

Some unanswered complaints to the BBC:

Global poverty and government pledges

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DRAFT

Comments here are not to be taken as definitive statements.

This is not presented as a complete list of complaints or communications to the BBC.

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To do: Remove any duplicates on BBC World News

Go through older complaints starting with emails to News Online.
 Check spreadsheet for errors.
 Go through emails to list complaints and include any not here.
 Can use the document listing emails copied from the Gmail page.
 Make sure complaints to ECU are included.
 Match up with spreadsheet.
 Think about how to present the information.
 Keep a cool head and a strategic attitude.

Reply on How to End ... by around 6 Jan.

Complain on 10 Dec link by around 7 Jan.

Tidy up first few pages below.

Complaints have been reformatted for readability.

BBC Annual Report 2014-5:

*“Licence fee payers expect the BBC to set the **very highest standards of** fairness and independence, as well as of **impartiality and accuracy**. The BBC’s **lack of any commercial or state influence** is the bedrock of its trustworthiness amongst its audiences.”*

*“We...re-emphasised the **necessity** of reflecting the **broadest possible range of opinions** and experiences”*

"All webform complaints received acknowledgements within a short period of being submitted"

downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/complaints_framework/rust_concls_mystery_shopping2014.pdf

Examples of unanswered complaints 2015 with dates of submission:

* = unacknowledged

9 June The Inquiry 3340770

11 August 3430579

11 August Newshour, Today 3430697

*13 August 17.06

*14 August Business Daily

*14/15 August More or Less

*15 Aug In the Balance

23 Aug Newsround 3445371

1. More or Less: Handling complaint requested 6.12.12 in email sent to fraser.steel@bbc.co.uk and also to jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk .

No response: requested again 31.8.2013 to ECU.

Editorial complaint was of multiple inaccuracies with tendency towards bias in coverage of global poverty.

Handling complaint is of multiple failures of Executive to respond to complaint of 27 May 2012 and reminders; strange reply from editor of More or Less.

Status: Last communication from Executive was 17 September 2013 when ECU stated it would ensure an investigation was put in hand.

2. **Programme used statistics the presenter distrusted; overstated typical "income" by confusing "dollars"**: "Don't Panic: The Truth about Population". Presented statistics the presenter himself had stated were "plus or minus half a billion". Confused two different "dollar" units with result that wrongly presented half the world's humans as living on ten times the "dollar a day" level. Status: No response from ECU to substantive complaint or to suggestion of ECU conflict of interest as a result of its own related error in a published ruling.
3. **Wrong UN pledges**: 6 February 2014: ECU informed of serious error in More or Less 10/2/12. BBC has committed to reading all complaints to determine seriousness. Trust has pledged to the public that
4. Unacknowledged complaint at Stage 1a via web form

28 September 2015 CAS-3490118-DT7WRQ

After Audience Services failed to answer complaints, News Online also fail. Wrong "dollars".

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

Trustees recognise leaders' pledge but BBC journalists repeat spin

On 19 June 2015, after over a year of complaints, someone paid by the BBC stated something vaguely right about how Millennium Development Goal targets relate to governments' commitments of 2000. But after this, the BBC continued telling people in poor countries that the MDGs were set in 2000.

The BBC trustees sent a decision on 19 June which said:

"by changing the base line for measuring the reduction of under-five child mortality deaths [! - and other pledges] to the year 1990, the target set [?] in 2001 [?] was a less demanding commitment [?] than that made in 2000".

.....

Yet more guests with World Bank connections on More or Less; the errors continue

BBC World Service and Radio 4
More or Less
Did Global Poverty Halve Overnight?
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01ys3t5>
16 May 2014

An **ex-World Bank economist** who had chaired a session and given the keynote address at a **World Bank conference** less than three months before, presented a programme. He introduced it by referring to the team being like detectives.

The programme was on an article by **economists** at an organisation headed by an **ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank**.

The ex-World Bank presenter heard from one of the economists at the organisation headed by an ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank, raised a question put by the **ex-Research Director of the World Bank** who co-designed the official method, and heard from **the Chief Economist of the World Bank**.

The non-World Bank economist is a co-author of a paper with the ex-World Bank contributor to the 3 March 2012 edition of More or Less who proposes a similar line to the official World Bank line, but at a higher level.

The article by economists at the organisation headed by the ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank used **surveys processed by the World Bank** and price estimates from an **organisation hosted by the World Bank**.

.....

The **ex-World Bank economist presenter** raised a question which was in the main comment thread on the only page where the article was published. The questioner was the **ex-Research Director of the World Bank** and designer of the official "dollar a day" methodology, who was a guest for two previous editions of More or Less on the dollar a day in 2007 and 2012.

Besides the contributor from the organisation headed by the ex-Chief Economist of the World Bank, the other contributor was the **current Chief Economist of the World Bank**.

The current Chief Economist of the World Bank said that national price data should not be used for poverty analysis without proper adjustment. This was extremely strange, because that is **precisely what the World Bank does**.

The ex-World Bank presenter did not react.

Is that the BBC's idea of impartial reporting on economics?

.....

"Did the number of people around the world living in extreme poverty fall by half a few weeks ago? That's one interpretation of newly released figures for purchasing power parity around the world, but does it stack up?"

"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. "

BBC Radio 4 - More or Less

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0436h18>

"Did the number of people around the world living in extreme poverty fall by half a few weeks ago? That's one interpretation of newly released figures for purchasing power parity around the world, but does it stack up? Should the World Bank be lowering its global poverty estimates?"

Radio 4 introduction by the ex-World Bank economist and recent conference chairman and keynote speaker at World Bank:

"Hello, and welcome to More or Less - the show that does for statistics what Sherlock does for crimes. ...this week.... has global poverty just been halved overnight?"

On a Wednesday morning in late April, the worthy people over at the International Comparison Programme, which is housed at the World Bank, published a new set of estimates for purchasing power parity."

"James Fletcher:

Yes, Tim, it is fascinating even if it does sound like a bit like a tedious piece of geekery - but it's a piece of tedious geekery that's changing the way we understand the world."

Comment: This may imply serious acceptance of the widely derided World Bank statements on poverty. The lack of challenge may be linked to the preponderance of World Bank and ex-World Bank guests on More or Less editions dealing with extreme poverty on 3 December 2007 and 3 March 2012; the inclusion of yet another supporter of the "dollar a day" in November 2012; and the choice of guests and information sources for the current edition.

"For example, when these ICP numbers came out, some researchers in a Washington DC think tank did what they're paid for"

[The biggest donors to the organisation in grant size listed for 2014 were the Norwegian government and the UK government:
<http://www.cgdev.org/section/funding>. I have not divided this by the number of years the grants are spread over.]

*"and started thinking and calculating; and pretty soon they produced this headline:
"Global absolute poverty fell by almost half on Tuesday" "*

What the programme description calls "one interpretation" of the new price data - that global poverty fell overnight - is a joke made by the economists, and not only a joke about "overnight" or "on Tuesday".

Sometimes economists or statisticians say figures "fell" when the method was revised for all years.

"Tim Harford:

*Using the old set of PPP figures, the World Bank had estimated that there were more than a billion people in the world living in extreme poverty on less than a dollar 25 a day. **The rough estimates from the think tank suggest that using the new PPP figures the number under that extreme poverty line has almost halved.***

James Fletcher:

*And this has got development policy wonks hopping around because reducing the number of extremely poor people is one of the Millennium Development Goals agreed by the United Nations. **This suggests we've made a lot more progress on that goal than we previously thought.**"*

The programme's idea above is not necessarily always a mistake, but it is an unusual approach.

The programme did exactly what the price researchers said not to do, in saying the new price data could mean there has been faster progress on poverty.

It is odd if the More or Less did not realise this.

For one thing, the World Bank methodology paper for the official global poverty count shows the usual approach to price revisions in its title:

"The Developing World is Poorer than we Thought, but no Less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty".

The BBC reported correctly in 2008 that the World Bank had revised its estimate for 1981 as well as the most recent estimate.

It is not clear why the reporter thought this suggested poverty fell less sharply.

It could be that new price data resulted in PPP \$1 in 1981 being equivalent to PPP \$1.25 after 24 years of inflation, but given observed inflation rates in the US that would involve things in poor countries being now thought to be much cheaper relative to the US than was thought before, and not as the World Bank claimed more expensive.

"27 August 2008

By Steve Schifferes

Economics reporter, BBC News

The World Bank has warned that world poverty is much greater than previously thought.

It has revised its previous estimate and now says that 1.4 billion people live in poverty, based on a new poverty line of \$1.25 per day.

This is substantially more than its earlier estimate of 985 million people living in poverty in 2004.

The Bank has also revised upwards the number it said were poor in 1981, from 1.5 billion to 1.9 billion.

The new estimates suggest that poverty is both more persistent, and has fallen less sharply [?], than previously thought.

...The World Bank's new poverty line of \$1.25 per day in 2005 is equivalent to its \$1 per day poverty line introduced in 1981 [!] after adjustment for inflation. [!] The new estimates are based on 675 household surveys for 116 countries, based on 1.2 million interviews. The data has also been revised on the basis of new data on inflation and prices from the 2005 ICP survey of world prices, which showed that the cost of living in developing countries was higher than previously thought. It does not take into account the recent increases in fuel and food prices."

BBC NEWS | Business | World poverty 'more widespread'
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7583719.stm>

More or Less, 3 March 2012:

Tim Harford: "...in 2008 the World Bank made a major change to how they calculated the poverty line. They took account of more national poverty lines, more household surveys - and they got much more accurate price information."

Ruth Alexander: "So they effectively just started all over again."

Tim Harford: "Yes. They junked the old poverty line calculations and they recalculated everything. And the new dollar-a-day line is actually a dollar 25, pegged to 2005 prices."

That edition of More or Less phrased the PPP revisions as "much more accurate price information".

This 2014 edition claims the revisions might show faster progress on poverty.

It is not clear why.

The International Comparison Programme, which puts out the judgements about relative prices in different countries (they are judgements, not calculations, because the value of accommodation, for instance, is not easily comparable across countries) had stated that this was a new methodology which should not be compared with previous methods for previous years. The usual method was to adjust prices up or down for all years, not adjust the trend as in the approach by the programme.

The BBC statement

"This suggests we've made much more progress [on poverty]"

is a fundamental error, unless there was some specific reason for assuming the old estimates were more useful for previous years.

The ICP staff who the ex-World Bank presenter called "those worthy people" said of their new numbers:

"...not directly comparable with the 2005 ICP round estimates because they are based on two different price levels"

"...some of the economies.....were not in the other comparison"

"...most importantly, some significant improvements in methodology..."

"The ICP should not be used to compare changes in an economy's PPP-based GDP over time."

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/04/29/2011-international-comparison-program-results-compare-real-size-world-economies>

Since the ICP is about purchasing power, clearly the same applies to claiming changes in living standards.

The BBC statement *"The rough estimates from the think tank suggest that...the number under that extreme poverty line has almost halved"* in the context of the other statement, tends to confirm the wrong impression.

On 3 March 2012, More or Less presented the World Bank statistics applying the latest price data (from surveys carried out around 2005) to 1990 and 2008. Since the prices had been applied to all years, the World Bank was reporting the same trend as before.

On 16 March 2014, More or Less did something different from the World Bank and its own use of statistics in the 2012 programme. Now it presented the idea that the new price data applied only to the latest numbers.

In my view the economists' joke about poverty falling was irresponsible for an article put on public view, but I find it surprising, in concept at least, that an ex-World Bank economist might not see how it was a joke.

It is notable that the BBC did not note this:

The new price estimates might mean people in poor countries can afford much more than the older estimates were taken to indicate.

But those old estimates were taken to show that they could afford much less than economists had previously thought!

More or Less was here saying poverty might be less (and oddly that poverty might have fallen faster) than previously thought. But on 3 March 2012 the programme did not say the same in reverse, when prices were thought to be higher than economists had thought before that.

Let us put aside the odd BBC idea that you should only apply the ICP's claims of an improved methodology - meaning the inferred cheaper prices, and lower poverty - to a recent year.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose that the new prices released in 2014 show things in poor countries are cheaper than the ICP said last time. Let us suppose that this means people are not as poor as the World Bank said before.

It would still not be duly accurate to say that according to World Bank figures poverty is less than the World Bank thought before. Why not? Because the last time prices were updated - in 2008 using prices from surveys around 2005 - the World Bank said prices were substantially higher than they thought before 2008. So the higher prices had only been used between 2008 and 2014. It would have been sensible to point out that to some extent the new "cheaper" prices would put the World Bank back to where they were before, when for example Kofi Annan in 2000, using similarly "cheap" prices urged the Millennium Summit to halve the proportion of people on under a dollar a day from "currently 22 per cent".

As it turns out, researchers may now be saying, as of 2015, that the price revisions discussed in More or Less of 16 May 2014 seem not to give a very different poverty count from the previous revision.

A bigger problem with the programme is that it again ignored important issues - such as whether the household survey data are reliable, the fact that the World Bank do not estimate prices faced by the poor, or adjust for needs, and what world leaders actually pledged in 2000.

The programme's performance is worse because of the **misleading and farcical presentation of the Chief Economist of the World Bank as concerned for care about using prices which are not known to be what the poor face.**

That is damaging to people's understanding of public statements about both progress on poverty and the relative success of policies, may be the result of the BBC using an ex-World Bank presenter and World Bank and ex-World Bank guests.

The complaint about this fact-checking programme, like the complaint about the previous edition, was not answered at all by the BBC's complaints submission system - even though this system is presented as if it "guarantees" a response.

The Head of the Editorial Complaints Unit was notified of an unanswered complaint and did

not answer.

The complaint was submitted on 26 June 2014 at around 9pm.

Screenshot:

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>

The text copied from the web form four minutes earlier was:

.....

BBC "loses" complaint on errors and bias in More or Less?

More or Less of 16/19 May 2014

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.

BBC fails to reply on simple fact that it has failed to tell citizens what governments pledged in 2000

25 September 2015 at 15:54

Fwd: Urgent. Request for immediate retraction

To: trust.editorial@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk, david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

... 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.

.....

Further failure of BBC to answer on understating world leaders' historic pledge

25 September 2015 at 15:15

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

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

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]

After BBC fails to answer other complaints submitted to Audience Services, complainant informs Head of Editorial Complaints of "major error". He promises to answer on UN pledges. Guess what happens.

"More or Less makes a **major error**. The MDG targets ...are in fact easier than the pledges in the Millennium Declaration of 2000."

Invited comments on provisional response 1300394
6 February 2014

"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>

What is the World Service's record of replying to complaints on global poverty?

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

.....

BBC repeatedly disempowers poorest by falsehood

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

21 September 2015 at 00:00

Case number CAS-3490118-DT7WRQ

...Complaint Summary:

BBC repeatedly disempowers poorest by falsehood

Full Complaint:

Handling complaint.

BBC has not answered other complaints on same error or acknowledged complaints about eg More or Less making similar error.

Details: poornews.org

Suggest broadcast correction and adequate remedy before UN Summit on 25 September.

Further evidence: ungoals.org

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 5 November 2015 at 08:22

Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3490118-DT7WRQ

Dear Mr Berkley

Reference CAS-3490118-DT7WRQ

Thank you for your further e-mail about our Africa live page.

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/world-africa-33208716>)

The page was published on 1st July and your original complaint was received on the 13th August, meaning it wasn't received within the thirty working day window from the time of publication of this page to allow us to investigate further, as per our complaints process and as previously explained in our e-mail of 21st August.

There are some exceptions to this time limit within the full procedures but your further e-mail makes only a general reference to other complaints made on this same issue and in any event, was again received outside the twenty working day window stipulated in our procedures in the event you were dissatisfied with our earlier reply.

For these reasons we can only reiterate that we will be unable to investigate your concerns with this live page further.

For your complaint on handling, the Complaints process stipulates that:

2.5 Your complaint should include:

2.5.4 The nature of the complaint and (where possible) the particular parts of the programme or publication you are complaining about;

The inclusion of these details (or as many of them as possible) is very important.

A failure to provide them may mean that the BBC is not able to look into your complaint.

2.7 Your complaint should include all of the points about the item that you wish to be considered as the BBC may not consider new or different points after Stage 1a of the Procedure has concluded.

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/protocols/2012/complaints_fr_work_ed_complaints.pdf

We believe you have not adhered to the above criteria on this occasion, namely by directing us to us a website, and we therefore cannot address your concerns in the manner in which they have been raised. Should you choose to adhere to the aforementioned criteria, we will then endeavour to answer your complaint.

...Nicola Stewart

BBC Complaints

"Error that UN in 2000 set easier MDGs"

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
13 August 2015 at 17:48
Case number CAS-3433281-GVHHWH

...Complaint Summary:

Error that UN in 2000 set easier MDGs

Full Complaint:

"In 2000, world's leaders joined together in a pledge" is correct.

"They set out MDGs"

is not correct.

The MDGs were agreed later between civil servants, and have a standard easier 1990 baseline. The pledge does not. It was reaffirmed in 2005 and 2013.

millenniumdeclaration.org has the evidence.

I am afraid the BBC has misled citizens in poor and rich countries as to what the pledges are.

BBC bosses ignore likelihood of misreporting Millennium pledges during 2015 UN Summit

22 September 2015 at 08:41

Fwd: Red flag complaint unanswered? Risk of repeating significant error this week

To: FranUnsworth&PA@bbc.co.uk, james.harding01@bbc.co.uk,
nicola.meyrick@bbc.co.uk, tony.hall@bbc.co.uk, jessica.cecil@bbc.co.uk,
david.jordan@bbc.co.uk

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

From: Matt Berkley

22 September 2015 at 08:10

Red flag complaint unanswered? Risk of repeating significant error this week

To: fran.unsworth@bbc.co.uk, bbcworldnews@bbc.com, bbcworld@bbc.co.uk,
worldservice.letters@bbc.co.uk, james.harding@bbc.co.uk, mary.hockaday@bbc.co.uk

Dear Ms Unsworth, Mr Harding and Ms Hockaday,

The Editorial Standards Committee of the BBC Trust, in its bulletin of June/July 2015, accepted that the Millennium Declaration of 2000 did not, as the BBC has reported over the years, set a 1990 baseline. What this means is that the BBC has understated world leaders' pledges to the poorest people on earth.

Details are at poornews.org and ungoals.org .

Below are some details of unanswered complaints to BBC World News.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

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

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

11 August 2015

BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3430697-YFGJN9

...YOUR COMPLAINT:

...Further to complaint CAS-3430579-YK1JHW 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> .

....

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

27/10/2014

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.
>
> 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

>

> All communications will need to be by email.

>

>

> On 13/08/2014, Matt Berkley wrote:

>> Dear Mr Steel,

>>

>> Thank you for your email.

>>
>> I attach further evidence and complaints on an impression that MDG
>> targets are what was pledged by world leaders in 2000.
>>
>> Yours sincerely,
>>
>> Matt Berkley
>>
>>
>>
>>
>> On 11/08/2014, ECU <ECUdl@bbc.co.uk> wrote:
>>> 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
>>>
>>>
>>> -----Original Message-----

>>> Sent: 11 August 2014 08:49
>>> To: ECU
>>> Subject: 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.
>>>
>>> Yours sincerely,
>>>
>>> Matt Berkley
>>>
>>>
>>>

>>> On 3 August 2014 19:17, Matt Berkley wrote:

>>>

.....

BBC loses another complaint on World Services? Loses another complaint on More or Less?

More or Less again misleads on UN pledges

Submitted 15 August 2015 via BBC complaints system web form, very similar to the following:

Major matter.

Please see CAS-3340770, 3430579.

More or Less 3/7/15; related text.

May add to impression that UN members are committed only to relevant MDG targets.

More or Less 10/3/12 stated that in 2000 members agreed 1990-2015.

Millennium Declaration has 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 2000-2015 goals even though guest said did not want MD to be forgotten.

Instead of reporting baseline scandal or correcting errors after complaints, **BBC featured ex-civil servant who agreed baseline change w/out 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".

UN:

1991:18.6%,

2001:**14.9%**,

2015:**10.9%**.

*"**Amount** WB [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 were informed in 2000, c.2003 of MDG problem: stats look better if poor die.

.....

URL for page stating that above complaint was submitted on 15 August 2015 at around 00.10:

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=UJVD7KV3SO9PVNKC25JLUJ09AO&uid=622663514#anchor>

BBC breaches accountability rule by removing More or Less episode without comment

The 3 July 2015 edition of More or Less, which for the first time allowed the view that the World Bank statistics were not reliable, was removed some time before 14 August 2015.

The complainant had informed the BBC 12 years earlier that the "poverty" claims were unreliable. He did so in 2003 to the environment correspondent and later to Today and Panorama.

.....

BBC removes from its website what appears the only accurate information on world leaders' pledges.
In an apparent breach of accountability rules, BBC does not answer at all the public-interest argument for restoring it.

The following may be the only reasonably accurate statement or evidence on the BBC website on what national leaders pledged on poverty at the UN in 2000.

It was removed by the BBC.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20150821152153/http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbctrust/entries/3950cd25-1120-46b3-9fe0-a9259677adfa>

[Below are comments to Chair of BBC Trust.

Comments later removed by BBC as irrelevant to the public consultation on the extension of CBBC hours.

The comments might be thought relevant to decisions whether it is better value to spend money on more hours or more quality.]

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/20150821152153/http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan000923.pdf](http://web/20150821152153/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/20150821152153/http://web.archive.org/web/*/web/20150821152153/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc](http://web.archive.org/web/*/web/20150821152153/http://undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc)

[/web/20150821152153/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/20150821152153/http://web.archive.org/web/20140815174058//web/20150821152153/http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs - letter - MDGs - letter.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20140815174058//web/20150821152153/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/20150821152153/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/20150821152153/http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62)

...

"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 [!]"

[end of comments to Chair of BBC Trust, removed by the BBC]

.....

Unanswered complaint: BBC misled children on humans' access to clean water - after accepting there are no such statistics

23 August 2015 submitted via web form: CAS-3445371

[Note: On 25 July 2013 the BBC upheld a complaint, making several changes to web pages as a result.

It accepted among other points that official statistics are not on "clean" water.

The complaint however did not result in an emailed acknowledgement or reference number from Audience Services.

Two years later, on 3 November 2015, Audience Services stated that the reference number was CAS-2236086.]

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

.....

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 "<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]

.....

Unanswered complaint:

"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. ...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."

Note: Instead of correcting the errors, on 10 December 2015 the BBC again, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-35060621> , linked to misleading content complained of here, wrongly implying that the UN "marked the millennium" with the easier 1990-baseline MDGs: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33337787>

"Fifteen years ago, the United Nations marked the new millennium with a series of pledges aimed at improving the lives of the world's poorest people.

The Millennium Development Goals were ambitious, with eight different targets, covering issues including poverty reduction and improvements in healthcare and education.

The goals were to be met by 2015"

The BBC did so despite complaints that it was contradicting its own Trustees.

The BBC falsely claimed what UN set in 2000 was [the easier 1990-baseline] "MDGs" [rather than what leaders actually pledged] despite BBC Trustees acknowledging on 19 June that this was not true.

"Millennium Development Goals: What are they?"

1 July 2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-33313366>

Also in this particular complaint:

<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>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-33333094>

Complaint:

CAS-3430579 11 August 2015

Conflation of Millennium Declaration and MDGs

[Later note: The BBC page states: "*The Millennium Development Goals come to end in 2015. But what are they exactly? And how successful have they been globally?*".]

<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.

.....

*"While target 7.C explicitly refers to access to safe drinking water, **the indicator does not measure quality directly**, and 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

United Nations

2010

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HRAndMDGsInPractice.pdf>

*"At the current rate of progress, **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

[end of email to Cheryl Taylor and Jessica Cecil, Chief Complaints Editor]

.....

BBC "loses" another World Service complaint?

In the Balance; "Cumulative effect";
BBC "keeping vulnerable people in the dark"

"Misleading on UN pledges"

Complaint submitted by web form 15 August 2015

In the Balance

Broadcast 4/7/15,

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".

[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.]

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.

.....

Trustees acknowledge UN pledge but BBC continue spin

BBC Trust Editorial Standards Committee, decision sent to complainant 19 June 2015:

*"Millennium Declaration in 2000...commitments...
reducing child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates...
by changing the base line to 1990...the [MDG] target...was...less demanding..."*

*"Trustees... noted his concern that the BBC had made similar errors over many years
and that these had been the subject of other complaints"*

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/appeals/esc_bulletins/2015/june_july.pdf

BBC World News ignore complaint of "institutional failure"

Complaint of 11 August 2015

Conflating easier MDG targets with leaders' actual pledges of 2000

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 [later note: around 3.6 million].

MDG target is for c.4M deaths. [later note: around 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

.....

BBC ignores warning of likelihood of false reporting during UN Summit

11 August 2015

Case number CAS-3430697-YFGJN9

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.

Unanswered complaint:
"BBC fails to report scandal"
"Systemic failure"

Submitted 11 August 2015
CAS-3430579

<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. [Later note: about 3.6 million]
MDG target proposed later is c.4M. [Later note: about 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.

.....

"Notes from call to Audience Services today 13 August

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."

BBC loses complaint on 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.

BBC "lost" complaint that "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>

.....

Audience Services "notes" allegation that BBC understated Millennium pledge, before BBC repeats it:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 21 August 2015 at 07:20 ...

Reference CAS-3433281...

I understand you felt that it was **inaccurate** for the Africa highlights timeline on 1 July to state **that** when **world leaders** met at the Millennium Summit in 2000 “they **set out Millennium Development Goals**” and **note your comments** that the **MDGs were “agreed later between civil servants, and have a standard easier 1990 baseline”**.

...I appreciate the strength of your concerns...

... **we appreciate your feedback** about the BBC News website. Please know all complaints are sent to senior management and news teams every morning and we’ve included your points in our overnight reports. These reports are among the most widely read sources of feedback in the BBC and ensure that **your complaint has been seen quickly, by the right people**. This helps inform their decisions about current and future reporting.

More or Less fact-checking team mislead again after BBC Trustees get the position vaguely right

On 19 June 2015 the BBC Trust sent the decision to the complainant stating that the MDGs were not agreed in 2000.

On 3 July the fact-checking programme More or Less broadcast an edition on the MDGs.

Its web page states:

*"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?"*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vmb62>

Instead of mentioning the baseline change it **featured one of the civil servants who had agreed the change**.

Another guest referred to the MDGs being set "**fifteen**" years ago.

The programme began by saying "*Let me take you back to September 2000*" and played a recording of the Secretary-General.

But, like apparently all or almost all BBC output on the Millennium Declaration, it **failed to tell listeners in poor or rich countries what leaders actually pledged**.

The BBC's fact-checking programme bizarrely stated that the dollar a day was "**raised**" to \$1.25, **ignoring twelve years of inflation**.

One reason this is odd is that the same programme had stated in 2012,

"the new dollar-a-day line is actually a dollar 25, pegged to 2005 prices."

The new programme begins by talking about the Declaration. But the 2000 Declaration cannot have pledged, and civil servants cannot have agreed in 2001 to water down, a target using 2005 prices.

The BBC's "Editor's Choice" page for global poverty - the More or Less article of 9 March 2012 – reads:

"And even at \$1.25 it is set too low he says".

Since this sounds like a very low line, why would someone say "even at \$1.25"?

Perhaps the contributor did not actually say it.

The answer seems to be a previous statement:

"The World Bank's global poverty line measure is now not \$1, but \$1.25 per day."

- in the context that the programme did not explain why.

Taking the statements together, perhaps readers may well think the dollar level was raised – the same error in the 2012 article as in the 2015 programme.

Again, it seems astonishing that these errors appear in articles and programmes from a team including an ex-World Bank economist.

The "dollar a day" which the leaders at the Millennium Summit were talking about was \$1.08 in "international dollars" by a 1993 price index for the USA.

The current "\$1.25 a day" relates to 2005 prices, as mentioned in More or Less on 3 March 2012.

Using the same baseline and adjusting for the US inflation rate used, the current "\$1.25" would equate to 92 cents.

This is one reason for the bizarre position where the Economist and the Guardian said in 2000 that the 2000 Summit agreed to halve the 22 per cent currently on under a dollar a day, but the World Bank reported in 2012 that the proportion in 2008 had been almost halved to 22 per cent.

Another reason is the change of baseline.

Hans Rosling used statistics he had already criticised; bizarrely stated half humans live on over \$10 a day by confusing two "dollar" units

Complaint 18 December 2013

Don't Panic: The Truth about Population

BBC2 7 November 2013

Programme repeated in 2015 despite unfinished investigation at Stage 2.

Status as of 2 January 2016:

No response at Stage 2 from BBC Executive.

No specific response from BBC Executive to suggestion of June 2014 that Editorial Complaints Unit may face a **conflict of interest** or threat to independence as a result of its own error or notification of its own error on the "dollar a day" in published ruling of 2005.

Original complaint:

1. Dollar figures misled.

They are "purchasing power parity" units, worth far less in poorer countries than real dollars.

[This was the same error made by the ECU]

2. These dollars are not what people "get" but **GDP/person, worth far less to people than World Bank survey "dollars a day"** which audience knows:

a) Programme: median "**\$10**".

Bank: **\$3.40**

("PPP" in 2010).

[Later note: The point is that the programme confused two very different units for its emphatic claim that half the world's humans live on more than ten times the "dollar a day" level. Neither the World Bank nor its critics, nor apparently any economists had made that strange claim.]

b) "Extreme poverty" line is not "a little above one dollar" in programme's GDP dollars but much more.

Utrecht Univ. paper, a main source for programme's figures, says **\$2 GDP/pp/day is equivalent to Bank "\$1.25" line.**

So programme's line is too far to left to illustrate "proportions" as stated (uses log scale).

3. Income clearly is not "wealth" - proved during financial crisis. No estimates of need, inflation for poor, assets, debts, or shared assets.

5. **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.

6. Only some economists, not "the economists" use \$1.25 line.

7. Was most common income in Americas in 1963 really higher than Europe?

8. Proposal is not "eliminate" but 3% (c.250m people).

9. **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.

10. Similar problems in associated web pages: eg Magazine page 24836917 statements re poverty.

"Yardstick of wealth" misleads.

.....

Later note:

Reference for Professor Rosling's stated distrust of World Bank poverty claims:

*"That unit [at the World Bank] which assists countries, trains the staff, and helps them to compile [poverty] data, how many persons are working there? Four half-time. For the world. **It's a joke.** They're very competent, they're very good. But **it's not serious** ... The uncertainty of 1.3 billion [people living in poverty] is **plus or minus half a billion.** And we will not know whether the MDGs [millennium development goals] have been achieved until 2019, the later part. We only get poverty measurements every fifth year."*

***These issues are well known,** he says, but still underappreciated and infrequently discussed. **"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>

.....

Head of Editorial Complaints Unit quotes "half the world lives on \$1 a day" then does not reply to complaint that Hans Rosling said it was \$10

7 January 2014: Head of Editorial Complaints quotes BBC "Dollar a Day" documentary series web page in provisional response 1300394.

Summer 2014: says expects to take more than two weeks more to answer complaint on Rosling programme.

January 2016: No answer yet.

"Millennium Children" publicity understates Millennium pledges

CAS-3490853

Complaint Summary:

Advance publicity **understates UN pledges**

Full Complaint:

Acknowledgement email [to the complaint] is the standard version - 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 acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
21 September 2015 at 14:12
Case number CAS-3490853-T14FD9

Wrong UN pledges: BBC World News, Newshour

11 August 2015
CAS-3430697

Further to complaint CAS-3430579-YK1JHW 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.

.....

Above was acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

11 August 2015 at 23:07

.... CAS-3430697-YFGJN9

...We'll normally include the full text of your complaint to BBC staff in the overnight reports...This ensures **it will reach the right people quickly tomorrow morning**. ...

.....

BBC, Trust ignore complaint Capita misled on BBC procedure

The Trustees made a decision in June 2015 on the Woman's Hour complaint. In it, the Trustees misled by stating that they could not consider handling complaints unless they were put to the Executive. Clearly, that implied there had been no valid handling complaint to the Executive. But in reality that had been done. The complaint summary was: "Complaint handling". The complaint appealed was a handling complaint made to the Executive, as well as a request for further investigation of the editorial complaint.

BBC Audience Services falsely stated a Trust commitment that complaints would be forwarded to Audience Services was out of date.

[Original complaint was on January 26 2015, on Woman's Hour material 31 Dec 2014. Audience Services claimed to have answered the complaint, but in fact only answered an email mentioning it.]

...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.htm
↓

Above acknowledged:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk <bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk>

12 March 2015 at 20:37

...CAS-3204842-M13GJS

Later notes:

The BBC Trustees referred in 2012 to a "*Trust decision....*" that complaints would be forwarded to Audience Services.

BBC Audience Services, 11 February 2015:

"...what you"

[! - more relevantly for Capita procedure, the Trustees themselves]

"describe as a BBC "Trust decision..." "

"...not only does the passage in the document you refer to relate exclusively to "letters",

[Here Capita are strangely saying that the commitment does not apply to emails. This is not only implausible but also contradicted by the evidence the complainant supplied in response, in the handling complaint]

the document is merely an archived

[Here Capita make up a fact - see below]

consultation document

[untrue: it is not a consultation document but Trust conclusions]

from 2012 and is thus both out-of-date

[untrue - see below]

and not itself our actual complaints process.

[untrue - see below.]

Complainant, 12 March 2015 handling complaint to Audience Services:

*"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

↓

The BBC refused to answer the handling complaint.

The Trustees claimed to have answered the appeal on case 3204842, but that case is in fact

.....

BBC claims humans have met a "clean" water goal, after upholding complaint that the statistics do not exist

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-34347198>

CAS-3556479

5 Nov 2015

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

.....

BBC upheld complaint on human access to "clean" water, then repeat the spin

The following complaint of 2013 was upheld by the BBC but the complainant did not receive a final reply and was not given a case number until two years later.

In fact the actual complaint was not answered - only a submission to the website referring to the actual complaint. Two years later, on 3 November 2015, he was told the reference number was CAS-2236086

The BBC appears to have breached accountability guidelines by failing to note the changes on the page and leaving the original date.

12 August 2014 at 10:32
Re: Complaint Reply Required
To: NewsOnline Complaints <newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk>

Dear News Online,

This complaint seems to lack a final response. Was there an answer from Mr Loyn?

Many thanks.

Matt Berkley

On 25/07/2013, NewsOnline Complaints <newsonline.complaints@bbc.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Berkley

Thanks for your email.

[? The reply is not to an email but to a submission via the complaints website. They did not answer the actual complaint emailed to Ms Plett.]

The article and the complaints you have are about the text of the article rather than Barbara Plett's analysis box,

[not accurate: the actual complaint did refer to something in the text 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.

[I had in fact referred to "failure to respond to complaints", not "delay". Other complaints of 2012 to News Online were never answered.]

Taking your points in order:

[the points are not in sequence because the actual complaint was not answered]

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

["authored" is a specialised term referring to an opinion piece, while these are news stories with different 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>

.....

"Senior editorial staff" answer, ignoring complaint title of
"BBC pattern: underrepresenting criticism"
[of official claims on global poverty]

Don't Panic: How to End Poverty in 15 Years
BBC2, broadcast 11 October 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 has just stated that the "extreme poverty" line is a little over one dollar. He therefore seems to be, as in the programme "Don't Panic - the Truth about Population", referring to the World Bank \$1.25 "purchasing power parity" line and so to the 2005-based dollars.

The latest (2011-survey-based) median would be higher (perhaps around \$5.40 from the World Bank Povcalnet site. However, even if he were referring to that, the impression the chart and speaker give would still be wrong that the middle person has an "income" about ten times the dollar-a-day level. The 2011-based "extreme poverty line" is at \$1.90, so "a little less than two dollars, not "a little over one dollar" as he stated; and in those 2011-based

dollars people would not generally have "incomes" of about a dollar as he stated, because if he were talking about the 2011-based dollars that would be about half the "extreme-poverty line" level.]

"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 has 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.]

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

BBC response ignored the actual complaint

- that the programme contributed to a pattern of imbalance

Formatting, comments and emphasis added later by MB.

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 16 December 2015 at 15:41...

Reference CAS-3555570-6V99HQ

Thank you for contacting us regarding BBC 2, This World. Don't Panic: How to End Poverty in 15 Years.

We flagged your concerns up with senior editorial staff who responded as follows:

“Professor Hans Rosling presented Don't Panic - How To End Poverty In 15 Years, following his previous award-winning BBC productions Don't Panic - The Truth About Population and The Joy Of Stats.

[MB: But the Editorial Complaints Unit has not yet, as of 13 January 2016, answered the complaint of 18 December 2013 about the "population" programme. Would it have won an award if the judging panel had known the presenter used statistics he himself had rubbished, and claimed half of humans live on over ten times the dollar a day level when the official statistic was 3.4 times?]

It was a BBC production in partnership with The Open University, based on expert opinion and scientific facts. It drew on widely available public **data**, much of it from the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainment Development Goals UN processes.

[MB: But that is what I complained about - over-reliance by the BBC in this programme and others on the official claims.]

We are sorry if you do not agree with the **facts** presented.

[Misleading characterisation of the complaint, which was about imbalance. In any case, there is no "fact" about poverty. "Poverty" is a concept about resources versus needs, and needs are clearly not "factual".]

"The data sources and methodologies used in the programme can be found on Gapminder's Educational Material site : <http://www.gapminder.org/news/data-sources-dont-panic-end-poverty/>.

The statistics in this area are complicated and were necessarily simplified in order to aid comprehension.

However, we are confident that this process was carried out in such a way as not to mislead the audience and in accordance with BBC Editorial Guidelines.

We hope this helps to clarify matters and thank you for your time in contacting us.

Kind regards

Nicola Stewart

BBC Complaints"

.....

BBC "lost" another complaint on World Service?

Unacknowledged complaint:
Business Daily
Broadcast 22 Sep 2015

Unacknowledged after web form complaint confirmed as received on 3 Nov 2015

at

<https://ssl.bbc.co.uk/complaints/forms/review/?id=M7592VCC4RJ6O2HMTQVBKCCBA6&uid=695467160#anchor>

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

Unanswered complaint:

Patterns of inaccuracy and imbalance towards official sources
in BBC coverage of global poverty

Rosling quiz: odd answer that extreme poverty halved in
Africa since 1990

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

.....

Strange reply from BBC not acknowledging the actual complaints:

9 November 2015:

"CAS-3555804...

*[ie the complaints that
"With other output, accuracy/impartiality lacking",
wrong description of UN proposal and a
bizarre quiz answer claiming a halving of extreme poverty in Africa]*

We note your comments and that you would prefer the following article not use a "\$/day" figure:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34312879>

The context for this usage is that it is the choice for the quiz set by the renowned statistician, Prof Hans Rosling."

.....

MB reply:

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 as received:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 20 November 2015 at 15:11

...Case number CAS-3579660-46726C

....We are sorry that you were not satisfied with our earlier response...[ie on CAS-3555804-5NJVYK]..."

.....

Unanswered complaint:

Patterns of inaccuracy and imbalance towards official sources in BBC coverage of global poverty

Further lack of response:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

28 November 2015 at 14:33

...CAS-3579660-46726C

...at this stage (which is stage 1b of the complaints process) ... it may now take longer than 20 working days before you receive our reply.

.....

"Inaccuracy and imbalance of views ...

These are systemic BBC problems."

Millennium Children
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]

.....

Unanswered complaint:

"Pattern of repeating spin on world poverty as fact"

6 November 2015

CAS-3558419

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 complaint acknowledged:
From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
6 November 2015 at 20:52
...CAS-3558419-XZ7DX0

...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.**"

"Global Citizen Festival"

Said MDGs agreed in 2000, which BBC Trustees had already acknowledged as untrue and which clearly implies leaders did not agree what they actually agreed.

After warnings to Editorial Complaints Unit and director-general among others:

"Global Citizen Festival" misled on human access to "clean water" despite BBC upholding complaint in 2013.

Broadcast 28 September 2015

Sold by BBC Worldwide to other organisations

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 that 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.

.....

"Nearly half the world's population live on less than £1.60 a day. "

BBC Radio 4 - Prayer for the Day, 24/09/2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06c06n6>

.....

"Hans Rosling examines the number one goal for the world: eradicating extreme poverty."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006mgxx/broadcasts/2015/10>

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03h8r1j

"Rosling's message is surprisingly upbeat."

"the United Nations has set a target of eradicating it altogether within a few decades."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34490054>

.....

BBC again wrongly claims a complaint is "too late"?

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
9 November 2015 at 20:52
Subject: BBC News website ...

Complaint reference: CAS-3556479-42JQTW

Thank you for your e-mail about our On Demand article on the UN's Global Goals.
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-34347198>)

Your complaint has been made outside the 30 working day window....

[To this statement I replied, "It was submitted within 30 working days of the only date on the page" - full text below]

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, in accordance with our complaints process, then we will investigate further and hopefully do so as soon as possible.

In closing it's worth adding that you have made a number of complaints to the BBC on broadly the same issue and in many cases these complaints are written in the apparent understanding that the reader will be intimately acquainted with the background facts in question.

This is typically not the case and for future reference it may be beneficial to add more detail to your areas of concern while ideally avoiding something of a "bullet point" approach which, while concise, can prove difficult to understand for those unaware of the background to these issues. ...

Sean Moss

BBC News website

[To this I replied "If any specific parts of my complaints are unclear, please contact me."]

.....

Is BBC using wrong baseline for MDG on water?

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..."]

.....

No reply on BBC Youtube video:
"accuracy problems about goals on poverty and "clean" water"

13 November 2015,
ref. 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/officiallist.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...

.....

No reply:

Due accuracy/balance [across BBC output on global poverty]

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."

Links to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p032nq98> , the subject of another complaint CAS-3555570]

.....

The complainant made an addition to complaint at Stage 1a, of another contribution to BBC imbalance towards World Bank claims.

Categorical statement "*Fewer than 10% of the world's population now live in extreme poverty*"

"Inaccurate and imbalanced in context of BBC output"

Case number CAS-3579521
20 November 2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34490054>

Complaint category:
Bias

Previous reference:
CAS-3561236-D8SQR0

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.

.....

BBC yet again claims a complaint is "too late" for no apparent reason:

Repeat of Don't Panic: The Truth about Population (BBC2)

despite current investigation at Stage 2;

"possible ECU conflict" ie possible conflict of interest at Editorial Complaints Unit due to its having made same inaccuracy suggested as possible in this programme.

Current status of complaint about this repeat:

BBC again falsely claimed complaint was outside time limit

Most recent ref: CAS-3628016

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 complaint that BBC repeated programme despite complaint being considered 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

.....

Odd reply from BBC on Millennium Children

Emphasis added by MB:

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk

Date: 7 January 2016 at 15:27

Subject: BBC Complaint ref. CAS-3553582-MNSDLC

Dear Mr Berkley,

Thank you for contacting us about Millennium Children and the discussion of poverty statistics.

Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding. As you're aware Millennium Children was made for a long time and we therefore wished to check some details with them before replying but we're sorry this has taken longer than a

I note you refer to a previous BBC Trust finding about the Today programme.

[Incorrect: in fact Woman's Hour]

We don't usually comment on previous Trust findings, but I felt it worth clarifying a crucial aspect of that find

[!]

specifically stated that the eight Millennium Development Goals were set in 2000, the Trust finding said;

'Trustees appreciated that the actual goals and targets were not finalised in 2000 although they sprang out of the fact that Trustees considered that this was not a material error in the context of this item'.

[That BBC "clarification" is in fact nothing of the sort. The "aspect" here is clearly not "crucial" in respect of the programme in a different context - not about the statement considered by Trustees. In any case, the Trust is considering that decision.]

[The rest of the BBC reply supplies a superficially polite but, wittingly or otherwise, obfuscatory point about the programme contributed to BBC imbalance in making a categorical claim about world leaders achieving a goal based as usual on World Bank claims without any views to balance the official PR, or even accurate description]

With regard to the second part of your email, it is not entirely clear what your complaint is but I have attempted to

Regarding the on-screen graphic in Millennium Children about statistics and the commentary which follows, it refers to the figures for undernourished and underweight under-5s. The source for the statistics was displayed

The programme then continues and the commentary refers to the very poorest and the ambitions of the world in 2000, the world leaders made the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger their number one goal. They and they have.”

The figures for halving the rates of extreme poverty around the world are well-documented:

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum>

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/interactive/2013/sep/24/millennium-development-goals-da>

You appear to suggest that the programme’s statistics about halving rates of poverty and hunger conflict with what has happened. The number of people living in extreme poverty has dropped by just over a quarter – 135 million in 2000, 90 million in 2015. When referring to under-5s the proportion has fallen. While the number of malnourished under-5s went from 125 million to just under 100 million, the number of malnourished under-5s in 2015 – with the fastest growth in low-income countries. Therefore there are still almost as many malnourished children as there were in 2000.

I hope this helps to clarify the situation and address your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Austin
BBC Audience Services

.....

BBC yet again falsely claims complaint submitted outside time limit?

In reality the complaint was submitted within 30 working days of the broadcast complained of.

From: bbc_complaints_website@bbc.co.uk
Date: 12 January 2016 at 17:53
Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number CAS-3628016-PF3F2M

Dear Mr Berkley

Reference CAS-3628016-PF3F2M

Thank you for contacting us regarding the BBC Two programme 'Don't Panic - The Truth About Population' aired on 18 October.

I understand you would like a response from us regarding the repeat of this programme.

If you have a complaint about a BBC item which was broadcast or published, either online or in a BBC owned magazine, you should normally complain within 30 working days of the transmission or publication, so unfortunately we'll be unable to address your complaint in this instance.

[! - the complaint was submitted within 30 working days of the broadcast complained of]

I note that you've been in correspondence with the ECU about this issue. I have to advise that as you're unhappy with **the reply from Editorial Complaints Unit**

[! - in fact there has been no reply at all since June 2014 when the ECU said it would take "at least two weeks"]

you will have to raise this with them.

Once again, thank you for contacting us.

Kind regards

Anna Sweeney

BBC Complaints

