

Integrated Regional Information Networks

Progress Report – 2006



Contact:

Pat Banks
IRIN Coordinator
IRIN / OCHA
P.O. BOX 30218, 00100
Nairobi, Kenya

Pat@IRINnews.org
Tel: +254-20-7622147
Fax: +254-20-7622129

Katarina Toll
IRIN Office Geneva
OCHA/IRIN
Palais des Nations
8-14 avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10

tollk@un.org
+41 (0)22 917 1107/1135 Office
+41 (0)22 917-0023 fax

Mark Dalton
IRIN Office New York
OCHA, UN Plaza New York

DaltonM@un.org
Tel: +1-917-367-2422
Mob: +1-626-240-3994
Fax: 1-917-367-7002/5274

PROGRESS REPORT 2006

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I. SUMMARY

2006 was an especially busy year, with a considerable increase in both the quality and quantity of IRIN's global humanitarian reporting. Page views of the IRIN website reached five million a month – an increase of one-and-a-half million on 2005. IRIN produced more than 4,000 articles, special reports and features; seven documentary films, a variety of film footage and audio clips, along with seven In-Depths (formerly known as Web Specials); and five special web pages that ranged from drought in the Horn of Africa to avian flu.

IRIN also expanded its Middle East/Arabic service, revamped its Afghan radio project and sought funding to expand the radio project in northern Uganda to help promote the peace and reconciliation process. An important photo-essay book on the international problem of violence against women was also widely distributed to aid agencies, donors, relevant government officials and advocacy groups.

In 2006, IRIN focused on some of the worst humanitarian crises and disasters in the world, providing contextual information on the multiple conflicts engulfing many parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. IRIN's text, radio, video and PlusNews services, meanwhile, contributed to public knowledge of such crises - and promoted humanitarian responses and enhanced advocacy and early-warning efforts. In addition, these services provided a platform for those affected by crises to make their voices heard.

As part of a significant drive to improve its services and offer a more effective, up-to-date delivery of products, IRIN's news-gathering arrangements were reshaped. The main objective was to ensure a consistently high quality of humanitarian news and analysis, along with cost-effectiveness.



DRC: A woman carrying her child runs for safety, 27 July 2006. Thousands of demonstrators, who wanted Congo's first multiparty elections in 40 years to be delayed, threw rocks and gasoline bombs, blocking a highway into the city centre. © Eddy Isango/IRIN

An integrated newsroom was created in Nairobi and arrangements introduced to bring all IRIN components, IRIN Film, IRIN Radio and IRIN Photo together to work on multi-media packages to better highlight important news. The Asia office in Ankara was closed and staff members working on Asia were relocated to the region and to Dubai. As of end-2006 the Dubai office was responsible for both Asia and Middle East services.

Throughout the year, IRIN also placed even greater emphasis on quality and quantity control. This led to a more centralised approach to sub-editing, with the recruitment of full-time sub-editors in Nairobi and Dubai. Training and in-situ mentoring of IRIN field correspondents (stringers) – and in particular new stringers in the Middle East – were increased.

Using stringers and its own staff, IRIN provided 24-hour coverage of the growing humanitarian crisis in the Middle East during the 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon. IRIN's special page on the Lebanon crisis climbed to Google's top 'Lebanon' rating in July 2006.

The annual subscriber survey was carried out in the latter part of 2006 and again proved that IRIN had considerable standing among those it strives to serve. Almost 80 percent of respondents to the survey rated IRIN as their first or second-most important source of humanitarian news.

IRIN's impact is considered high. About 64 percent of respondents said an IRIN report had raised an issue of which they were not aware within the previous two weeks. In the same timeframe, 80 percent

of respondents had shared IRIN information with others; 86 percent said IRIN had enhanced or influenced their work. About 56 percent of respondents said they or their agencies regularly redistributed IRIN reports through internal and public mailing lists, hardcopy publications and agency websites - confirming IRIN's extended reach and the high value placed on its reports. Web tracking also revealed that IRIN reports are re-published on more than 500 news sites, in addition to many more specialised humanitarian websites, blogs, country portals and discussion groups.

Overall, 75 percent of respondents believed IRIN's most significant influence was in keeping them up to date, followed by 46 percent who felt IRIN's role was bringing their attention to under-reported or previously unknown issues.

Throughout 2006, IRIN continued to report extensively on deadly, under-reported conflicts and internecine violence in Africa, focusing on **Sudan**, the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, **Burundi**, **Somalia**, **northern Uganda**, **Chad** and **Côte d'Ivoire**. It also produced special multimedia web pages on the African food crises, the potential avian flu pandemic and upheavals in the DRC and Somalia.

In **southern Africa**, IRIN reported on the challenges confronting the region: the susceptibility of women and girls to HIV infection; the vulnerability of populations to the triple threat of poverty, HIV/AIDS and food security; an ever-expanding population of orphans; and growing donor fatigue. Zimbabwe remained a special concern and despite increasing reporting difficulties, IRIN maintained a steady flow of pertinent and timely information from the country.

IRIN's **Middle East** service became fully operational in 2006. Within a relatively short period, it established a reputation for its accurate and balanced news reporting and clearly illustrated that it could contribute to a better understanding of the region. By the end of the year, about 32 Arabic news websites or newspapers were reproducing IRIN material in English and Arabic, including CNN, Arabiya, Emarat Al Youm, Al Khaleej and Al Bayan.



Uganda: Jan Egeland, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Emergency Relief Coordinator, talks to children in Opit camp for internally displaced people, Gulu district, northern Uganda, 9 September 2006. © Tiggy Ridley/IRIN

In **Asia**, IRIN focused primarily on **Afghanistan**, **Pakistan** and **Nepal**. Its coverage of **Afghanistan** increased significantly in the second half of the year, as the situation there steadily deteriorated. In **Pakistan**, IRIN continued to report on the 200,000 people who lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the devastating earthquake in 2005. In **Nepal**, IRIN built on its early success by offering more comprehensive reports on vulnerable people who continue to suffer despite the ceasefire in the decade-long insurgency.

To complement its text services, IRIN strengthened its

capacity to provide high-quality photographs to its humanitarian partners and the media through the creation of **IRIN Photo**. As the year ended, more than 150,000 humanitarian and advocacy partners had accessed photographs for use.

IRIN's Information Analysis Unit produced In-Depth research on a wide range of issues, including malaria, small arms, minorities at risk, youth and violence, the Pakistan earthquake and the global water crisis. The unit assisted with specialised analyses of the widespread drought in early 2006, as well as events in Somalia after the rise of the Islamic Courts and the ousting of faction leaders that have wreaked havoc in Mogadishu since 1991.

The IRIN publication, *Broken Bodies-Broken Dreams, Violence Against Women Exposed*, released in late 2005, continued to have a powerful impact and throughout 2006 about 5,000 copies of the book were distributed to donors, advocacy groups and UN agencies worldwide. Exhibitions featuring some of the photographs used in the book were organised by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), IRIN, advocacy groups and governments in donor capitals.

Supporting these advocacy efforts, **IRIN Film** continued to promote the plight of vulnerable people trapped in forgotten humanitarian emergencies by producing and distributing about 20,000 copies of short documentaries addressing a wide range of pressing humanitarian issues. A variety of short media clips were also made, some to illustrate articles on the IRIN website.

IRIN Radio produced programmes, news reports and features for partner radio stations and provided training and support to radio journalists in **Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Lesotho, Somalia, South Africa and Sudan**, and the five corridor countries of **Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria**. Its two soap dramas, for Burundi and Angola, widened their reach and were hailed as key advocacy tools in the areas of HIV/AIDS; health; sexual violence and peace and reconciliation.

IRIN's **Plus News** service continued to be the largest source of original reporting on HIV/AIDS in Africa, providing a comprehensive, professionally produced, one-stop shop for relevant news and analysis about the pandemic. Produced in English, French and Portuguese, the project exceeded its overall goals of promoting dialogue on HIV/AIDS and enhancing knowledge, awareness and understanding among decision-makers and people directly affected by the epidemic.

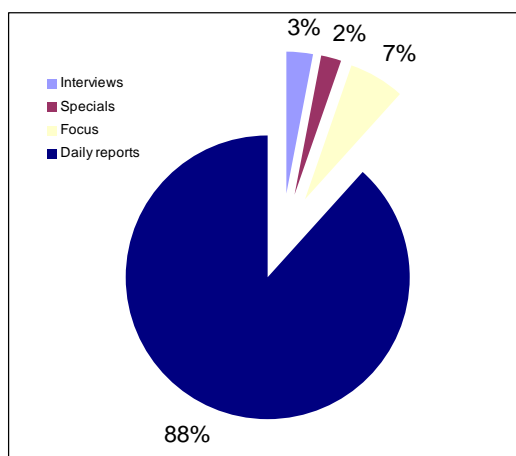
In 2006, the service broke new ground by joining a consortium of UN agencies seeking to expand prevention, treatment and care services to the estimated 200 million people who are not reached by current HIV/AIDS programmes.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

IRIN News & Analysis

On the text side, IRIN journalists continued to produce daily, weekly and special reports on events and issues of concern. Articles were accessible via the website and e-mail, and were featured regularly in local and international media. As mentioned in the Summary, attention was paid to ensuring quality over quantity and relevance to IRIN's humanitarian mandate.

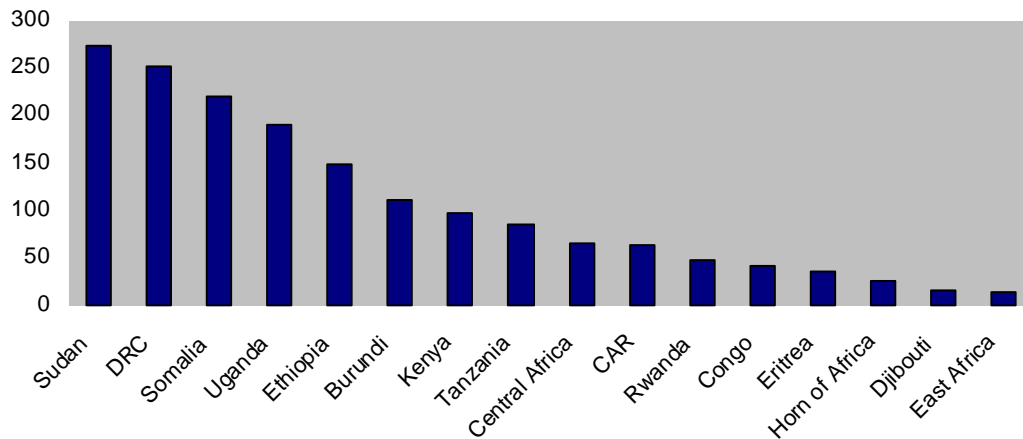
2006 was another challenging year throughout the **Horn and East Africa** region. A devastating drought gripped the Horn of Africa early in the year, decimating livestock in parts of **Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia** inhabited by nomadic herders. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their livelihoods and there were reports of numerous deaths due to starvation. The same region was inundated by flooding later in the year, which displaced thousands of people and led to scores of deaths. The floods were followed by an outbreak of the highly contagious Rift Valley Fever in northeastern Kenya, which spread to southern Somalia, at a time when the conflict between the interim government there and the Union of Islamic Courts was at its height. IRIN reported the humanitarian effects of all of these by sending its reporters to the worst-affected areas.



**Horn, East Africa and Great Lakes
Report Production by Type**

The situation in **Sudan** – both the south and Darfur – remained of keen interest. The year saw increased violence against both civilians and aid workers in Darfur, and major problems with the implementation of the southern peace agreement. Using stringers and contacts in key locations, IRIN sustained its coverage of both situations.

Horn, East Africa and Great Lakes 2006 Reports by Country



In the **Great Lakes** Region, the conclusion of democratic elections, the first in more than 40 years, in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** was the biggest event of the year. IRIN set up a special page for the pre- and post-election period in the Congo, which was updated until after the inauguration of President Joseph Kabila in early December 2006. IRIN also increased its output of audio pieces to complement its text service.

In **Burundi**, IRIN focused on the peace and ceasefire accord signed in September, which signalled the end of 13 years of civil war in the country. IRIN also reported on the democratic elections, culminating in the election of President Pierre Nkurunziza in August 2006.

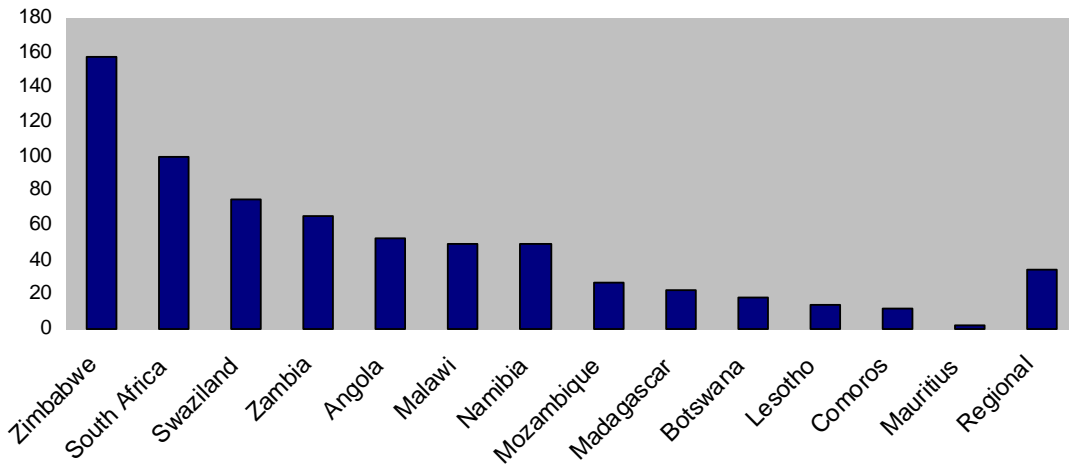
IRIN staff monitored and reported on the continued unrest/conflict in the **Central African Republic**, which had caused the displacement of at least 50,000 people into Chad as well as thousands more displaced inside the country. An IRIN staff member was deployed to the worst-affected areas in the northeast to file exclusive reports. Elsewhere, missions were undertaken to Sudan, Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia.

Among the many achievements of the year were the number of reports from the Horn, eastern Africa and Great Lakes region, which were picked up by media, including the Kenyan Daily Nation, Standard and the East African; the Sudan Mirror, Uganda's The New Vision; and various Ethiopian, Djiboutian and Somali media. The International Crisis Group also quoted IRIN's reports extensively and as in previous years, the region still attracted the biggest readership, including a large number from the Horn of Africa diaspora.

In **West Africa**, and with three journalists in Dakar, **Senegal**, 35 local correspondents in the 22 countries of the region, IRIN West Africa produced 16 stories a week on average, including 79 regional reports and summaries covering the most pressing humanitarian, human rights, economic and political issues. To ensure first-hand reporting of crucial questions, the Dakar-based IRIN journalists carried out 24 field missions to countries in the region.

In line with IRIN's global strategy, the West Africa office paid particular attention to the humanitarian crises unfolding in the region with a view to assisting humanitarian actors in the decision-making process and to alert them on issues of concern or developments that may affect their operations.

Southern Africa - 2006 reports by region or country



The gradual deterioration in the situation in eastern **Chad**, which led to the displacement of almost 100,000 Chadians when the country was caught between the spill-over of the Darfur crisis and the insurgency in **Central African Republic**, was extensively covered by IRIN, as was the resumption of fighting in **Senegal's** southern province of Casamance and lack of progress on the **Côte d'Ivoire** peace agreement.



Sierra Leone: A young girl learning the Koran in Freetown, 12 August 2004. The country is sixty percent Moslems, thirty percent indigenous believers, and ten percent Christians. © IRIN

Reporting on eastern Chad in early May-June and on fighting and displacement in Casamance was particularly well received by the humanitarian community as it frequently represented their main source of breaking news and information, not covered by the mainstream media.

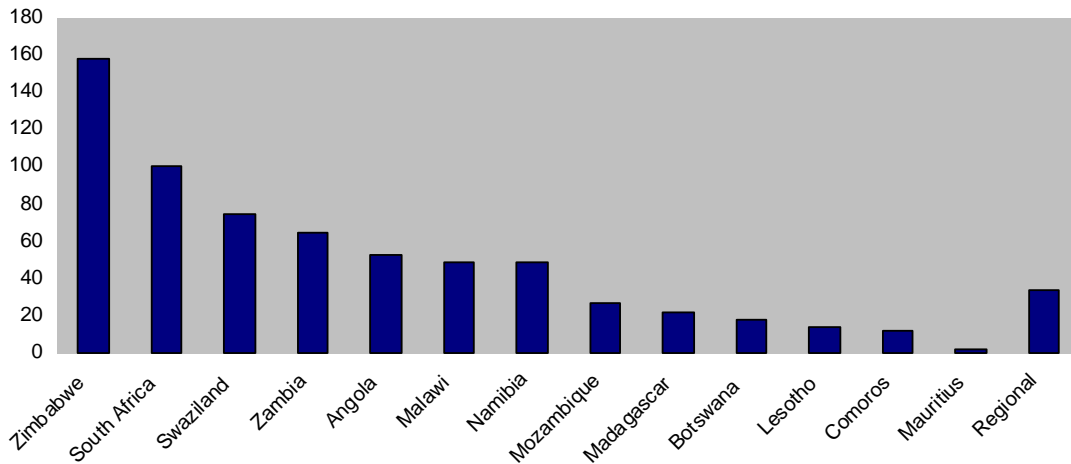
In **Liberia** and **Sierra Leone**, where post-war transition processes are under way, IRIN covered the challenges of democracy, reconciliation, the struggle against a culture of impunity, reconstruction of healthcare, education and economic systems, as well as the continued problems of sexual violence and demobilisation of former combatants.

As part of its mandate to focus the world's attention on forgotten crises, IRIN boosted its reporting on **Guinea** and **Guinea-Bissau**, where the combination of poverty, corruption, and disastrous economic performances put an almost insurmountable strain on exhausted populations and could lead to chaos. IRIN also reported on the cycle of food shortages and natural disasters affecting the other West African Sahel countries, **Mali**, **Burkina Faso** and **Niger**.

Bird flu outbreaks in **Nigeria** and a massive wave of clandestine migration from **Senegal**, **Mali** and **Guinea** towards Europe received particular attention from IRIN with a series of reports documenting the problems and raising awareness of the risks posed by these events.

As in other regions, IRIN West Africa continued to guide and train its team of stringers. A three-week intensive training course was held in Dakar for three stringers from Liberia, Guinea and Burkina Faso. This proved extremely useful for stringers and IRIN staff alike.

Southern Africa - 2006 reports by region or country



In **southern Africa**, some of the key regional themes IRIN explored over the year included the impact of the 'brain drain' on health and education services; human trafficking and gender violence; migration and the role of remittances; preparations for a potential outbreak of bird flu, and the growing threat of climate change. IRIN's reporting won applause from a wide range of bodies in southern African for its ability to tackle complex issues in an accessible manner.

In **Zimbabwe**, legal constraints on the media and an aggressive government continued to make reporting extremely difficult. Thanks to its stringer network, IRIN was still able to focus on the evolving humanitarian crisis. Articles on Zimbabwe represented the largest volume of work in the Johannesburg office. It was also the most frequently selected country by IRIN-SA's email subscribers.



Mozambique: HIV mother and her baby wait at Santo Egidio clinic in Machava. © IRIN

Notable examples of IRIN's coverage in 2006 include the plight of illegal migrants on the Zimbabwean/South African border; a four-part series examining the regional impact of Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis; plus, reports a year after the slum clearance, Operation Murambatsvina, which cost 700,000 people their homes and jobs; and unique reports from inside the resettlement camps.

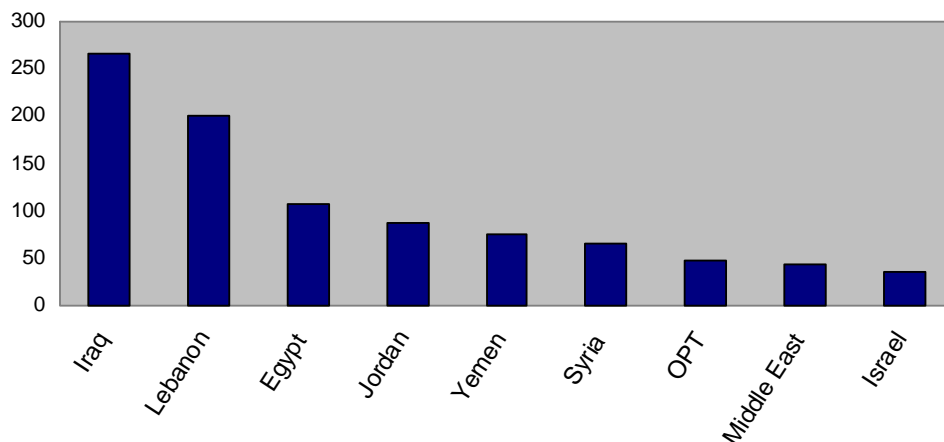
In **South Africa**, at the other end of the spectrum as a prosperous and important continental player, IRIN focused on the country's struggle against HIV/AIDS and reported on the economically disenfranchised majority for whom poverty has increased. It also looked at the intolerance towards migrants from the rest of Africa.

Swaziland, a tiny nation of two million, was the third-most covered country by IRIN-SA in 2006. The country has the world's highest HIV prevalence, a quarter of its population dependent on food aid, while King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, has stood resolute against calls for democratic reform.

In 2006, IRIN followed refugees home from **Zambia** to **Angola**, reporting on the anxiety of many on their return to a country they no longer knew and one still recovering from 27 years of civil war. A two-part series on children accused of witchcraft in Zambia, where anti-social behaviour - potentially linked to war-related trauma – is attributed to sorcery, was also released.

A stringer workshop, which brought IRIN reporters together in Johannesburg to discuss coverage priorities and to brush up on writing skills, was held in 2006 and proved a useful exercise to introduce the new multimedia opportunities available, and to hear first-hand the experiences of field correspondents.

Middle East - 2006 reports by region or country



IRIN's **Middle East** service successfully completed its first full year of service in 2006, one of the most tumultuous years in the region. The Dubai office focused on humanitarian stories from countries in crisis, with accuracy and balance, thereby filling a gap in coverage by the mainstream media, much of which reports only on political and military issues.

A major part of IRIN's reporting centred on the conflict in **Lebanon** between Hezbollah and **Israel**. IRIN looked at the consequences of the war, including the displacement of almost one million Lebanese and hundreds of thousands who fled temporarily to neighbouring **Syria** and the damage done to roads, bridges, factories, schools, buildings and houses.



IRIN also reported from the Israeli side, looking at the damage done by Hezbollah's retaliatory rocket attacks against Northern Israel.

Lebanon: Belgian UN peace keepers patrol in Jabal El Botm village, southern Lebanon, 6 October 2006. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was created to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security, and help the government of Lebanon restore its effective authority in the area. © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

A successful special multimedia webpage on the conflict was produced, attracting more than 20,000 page views. The page also contained four news films on the effects of the conflict, quality photos and up-to-date maps. Many of the reports produced in the 34-day war were widely used by Middle East media. The IRIN film on cluster bombs was also picked up by a variety of media.

In addition, many of its reports received positive feedback from readers. One such was the story of a 13-year-old boy who lost his leg and his brother on a bridge in northern Lebanon as it was being bombed. International help, including by American network CBS, mobilised donations to fund an operation to save the boy's other leg and to provide him with a prosthesis.

In **Iraq**, IRIN chronicled the worsening war situation and its impact on society. Particular attention was paid to the danger facing Palestinian refugees and minorities, the flight of professionals such as teachers, doctors and lawyers, and the dramatic impact on women and children of the violence.

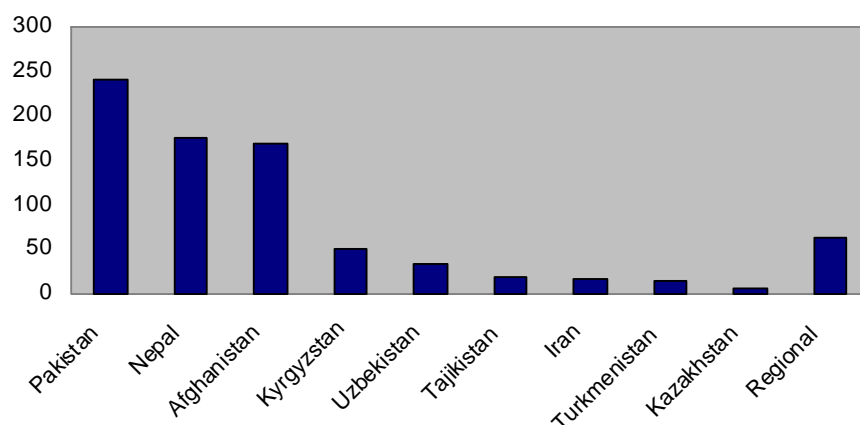
Although UN staff are restricted in Iraq, IRIN was able to continue its almost daily reporting through its network of stringers all over the country. It proved to be a crucial service for the global aid community, due to the dangers posed to western aid agencies and national staff as well as international media working inside Iraq. IRIN highlighted the humanitarian plight of the civilian population, which triggered significant feedback from institutions, NGOs or individuals who wanted to provide support, whether moral, political, financial or in kind.

IRIN began covering Israel and the **occupied Palestinian territories** in the context of the Israel – Hezbollah war and the Israeli military offensive against Gaza in July 2006. Since then, IRIN has written about the humanitarian problems faced by the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank, in addition to the humanitarian concerns and human rights violations within Israeli and Palestinian societies. One of the most popular products of IRIN's coverage of Israel/oPt has been the wall series, where IRIN highlighted the practical humanitarian consequences on the daily life of normal people created by this obstacle.

IRIN also paid special attention to the human security issues in **Yemen**, one of the poorest countries in the Middle East where the increasing influx of Somali refugees arriving by boat from war-torn Somalia has put an added burden on the country.

IRIN strengthened its stringer network in the Middle East and to further boost this capacity, hosted five stringers for a week of training.

Asia - 2006 reports by country/region



The lack of independent journalists and difficulties in identifying stringers able to deliver quality reports in English continued to hamper the coverage of **Central Asia**. In several countries IRIN stringers found themselves in jeopardy. Following a media clampdown in **Uzbekistan** for example, IRIN's two stringers fled the country.

But despite these problems, IRIN-Asia produced 781 reports in 2006 – on average 15 reports every week. About 30 percent of the total annual output came from **Pakistan**, parts of which were devastated by the earthquake on 8 October 2005. News, feature and analytical reports ranged from shelter, food security and health to education, gender issues and reconstruction.

Five years after the fall of the Taliban, **Afghanistan** remained at the forefront of IRIN's coverage of the region, as the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai continued to wrestle with the multiple challenges facing the nation, still reeling from more than two decades of war and conflict.

Insurgency, internal conflict and the reintegration of families who have spent many years as refugees, as well as illicit poppy cultivation, remain a key challenge for the authorities. IRIN provided accurate and sustained coverage of issues ranging from security and reconstruction to health, education and governmental reform.



Nepal: Maoist rebels on guard outside a house, 16 January 2007. The rebels joined the Nepalese parliament to enter mainstream politics peacefully but aid workers are concerned over the lack of an adequate environment for development and humanitarian work. © Naresh Newar/IRIN

In **Pakistan**, IRIN boosted its coverage of the reconstruction effort on the ground once most of the international media had left, with a particular focus on health, shelter and education – all areas that will take decades to restore.

In **Nepal**, IRIN enhanced its coverage of the Himalayan kingdom, following mass protests that ended King Gyanendra's direct rule on 24 April, with feature items on a number of timely issues, including the impact of the conflict on malnutrition, an issue the government is only beginning to acknowledge, while in May 2006 IRIN reported on an acute food shortage in areas of the

country's west. The internal displacement of up to 200,000 people, many of whom have yet to return home, citing security concerns, was an issue IRIN has been following closely.

The French Service

In 2006, an editorial review of the French Service content by mid-year showed that it was mostly focusing on West Africa and more particularly on French-speaking countries, and that the themes covered were essentially of a news nature. The editorial line of the French Service was subsequently modified.

Considering that the interests of the readers of the IRIN French Service are not limited to West African francophone countries, the geographic scope of the French Service was broadened to encompass many different countries, irrespective of their geographical location or language. Reports from the IRIN bureaus in Asia, the Middle East, southern, central and East Africa were subsequently translated and posted on the IRIN French website.

During the year, the French Service translated 753 reports, 35 percent of which originated outside West Africa. The same approach was applied to themes and by the end of the year, the French Service had doubled its coverage of long-term crises, post-conflict, development and HIV/AIDS issues.

The Information Analysis Unit

The Information Analysis Unit continued to produce In-Depth reports and comprehensive advocacy tools. Well-researched reports and field-based stories were provided in comprehensive In-Depth packages that also offered detailed links and references to a wide range of material dealing with a specific subject.

The unit produced seven In-Depths in 2006:

Between Two Stones – examined Nepal's brutal decade of conflict between Maoist insurgents and security forces, which has exacted a heavy toll on the civilian population, especially those in contested hill districts, many of whom already live near or at the global poverty threshold.

Killer Number One – examined the challenges malaria continues to pose for nations and households.

Minorities Under Siege – provided an overview of the key issues facing indigenous peoples in Central Africa.

Guns Out of Control – examined the crucial role that small arms play in most – if not all – violent conflicts. The lead features examined the rampant and illegal proliferation of small arms into third-world countries, and the gender and age imbalance revolving around the use of small arms. Frontline features on the effects of small arms in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Uganda, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan and Yemen. Interviews with former members of the Lord's Resistance Army, fighting in northern Uganda, and human rights violations experts were included.



DRC: Young militia fighters stand guard outside their leader's hut close to Bunia, Ituri region, Democratic Republic of Congo, August 2006. Seven years of almost continuous war in the DRC have resulted in the deaths of four million people since 1998, mostly civilians. There has been a widespread use of young combatants by all parties involved in the conflict. DRC is one of the countries with the largest number of child soldiers. © Tiggy Ridley/IRIN

When Disaster Strikes – The response to the South Asian earthquake, dealt with the difficulties humanitarian organisations encounter when delivering aid.

Justice for a Lawless World? – Rights and reconciliation in a new era of international law, explored the international justice system, latest developments in international justice, and its efficacy in healing and bringing about peace and stability. Features covered the *gacaca* justice system in Rwanda, and the recent ruling of rape as a war crime under international law while the Frontlines section included stories on Argentina, Burundi, the DRC, Iraq, Cambodia, Liberia, Morocco, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda.

Running Dry – The humanitarian impact of the global water crisis - focused on the most pertinent issues surrounding the global water crisis through feature essays dealing with some of the macro issues and direct field reports from the communities and people most affected by water scarcity and contamination.

The book *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams* – a detailed account, with graphic photographs, of violence against females from birth to death, was used by many advocacy groups as part of their campaigns. Five thousand copies in English were distributed in 2006 and a reprint in English and French is planned for 2007.

The production of *The Shame of War: sexual violence against women and girls in times of conflict*, another book on rape and sexual violence in war and efforts to end it commenced in 2006 and will be released on International Woman's Day in March 2007. Based on *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams*, in addition to documenting case studies in war situations, the publication examines the international legal frameworks being developed to address gender violence.

Film

In 2006 IRIN Film produced and distributed more than 20,000 copies of short documentaries addressing a wide range of pressing humanitarian issues. Although this number far exceeded its output for 2005, IRIN Film was able to distribute this increased quantity at a similar cost having redesigned the packaging and kept film costs of minimal levels.

The unit instituted a new monitoring system that allowed it to build a significant library of comments and feedback on all films, most of which has been extremely favourable and encouraging and served as further evidence of the growing importance of film in the dissemination of important humanitarian information.

2006 Films:

- *Somalia: a State of Need* - December 2006
- *Lebanon: Fields of Fire* - November 2006
- *The Shadows of Peace: Life after the LRA* - September 2006
- *Gem Slaves: Tanzanite's child labour* - September 2006
- *Congo's Curse* - July 2006
- *Aftershock: Rebuilding after the earthquake* - May 2006
- *From North to South: Sudan's Displaced Head Home* - April 2006
- *Nepal: Between Two Stones* - February 2006
- *Malaria: Killer Number One* - February 2006

Detailed statistical breakdowns of where the films go, who uses them, what they are used for and in some cases their impact is now available. For instance, the pre-election film on the DRC, *Congo's Curse*, moved a group of UK-based women to initiate a lobbying campaign with their MPs advocating on behalf of the women of the DRC.

In 2006, IRIN films won first and third prizes at the New York Stories From The Field film festival (the second year in a row that IRIN films have won the festival's top award), and three of the films were official selections at other film festivals. These successes enabled IRIN to raise the profile of the unit and allowed it to further expand its database of advocacy partners.

In 2006 the unit released nine films (see box above) on subjects as diverse as the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake to the plight of children working in Tanzanite mines in Tanzania. The internet has become an increasingly important tool for IRIN in distributing its films. The Lebanon film on the impact of unexploded cluster bombs in Lebanon after the war with Israel received 25,000 hits alone.

These figures, combined with hard-copy distribution service, demonstrate that each of the films IRIN releases reaches a potential audience of 50,000. As and when broadcasters use IRIN Films this number increases exponentially. An average per film cost (including salaries and all other costs) is approximately US\$25,000.



David Gough, IRIN film maker, in action, Niger.

Photo

Alongside its news services, IRIN has made its photos available to its readership free of charge to enhance efforts and encourage greater media coverage of forgotten and under-reported crises. But without a professional photographer on staff the quality of many of the photographs was poor and they were not always suitable for reproduction.

Work on improving IRIN's public photo gallery began in 2005 and in 2006 a professional photographer was hired to manage the public gallery and control the image quality on the website. In 2006, IRIN Photo added more than 600 high-resolution images to the gallery. The unit also developed the high-quality photo gallery by editing and re-captioning all photos in the Archive Photo Gallery and closely monitored and edited the newly uploaded pictures to ensure they are of best quality possible to maintain a consistently high standard.

Free print-quality photos were provided by IRIN to humanitarian actors and international media which do not always have access to pertinent and timely images to illustrate their reports and articles.



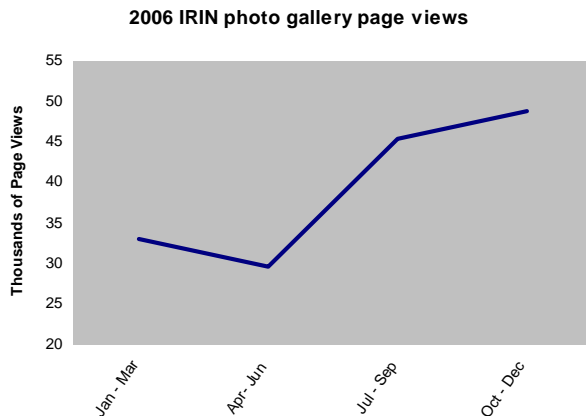
IRIN Photo Unit interns at work in Nairobi

IRIN photos have been used widely by news sites, NGOs, Net Forums/ Blogs and by several UN organisations. For his upcoming book, Professor Eric Reeves (*A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide*) requested the use of IRIN pictures, while participants and organisers of the 12th session of the UN conference on climate change held in Nairobi in November 2006 used IRIN Photo services.

The unit also undertook missions to Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda to add a variety of photographs on different themes to the gallery.

In 2006, the unit created a network of stringers (photo-journalists) in various countries around the world. By the end of the year, 12 professional photographers were supplying IRIN Photo with high-quality images.

Begun in 2006 and continuing into 2007, IRIN Photo is working on a Special In-Depth – *Tomorrow's Crises Today*, together with Film, Analysis and News, exploring the risks and opportunities in urbanisation in an effort to develop and disseminate multimedia packages with partners to highlight the urgent need for decision-makers and communities to better respond to current and future urban crises.



Radio

IRIN Radio is known widely for its success in giving local populations a voice. It has also made significant progress towards building sustainable capacity by training local reporters and radio stations, enabling them to continue production of high-quality programming on issues of human

security in the longer term. IRIN has worked in partnership with 168 radio stations and trained 200 broadcasters.

In 2006, one of the trademarks of IRIN Radio, remarked on by listeners, station managers and other international organisations, was its success in tailoring programmes to meet local needs and conditions, and in handling highly sensitive issues. The IRIN issue-based soap operas in Somalia, Burundi and Angola remained one of the best and most popular examples of its achievements in this regard, informing communities on HIV/AIDS, human rights, problems over reconciliation and the return of refugees.

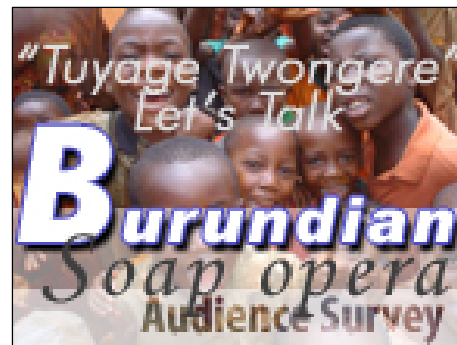
In 2006, IRIN Radio contributed significantly towards the provision of accurate programme content for use by local radios in 14 countries in Africa and Central Asia. It produced at least 350 programmes in 19 languages, comprising 1,068 hours of broadcasting on FM and short wave, reaching millions of people, many living in remote and marginalised areas.

In Afghanistan, for example, IRIN played an important role in the development of that country's nascent media. IRIN trained a new generation of women and provincial broadcasters and provided them with the tools to operate. It also co-produced a series of programmes focusing on the daily struggles of ordinary Afghans, which are broadcast on more than 50 local and provincial radio stations. In Angola, IRIN helped to make the production of radio programmes more professional while offering listeners' alternative broadcasts addressing diverse issues.

i. East and Central Africa - Somalia, Burundi, western Tanzania, Sudan, Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

Burundi

The IRIN Radio soap in Kirundi entitled *Tuyage Twongere* (Let's Talk) continued to be produced at a rate of two episodes per week, totalling 104 episodes during the reporting period. Partner stations continued to air the two fresh episodes each week, plus repeats of each new episode. The soap had the potential to reach the entire Burundian population via five stations inside Burundi and covering the refugee camps in Tanzania and played an important role in opening discussions on gender-based violence and polygamous relationships in the refugee camps, issues that had been taboo.



The drama also reported effectively on the politically sensitive aspects of refugee returns, the killing of perceived opposition supporters, and the complex issues surrounding the return of land and property through the justice system. With increasingly heavy-handed pressure being exerted by the Burundian government on the local media, IRIN's soap opera succeeded in airing such issues when local radio reporters had been silenced.

IRIN conducted intensive training for staff on three radio stations, and provided some equipment, focusing on the production of humanitarian programmes. Basic training was also given to reporters on a station in Uvira, eastern DRC. As a result, IRIN's partner stations made greater efforts to include human security issues in their news and programme agendas.

Somalia

IRIN launched its Somali soap opera entitled *Lama Huraan* (Indispensable) in 2006. About 15 episodes were aired by stations in Somalia and north-eastern Kenya, and posted on the IRIN website for other stations to download.

Informal surveys indicated that the soap - a gripping drama set in an imaginary Somali village, where residents grapple with issues, problems and prospects similar to those facing communities across Somalia - was well liked. Scenes from the story were a topic of conversation among Somalis: the elder advocating peaceful resolution to local conflict faces opposition from a troublemaker urging villagers to

form a defence militia; families returning from years in displacement set about rebuilding their house and improving their harvest; a committed teacher opens a new school and seeks support from the community; a woman running a tea kiosk has to decide if her young daughter should go to school or stay at home and do chores; and whether her daughter should be circumcised ...

IRIN continued to produce regular feature programmes in Somali on topical issues of humanitarian concern. The programmes, of 12-15 minutes in length, were based on field reporting by IRIN producers, and contained interviews with Somalis from all levels of society, as well as speakers from UN and non-UN agencies, government officials, specialists, etc. Topics chosen included all the humanitarian themes covered by IRIN, for instance, conditions for new refugees arriving in camps in Kenya; chronic water shortage and alleviation plans in Hargeisa; Somalis' views on the Islamic courts; avian and human flu awareness and prevention; conflict resolution in Mudug, central Somalia; effects of the drought on nomads; human smuggling from Bosasso to Yemen.

In Somalia and the Somali-speaking part of Kenya, to avoid duplication, IRIN continued to collaborate with the BBC Trust over the use and distribution of BBC training materials in Somali and English.

Sudan

In Sudan, IRIN's programmes continued to set the standard on local stations which air them for local reporters to emulate in terms of programme production on important local issues. However, none of the programmes was a co-production. Challenges of security and logistics meant that IRIN focused on producing its own content. Throughout 2006, IRIN produced at least 40 programmes.

ii. West Africa - Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria

IRIN Radio WA expanded its activities in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in 2006, significantly boosting its profile in both countries. There was a stronger emphasis on networking, publicity and producing more and better programmes with a wider variety of themes. In 2006, IRIN Radio WA established service and brand, using training techniques and products that can be very easily duplicated elsewhere.

Côte d'Ivoire

In 2006, Côte d'Ivoire remained at the centre of IRIN Radio's West African operations. An expanded team took on an ever-increasing workload and made programmes with more than 20 stations in Côte d'Ivoire, while tackling a rich variety of subjects. IRIN placed more emphasis on content, emphasising that training activities in the field must lead to an end-product, ideally a well-made programme on an appropriate theme, produced by local reporters with IRIN's help. IRIN Radio remained committed to addressing local concerns about the dangers of hate radio emerging in Côte d'Ivoire and continued its policy of taking journalists from government-held areas into territory controlled by the former rebels, the Forces Nouvelles, and vice-versa. Journalists complimented IRIN on this initiative, pointing to a greater understanding of national and local issues and enjoying the collaboration with peers from different regions.



Freeplay Foundation wind-up radios have proven popular with listener groups in a number of countries where IRIN Radio operates.

Programmes in 2006 examined drug abuse in Abidjan, problems of crime and insecurity in urban areas, pollution and land disputes. IRIN's CDs on HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation generated good local press coverage and prompted suggestions for new, broader initiatives in these areas, with NGOs and activists keen to collaborate with IRIN.

IRIN programmes continued to be broadcast regularly on the UN's radio station in Côte d'Ivoire, ONUCI FM, which has complimented IRIN on the range and quality of its output.

Liberia

Working as the 'IRIN Liberia Radio Project', IRIN's production team established itself as the main partner for local and national broadcasters in Liberia. IRIN used a four-month training project with state broadcaster, LBS, 'Here is the News', to improve the station's news and current affairs content. The project ended with a week-long workshop, covering reporting techniques, interviewing, script-writing and digital editing. LBS management has been highly appreciative of IRIN's output and requested further assistance.

With the help of UNHCR, IRIN made several programmes on Liberian refugees in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. IRIN reporters visited refugee sites, interviewing refugees on their current conditions and prospects for returning home. These programmes have been broadcast on the UN's radio station in Liberia, UNMIL Radio, generating a positive response.

As part of a project backed by the UK's development agency, DFID, IRIN made programmes on HIV/AIDS in Liberia, working with radio stations across the country. IRIN plans to produce a compilation CD of programmes, including commissioned drama sketches, along with a guide for reporters.

Meanwhile, the partnership with the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organisation (ALCO) enabled IRIN to continue work in five countries in West Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, making programmes on HIV/AIDS with 15 partner stations as part of a programme backed by the World Bank.

High-quality programmes focused on people living with HIV and many of these programmes went out in vernacular languages. There was also a strong drama component, with stations broadcasting locally-produced sketches.



Angola: local radio journalists learn the art of digital sound editing © IRIN

While there have been other radio initiatives on HIV/AIDS in the region, IRIN's work was unique. The project had a strong grassroots orientation from the outset, working with local health activists, addressing the concerns of ordinary citizens and encouraging journalists to engage directly with a challenging subject. For instance, IRIN produced a weekly bulletin, *The Traveller*, available in French and English, in both text and audio formats, including HIV/AIDS news from the five countries providing transport news, profiles of towns and villages. *The Traveller* sought to debunk common myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, the Corridor team placed a strong emphasis on marketing, producing stickers and billboards, packaged CDs and other Corridor products, while making effective use of IRIN's website.

iii. Southern Africa – Angola

The Angola project successfully entered its second year of current affairs programmes, *Adentro*¹; and its soap drama *Camatondo*² remained extremely popular. By end-December 2006, 83 *Camatondo* episodes and 67 *Adentro* editions had been broadcast by the National Radio of Angola (RNA). Meanwhile, IRIN worked towards consolidating further an excellent partnership already existing with

¹ Angola *Adentro* is broadcast every Wednesday on RNA's Channel A (broadcast nationwide on AM). This programme's objective is to contribute to positive social change, good governance and sustainable development efforts in rural Angola, by voicing the concerns, interests and expectations of rural Angolans, and by producing regular reports about their problems, ideas, aspirations and hopes, and demonstrating that grassroots community members, peasants, women, children, the elderly and the poor can positively contribute to the development of their country.

² *Camatondo* is broadcast by the RNA national channel A (AM) twice a week and on FM by all the 23 provincial radio broadcasters (usually several times per week - in some provinces it is apparently broadcast every day).

the RNA. Given the media reform that followed the adoption of new press laws in 2006, IRIN strengthened its training capacity. In consultation with RNA and the National Centre for Journalistic Training in Luanda, IRIN started to develop a manual for rural journalists to address the information needs of most vulnerable groups.

iv. Central Asia – Afghanistan

IRIN established a network of stringers as the Afghanistan radio project evolved from a training to a reporting focus. By the year's end, the stringers were filing from seven locations, where they were based in local radio stations. IRIN moved from making stand-alone radio programmes to producing reports for broadcasters to include in their regular schedule news and current affairs programming. This strategy allowed IRIN to have reports broadcast on Good Morning Afghanistan nationally on the government RTA network and on the Internews network. In addition to its primary reporting role, the stringer network facilitated a decentralised and Afghan-based capacity-building capability. As the skills of each stringer develop, they act as in-situ mentors for their colleagues in the provincial local radio stations.

IRIN made several moves to integrate its radio and text projects, establishing a central office. IRIN can now run a cross-media newsroom and use the national network of radio stringers for text. The new arrangement streamlined editorial and administrative management of the Afghanistan operations.



Afghanistan: Radio is more effective than any other means reaching women and girls who are often unable to leave their homes to access conventional forms of education. © IRIN

In 2006 IRIN Radio changed its training programme, conducting three advanced workshops for journalists who had already completed basic training. While fewer journalists were trained, the project took selected reporters to a higher level and added greater emphasis on humanitarian news skills. Journalists who attended these advanced workshops were considered for the national network of stringer correspondents. In addition to supplying IRIN with radio reports from the provinces, it is expected that these correspondents will operate as in-situ mentors.

IRIN Radio established a relationship with the universities in Khost, Herat and Balkh provinces, with correspondents in each location attached to the university to assist in teaching practical humanitarian radio journalism.

In April 2006 a new Country Manager was appointed. Four additional radio editorial staff and associated support staff were added to the team in October 2006 to manage the new national network of stringer correspondents.

The IRIN Radio project under the UNAMA-administered Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund came to a close on 31 December. This project had begun in April 2004, after initial funding from the Trust Fund for Human Security in 2003.

Obtaining new funding for Afghanistan, as in other regions, was a priority in the second half of 2006. However, despite best efforts, by the end of 2006 no support was forthcoming. Advanced discussions were continuing with several potential donors.

PlusNews

A quarter of a century into the pandemic, more than 65 million people have been infected with HIV, more than 25 million people have died of AIDS-related diseases, 15 million children have been

orphaned, and 40 million people are living with the virus - more than 95 percent in developing countries.

In 2001, building on IRIN's existing editorial infrastructure, which offered a cost-effective approach, an English-language service was begun on HIV/AIDS, attracting financial support from UNAIDS, UNICEF and South Africa's Medical Research Council. The service became known as PlusNews. At the end of 2004, with a start-up grant from Germany's GTZ and support from UNAIDS, a French-language service was established covering francophone West and Central Africa. In December 2005 a SIDA-funded Portuguese-language service was launched.



Canada: A display of 8,000 flags outside the venue for the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto symbolised the number of people who die from AIDS-related illnesses everyday © Kristy Siegfried/IRIN

In addition to continuing its popular text service, a ground-breaking IRIN radio initiative was also begun in 2005 and ran through 2006, due to end in March 2007. The joint Regional HIV/AIDS Project in the Abidjan-Lagos Transport Corridor is an HIV/AIDS prevention project covering five countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. The project is run by the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organisation (ALCO), based in Cotonou, Benin, which enlisted IRIN's help to work with partner radio stations in the five countries to deliver imaginative, informative and popular programming on HIV/AIDS issues. The audience includes truck drivers, commercial sex workers and travellers, with the aim of strengthening cross-country coordination of HIV/AIDS activities, and increase access to prevention and care services. Funding for the project expires in February 2007, but after building up close working relationships with radio stations in the five countries, IRIN is keen to see the initiative continue.

In 2006 PlusNews joined a DFID-funded consortium of nine UN agencies working on scaling up HIV/AIDS services for populations of humanitarian concern. Although it has been proven that treatment, prevention and care initiatives can be rolled out to communities in crisis, their rights to access these services are routinely overlooked. PlusNews produced four In-Depth web specials, nearly 300 features, and more than 20 audio reports exploring the challenges facing humanitarian workers and affected communities. A series of on-line journalist-friendly 'fact files' was also developed, aimed at raising awareness among local media of the particular risks faced by vulnerable populations.



Kenya: HIV-positive demonstrators march through Nairobi to protest against a proposed law that could hike the price of ARVs and other life-saving drugs, July 25, 2006

Under the project, IRIN/PlusNews again broke ground by extending its coverage to selected Asian countries. The reporting on Asia used experienced 'super-stringers'. This decentralised model was cost-effective and is an approach PlusNews will adopt to expand its coverage in Asia and the Pacific. UNAIDS highlighted Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Nepal and India as countries of particular concern.

In partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, PlusNews embarked on a four-month project beginning in November 2006 to raise awareness around HIV/AIDS

mitigation, protection and support for vulnerable children; prevention of mother-to-child transmission; ARV literacy; and infection prevention among adolescents and young people in southern Africa. Under the project, PlusNews is producing a range of online articles, audio programmes, a series of documentary films and a photo-essay book. It is the most complicated undertaking PlusNews has embarked on to date.

Among other non-text services produced by PlusNews were:

Country Profiles: Annotated contact details for relevant government departments and national programmes in sub-Saharan Africa; active NGOs and organisations of people living with AIDS; as well as country socio-economic indicators and the latest epidemiological data were provided.

Treatment Map: IRIN produced country-by-country overview on progress in the roll-out of anti-retroviral therapy in sub-Saharan Africa, detailing numbers on treatment, funds disbursed and national drug regimens.

Hayden's Diary: A weekly journal by a PlusNews Information Officer on being young, South African and HIV-positive was published. The goal was to break the silence and denial around HIV/AIDS and tackle head-on the stigma that has led so many people to a silent and avoidable death. Similarly the Portuguese service has pioneered blogs by HIV-positive women in Lusophone African countries.

News Digest: A weekly electronic newsletter includes summaries of the articles produced that week, together with a digest of upcoming conferences; a synopsis of selected research; and web links to the latest resource materials.

III. MEASURING IMPACT

IRIN remained the leading online provider of humanitarian news and information in Africa, Asia and the Middle East in 2006. IRIN reports were widely used by policy-makers in the UN, the humanitarian and donor community and NGOs. IRIN was also a major supplier of original text, photos, radio and video content to local and international media organisations. It delivered much of its content electronically via its online platform – www.IRINnews.org – and directly by email.

Traffic to IRIN's website has grown exponentially from year to year. Visits to the website jumped from 800,000 in 2005 to 1.2 million per month in 2006, an increase of 50 percent. The site received 29 million hits a month and an average of five million page views - an increase of one-and-a-half million from 2005.

IRIN's coverage of events and issues had a major impact on decision-makers, practitioners and the media. NGOs working in Iraq, for example, said that IRIN reports alerted them to urgent humanitarian problems and triggered appropriate responses. News organisations such as the BBC, CNN, Al-Arabiya and MBC either used IRIN



Kenya: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon tours Kibera slum accompanied by the Director-General of the UN Office at Nairobi Anna Tibajuka and Kenya's Education Minister George Saitoti, Nairobi, Kenya, 30 January 2007 © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

content or followed up IRIN stories to produce their TV reports. In addition, more than 200 internet news providers reprinted IRIN stories and reports on their websites. The major Arabic and western newspapers used IRIN articles, proving the continued need for humanitarian reporting from the region.

In the past three years, IRIN's coverage of the conflict in northern Uganda – until recently one of the world's most underreported crises – included a film, a book, regular news reports and features and helped to raise global awareness and double funding levels. In Chad, a UNHCR official reported that DFID had contacted the organisation after reading an IRIN report to ask if it needed greater financial

assistance. The International Herald Tribune sent a reporter from Paris to Senegal to report on illegal mass migration after an IRIN story on the subject.

IRIN's Horn of Africa reports were widely used by newspapers across the region. Its articles appeared in the East African weekly, the Sudan Mirror, the Khartoum Monitor, Uganda's New Vision and Ethiopian and Somali media, as well as numerous diaspora websites.

Feedback

"What has struck me most forcefully about the news and features which IRIN provides is the originality of its outlook and the strength of its journalism."

Paul Anderson, BBC

IRIN also continued to trigger interest in little-known humanitarian situations. IRIN's publication of a series on people who are smuggled from Somalia across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen was picked up by the mainstream media, including the BBC and The Economist.

In Zimbabwe, where journalists are restricted by formal regulations as well as by fear for their safety, IRIN's human-centred reporting was recognised by civil society for its accuracy. Its coverage became a staple of the private media.

In West Africa, IRIN's reporting on health issues such as lyme disease, obstetric fistulas and diabetes triggered responses from agencies and aid workers. For instance, the UN's Population Fund, UNFPA, developed a programme on fistulas following an IRIN article on this topic. IRIN was the first information service to report on the dire education situation in Guinea, the promising results of alternative nutrition food (plumpy-nut) in Niger, the untenable situation of cashew nut producers in Guinea-Bissau, to name a few. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) undertook a mission to Guinea-Bissau to look at the cashew nut problem after being alerted by the IRIN report. IRIN was also ahead of the trend in providing analysis on the political and social situation in Mauritania under the new president, and in highlighting the humanitarian dimension of clandestine migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands. Meanwhile, the reports of IRIN on Liberia were also found in refugee camps in Guinea where teachers in makeshift schools were using them to teach Liberian refugees about their country's recent history and progress in peace negotiations.

Feedback from users also confirmed that IRIN film documentaries are becoming a key aspect of advocacy efforts. Humanitarian agencies, human rights groups, donors, educational institutions and policy-makers now use these films as an integral part of their sensitisation, training, fund-raising and educational programmes.

Feedback

"The documentaries you sent are SO educational and the kids are REALLY empowered to find their voices to seek change. Thanks for bringing these issues to light for us."

High school teacher, Orcas Island, Washington State

Demand for these films and the number of partners using them grew exponentially in 2006. Most importantly, IRIN's film documentaries reached a growing number of schoolchildren, offering them a unique insight into the wider world in which we live.

Radio continued to have a major impact on the lives of many listeners. In Burundi, for example, a survey indicated that many of those who listened to IRIN's radio soap said they found the drama informative and educational, especially on issues such as repatriation, HIV/AIDS, health and gender and family. Many said the drama had shown them the 'positive face' of refugees in Tanzania, and that they realised they shared similar problems. Some respondents also indicated positive behavioural changes, including the dangers of extramarital affairs and polygamy.

IRIN Radio in Burundi, Somalia and Sudan helped maintain a consistent level of discussion and public debate over important issues that would otherwise not necessarily make it into the traditional radio schedules.

Readership survey

Every year since its inception, IRIN has commissioned an annual survey of its readership to review progress on meeting its goals and to find out if its products and services are continuing to meet the needs of its client base. An important element of the survey is to glean readers' views on content and services, as well as new products and geographical areas that IRIN should consider introducing.

More than 3,500 e-mail subscribers and web users responded to the 2006 readership survey in November-December 2006. Although the number of respondents focused on Asia and the Middle East was less than those following Africa, the sample size was large enough to be representative.

The main respondents to the IRIN survey said they were involved in some way with the humanitarian sector. More than 57 percent were directly involved (UN, NGOs or donors). Another 14 percent were academics, many acting as advisers to the humanitarian community. Most of the remainder were consultants, government officials or media, which use IRIN to inform their humanitarian reporting. About 20 percent of respondents said they had been IRIN readers for five years or more; 33 percent for three to four years and 45 percent for the past two years. Given the high turnover of humanitarian staff in many countries covered by IRIN, this suggests IRIN continues to attract new readers on a regular basis, and that reader loyalty is firm.

While the bulk of respondents said they used IRIN for work and research, a growing number used IRIN for information on their home countries.



Somalia: Children play in the flood-waters at an internally displaced persons camp in Arare, 12 km from Jamame, southern Somalia, 15 December 2006. © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

Almost 80 percent of respondents rated IRIN as their first or second-most important source of humanitarian news. Sixty-nine percent of these described themselves as 'dynamic or regular' IRIN users, reading more than 60 percent of IRIN reports on their areas of interest. Most said they regularly consulted mainstream news sources such as the BBC and CNN, while 32 percent also consulted ReliefWeb and 19 percent Alertnet, two other important humanitarian websites. This would indicate that IRIN continues to fill a unique niche with the information it provides. Web tracking also reveals that IRIN reports are re-published on more than 500 news sites, in addition to many more specialised humanitarian websites, blogs, country portals and discussion groups.

Overall, 75 percent believed IRIN's most significant influence was in keeping them up to date, followed by 46 percent who felt IRIN's role was bringing attention to underreported or previously unknown issues.

Globally, 95 percent of respondents believed IRIN's reporting was objective. More than 78 percent – an increase from 61 percent in 2005 - of respondents felt IRIN represented the views of the broader humanitarian community rather than any one organisation, underlining IRIN's editorial impartiality. About 37 percent also felt that IRIN represented the views of affected populations, attesting to IRIN's commitment to provide a platform for those affected by crises. Only 6 percent (compared with 12 percent in the 2005 survey) felt that IRIN represented the views of the UN alone. (Full text available on the IRIN website www.IRINnews.org.)

IV. FUNDING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Core reporting operations

As a result of improved cash flow and record income during the preceding twelve months, IRIN began 2006 with a healthy fund balance of just under US \$3 million, available for both its core news and analysis services and project activities such as Plusnews and IRIN Radio. For the first time, this allowed staff contract extensions and full continuity of operations for the first four months of the year, a

period when historically IRIN has suffered severely from cash flow constraints while waiting for new contributions to come in.

Core needs for 2006 were estimated at around US \$7 million, a figure that covered the regular operations of IRIN in the field and its principal reporting services. This figure was up some 22 percent on the 2005 figure of US \$5.7 million, in part reflecting increased operating costs (to some degree stemming from the declining value of the US dollar), and the introduction of new services, such as IRIN Photo, but mostly due to the cost of running a full-fledged Middle East service managed from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.



Lebanon: A man picks up garbage at the public beach of Ramlet El-Baida, Beirut, 29 July 2006. White sand is covered with oil that spilled out into the sea after a power plant was hit by Israeli jets on 13 July 2006. © Focusmideast/IRIN

As in previous years, donors responded very positively to appeals for support, providing earmarked and soft-earmarked core contributions for 2006 amounting to around \$4 million. Among those contributing funds were IRIN's long-standing group of primary donors: Australia, Canada, Denmark, ECHO, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, all of whom have supported IRIN's primary reporting services consistently for the past few years, and, in several cases, since IRIN was first established in 1995. Other donors contributing core funding in 2006 included Ireland and South Africa.

Though the overall picture for the year was a healthy one, the actual timing of the contributions was such that needs had

outstripped cash availability by mid-year. IRIN was therefore fortunate to benefit from approximately US \$2 million made available by OCHA from donor unearmarked institutional grants, allowing the full continuity of staff contracts and operations during the difficult third quarter of the year. The availability of two major contributions, from the UK and US governments, during the last quarter, together with the early arrival of the government of Switzerland's contribution for 2007, meant that the year ended positively, with approximately US \$1.5 in funds carried forward to meet first quarter costs in 2007.

Project-based services

It was also a good year in terms of new funding earmarked to support IRIN's project activities, notably IRIN Radio and Plusnews. Donor grants amounting to over US \$600,000 were confirmed during the year, significant among these being a major contribution from the UK's Department for International Development (via the UNAIDS secretariat) supporting a special Plusnews initiative looking at AIDS and communities in crisis, and the first part of a two-year grant from the Swedish government enabling Plusnews to establish a Portuguese language service.

Other noteworthy project grants included funding from Norway and Switzerland to support the continuation of the IRIN radio soap opera project for Burundi, from Norway again in support of radio project work in Angola and from the Swiss government to finance the publication of a short photo-book on the issue of violence against women in war.

Institutional financing

Financial support was also made available to IRIN from various special funds administered by OCHA. This included the approval and calling-forward of some US \$600,000 from the Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund (AETF) to support daily reporting on Afghanistan and the surrounding region, as well as to support the continuation of IRIN Radio's work with local broadcasters and radio journalists in the country, and US \$110,000 from the Trust Fund for Disaster Relief for the continuation of expanded reporting on post-earthquake recovery efforts in Pakistan.

While IRIN's initial response to the growing mid-year humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, was financed through the rapid draw-down of available core resources, the approval of some US \$200,000 in funding provided by donors in response to the July flash appeal, channelled through the Disaster Relief fund, enable IRIN to produce its short film *Fields of Fire* documenting the humanitarian consequences of the use of cluster bombs in the final days of the war between Israel and Hissbollah, and to sustain coverage during the months after hostilities ceased.

As in previous years, a number of IRIN's New York and Geneva administrative and liaison costs were met directly through provisions derived from the 13 percent programme support levy applied by the UN Secretariat to all voluntary contributions to OCHA. In 2006, authority was given to use part of these funds to meet a variety of IRIN-specific support costs, including a full-time representative and liaison officer in New York and a donor relations and liaison officer in Geneva, and local staff support to the two offices. The overall cost contribution was just under \$450,000, equivalent to around 60 percent of the levy applied to IRIN income during the year, a proportion that IRIN is lobbying to increase substantially in 2007.



oPt: Masked militants such as these Fatah supporters put civilian lives at risk in Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territories, during fighting on 12 June 2006. © Tom Spender/IRIN

IRIN also benefited financially from provisions made through the Advocacy and Information Management Branch of OCHA in New York. Just under US \$67,000 was allocated to meet the costs of IRIN's annual IT equipment replacement and upgrade plan, while US \$97,000 was furnished for IRIN's staff development and training programme. Part of these funds were used to finance two fellowships on the three-month Thomson Foundation summer course for international journalists held in Cardiff, Wales, awarded this year to two IRIN national staff, one from Pakistan and one from South Africa. The funds also met the cost of enrolling staff on various technical and professional training courses, covering languages, disaster response training and workshops on international humanitarian law among others, as well as financing on-the-job training and orientation for IRIN's freelance stringers and photographers.

The Trust Fund for Human Security, administered on behalf of Japan by OCHA, continued to be an important source of financing for IRIN's work with local community radio stations in Africa. Under the second and final phase of financing from the fund, IRIN called forward US \$680,000 during the year to support its training of radio journalists, and the production of drama and features programmes for broadcast in Angola, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, IRIN's radio work in Afghanistan was revamped during the year using a combination of financing from the AETF (see above) and funds remaining from an earlier grant through the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, UNAMA.

Expenditure

Donor contributions for IRIN's regular operations, both core services and project activities, are channelled through a sub-account of the Trust Fund for Strengthening OCHA. Funds from the account were called forward on the basis of a cost plan approved by senior management in October 2005, revised in mid-2006. The cost plan becomes both the basis for appeals to donors for support and an operational tool for allocating resources during the course of the year.

Provisional estimates indicate expenditure on core services being close to what had been projected at the beginning of the year, US \$7 million (including programme support costs), drawing on a combination of carry-over funds and new contributions, including OCHA unearmarked resources.

IRIN's project expenditure is necessarily tied to the cash resources made available by donors. In some cases, the formalities required to finalise and transfer funds can present a challenge to rapid implementation, as can the situation where donors are not able to make 100% cash advances but generally by leveraging available unearmarked resources has enabled IRIN to maintain the continuity of its projects based on the commitments made by supporting donors. Project expenditure during the course of 2006 is provisionally estimated at US \$2 million, including programme support costs

Finally, expenditure on IT procurement, training, Afghanistan-related reporting, radio project activities supported through the Trust Fund for Human Security, the South-Asia earthquake response and the expanded reporting of events in the Middle East and Lebanon, supported using funds called forward from the various OCHA-managed funds detailed above, amounted to an estimated US \$2 million.

Taking into account all sources of funding and activities, IRIN operations in 2006 cost in the region of US \$11 million. On the same basis of analysis, this was approximately 25 percent up on 2005, mostly as a result of launching the new Middle East service, an expansion of Plusnews services and expenditure on emergency reporting in Lebanon and the surrounding region.

For more detailed accounting of IRIN income and expenditure, interested donors are advised to contact the OCHA Donor Relations Section in Geneva. Official figures relating to OCHA accounts and the status of the various trust funds used by IRIN will be published in the OCHA 2006 Annual Report, due to be published during the second quarter of 2007.



Uganda: The daughter of a former abducted girl in front of a mural at the World Vision rehabilitation centre in Gulu District, northern Uganda, August 2006. With calm returning to most parts of the region, children are now able to experience a normality that had been absent during the ravages perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army. © Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

Annex I: Readership Statistics

