the material came to be repeated, and b) that the BBC give an independent "response...to the suggestion of possible ECU conflict of interest" "

Date: 3 March 2016 at 22:59

Subject: Unanswered Stage 2 complaint: The Truth about Population

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Clarke,

Thank you for your email.

On the main complaint, in fact I have yet to receive a Stage 2 reply.

The appeal, rather than being a request for a final appeal, simply requests a) that the BBC also consider how the material came to be repeated, and b) that the BBC give an independent "response...to the suggestion of possible ECU conflict of interest" in this particular case. Then hopefully the BBC can decide who will give the promised Stage 2 reply.

BBC Complaints' answer of 18 February gave the wrong appeal deadline and justified their decision using case numbers for a different complaint. To save money, the Trust may therefore wish first to ask them whether that reply, without which the appeal is unnecessary, was on the basis of the wrong programme.

I have sent the Trust material on this unanswered Stage 2 complaint which I propose that the Trust forward to the BBC. I can compile it if the Trust would find that easier.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 3 March 2016 at 15:53, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

...your appeal to the BBC Trust regarding The Truth about Population....

We will now consider your request for a final appeal

From: Matt Berkley [...]
Sent: 25 February 2016 13:08
To: Trust Editorial
Subject: Appeal requests

[appeal letter:]

Request for appeal to BBC Trustees

CAS-3589152 "Programme repeated despite unanswered complaint"
Follow-up: CAS-3628016
Second follow-up: CAS-3695207

Appellant: Matt Berkley

I complained that the BBC repeated "The Truth about Population" despite a complaint being unanswered at Stage 2.

I also requested a response from a different part of the BBC to the suggestion of possible ECU conflict of interest.

The BBC has refused to correspond further on the puzzling grounds that it has responded to CAS-3666635 and CAS-3555570, which relate not to this programme but to "How to End Poverty...".

I have stated to the Trust Unit and Trustees that I believe complaint 2476017 on "The Truth..." should be sent back to the BBC for a response at Stage 2. The ECU have not specifically mentioned any decision about it; I have not appealed it to the Trust.

.....

[Email from BBC referring to wrong complaints, with wrong appeal deadline:]

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
18 February 2016 at 14:25
...CAS-3695207

We believe Audience Services, at stage 1 of the BBC's complaints process, have addressed your concerns in our response to CAS- 3666635-5RPD1D and CAS-3555570-6V99HQ. [?]

As explained in our last response on 28 January 2016, [?]

we do not believe your complaint has raised a significant issue of general importance that might justify further investigation. We will not therefore correspond further...

If you wish to submit an appeal you must write within 20 working days of receiving this reply (sent on 28 January 2016) [?]....

On 3 March 2016 at 15:53, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your appeal to the BBC Trust regarding *The Truth about Population*, which we received on 25 February 2016.

We will now consider your request for a final appeal under the BBC's Editorial complaints procedure. In order to do this we will review your complaint and your previous correspondence with the BBC and decide whether your appeal qualifies for consideration by the Trust. We will only consider the points you raised at Stage 2 that you want the Trust to reconsider. Therefore, unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will not consider new points at this stage. We also ask that you do not now submit any further documentation unless you consider this to be necessary for the purposes of your appeal.

The Trust's Editorial complaints procedure explains that we will write to you with our decision within 40 working days of the receipt of your appeal (i.e. by **23 April 2016**), but we are usually able to do this sooner. We will also keep you informed if for any reason we meet with delay during this process.

If we decide your appeal qualifies to be considered by the Trust, we will write explaining the process and setting out the timescale for taking your appeal. In considering whether or not an appeal qualifies for consideration, we may decide to take only part of the appeal, and consider only some of the issues raised.

If our conclusion is that your appeal, or any part of your appeal, does not qualify for consideration by the Trust, we will write and explain the reasons for that. If you disagree with our view then you may ask the Trust to review the decision by writing to us within 10 working days of the date on which you received our response.

If we decide your appeal qualifies for consideration, or if you challenge the decision of the Trust Unit not to proceed with some or all aspects of your appeal, the matter will be considered at the next monthly Editorial Standards Committee meeting. We aim to provide you with their final decision within 80 working days of our decision to accept your appeal or challenge.

The Trust Unit reports on its performance against these target response times in the BBC's Annual Report and Accounts (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport/>)

Full details of the BBC's complaints procedure, including the appeal stage, can be found here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/contact_us/complaints/appeal_trust.html

Yours sincerely

Kirsty

Kirsty Clarke
Complaints Adviser

BBC Trust
180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

From: Matt Berkley [...]
Sent: 25 February 2016 13:08
To: Trust Editorial
Subject: Appeal requests

Dear Ms Clarke,

I attach two editorial appeal requests.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

World Service again gives impression MDGs were set "15 years" ago (unanswered complaints 6 February 2014 onwards); imbalance of contributors towards those with official ties (unanswered complaints 1 November 2012 onwards); fails to note that world leaders' pledge on extreme poverty is, according to the World Bank, that 250 million, rather than "nobody" would be in extreme poverty (unanswered complaints 18 December 2013 onwards). Addition to unanswered complaint of 9 June 2015. The New Face of Development, World Service, 24 January 2016

Complaint: 4 March 2016

Case number CAS-3734678

Addition to unanswered complaint 3340770

I have yet to receive replies to complaints that the BBC has contributed to wrong impressions of UN pledges of 2000, in material including that mentioned in CAS-3340770; CAS-3430579; CAS-3430697.

I wish to add the following:

The Documentary: The New Face of Development World Service 24 Jan 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fq2v6>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03gj9ck>

Podcast: <http://open.live.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/5/redirect/version/2.0/mediaset/audio-nondrm-download-low/proto/http/vpid/p03gj9ct.mp3>.

Audio contributes to impression that the pledges of 15 years ago were merely the later, easier MDG targets of more dubious formal standing. Timings are for audio at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fq2v6> .

00.30 "Millennium Development Goals, the global framework for the last 15 years"

1.00 Myles Wickstead: "tremendous progress over the last 15 years in delivering on these

MDGs” headed the Africa Commission set up by British Prime Minister Tony Blair...

14.55 “You’ve been chief here for fifteen years, which happens to be exactly the same time that there have been the Millennium Development Goals”

Imbalance of commentators towards those with official ties: former UK representative at the World Bank, ex-Governor of World Bank/UN employee; WFP employee

Article 23 Jan 2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-35370021>: “launch of the Sustainable Development Goals at the UN, the leaders pledged that by 2030 nobody anywhere in the world would live in extreme poverty”

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-35370021>

But in fact the goal is counted as 3%.

Text is not clear whether dollar amounts are in same units as World Bank "dollars a day".

Stage 2 complaint: "accuracy/ impartiality over time"; "cumulative problems"; "programme page encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges"; "BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements"; "wrong for BBC not to tell public that UN has wrongly stated easier targets are what leaders pledged"; "contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims." A reply would require "instances where the BBC considers it has balanced the official claims with other views." To this, the ECU replied that it did not have the remit to deal with problems over a period. It failed to tell the complainant that News was the division for such a complaint at Stage 2. In addition, Audience Services seems to have wrongly advised complainant to escalate to the ECU.

29 March 2016

Dear ECU staff,

BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

This is a request for further investigation of this case with a view to the BBC considering it alongside the other complaints in the same series.

I give details below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

I found Audience Services' reply of 29 February difficult to relate to the actual complaint.

There was no "complaint about Millennium Children" separate from the other complaints acknowledged by Audience Services as a series on BBC coverage of global poverty.

Since there is a normal 30-working-day time limit, it seems to me reasonable for members of the public concerned about accuracy or impartiality over time to make complaints within the time scale, rather than save them up for one larger complaint.

Since the complaints are of cumulative problems, the response seems inappropriate in suggesting the complaints about other output should be dealt with separately.

Audience Services' statement "the targets...were agreed out of the 2000 Millennium Declaration" is insufficiently clear to me as a reason to reject the complaint.

I submit that the relevant distinction is between

- a) solemn pledges: what leaders "resolved" in 2000 to achieve, and
- b) the targets later publicised which were of more dubious formal standing.

The programme's claim about numbers in poverty halving was in terms of numbers of people. Audience Services' point about percentages does not seem relevant.

The programme said that leaders hoped to reduce the numbers by half, whereas in reality the pledge and the MDG target were on proportions. I did not complain about that possible error. At Stage 1a I placed "%" in brackets to indicate that leaders were talking about a percentage, and not a number of people as the programme may have implied.

There are two matters to which Audience Services may be referring:

1. A pre-broadcast complaint about the "Millennium Children" programme page and a European Parliament web page:
CAS-3490707, follow-up CAS-3490853; both 21 September 2015.

This complaint stated,

"Programme page encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges."

2. A general complaint about BBC coverage.

CAS-3553582, 3 November 2015; follow-up for Stage 1b CAS-3690848, 4 February 2016.

This complained of

"Inaccuracy and imbalance of views"

which were

"systemic BBC problems";

"BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements";

- meaning that it is wrong for the BBC not to tell the public that the UN has wrongly implied or stated that the easier targets are what leaders pledged -

"[Millennium Children] and web page contribute (with other BBC material) to wrong impressions: see unanswered/unacknowledged complaints eg CAS-3340770";

"Halved" claim [the claim in Millennium Children that the number of the poorest had halved] contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims."

"Too little coverage" is another complaint about general BBC coverage.

The specific case to which I referred, CAS-3340770, of 9 June 2015, mentioned six items and is still unanswered on 29 March 2016.

The substantive complaint was therefore of "systemic BBC problems" especially in view of information supplied in the other complaints.

Audience Services have acknowledged that there is a series of such complaints.

This communication is not properly characterised as a separate complaint about this programme, or answered as if it were.

On the categorical claim that the number of the poorest had been halved:

The response of 7 January 2016 (CAS-3553582) stated,

"You appear to suggest that the programme's statistics about halving rates of poverty and hunger conflict with the idea that the number of malnourished under-5's only dropped by just over a quarter".

I did not refer to the programme's statistics about rates of poverty and hunger, but its categorical claim that the number of the poorest had been halved.

The claim appears to mean the number has halved since 2000.

It is not clear that the programme has a strong foundation for such a claim. As I said, the WHO and FAO statistics do not seem to support it. I am not saying those are reliable, but even someone who for some reason were to believe official claims without question might notice the discrepancies and hesitate before making the claim in the programme.

The complaint questions whether the claim that the number has halved is "well-sourced".

It points out that there are no estimates of inflation faced [by the poor] or estimates of needs.

Under those circumstances, it is not clear why the categorical statement is justified.

The complaint stated that this is a "matter of opinion" and "controversial".

The programme's statistics on the number of children (125 down to 90 million) do conflict with the programme's claim that the number of extremely poor has halved.

The complaint also stated (emphasis added):

"World Bank and FAO statistics are known to be unreliable, but FAO estimates are nowhere near "halved": chronically hungry people estimated at 930 million in 2001 and 795M in 2015. "Halved" claim contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims."

The complaints cannot in my view be answered adequately without reference to the others about the BBC's coverage.

In CAS-3690848, for example, the complaint "Too little coverage of... controversy" requires, I would suggest, a defence pointing to any instances where the BBC considers it has balanced the official claims with other views.

I refer the BBC to complaints known to Audience Services:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

9 November 2015 at 20:52

Subject: BBC News website ...

Complaint reference: CAS-3556479-42JQTW

...In light of your concerns with other complaints you've made to the BBC we'll review your complaints history and if there any found to be requiring a response....then we will investigate further and hopefully do so as soon as possible.

...you have made a number of complaints to the BBC on broadly the same issue...."

On 20 November 2015 I wrote in a different case, CAS-3579660-46726C:

"Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items.

Thank you."

22 March 2016: BBC again overstates, if the information from the official experts is correct, humans' access to "clean" water

"It's estimated that 650 million people around the world still don't have access to clean water."

World Service

Business Matters

World Water Day - how music can improve sanitation

Web page dated 22 March 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03npvx9>

4 April 2016: BBC again claims that the MDGs with easier baselines* were agreed in 2000. This contradicts Trustees' acceptance of the baseline change in their decision of 19 June 2015 and the fact that the United States repeatedly said in 2005 that the MDG framework had not been agreed by member states. The BBC appears to use the 1990 baseline even though there is no such baseline in the MDG list for sanitation.

* (except, according to the OECD report of what was agreed, the water and sanitation target)

"In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Development Goal was to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015. We failed spectacularly - by 700 million people"

At 10 minutes 13 seconds

[A Dirty Secret](#)

Radio 4

4 April 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b075pc0h>

Notification of possible judicial review.

On receipt, Trust implied it did not know what the allegations were, despite having promised to

- a) respond "in full" to specific allegations that it had on 19 January 2016 materially misrepresented the complaints - despite taking seven weeks to "consider the points" - and
- b) investigate the allegation of factual error in its decision of 19 June 2015.

14 April 2016 17:14

To: Trust Enquiries; Trust Editorial; Tony Hall and PA

Subject: Judicial review of Trust decisions and omissions: Editorial Standards Committee decision, ref. 1300394 and related decisions and omissions

Dear Mr Towers and Mr Ayre,

BBC omissions, inaccuracies and imbalance on global poverty: Judicial review of Editorial Standards Committee decision of 19 January 2016, ref. 1300394 and related decisions and omissions

I am considering applying for permission for judicial review of the above, before Tuesday 19 April 2016.

I intend to ask the Court for a stay of proceedings to allow the BBC Trust a further opportunity to:

- a) answer the complaint that underlying its decisions and omissions in this matter are fundamental inaccuracies and/or imbalance,
- b) clarify whether it has addressed the main complaints,
- c) provide other relevant information;

and for this to be taken into account for properly-informed grounds, statement of facts and documents for the claim.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

15 April 2016 12:42

To: ECU

Subject: Reminder: BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

Complaint to Director-General's office and World Service.
Breakdown in complaints system: UN water statistics. 4 May 2016

Document "BBC fails to respond on human access to water" was attached to the email.

4 May 2016 at 23:57

Subject: Breakdown in complaints system. Formal complaints: Reply required

To: stephanie.harris@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk,
worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk, TonyHallandPA@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Harris, Ms Cecil and World Service staff,

I regret that the BBC has repeated an error already corrected (please see the correspondence below). This seems to add to inaccuracy over time (please see the attached document).

A web page of 22 March 2016 states,

"It's estimated that 650 million people around the world still don't have access to clean water."

Business Matters

World Water Day - how music can improve sanitation

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03npvx9>

Yet those numbers refer to "improved sources", not clean water. As the evidence in the attached document shows, the official experts are unable to state that the figures for clean water are anywhere near as low as that.

But what is far more worrying is the BBC's continued failure to address complaints on matters relevant to the public's ability to hold governments to account. Complaints mentioned here are only a subset of those unanswered.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

...

.....
From: newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk
Date: 25 July 2013 at 19:28
Subject: Complaint Reply Required

...

Dear Mr Berkley

Thanks for your email. The article and the complaints you have are about the text of the article rather than Barbara Plett's analysis box, so please accept this as a response to your comments on this article and please accept our apologies for the delay in replying to your emails.

Taking your points in order:

...

4) The clean water reference has been changed to "improved sources of water".

...

7) The reference to the poverty line has been amended in the news story amongst the "related stories". The other two are David Loyn authored pieces - I've passed your email on to him to consider whether his piece needs amending.

Thanks again for getting in touch.

Regards

BBC News website

...

-----Original Message-----

From: [Matt Berkley] [mailto:automail@metafaq.com]
Sent: 11 July 2013 14:58
To: NewsOnline Complaints
Subject: Complaint Reply Required

....{Complaint title:} Breach of due accuracy in major matter

{Complaint:} "UN urged to embrace 2030 goal... ", 30 May

Below is an edited version of selected points from a complaint to barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk yesterday, 10 July. I send this version to help the BBC deal with and track the complaint in view of past BBC failure to respond to complaints of inaccuracy in global poverty reports.

Parts of the article seem to breach guidelines on due accuracy and major matters, when viewed either separately or in combination:

...

4. "Goal for access to clean water has already been reached" conflates MDG 7 (environmental sustainability), target 7C (safe drinking water/sanitation) and indicator 7.8 (improved drinking water). It thus overstates progress in terms of both number of goals met, and evidence for the water being clean. The official monitors' research is in fact on "improved", not "clean" water sources: <http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/graphs/>

.....

7. All three "related stories" conflate goals with targets and/or indicators, wrongly claiming that poverty or water goals were met.

{URL:} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22719812>

.....

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 16 August 2015 at 13:20

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3428708-N971FD

...

Thank you for contacting us about 'BBC World Service' on 10th August 2015.

I understand you've not received a response to your complaint made regarding World Service and World News.

Your complaint was passed to BBC World Service who will respond directly.

You can contact them at; worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk

.....
From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 13 March 2016 at 06:08

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3734678-JP45NM

To: Matt Berkley <...>

Dear Mr Berkley

Reference CAS-3734678-JP45NM

...The remit of BBC Audience Services is limited to comments, enquiries and complaints regarding the recent content of television, radio and online output within the UK for UK audience members.

The issue of editorial content of World Service programmes (such as the audio for The Inquiry) is not within our area of control. Our advice for you therefore is to contact BBC World Service, as they are responsible for this global BBC output:

...Email:

worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk

We hope these contacts assist you in taking your points to the people responsible, allowing you to obtain a reply to this particular concern.

...Natasha McCartney

BBC Complaints

BBC Audience Services are informed of complaint to Director-General's office on "breakdown in complaints system"

5 May 2016

CAS-3818536-JSWBSJ

Complaint Summary: Breakdown in complaints system:UN water statistics

Full Complaint: A complaint of 4 May 2016 has been forwarded to the Director-General's office. It concerns repeated BBC claims based on the idea that there are global "clean" water statistics, and that a Millennium Summit pledge or Millennium Goal target on drinking water has been met several years early. These claims have been made despite upheld complaint CAS-2236086. It adds to unanswered complaints on similar inaccuracies including CAS-3430579, CAS-3445371, CAS-3556479, CAS-3561236, and CAS-3568785. The complaint was also sent to the World Service, following advice from Audience Services that its remit did not cover the World Service; it contains a new example of erroneous material.

The present web form submission is in case Audience Services finds it useful to track the complaint or may wish to liaise with the Director-General's office.

.....

From: jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk

5 May 2016 at 09:19

Re: Breakdown in complaints system. Formal complaints: Reply required

To: [Matt Berkley], dominic.groves.01@bbc.co.uk

Cc: Tony Hall and PA <TonyHallandPA@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Mr Berkley

I have passed this on to my successor, Dominic Groves.

.....

>4 May 2016, at 23:58 ...[Matt Berkley]...wrote:

>Dear Ms Harris, Ms Cecil and World Service staff,

>I regret that the BBC has repeated an error already corrected (please see the correspondence below). This seems to add to inaccuracy over time (please see the attached document). ...

.....

>From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

>13 March 2016 at 06:08

>Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3734678-JP45NM

>To: [\[Matt Berkley\]](#)

> ...The remit of BBC Audience Services is limited to ...output within the UK for UK audience members. ...editorial content of World Service programmes...is not within our area of control. Our advice for you therefore is to contact BBC World Service, as they are responsible for this global BBC output: [Email:...worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk](mailto:worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk)

BBC Trust wrongly claimed to have authority to dismiss complaints of "cumulative error/imbalance" not considered by the Executive

...From: [Matt Berkley]
Date: 10 May 2016 at 15:21
Subject: Re: Your appeal to the BBC Trust
To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Buckle,

Complaint that "How to End Poverty" contributes to BBC imbalance

I am afraid I am having some difficulty replying to your letter.

As with my communications in general to the BBC and Trust, the subject matter is largely the adequacy of BBC information on the "world's number one goal" and world leaders' pledges. I submit that these are not trivial matters.

I refer the Trust Unit to the complaint of 25 January on material inaccuracy in the Trust decision of 19 January (Stage 1a complaint on More or Less, Dollar a Day series and BBC failures "since 2000").

The Stage 1a complaint in the present case referred the Executive to previous complaints, and in particular to the unanswered Stage 2 complaint of 20 May 2014 on "The Truth about Population".

Five days after this Stage 1a complaint, and before they refused to correspond further, Audience Services indicated what seem "corporate knowledge" that they were aware of a series of related complaints:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

9 November 2015 at 20:52

Subject: BBC News website ...

Complaint reference: CAS-3556479-42JQTW

...In light of your concerns with other complaints you've made to the BBC we'll review your complaints history and if there any found to be requiring a response....then we will investigate further and hopefully do so as soon as possible.

...you have made a number of complaints to the BBC on broadly the same issue...."

1. I am unsure which points in the appeal you mean are "new points". Are they not largely unanswered points from that previous complaint to which I referred the Executive?

2. I am unable to understand your idea that Trustees could have been entitled under the Charter and Agreement to dismiss the complaint on "The Truth about Population".

Please supply copies of the ECU refusal to answer, which you mention, and the complaint to the Trust which Trustees stated on 19 January 2016 I had made about that ECU refusal. I have no memory and no record of either. As I have already stated, the last communication I am aware of was of 4 July 2014 when the Head of Editorial Complaints said he was taking further time to investigate.

3. I do not understand how Trustees could have been entitled to dismiss the Stage 1a complaints of 1 November 2012 relating to cumulative problems - either in More or Less material or in BBC output generally. These The Stage 1a complaint included a suggestion of "systematic bias" from accuracy and impartiality problems, BBC failures "since 2000", and problems in "other programmes".

Those were not answered by the Executive - despite the clear commitment to the public to read complaints about older material to determine seriousness.

The Trustees' statement in their decision of 19 January 2016 that the complaints on cumulative problems were added in a handling complaint at Stage 3 is contradicted by the Stage 1a text, described above.

Trustees' description of the suggestion of "systematic bias" is insufficient: it was not limited to impartiality complaints or the matters mentioned by Trustees; it did not mention "presenter bias".

4. I do not understand how the ECU could legitimately have dismissed the complaints on More or Less/Dollar a Day/failures "since 2000".

The ECU informed me on 19 April 2016 that its remit does not cover allegations of breaches over time.

The Executive did not address these allegations. Nor, in specific terms, did the Trust.

5. Your letter omits, as does the Trust decision of 19 January, the reason for a suggestion that the ECU might have a conflict of interest - which applies to the subject matter of that appeal, and the "Truth about Population" complaint. The Trustees gave a wrong reason for the suggestion of a conflict, and so their dismissal of it seems unjustified.

The first point in the complaint about "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population" was:

"It was not made clear that dollars were "purchasing power parity" units, worth far less in poorer countries than real dollars."

The ECU's possible conflict of interest here arose because it had itself, in a published ruling of 2005, made a worse error than the programme whose problems it was supposed to be assessing.

I have never received a specific response on this from the Executive or Trust.

On 26 January 2016 the Trust Unit promised a "full response" to a complaint on inaccuracies in the Trust decision of 19 January 2016. It took seven weeks to reply, but basically did not respond to the points.

Having stated twice that it was withdrawing it from bulletins, the Trust chose to refuse to correspond further, and then published the decision in full, without telling the complainant.

Complaints Procedure 7 states:

"4.4 In the case of complaints about Trust decisions, you should be aware that... the Trust's decisions are final, and not subject to a right of appeal within the BBC. We will, however, read your comments and note them for the future."

It seems this has not been done.

I consider it unfair to expect a complainant to use up space in a short request to Trustees, to clear up facts the Trust has failed to clarify despite its promise.

Please supply answers on these points to enable a reasonably relevant request to Trustees.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 25 April 2016 at 15:02, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Please find attached a letter in reply to your appeal to the BBC Trust. This is in response to your appeal about Don't Panic: How to end poverty in 15 years.

Yours sincerely

Leanne Buckle

Senior Editorial Adviser

BBC Trust

180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ

P. [0203 214 4952](tel:02032144952)

M. [07969 430575](tel:07969430575)

E. leanne.buckle@bbc.co.uk bbc.co.uk/bbctrust

The unanswered recent complaints of BBC inaccuracy and lack of balance over time in coverage of global poverty

From: Matt Berkley

Date: 10 May 2016 at 16:47

Subject: Re: Reminder: BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

To: ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Mr Steel,

I refer to your email of 19 April.

I request that you send this complaint on cumulative problems over time to the appropriate division.

Please supply the correspondence in which the ECU informed me it cannot consider allegations of long-term breaches. I am puzzled as to why, in view of your statement to that effect, you took on and dismissed the More or Less/Dollar a Day series/"BBC failure since 2000" Stage 1a complaint of 1 November 2012 (your ref. 1300394).

I am sorry to hear that you spent considerable time tracing and collating complaints to Audience Services. I had thought this could be efficiently achieved by "Dear Audience Services (or complainant), please send the complaints mentioned in this escalation email".

I suggest that, if necessary, I can clarify the complaints once it is clear who is supposed to answer them.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

On 19 April 2016 at 15:10, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

I'm in receipt of your message of 29 March, and have spent a considerable amount of time in tracing and collating the various strands of correspondence to which it refers. I'm sorry to say that, even after this exercise, I'm not entirely clear which item broadcast or published by the BBC you are requesting further investigation of, and what your complaint about it consists of. If you would be kind enough to clarify this for me, I'll then be able to decide how to proceed. As your message has been with us for about three weeks, I suggest three weeks from today's date as a deadline for reply.

As you know from previous correspondence with the Editorial Complaints Unit, our remit is confined to issues of editorial standards in individual items, so we would not be able to consider your current complaint "*alongside the other complaints in the same series*" in the sense of deciding whether the items in question resulted in a breach of editorial standards when taken together. If you wish us to investigate any of the items in question individually, however, I would invite you to identify each item and state what your complaint about it consists of, again by three weeks from today's date (Tuesday 10 May).

Yours sincerely

Fraser Steel

Head of Editorial Complaints

From: Matt Berkley

Sent: 15 April 2016 12:42

To: ECU

Subject: Reminder: BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

On 29 March 2016 at 23:26, Matt Berkley wrote:

Dear ECU staff,

BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

This is a request for further investigation of this case with a view to the BBC considering it alongside the other complaints in the same series.

I give details below.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

I found Audience Services' reply of 29 February difficult to relate to the actual complaint.

There was no "complaint about Millennium Children" separate from the other complaints acknowledged by Audience Services as a series on BBC coverage of global poverty.

Since there is a normal 30-working-day time limit, it seems to me reasonable for members of the public concerned about accuracy or impartiality over time to make complaints within the time scale, rather than save them up for one larger complaint.

Since the complaints are of cumulative problems, the response seems inappropriate in suggesting the complaints about other output should be dealt with separately.

Audience Services' statement "the targets...were agreed out of the 2000 Millennium Declaration" is insufficiently clear to me as a reason to reject the complaint.

I submit that the relevant distinction is between

- a) solemn pledges: what leaders "resolved" in 2000 to achieve, and
- b) the targets later publicised which were of more dubious formal standing.

The programme's claim about numbers in poverty halving was in terms of numbers of people. Audience Services' point about percentages does not seem relevant.

The programme said that leaders hoped to reduce the numbers by half, whereas in reality the pledge and the MDG target were on proportions. I did not complain about that possible error. At Stage 1a I placed "%" in brackets to indicate that leaders were talking about a percentage, and not a number of people as the programme may have implied.

There are two matters to which Audience Services may be referring:

1. A pre-broadcast complaint about the "Millennium Children" programme page and a European Parliament web page:

CAS-3490707, follow-up CAS-3490853; both 21 September 2015.

This complaint stated,

"Programme page encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges."

2. A general complaint about BBC coverage.

CAS-3553582, 3 November 2015; follow-up for Stage 1b CAS-3690848, 4 February 2016.

This complained of

"Inaccuracy and imbalance of views"

which were

"systemic BBC problems";

"BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements";

- meaning that it is wrong for the BBC not to tell the public that the UN has wrongly implied or stated that the easier targets are what leaders pledged -

"[Millennium Children] and web page contribute (with other BBC material) to wrong impressions: see unanswered/unacknowledged complaints eg CAS-3340770";

"Halved" claim [the claim in Millennium Children that the number of the poorest had halved] contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims."

"Too little coverage" is another complaint about general BBC coverage.

The specific case to which I referred, CAS-3340770, of 9 June 2015, mentioned six items and is still unanswered on 29 March 2016.

The substantive complaint was therefore of "systemic BBC problems" especially in view of information supplied in the other complaints.

Audience Services have acknowledged that there is a series of such complaints.

This communication is not properly characterised as a separate complaint about this programme, or answered as if it were.

On the categorical claim that the number of the poorest had been halved:

The response of 7 January 2016 (CAS-3553582) stated,

"You appear to suggest that the programme's statistics about halving rates of poverty and hunger conflict with the idea that the number of malnourished under-5's only dropped by just over a quarter".

I did not refer to the programme's statistics about rates of poverty and hunger, but its categorical claim that the number of the poorest had been halved.

The claim appears to mean the number has halved since 2000.

It is not clear that the programme has a strong foundation for such a claim. As I said, the WHO and FAO statistics do not seem to support it. I am not saying those are reliable, but even someone who for some reason were to believe official claims without question might notice the discrepancies and hesitate before making the claim in the programme.

The complaint questions whether the claim that the number has halved is "well-sourced".

It points out that there are no estimates of inflation faced [by the poor] or estimates of needs.

Under those circumstances, it is not clear why the categorical statement is justified.

The complaint stated that this is a "matter of opinion" and "controversial".

The programme's statistics on the number of children (125 down to 90 million) do conflict with the programme's claim that the number of extremely poor has halved.

The complaint also stated (emphasis added):

"World Bank and FAO statistics are known to be unreliable, but FAO estimates are nowhere near "halved": chronically hungry people estimated at 930 million in 2001 and 795M in

2015. "Halved" claim contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty: too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims."

The complaints cannot in my view be answered adequately without reference to the others about the BBC's coverage.

In CAS-3690848, for example, the complaint "Too little coverage of... controversy" requires, I would suggest, a defence pointing to any instances where the BBC considers it has balanced the official claims with other views.

I refer the BBC to complaints known to Audience Services:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

9 November 2015 at 20:52

Subject: BBC News website ...

Complaint reference: CAS-3556479-42JQW

...In light of your concerns with other complaints you've made to the BBC we'll review your complaints history and if there any found to be requiring a response....then we will investigate further and hopefully do so as soon as possible.

...you have made a number of complaints to the BBC on broadly the same issue...."

On 20 November 2015 I wrote in a different case, CAS-3579660-46726C:

"Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items.

Thank you."

----- Forwarded message -----

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 29 February 2016 at 14:38

Subject: BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

...

...I am responding to your complaint about Millennium Children. Should you wish to raise an issue about any other programmes or complaints/responses that you have previously made/received, as per the BBC's complaints process, you should do so separately.

Turning to your substantive complaint, you allege that the wording on the programme

website is inaccurate and/or misleading.

Website wording:

In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed on a series of ambitious targets to improve the lives of people everywhere. The Millennium Development Goals they signed up to were meant to herald unprecedented progress in every corner of Earth.

We stand by our previous response on this matter. While the specific targets may not have been finalised in 2000, they were agreed out of the 2000 Millennium Declaration.

With regard to your concern about the ‘numbers halved’ point, I can only reiterate what we said previously. When referring to malnourished under-5s the programme is referring to pure numbers rather than proportion. While the number of malnourished under-5s went from 125 million to just under 100 million, the population grew by about 1.2 billion between 2000 and 2015 – with the fastest growth in low-income countries. Therefore there are still almost as many malnourished children around the world, even though the percentage fell.

If you would like to take your complaint further, you can contact Stage 2 of the complaints process, the BBC's Editorial Complaints Unit, within 20 working days, and they will carry out an independent investigation. You can email them at: ecu@bbc.co.uk , or alternatively write to them at the following address:

Editorial Complaints Unit
Broadcast Centre
BC2 B4
201 Wood Lane
London
W12 7TP

Should you choose to escalate your complaint we would ask that you include the reference number provided above in your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Austin
BBC Audience Services

BBC again repeats UN spin without question: Addition to unacknowledged complaint to Director-General's Office, 16 May 2016

Complaint Summary:

Adds to understated impression of UN commitments

Full Complaint:

In a complaint of 4 May 2016 to the Director-General's Office (CAS-3818536) I attached a document stating of A Dirty Secret:

"BBC persists in claiming that the MDGs with easier baselines were agreed in the year of the historic Millennium Declaration".

The present message adds to that. The programme is to be repeated today. It states:

"In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Development Goal was to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015. We failed...by 700 million people".

Firstly, there were no "Millennium Development Goals" in 2000.

I can find no reference to them in BBC reports from 2001 either.

The historic 2000 pledges have baselines of 2000, not the 1990 baselines of the MDG framework. The US insisted in 2006 that it had not agreed the latter.

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109shrg36452/html/CHRG-109shrg36452.htm>

Secondly, the basis of the BBC's claim about 700 million people is not clear. The UN's "700 million" claim is in the context of a 1990 baseline.

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp-2015-key-facts/en/, section B1.

However, in reality there is no "1990" baseline in the water/sanitation MDG target.

The relevant target for water and sanitation, 7C, is

"Halve, by 2015, the proportion..."

This is in contrast to other targets which are

"between 1990 and 2015".

Using the UN data from <http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/tables/> , leaving aside questions of definition, I calculate the shortfall from the MDG target (agreed in 2002 at the Johannesburg Summit) using a 2000 baseline as 875 million people, not 700 million.

I refer to unanswered complaints including 3558419, *"Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact"*, 3568785 and 3568729 (follow-up to 3556479).

CAS-3430579, 11 August 2015, states:

"It is a waste of public money for BBC to make programmes to inform people on MDGs or give media training without informing public of pledges their leaders made."

.....

Unanswered appeal on "systemic BBC problems", 27 June 2016

This appeal was sent with the responses from the National Audit Office and Financial Times Complaints Commissioner detailing changes made by those organisations to output following complaints, and a reasonably comprehensive compilation of communications to the BBC and Trust to date.

.....

Date: 27 June 2016 at 17:49

Subject: Request for appeal to the BBC Trust. CAS-3690848-W26SGM

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Clarke,

I wish to appeal CAS-3690848 to the Editorial Standards Committee.

I attach

- a) the appeal request,
- b) a document of previous communications to the BBC including unanswered complaints dating back to 2012,
- c) a ruling from the National Audit Office making a correction the BBC has not,
- d) evidence that the Financial Times has made a correction the BBC has not.

I acknowledge the last email from the Head of Editorial Standards, to which I shall reply separately.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

Request for appeal to BBC Trust

Editorial complaint: Audience Services ref. CAS-3690848

"Systemic BBC problems"

Appellant: Matt Berkley

Summary

This case appears to have been insufficiently investigated by the BBC Executive. The complaint alleges a potential breach in the context of other BBC output, which has not been addressed previously. To ignore the other complaints in the same series is to ignore the allegation of a pattern of presenting official claims without question. These claims are, unsurprisingly, often exaggerated in ways which make governments' alleged achievements look better.

This case includes the complaint:

"BBC should not always omit change of [Millennium Declaration/MDG targets'] baseline and UN false statements".

This has not to the appellant's knowledge been addressed by the Executive or Trust in any reply.

The BBC Executive has failed to reply to allegations of "systemic BBC problems" even though it has already accepted on 9 November 2015 that there is a series of linked, unanswered complaints unanswered at Stage 1. The appellant's past reference in a communication to Audience Services to "previous complaints" were not limited to those appealed to the Trust but related also to those acknowledged by Audience Services.

In the appellant's view, the Executive's decisions a) to separate complaints on individual items of output, and b) not to facilitate Stage 2 responses from a department with the relevant

remit - including matters of accuracy or impartiality over time - amount to procedural impropriety.

The length of this submission is due in part to the apparent need to restate the complaints after repeated BBC failures to address them. Audience Services' responses concerning the categorical claim in Millennium Children about "halving the number of the poorest" are garbled. There is a clear conflict between that, and both the official reduction from 125 to 90 million in malnourished children, and the official hunger statistic of a reduction from 930 to 795 million in chronically undernourished people. But the larger problems are the failure to question or counterbalance official claims, and the failure to answer the complaints of imbalances, errors or omissions. The matters are clearly of some significance to the public's ability to relate governments' statements about poverty to real life, and so hold them to account.

It is highly inappropriate for the BBC to respond to isolated points without addressing the main allegations of systemic problems. This appears to raise a question of principle.

A document of past communications is attached for reference.

Background

On 15 October 2001 the appellant complained to his Member of Parliament that macroeconomists were using the wrong method to aggregate the progress of the poorest. They were only looking at survivors.

In November 2001 the Secretary of State for International Development, UK Governor of the World Bank, responded to the complaint.

In December 2001 the economist Jeffrey Sachs - to whom the appellant had explained the problem in April 2001 - co-wrote a paper to some extent recognising the problem. The appellant had alerted several senior economists, academics and officials of this error beginning in 2000, including several senior staff at the World Bank in April 2001. See, for example, <http://www.mattberkley.com/morduch.htm> ;
<http://www.mattberkley.com/survival.htm> ;
<http://www.mattberkley.com/thoughts.pdf> .

In 2002 the incoming Chief Economist of the World Bank, Francois Bourguignon, co-wrote a

paper on long-term economic welfare, incorporating a relevant correction.

In both cases - as with subsequent analysis for the Lancet - the results were significantly different from those using the wrong method previously used. This was recognised in the Lancet in 2013 as having significant policy implications.

Until then, economic theorists had ignored this error. Macroeconomists had recommended policies on the basis of statistics which looked better if the poorest died. Economists Mark Weisbrot and colleagues, and the philosopher Thomas Pogge, had also raised this problem in perhaps more limited ways.

On 8 November 2012 the BBC partially upheld a complaint from the appellant. It amended a web page - though not other material with what was clearly the same error. (ECU ref. 1300394). The BBC has yet to respond to major complaints made at the time, including that the BBC had failed "since 2000" to inform the public correctly of the factual basis underlying the "vital goal" on poverty.

On 25 July 2013 the BBC upheld a second complaint from the appellant and made numerous corrections to two web pages on various aspects of global poverty (see Appendix). After this, the BBC continued to make one mistake it had already corrected, repeatedly claiming in 2015 that a target on "clean" water - for which there were not in fact the required statistics - had been met. It did so despite further complaints.

In early 2015 the editor of the Financial Times made numerous changes to published material "to ensure sufficient accuracy" after a complaint by the appellant (see attached document, end of page 2). He did so again following a further complaint. In contrast to the BBC approach, the Financial Times' Complaints Commissioner stated that he might have found a breach of

standards had the Financial Times [like the BBC had in fact done] made an explicit false statement about Millennium pledges.

On 19 July 2015 the BBC Trustees recognised that the Millennium Development Goal target on child mortality was weaker than the actual pledge by world leaders in 2000. The BBC

appeared never otherwise to have published this important historical fact. The Trust did not act on the appellant's request that it use discretionary powers in relation to the BBC's false statements about the world leaders' pledges. The BBC continued to conflate the targets with the actual pledges, despite complaints dating back to early 2014.

In October 2015 The Guardian amended a story following a complaint from the appellant on Millennium pledges.

On 19 January 2016 the BBC Trust gave a purported response to the complaints of November 2012, but failed to address the actual suggestion of "systematic bias", the problem that the BBC falsely claimed the World Bank looked at needs for its poverty claims, or the failure "since 2000" to state correctly the basis of those official claims. It wrongly presented a Stage 2 complaint as dismissed by the Executive, with the result that it was not addressed at all.

On 22 February 2016 the National Audit Office upheld a complaint on Millennium pledges/Millennium Development Goals which the BBC had not decided to act on (see

attached document).

Scope of the present complaints

The scope of Audience Services' last communication is not entirely clear, but it may relate to both these Stage 1a complaints:

CAS-3490707: Millennium Children programme page - encourages people to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges; other web pages which have similar content.

CAS-3553582: "systemic BBC problems. ..."Millennium Children....and web page contribute (with other BBC material) to wrong impressions: see unanswered/unacknowledged complaints, eg CAS-3340770."

[CAS-3340770 of 9 June 2015, like several other complaints on material leading up to, during and after the 2015 UN Summit, has never received a response.]

The appellant had complained that the reference in the Millennium Children web page

"In 2000, 180 world leaders agreed...targets...Millennium Development Goals they signed up to..."

"encourages citizens to hold governments to account for the wrong pledges".

This and the other instances of similar errors in the present complaint are in the context of a widespread failure notified to the BBC and Trust but never addressed.

Trustees never responded on this issue except on one wording in Woman's Hour

Trustees accepted in a ruling of 19 June 2015 that the actual child mortality pledge by "world leaders" in 2000 was more ambitious than the later MDG target.

However, the Trust's ruling in that previous case specifically excluded consideration of the cumulative effect over time of the BBC repeatedly conflating the two sets of aims. Further, the Trust's ruling contained an apparent error, which appeared wrongly to minimise the significance of the BBC's error in reporting. The Trustees had appeared to claim UN member states committed to the easier baseline in 2001 - when in reality they recommitted to the actual pledges of 2000.

On 16 October 2015 the Trust Head of Editorial Standards made the following commitment: "You have also complained about the published finding. We will revert to you in due course. ... a decision by the Trustees is final and unless I am persuaded there is a factual error I will not advise that it be changed."

In the complainant's view, the commitment clearly gave rise to legitimate expectations that
a) the Trust would respond substantively to allegations of inaccuracy in Trust rulings,
and

b) in this particular case the Trust would "change" the "published finding" if there was a "factual error".

The appellant is not aware of any such response or reaction.

Despite the commitment, and what would appear to be a common-sense obligation, the

Trust has apparently not defended the factual basis of its ruling of 19 June 2015; nor addressed the allegation that there is a systemic problem in BBC reporting of world leaders' pledges of 2000.

The BBC has not addressed allegations that, across its output, the BBC has failed to counterbalance categorical statements on global poverty trends based on official claims.

"Halved poverty" claim in "Millennium Children" programme

At 11 minutes 30 seconds, a caption "MDG1" was followed by audio:

"in 2000 the world's leaders...wanted to halve the number of the very poorest by now and they have".

The complaint said that the programme's stated numbers of malnourished children (125 million in 2000 down to 90 million) conflicted with that claim; and that the official estimates of chronically hungry were 930 million in 2001 and 795 million in 2015.

The appellant had said this claim contributes to lack of impartiality in BBC coverage of global poverty, from "too little coverage of fierce controversy over official claims."

This was in the context of "previous complaints" to which he had referred the BBC.

Continued failure of BBC to address cumulative effect of errors on world leaders' pledges of 2000

One of the Stage 1a complaints, in 3553582, was:

"BBC should not always omit change of baseline and UN false statements".

In other words, that the BBC:

a) has failed in its duty to the public by not telling them of the watering-down of Millennium pledges of 2000 in the subsequent MDG targets of more dubious formal standing; and

b) should instead have told the public that the UN had misled the public that the MDG targets were agreed at the Millennium Summit.

The context clearly includes that the BBC had already been given the correct information in previous complaints from this appellant.

As he wrote in the Stage 2 complaint of 29 March 2016:

"There was no "complaint about Millennium Children" separate from the other complaints acknowledged by Audience Services as a series on BBC coverage of global poverty."

A finding that one programme did not breach guidelines would not be in my view decisive for a conclusion that the BBC had not breached guidelines. The appellant has yet to receive specific replies at Stages 1, 2 or 3 to such complaints of failures across multiple items of BBC

output. It is therefore not the case that this complaint has previously been addressed by the BBC.

This did not refer simply to complaints already appealed to the Trust, but to the large number of unanswered complaints mostly about the BBC's coverage leading up to, during and after the 2015 Summit.

The context for communications to the ECU in this case

The appellant escalated the complaint to the ECU because he was advised to do so by Audience Services.

Also, the ECU had taken on a previous complaint (their ref. 1300394, rejected by the ESC on 19 January 2016) despite the fact that it was in part of BBC "failure since 2000" to give the correct information on official global poverty monitoring.

In that previous case, the ECU, the Trust Adviser and Trustees did not inform the appellant at any stage that the scope of the complaint was outside the ESC's remit.

The appellant therefore considers that in the present case, he was reasonable in supposing the ECU was the appropriate part of the BBC to investigate the present complaint and asking for clarity as to who was responsible for a reply. He indicated a willingness to explain the complaints once this, and by implication the scope of the BBC's investigations, were made clear.

The appellant considers there was a legitimate expectation that in both cases a department of the BBC Executive would not reject complaints which in fact fell outside the remit of that department.

These two rejections by the ECU, without passing the complaints on to the right department(s) or informing the appellant properly of BBC procedure, appear to constitute procedural unfairness.

In failing to address the more serious complaints of systemic problems, the BBC has failed to address matters which are plainly of some significance for the public to hold power to account.

Some unanswered complaints to the BBC relating to the same "systemic failures":

CAS-3445371, 23 August 2015: "BBC are stopping people from holding [governments] to account by not giving correct information on [Millennium] pledges."

Complaint CAS-3555570, appealed to the BBC Trust, was that "How to End Poverty in 15 Years" was "Part of BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism".

It read, "See previous complaints". In response:

- the Trust Unit gave an unsupported impression that this was limited to complaints appealed to the Trust. In reality the Executive had already recognised that there was a set of related complaints about material over an extended period, but failed to answer either in that context.

- The Trust Unit wrongly claimed that this appeal included three points not previously raised.

The complainant had in fact referred the Executive to a complaint of 18 December 2013 on this programme's predecessor in the same series.

As of June 2016, the Executive has still not answered the older complaint at Stage 2. The Executive failed to fulfil either of the required options: a substantive reply or a reply that the complaint raised no matter of substance.

The Stage 2 complaint on the 2013 programme focussed on two problems which neither the Executive nor the Trust had answered.

That programme emphatically claimed that the "middle billion" of humans "get" ten dollars a day, wrongly juxtaposing this claim with very different units for the "dollars a day" used by the World Bank.

The programme emphatically claimed that other people were wrong about the difference, and that the "middle billion" were on ten times the "dollar a day" level. But in fact there seemed to be no research basis for this claim.

The programme had clearly failed to heed the warning from its own academic source and the World Bank research director. It in effect approximately doubled, wrongly, its source's recommended adjusted "dollars" for the "middle billion".

The original complaint had been that the programme appeared to mislead even more, by

combining this error with the failure to mention that the middle billion's "dollars" were worth not only far less than the "dollars a day" but also far less than real dollars.

The newer programme emphatically claimed that the new aim was to eradicate extreme poverty.

But the World Bank actually write of bringing the number to about 250 million.

The BBC failed to respond to this complaint or the reference in the appeal on "How to End Poverty" to the unanswered older complaint containing this point.

The Trust Adviser wrongly claimed, in replying to the appeal on the newer programme, that this was a new point.

Unanswered complaint CAS-3555804 (5 November 2015) pointed out further instances of this error, as well as a further apparently baseless claim in BBC material from Professor Rosling in claiming extreme poverty had been halved in Africa.

Unanswered complaint CAS-3558419 (5 November 2015) "Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact"

Unanswered complaint CAS-3556479 (5 November 2015) pointed out that the BBC had, despite correcting the same error in July 2013 in upholding a complaint, CAS-2236086, again falsely claimed a UN goal on "clean" water had been met.

It pointed out that this was the "same error" as

"- unanswered complaints CAS-3430579 and CAS-3445371;

- unacknowledged complaint 14/8/15 on Business Daily;

- mentioned in unanswered complaint emailed to BBC World News 27/11/14."

Unanswered complaint CAS-3568785 (13 November 2015) added a further example of the false claim that a global "clean" water goal had been met. Not only were no statistics on "clean" water employed by the UN in the claim being presented by the BBC, but also the

BBC claim depended on using an easier baseline which was not in the Millennium pledge of 2000 or the MDG target proposed in 2001. The official figures were for 2000, 17.5%; and for 2015, 9.1%. There clearly had not been, according to the official monitors' statistics and the implication of the MDG target as written, a "halving ahead of time" as the BBC claimed.

CAS-3571759 (16 November 2015) "Due accuracy/balance in output on poverty claims", read:

"The question I ask is this:

"Does the BBC take reasonable steps to provide the basics - across its output on progress on world poverty - of accurate and clear enough information, and at least crudely balanced views, to inform audiences' ability to take part in the democratic process?".

Please see CAS-3561236/CAS-3561377;

CAS-3558419;

CAS-3553582."

A follow-up, CAS-3579660-46726C (20 November 2015)

"Inaccuracy and imbalance in context of BBC output"

read:

"I cannot easily find in BBC output:

a) accurate enough description of the basis of official statistics on world poverty to enable me to take a view on the official claims

or

b) alternative views to the official claims."

It noted several unanswered complaints and read:

"Please note for future responses that I allege inaccuracy and imbalance across multiple items."

Appendix: Upheld complaint

From: newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk

Date: 25 July 2013 at 19:28

Subject: Complaint Reply Required

To: "mattberkley@gmail.com"

25 July 2013

<newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Thanks for your email.

The article and the complaints you have are about the text of the article rather than Barbara Plett's analysis box,

[MB note: Not accurate: the actual complaint did refer to a problem in her contribution]

so please accept this as a response to your comments on this article and please accept our apologies for the delay in replying to your emails.

[MB: This should read "failure to respond". I had in fact referred to "failure to respond to complaints", not "delay". The previous complaints of 2012 to News Online - which were hardly disputable because the material was in conflict with the point made by More or Less that the World Bank "dollars a day" are not in fact real dollars - were never answered.]

Taking your points in order:

1) We have added the word 'targets' into the line about 2015 deadline.

3) The \$1.25 (83p) a day figure is the one given in the report itself.

Having had a look through the UN reports I can't see a specific definition saying that the measure is what can be bought in the US for \$1.25 - if you have a link please send it on and we'll happily amend - in the meantime this has not been changed as it seems that the key point is that the call is for the figure to be higher (rather than worked out in a different way).

4) The clean water reference has been changed to "improved sources of water".

6) That reference has been removed.

7) The reference to the poverty line has been amended in the news story amongst the "related stories". The other two are David Loyn authored pieces

[MB note: "Authored" is a specialised term referring to an opinion piece, while these are in fact

are news stories with more stringent guidelines applicable]

- I've passed your email on to him to consider whether his piece needs amending.

Thanks again for getting in touch.

Regards

BBC News website

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/handle-complaint/>

-----Original Message-----

[original message to News Online from "automail", ie BBC Audience Services, presented here with administrative details removed and formatted for readability:]

...[mailto:automail@metafaq.com]

Sent: 11 July 2013 14:58

To: NewsOnline Complaints

Subject: Complaint Reply Required

...{Reference case number:}

{Complaint title:} Breach of due accuracy in major matter

{Complaint:} "UN urged to embrace 2030 goal... ", 30 May

Below is an edited version of selected points from a complaint to barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk yesterday, 10 July. I send this version to help the BBC deal with and track the complaint in view of past BBC failure to respond to complaints of inaccuracy in global poverty reports.

Parts of the article seem to breach guidelines on due accuracy and major matters, when viewed either separately or in combination:

1. "2015 deadline for achieving...Goals" should refer to the intermediate "targets". The claim that the new goal is "more ambitious" is not as true as suggested.

3. "\$1.25 (83p) a day" and "one dollar..." give a misleading impression that the purchasing power of the poorest is much higher than it is. The \$1.25 is in "purchasing power parity" dollars.

4. "Goal for access to clean water has already been reached"

conflates MDG 7 (environmental sustainability),
target 7C (safe drinking water/sanitation)
and
indicator 7.8 (improved drinking water).

It thus overstates progress

in terms of both number of goals met, and evidence for the water being clean.

The official monitors' research is in fact on "improved", not "clean" water
sources:

<http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/graphs/>

6. The claim that "growing" pressure from population increases is hampering progress appears not to be well-sourced.

7. All three "related stories" conflate goals with targets and/or indicators, wrongly claiming that poverty or water goals were met.

{URL:} <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22719812>

.....

27 July 2016: BBC Trust told a third decision by Trustees is materially inaccurate

On 20 July 2016 at 10:17, Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

...The Editorial Standards Committee (ESC) has considered your request for an appeal to the BBC Trust and I attach a copy of its decision, which has been approved by the Chairman.

The Committee's decision is final and will be published in the next edition of the ESC's bulletin at http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/our_work/complaints_and_appeals/editorial.html on 28 July 2016.

...Please note that ESC findings and decisions remain strictly confidential until they are published and should not be forwarded on or shared with others prior to publication.

...

Kirsty Clarke

Complaints Adviser

BBC Trust

27 July 2016

Dear Ms Clarke,

I am still studying the text of the Trust's decision, but it seems not to meet the BBC's standards for accuracy and impartiality.

Due to the short notice given, the attached document should be viewed as containing initial thoughts rather than a polished or comprehensive version.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

[Attached document "**Comments on proposed BBC Trust publication of 28 July 2016.pdf**":]

Initial response on accuracy and impartiality of BBC Trust response on complaint that “Don’t Panic: How to End Poverty in 15 Years” proposed for publication on 28 July 2016

As with the complaints about BBC output (complaints from 1 November 2012 onwards, when it was explicitly suggested as a problem though never addressed by the BBC) a problem seems to be not just accuracy or impartiality separately, but the possibility that inaccuracies in the Trust’s response may add up to an impartiality problem.

1.

Legitimate expectation that Trust will respond adequately to allegations concerning accuracy and impartiality of its own statements to the public

I do not think the Trust could legitimately argue that it is exempt, in admissibility decisions, from a duty to respond to allegations that it has published or is about to publish misleading information.

It cannot have been, in my view, the intention of the drafters of the Charter and Agreement that Trustees should be held to a lesser standard of accuracy or impartiality than BBC staff whose standards they are supposed to uphold.

If it were, then inaccuracies by the staff could simply be dealt with by inaccuracies from Trustees. I cannot accept that such a situation would have been envisaged as satisfactory by those drafting the Charter and Agreement.

My view is bolstered by the fact that the Trust Unit promised to answer the allegation of inaccuracy in the Trustees’ decision of June 2015 on Woman’s Hour material.

I am still waiting for a substantive response to that allegation.

It is also bolstered by the withdrawal from publication of the Trust decision of January 2016 on More or Less and associated output.

The Trust Unit made a reference to “not offering” appellants the chance to comment on admissibility decisions. However, it seems a reasonable inference from the communications would be that the Trust would reconsider the text to be published. It is not clear what other reason there could have been for the Trust withdrawing the publication for seven weeks or so while saying it would consider the points and respond fully.

2.

Trustees' statement

“the complainant raised a number of new points relating to the programme”

does not seem sufficiently accurate.

I had, for example, raised the point in 2013 that Professor Rosling was claiming the new goal was to eradicate extreme poverty, when the World Bank in fact said it was 3% of world population.

At Stage 1 in November 2015 I had directed the BBC to that previous complaint, which was, and is, unanswered at Stage 2.

3.

In the appellant's view an accurate account of the complaint would include the following:

The appellant asked for clarification within ten working days, but was not given any more time to formulate a response to the Adviser's letter.

An accurate account would reflect this, and not give any impression that points made in the course of asking for clarification were the appellant's substantive response.

4.

The Trustees' account omits a key aspect of the complaint: the reference to “previous complaints”. This was clearly important in the context of a complaint that the material contributed to a pattern of BBC imbalance.

The “previous complaints” included unanswered complaints to Audience Services – which Audience Services seemed to recognise on 9 November 2015 as a series of related complaints.

The complaint had referred in particular to the previous complaint unanswered at Stage 2 about the BBC2 programme of 2013, The Truth about Population.

Clearly, since much of the relevant content was similar, the BBC was here being asked to consider the same aspects which appeared in both.

An example was the presentation of a goal as “ending” extreme poverty. In reality the World Bank goal is to bring the proportion below 3%, or about 280 million people.

The BBC had never answered this point, or a mention of a further example of the problem in another complaint of November 2015.

5.

The title: *“Decision of BBC Audience Services not to respond further to a complaint about This World: Don’t Panic – How to End Poverty in 15 Years, BBC Two, 11 October 2015”*

Trustees do not adequately reflect the language of the actual complaint which in fact alleged a BBC-wide problem, in the clear context of “previous complaints”.

Trustees’ statement *“The complaint concerned accuracy and impartiality in a BBC Two documentary”* and the subsequent reference to a point about BBC output, do not properly reflect that the complaint was about whether the programme contributed to accuracy and impartiality of BBC output overall, not whether it breached standards on its own.

The Trustees’ reference to overall BBC output did not properly reflect the specificity of the points previously made to the BBC, or made to the BBC by the time the BBC reply of 28 January 2016 was issued.

6.

Trustees omit a key point from the previous complaint about the “Population” programme to which he had referred the BBC:

Professor Rosling was presenting statistics he himself had rubbished in May 2013, saying the World Bank claims were “plus or minus half a billion” and in terms of “the emperor’s new clothes”.

The complaint referred to Professor Rosling’s use of the term “data” which seemed to indicate to the audience a higher degree of precision than he himself actually believed. Trustees omit this.

The overall impression, with the figure of “12%” on a chart, seemed inconsistent with his own stated belief.

If I apply the “plus or minus half a billion” proportionally to the “12%” (his comment was about a 1.3 billion estimate, while the 12% seemed to referred to an estimate of about 880 million), I get a range of about 7 to 17%.

The complaint, and the actual situation, was far from the impression given by Trustees of “experts” giving statistics which the complainant thought should be challenged.

The presenter had a specific doubt, and the complainant had a specific complaint about that doubt.

7.

Trustees state I said *“these figures were sourced from the World Bank”*.

I had in fact made clear earlier that Professor Rosling’s “middle billion on \$10” claim came from a Utrecht University paper, not the World Bank.

It is not possible that the “middle billion” being on about “\$10” and the “extreme poverty line” being \$1.25 (which is what the presenter said the line was) were both from the same World Bank method.

The World Bank estimate (on fragile numbers) for the “middle person” was nearer to \$3.50 in those dollars, than to \$10.

8.

Trustees claim the appellant said in effect, *“these figures...were not challenged during the programme”*

Again, the complaint was about whether there was an overall imbalance in BBC output.

9.

“the programme had defined “extreme poverty” as being \$1.85 per day.”

This would help the BBC’s defence of the “\$10” figure, since that “poverty” line would be in weaker “dollars”. But in fact the programme stated that the line was a little more than a dollar.

I do think the charts were based on these weaker “dollars”, even though the presenter, apparently wrongly, referred to them being based on the stronger “dollars” previously used by the World Bank.

The last part of the following page explains the “weak” and “strong” dollars:

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/international-poverty-line-has-just-been-raised-190-day-global-poverty-basically-unchanged-how-even>

The “Population” programme did use the stronger dollar for the charts, which was why its line was in the wrong place. [!]

[MB later note: The programme's line was clearly in the wrong place to show over a billion in "extreme poverty" out of seven billion.

However, my explanation here was wrong. I had stated it correctly before.

I may have become temporarily confused by Professor Rosling's two mistakes about what the dollars represented, his mistake in saying in the 2015 programme and web material that it used the weaker dollars while his methodology page on his website said he used the weaker dollars, and/or his moving of the "extreme poverty" line for the 2015 programme after my complaint. I gave the wrong reason why Professor Rosling's "extreme poverty" line was in the wrong place for the unreliable World Bank claims.

The real reason seems to be what I stated earlier in the process: that he used (unreliable) GDP per person in the chart but (unreliable and conceptually flawed) World Bank per person household survey numbers to talk about numbers and proportions below an extreme poverty line. GDP includes more economic activity besides households' activity. There may also be a problem arising from the fact that even GDP household figures may be higher than the survey results.]

The proportions on the 2012 chart are nothing like “more than a billion” to the left of the “extreme poverty” line and “less than five [! MB correction: six - see below] billion” on the right.

[MB later note: That is correct. However, another correction. As I stated to the BBC Trust the same day, that should read "six billion", but it makes no difference to the point I made in 2013: Professor Rosling's line is in the wrong place for his claim about there being over a billion in extreme poverty. There is no way the tiny triangle on the left is more than a sixth of the massive hill on the right.]

That error seems inevitably connected to his error in failing to heed his sources' advice to double the World Bank "extreme poverty" line to fit something like a \$10 "middle billion" claim - or, alternatively, to halve (or more) the \$10.

In "Population" Professor Rosling made the error of claiming emphatically that people could go from \$1 to \$10.

In "How to End" he made the error of presenting a chart with something near \$10 in the middle while saying the extreme poverty line was a little over a dollar. This implied a similarly misleading idea, even though the proportions on the new chart were adjusted following the previous complaint.

The Trust Adviser is not quite right about the dollar changing because of prices. In fact most of the difference between the "\$1.25 in 2005" and \$1.85 in 2011" is due to methodology change, not inflation (see link above).

I did initially think, wrongly as it turned out, that "How to End" had put the line in the wrong place by using the same figures for the charts as in "Population".

However, in this I may have been misled by Professor Rosling's apparent mistake in "How to End" when he said the line was just over a dollar.

I don't think it would be reasonable for the BBC to refuse to consider that mistake by Professor Rosling on the grounds that that mistake by him had misled me into thinking he had made a different error.

10.

"the exact position of the extreme poverty line varied depending on the value of the dollar"

This is part of the problem, as the complaint indicated. As with the previous programme, Professor Rosling seemed to give a likely impression that these were real dollars, worth far more than what was actually represented.

I have already explained that this added to the impression given by any exaggeration of official (weakly-evidenced) estimates of the "middle billion" "income".

11.

The section “Request for review by Trustees” does not adequately reflect the actual situation, in which the Trust Unit refused to allow the appellant time to respond to (or correct) its clarifications.

12.

A reasonably accurate account would state the correct position about the complaint on “Don’t Panic: The Truth about Population”. If the Trust has some evidence that this was dismissed by the Executive either after investigation or on grounds of it not being a “matter of substance” then I suggest it let me know. Otherwise it appears the Trust was not entitled to dismiss it.

Nor is it clear to me how the Trust could legitimately claim it had considered the points made in the Stage 2 complaint about that programme, which included that Professor Rosling was himself sceptical of the World Bank figures, or that the main points of the Stage 1 complaint had been properly addressed.

13.

Legitimate expectation that the Trust would take previous communications into account for new statements to the public

The Trust has made clear that although decisions are final, it takes comments into account for the future. I refer to my email of 10 May.

So even if there were a legitimate reason for the Trust not to respond or act on complaints on admissibility decisions – which I have disputed above - the Trust would still seem to have a duty to take points in such complaints into account when making new statements to the public.

On this ground too, it seems to me the Trust has a duty to assess material which it proposes to publish, or any material which should on a reasonable view be influenced by information supplied in comments on a previous admissibility decision, and ensure the public is not given information of a lesser standard of accuracy or impartiality than that expected of BBC staff.

Date: 27 July 2016 at 16:03

Subject: Correction. Re: Urgent. Trustees mislead in proposed publication. Re: ESC Decision
- This World: Don't Panic – How to End Poverty in 15 Years, BBC Two, 11 October 2015

To: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Ms Clarke,

In my document, "less than five billion" should read "less than six billion".

This does not affect the point made, which is that, as I stated in December 2013, in "The Truth about Population" Professor Rosling's "extreme poverty" line is clearly in the wrong place. There is no way a tiny triangle on the left is more than a sixth of the massive hill on the right.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

.....

From: Trust Editorial
Sent: 27 July 2016 16:15

Subject: RE: Correction. Re: Urgent. Trustees mislead in proposed publication. Re: ESC Decision - This World: Don't Panic – How to End Poverty in 15 Years, BBC Two, 11 October 2015

Dear Mr Berkley

Thank you for your email. We will consider the issues you have raised and get back to you in due course. We will delay publication of this decision in the meantime.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty

Kirsty Clarke
Complaints Adviser

BBC Trust

"BBC imbalance towards official claims"

29 July 2016

Complaint Summary:

Addition to unanswered complaint CAS-3340770
[of 9 June 2015]

Full Complaint:

This is an addition to CAS-3340770 and the series of related complaints, including on overall BBC balance in global poverty coverage.

The Inquiry, World Service 19 June 2016 and associated web material

Combined with other output complained of, not accurate enough;
not comprehensive enough concerning problems with factual claims from World Bank;
contributes to overall BBC imbalance towards official claims.

Please note the suggestion is of an overall BBC problem.

"The Inquiry" is a programme whose title suggests inquiry.

1. The programme, web material and publicity repeatedly use the terms

"end/eradicate/end/elimination".

However, as stated in complaint 2476017 of 18 December 2013 unanswered at Stage 2, the World Bank goal is 3% of world population.

If the world projection is 8.5 billion, the goal is about 280 million people.

2. Categorical statements, including misleading precision:

"For the first time in history fewer than 1 in 10 people are poor around the world. A billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty since 1990. But achieving the UN's new goal means reaching another 836 million people in the next 14 years."

3. *"the first MDG of halving global poverty...was met... in 2010"*

The goal included halving hunger, which was not officially met; another child nutrition indicator for MDG1 also made slow progress.

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 29 July 2016 at 17:03

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3945306-JQ1GM2

...you were not satisfied with the earlier response [? - in fact no response for over a year] to your complaint..

Here is the text of your response to our reply: [? - they had not replied at all]

YOUR COMPLAINT:

[reproduced complaint of 29 July]

...BBC Complaints Team

www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

To: worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk

Date: 29 July 2016 at 16:58

Subject: Re: Addition to unanswered complaint 3340770 of 9 June 2014.

[Later note: Should read "9 June 2015". It is other complaints from 2014 which are unanswered].

Fwd: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3734678-JP45NM

Dear World Service Complaints,

I have just submitted the following via the BBC Complaints web form.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

[included complaint of 29 July 2016, and the following:]

On 15 April 2016 at 12:34, Matt Berkley... wrote: ...

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 13 March 2016 at 06:08

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3734678-JP45NM

To: Matt Berkley ...

...The remit of BBC Audience Services is limited to comments, enquiries and complaints regarding the recent content of television, radio and online output within the UK for UK audience members.

The issue of editorial content of World Service programmes (such as the audio for The Inquiry) is not within our area of control. Our advice for you therefore is to contact BBC World Service, as they are responsible for this global BBC output:

...Email:

worldservice.complaints@bbc.co.uk ...

Natasha McCartney

BBC Complaints

----- Forwarded message -----

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 4 March 2016 at 17:11

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3734678-JP45NM

.....

We attach the text and case reference number of your complaint below for your records:

YOUR COMPLAINT:

Complaint Summary: Addition to unanswered complaint 3340770

Full Complaint:

I have yet to receive replies to complaints that the BBC has contributed to wrong impressions of UN pledges of 2000, in material including that mentioned in CAS-3340770; CAS-3430579; CAS-3430697.

I wish to add the following:

The Documentary: The New Face of Development World Service 24 Jan 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fq2v6>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03gj9ck>

Podcast: <http://open.live.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/5/redirect/version/2.0/mediaset/audio-nondrm-download-low/proto/http/vpid/p03gj9ct.mp3>.

Audio contributes to impression that the pledges of 15 years ago were merely the later, easier MDG targets of more dubious formal standing.

Timings are for audio at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03fq2v6> .

00.30 “Millennium Development Goals, the global framework for the last 15 years”

1.00 Myles Wickstead: “tremendous progress over the last 15 years in delivering on these MDGs” headed the Africa Commission set up by British Prime Minister Tony Blair...

14.55 “You’ve been chief here for fifteen years, which happens to be exactly the same time that there have been the Millennium Development Goals”

Imbalance of commentators towards those with official ties: former UK representative at the World Bank, ex-Governor of World Bank/UN employee; WFP employee

Article 23 Jan 2016

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-35370021>:

“launch of the Sustainable Development Goals at the UN, the leaders pledged that by 2030 nobody anywhere in the world would live in extreme poverty”

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-35370021>

But in fact the goal is counted as 3%.

Text is not clear whether dollar amounts are in same units as World Bank "dollars a day".

...BBC Complaints team

.....

2 August 2016 at 18:46

From: Trust Editorial <TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk>

Dear Mr Berkley

We have considered your two emails of 27 July and note that you have sent what you describe as your "initial thoughts" on the ESC's decision not to proceed with your appeal on *This World: Don't Panic – How to End Poverty in 15 Years*. We should make it clear that the ESC's decision is final, and we do not invite comments on it, although we will consider any material and relevant points of clarification or factual correction. ...

Ruby Seehra

Editorial Standards Team Assistant

& PA to Fran O'Brien

Reminder to Trust: duty to act reasonably in the public interest

To: TrustEditorial@bbc.co.uk

8 August 2016 at 10:12

Subject: Re: Correction. Re: Urgent. Trustees mislead in proposed publication. Re: ESC Decision - This World: Don't Panic – How to End Poverty in 15 Years, BBC Two, 11 October 2015

Dear Ms Seehra,

I refer to your email of 2 August.

I invite the Trust to clarify its position, to ensure that my communications are in line with the BBC's regulatory framework and the Trust's intentions.

The Trust writes,

"We should make it clear that the ESC's decision is final, and we do not invite comments on it, although we will consider any material and relevant points of clarification or factual correction. If you wish to submit any further points of that nature..."

As I see it, Trustees have an overriding statutory duty to act reasonably in the public interest.

All of my communications to the Trust have been, and will be, on that basis unless I learn otherwise.

I see no bar in the BBC Charter or Agreement against the Trust reviewing decisions, or reversing those it concludes were materially flawed.

Clearly, if a Trust decision contains a factual flaw this could mean the decision was untenable.

In such circumstances the statutory obligation would appear to bind the Trust to assess the decision for possible reversal.

Reassessment or reversal would be in the context of the public interest overall.

Similarly, if the Trust is informed of a different kind of flaw in a decision, meaning something other than a factual error, it would appear bound to consider this, again in the context of its overall public-interest remit.

So I cannot see what limitations, if any, your email is proposing on either my communications or the Trustees' action.

On timeliness of a reply from me, the "previous complaints" which I proposed that the BBC take into account at Stage 1a of the complaint mentioning "How to End" are extensive and to a large degree unanswered.

I propose to review them, and the responses from the Executive and Trust, during a reasonable time frame.

This may well take longer than the six days between my reading your message and 9 August.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Meanwhile:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-36972650



At least **76 million** people live without **safe** drinking water in India...

"At least 76 million people live without safe drinking water in India"

8 August 2016

bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-36972650

"Inaccuracy/imbalance in global poverty coverage"

Follow-up complaint to BBC Executive, 22 August 2016

[after inadequate reply from BBC News to complaints submitted over "past year"]
CAS-3979689

I suggest it is in the public interest to broadcast corrections and clarifications on major UN pledges, basis of Global Goal 1.1, "clean" water and so on. BBC gives inadequate reasons not to. Overriding statutory duty to act reasonably in public interest seems to require:

challenge/balance to official PR,

not ignoring/contradicting small print/other reasonable evidence/views;

reasonable assessment of global claims;

rectifying public impression where appropriate, especially if little evidence of other output counterbalancing problematic reports.

Executive has not answered on most UN pledge errors (6/1/14 onwards to ECU [*later note: Should read "6/2/14"*], others). ESC did not address explicit/cumulative implied understatements of pledges/failure to report them, but one wording in one programme. Baselines determine targets. CAS-3430579: "BBC does not report...pledges [or] scandal...Waste of...money".

Complaint 4/5/16 sent to D-G's office ("inaccuracy over time") states there are other unanswered complaints. Unanswered complaints include:

Business Daily; 3568785; 3561236 (influential event/BBC Worldwide sales); 3579660: "imbalance across/items". 3571759: "across/output". Many others: millenniumdeclaration.org/BBCpoverty.pdf. Some unacknowledged, including to World News, WS.

Essential context for allegations of systemic problems:

Complaints 2012 onwards including failure "since 2000" on official "poverty" stat (31/10/12); inaccuracies by More or Less 2007-15; Hans Rosling; Millennium Children; Dollar a Day series etc. 3555804 etc: Bank goal is 3%, not "end". 3445371: claims water "number" halved; "1 in 8 not enough food": But FAO stat is on chronic, severe calorie lack. 3568729 etc: BBC understates MDG7c; 3340770: child stat is 1990-2013, not 15yrs.

The accuracy problems/omissions seem to tend to exaggerate official claims of prosperity/progress.

Some output is likely used for reference, including in schools.

Please act by Editorial Guidelines, eg explain amendments on web pages.

More or Less' presentation of unreliable maternal mortality estimates

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02rzjy0

More or Less: Behind the Stats

Tim Harford investigates numbers in the news: are they always reliable?

Desk of Good News - Maternal mortality rates
The number of women dying in childbirth is falling around the world. In 1990, maternal mortality rates **were** 385 deaths per 100,000 live births
Today there **are** 216 deaths per 100,000 live births. This means the death rate **is** down by nearly half.

The Coastline Paradox
Why is it so difficult to measure coastlines? The further you zoom into the detail of a coastline, the longer it becomes. This is referred to as 'The Coastline Paradox'. We speak to Mairi Walker, a mathematician at the University of Edinburgh, and Danny Hyam, from The Ordnance Survey - the UK government agency responsible for mapping our coastlines.

Presenter: Tim Harford
Producer: Charlotte McDonald.

Show less

Available now
🕒 30 minutes

Last on

 Sun 7 Aug 2016
20:00
BBC RADIO 4

More or Less and maternal mortality: Complaint 16 September 2016

Complaint Summary:

Wrong impression that poor nations have good stats

Full Complaint:

Addition to unanswered Stage 1a complaints (please see CAS-3979689).

More or Less 5/8/16 and its web pages:

Statements on maternal mortality are problematic in light of UN and World Bank "small print". They appear part of a general BBC pattern being complained of. Here, repeating official PR headline numbers without question.

The now unavailable 3/7/15 edition of More or Less presented doubt on maternal mortality statistics. The 5/8/16 edition does not.

The uncertainty has been published in World Bank and other material for years.

"300,000 to 800,000" deaths/year

- UN Statistics Division/Inter-agency Expert Group, 2002.

millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mdg_report.pdf

"generally of unknown reliability"

- Main World Bank statistics book, every year 2001-2012.

openknowledge.worldbank.org/discover?scope=/&query=World+Development+Indicators

Ditto in MDG Indicator Handbook:

unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesf/Seriesf_95E.pdf

"unreliable and do not permit time-series analysis"

- Main UN Millennium Project report, 2005.

unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MainReportChapter2-lowres.pdf

"substantial uncertainty"

- Main UN/Bank maternal mortality report 2015.

datatopics.worldbank.org/hnp/files/Trends%20in%20Maternal%20Mortality%201990%20to%202015%20full%20report.PDF

"It is advised to consider...the reported uncertainty margins"

- SDG material.

unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/metadata-compilation/Metadata-Goal-3.pdf

Previous More or Less guests:

"MDGs/only one we measure quite well is _child_ mortality."

Hans Rosling

who.int/bulletin/volumes/91/12/13-031213/en/

"actual numbers on maternal mortality for just 16% of/births"

theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/jan/31/data-development-reliable-figures-numbers

"the data are so poor that...the real rate/might be twice as high"

developmentprogress.org/blog/2015/05/01/welcome-data-revolution

Hard to see much BBC output questioning these statistics.

In CAS-3979689 "6/1/2014" should read "6/2/2014".

.....

Recent problematic output and further information

19 September 2016

Complaint description

More or Less debunked UN safe water claim on 10/3/12 and 3/7/15 (but err on baselines).
14/5/12: bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-18020432: Experts say 3-4 billion may lack safe water - maybe 5x UN estimates.

Yet:

"At least 76m/in India"

8/8/16

bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-36972650 "663m" bbc.co.uk/guides/z347bk7

"One in eight"

bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zt3xdmn/revision/5

"783m"; juxtaposes "enough nutritious food" with FAO stat on chronic calorie lack.

bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zhkp34j/revision/2

"India, 77m" (text)

"600 m" (audio 00.40)

14/7/16

programmes/b07jw5j

"783m"

20/5/16

news/business-36259704

Unchallenged: "650m"

22/3/16

news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-35871987

"According to WaterAid, 57m/in Nigeria"

22/3/16

news/in-pictures-35860671

Unchallenged: "663m"

16/8/15
news/science-environment-33954763

"According to/charity, some 748m"
7/1/15
news/technology-30709273

"According to/UN, about 17m [Kenyan]"
11/9/13
news/science-environment-24049800

"fact that 780m/lack..."
18/7/13
news/technology-23360907

"One in six"
schools/gcsebiteize/geography/development/factors_influencing_development_rev2.shtml

CAS-2236086 is outstanding at Stage 1a: "David Loyn/to consider whether/needs amending"
(News Online 25/7/13)

CAS-2476017 (Hans Rosling previously rubbished stats; wrong \$) is outstanding at Stage 2.
ECU 21/7/15: complaints on UN baseline are "outstanding".

ECU email 19/4/16 said ECU remit is on single items.
Please clarify its power to dismiss complaints:

- BBC failure "since 2000" to report basis of UN \$/day (ECU case 1300394).
- Problems across several More or Less editions 3/12/07, 3/3/12, 3/11/12, 11/4/14 and "Dollar a Day" series to which More or Less page 3/3/12 linked (1300394; Stage 1a complaints to ECU after BBC failures to respond).
- "Huge amount" of BBC output conflates real and "PPP" dollars (6/2/14, 28/5/14 to ECU).
- "Systemic/problems...BBC should not always omit change of baseline"(CAS-3553582/3690848).

[end of communication to BBC 19 September 2016]

Maternal mortality: BBC story 12 November 2015:

← ⓘ | www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34796833 PA

Maternal mortality **has fallen by almost half** since 1990

Pregnancy-related deaths have fallen by almost half in the past 25 years, according to a report by United Nations agencies published in The Lancet.

Around 303,000 women died of complications during pregnancy or up to six weeks after giving birth in 2015 - down from **532,000 in 1990**.

Officials from the World Health Organisation (WHO) said the results showed "huge progress".

However, only **nine countries hit targets** set by the UN.

"This report will show that by the end of 2015 maternal mortality will have dropped by 44% from its levels from 1990," said Dr Lale Say, coordinator for reproductive health and research at the WHO.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34796833



Maternal mortality falls by almost 50% - UN report - BBC News

A United Nations report says pregnancy-related deaths have fallen by almost 50% since 1990, but only nine countries hit UN targets.

bbc.com

Reply icon Retweet 7 Like 3 More options icon

In reply to Suzanne Sicchia



Leslie Chan @lesliekwchan · 12 Nov 2015

@DrSicchia Yet this **BBC** news headline today gives a rather misleading impression about **maternal mortality** bbc.com/news/world-eur... #idsa01

Reply icon Retweet Like More options icon

<https://twitter.com/Gibbyk1/status/664812793351270400>



Gibran K
@Gibbyk1



Follow

Remarkable yet misleading: Maternal mortality falls by almost 50% - UN report -



Maternal mortality falls by almost 50% - UN report - BBC News

A United Nations report says pregnancy-related deaths have fallen by almost 50% since 1990, but only nine countries hit UN targets.

bbc.co.uk

2:31 PM - 12 Nov 2015

BBC material for schools confusingly refers to FAO number which only relates to people who have chronic, severe lack of calories, just after mentioning "enough nutritious food".

Clearly, the number who do not have "enough nutritious food" is likely to be much greater than the number who have severe, chronic lack of calories.

The BBC schools material also repeats the huge overstatement about "clean" water:

www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zhkp34j/revision/2

Revise Test

MDG Report, 2012

The most immediate consequence of poverty is not having enough nutritious food to eat. Around 850 million people, 15.5% cent of the world's population are malnourished. Hunger and the risk of famine remain very high in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia outside of India. Nearly one child in five under the age of five in the developing world is underweight.

Poor housing

Today 863 million people are now estimated to be living in slums compared to 760 million in 2000 and 650 million in 1990. Of the world's population, 11% or 783 million people remain without access to clean drinking water. In India 626 million people, in China 14 million people and 7 million people in Brazil have no inside toilet facilities.

Science in Action: Not real dollars; Bank goal is 3% extremely poor, not "eradicate"; not enough challenge to official concept or university researchers' claim

...

Contacted us before

Yes

...

Reference

3979689

Complaint title

Further recent editorial problems

Complaint description

Science in Action, WS [correct date given subsequently: 18/8/16] and associated web pages seem part of an overall pattern which may constitute BBC failure of due accuracy and impartiality in global poverty coverage.

Audio: Segment from 00.35-6.30.

News story: bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-37122748.

Systemic BBC problems seem to include:

1. Despite complaints, BBC still fails too often, here with a global audience, to state that the dollars a day are not real US dollars.
2. BBC material including this ("*poverty data*"; "*whether the computer gets it right*") contributes to wrong impression that "poverty" estimates are not to a significant degree subjective. For example, we can only guess or opine on the value to people of various foods or combinations of foods; the value of dirty water; the value of types of housing in different environments.
3. "Eradication of poverty" - As previous complaints: World Bank say the target is 3%.

News story:

Not real dollars; the researchers say lack of data on "economic livelihoods", not "incomes", hampers efforts; not really "*predicting*" in the ordinary sense of "forecasting".

Audio:

"Imagine you're giving away/money" - Why is the BBC not addressing poor people?

Why is it not asking the rich to imagine being poor?

"you need surveys/door to door" - Is that true? Why not use death rates? It is not hard to recognise a severely malnourished child.

Guest: *"pretty darn good prediction"* of poverty. Perhaps it is actually guessing prosperity.

Other media coverage: *"In general/able to predict ~50-70%/variation in wealth/"The bar is very low," Jean says."*

washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/08/24/how-satellite-images-are-helping-find-the-worlds-hidden-poor

Previous complaints on real-PPP dollar confusion incl:

8/11/12, 7/12/12, 16/12/12 all to newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk;

CAS-2236086:10/7/13 to barbara.plett@bbc.co.uk, 11/7/13;

CAS-2476017:18/12/13, 20/5/14 to ECU;

emails 6/2/14, 28/5/14 to ECU;

22/9/15 to alison.kirkham@bbc.co.uk;

CAS-3555570

BBC News repeats official claims on malaria without question or stating that there is a wide range of uncertainty

17 October 2016

Case number CAS-4053465

[Addition to case 4012130]

Complaint Summary:

Wrong impression that poor nations have good stats

Full Complaint:

This complaint is not as serious as, for example, the unanswered complaints that:

- More or Less repeatedly exaggerated the thoroughness of World Bank "extreme poverty" research methods; and

- The BBC is failing to inform the public properly of the basis of "extreme poverty" claims, or world leaders' pledges in 2000.

Omitting uncertainty in global malaria numbers may contribute to a wrong impression that poor nations have reliable statistics.

BBC 20/9/16, "Malaria...killed > 430,000 people in 2015". WHO said range was "236–635k" deaths.

(news/business-37406230; who.int/gho/malaria/en/).

BBC 7/9/16: "438k [deaths] according to WHO" (see above); "214 million cases according to WHO". WHO said: "uncertainty range 149–303M".

(news/health-37284378; WHO as above).

...

Context: Other 2015-6 output.

BBC 14/4/16: "kills ~440k each year" (news/health-36043876)

BBC 24/11/2015: "kills ~580k/year" (news/health-34898931)

Two older items on a Nature article:

Health Check WS 16/9/15: "no. of cases has halved since the year 2000"; "700M" figure given three times.

BBC Online, 17/9/15: "262M" cases in 2000; WHO said "205–316M". BBC: "839k died" in 2000; WHO: "653k - 1099k".

bbc.co.uk/news/health-34269314; who.int/gho/malaria/epidemic/cases/en/apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A1368).

Comment: The Nature authors wrote for the year 2000: "33%, 95% credible interval 31–35%" and for 2015: "16%, [credible interval] 14–19%". They do not give probabilities for a) the rate being halved (rather than, say, 30 in 2000 and 18 in 2015); b) it being much more than halved; or c) other potential conclusions about trends

researchgate.net/publication/281837736).

BBC did better in a story perhaps from 2005: "official study puts figure at 350-500M" cases/year.

news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/world/05/malaria_global_menace/html/ancient_scurge.stm).

I submit that it is inadequate for the BBC to repeat without question official statistics or claims by one set of authors, even with ranges.

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