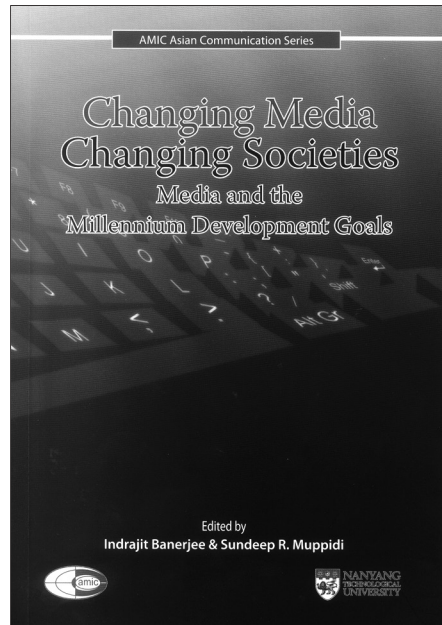


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## Diversity, but gaps in how media can achieve MDGs

***Changing Media, Changing Societies, Media and the Millennium Development Goals***, edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Sundeeep R. Muppidi. Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), 2009, 219pp. ISBN 978-981-4136-13-6.

IN 1948, communication was recognised as a fundamental human right when the General Assembly of the United Nations included freedom of opinion and expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights among other rights such as the right to life, liberty, education, assembly and privacy etc. Half a century later there are still millions of people in the world who do not enjoy some of the basic rights to life including rights to food, shelter and education, while paradoxically there has been an exponential growth in com-



munication technology. The United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are meant to be the light in the darkness for millions of people who are surviving on less than \$2 per day. MDGs are a set of eight goals, to be achieved by 2015, which directly address the world's biggest development challenges (see [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)) with media seen as an integral partner in this challenge.

The 2008 AMIC conference theme, *Changing Media, Changing Societies, Media and the Millennium Development Goals*, also the title of this publication, highlighted the role of media in this development process,

as the editors, Banerjee and Muppidi, point out:

In our globalised world, the media is more than just a watchdog. Around the world, in every society, they play important roles including creating awareness, disseminating the relevant messages at various stages of the development process, providing channels of communication between various stakeholders, and ensuring transparency in this global effort of the UN to achieve its millennium development goals (p. 3).

A collection of 12 conference papers have been edited into three sections. Sadly the first two of the three chapters, which are meant to underpin the themes in this book, engage largely with media practices in developed nations. Andrew Tausig's engaging discussion of the symbiotic relationship between government and media in democratic societies, using the analogy of partners on the dance floor, makes a perfunctory mention of under privileged groups as one of the parties in this crowded dance floor vying for media attention (p.14). Although Alan Knight presents an overview of changing journalism practices as a direct result of internet development in the Asia-Pacific region, much of this article dwells on issues pertaining to the Australian public broadcaster,

the ABC. Thus it is Felix Librero's third chapter in this thematic section which addresses more directly the significant issues that this publication sets out to present. Librero sees education 'as the mother of all development issues...and the common denominator of the eight millennium development goals set by the United Nations' (p. 37). Focusing on transnational education he argues that as a development message this sector would benefit students globally with a two way flow of knowledge from the developed to the developing world and vice versa.

... a two way flow of knowledge not only from the developed to the developing but vice versa. He further states, 'By offering our counterparts from the developed world an opportunity to learn from us, we are promoting not only world understanding, but the tenets of education for all ...' (p. 45).

One of the most important articles in relation to media and MDGs in the collection is Trevor Cullen's 'Reporting HIV and HIV Communication Theories'. By reviewing the findings and recommendations of three surveys on media reporting of HIV undertaken in the US, Southern Africa and PNG, Cullen identifies that 'one of the major problems was the narrow framing of the disease' (p. 155). He turns to the

emerging Social Change Communication theory (as opposed to Behaviour Change communication theory) as a way to rethink the coverage of HIV in media:

It is based on a belief that behaviour change is dependent on social change and is a long-term process [...]. The implications of this theory, if adopted by editors and journalists, would widen the predominant framing of HIV stories from primarily a focus on health to one that covers related issues such as gender equality, domestic violence, inadequate access to treatment, poor health facilities, complex sexual networking and challenge governments on their policies towards treatment, human right and overall strategies (p.153)

Another insightful article is '*Bandillo Ng Palawan: The Philippines Last Frontier of Environmental Journalism*' by Calma *et al.* It discusses the constraints and challenges of environmental journalism in the Philippines through a case study of community-based newspaper *Bandillo Ng Palawan*. The authors raise a raft of concerns in relation to environmental reporting including the fear of libel suits, harassments and self-interest within a community media context, and its deleterious impact upon environmental sustainability as addressed in MDG 7.

Section two has various country-

specific case studies as follows: Roy's analysis of 'policy and regulatory changes in the Indian radio landscape' (p.48); Patching and Pearson's revealing look at the 'spin' techniques used in government media relations with a focus on Australia; Shoemith and Mahmud's appraisal of a communication course in Bangladesh which is informed by a media savvy generation of students and underpinned by a broad liberal arts education; Papoutsaki and Strickland's research of Diaspora media within Pacific communities in New Zealand.

Section Three covers a multitude of issues which include Cabañes' research of cultural identity issues within the Filipino migrant community in Singapore; Chib *et al* on social campaigns focusing on disabled athletes and the study by Wijaya *et al.* into the impact of journalism education on professional practices in Asian countries.

The editors have identified a diversity of topics from the many papers presented at the 2008 AMIC conference in Manila to illustrate the role of media and media education in dealing with the challenges of development. However much is left to the reader's own critical faculties to draw the connections between the issues discussed and the role of media in achieving the MDGs.