

Chapter 8

Imperative of Peace and Conflict–Sensitive Journalism in Development

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ABSTRACT

Even though the role of the media in development has long been recognized, more attention has been given to their role as purveyors and disseminators of news and little on how such news are framed. Against this background, this chapter looks at the nexus of peace and development and the role of journalism in the mix. The concept of development journalism as a kind of deliberative effort, may have received some impetus and the practice established, as governments, policy makers, scholars and practitioners assign developmental roles to the mass media beyond the ideas from the West. Similarly, the notion of peace journalism emerged as a dimension of development journalism. Originally conceived by the eminent peace scholar, Johan Galtung, the Peace Journalism model is a source of practical options for journalists which shows backgrounds and contexts of conflicts, explores hidden agendas, highlights peace ideas and initiatives in news coverage of conflicts and therefore is recommended for consideration by journalists especially in developing nations.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals, developed by world leaders under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) at the beginning of the millennium, was perhaps the most important development framework for fifteen years up to 2014. The eight goals included eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achievement of universal primary education, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and reduction of child mortality. Others include improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malarial and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for devel-

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opment. These were lofty developmental goals but as noted by the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon (2015:3), “Yet for all the remarkable gains, I am keenly aware that inequalities persist and that progress has been uneven. The world’s poor remain overwhelmingly concentrated in some parts of the world. In 2011, nearly 60 per cent of the world’s extremely poor people lived in just five countries.” The admission of minimal success is also an indication of the huge responsibilities ahead for all development agencies, governments, civil society and the media. The immensity of the development tasks ahead has also led the UN to develop another set of goals designated as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be pursued between 2015 –2030 in the continuous search for solution to the challenges of development in the world. The SDGs document declared that:

On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative goals and targets. We commit ourselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner. We will also build upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seek to address their unfinished business (United Nations General Assembly: 2015).

The search for solution to this unfinished business must therefore be widespread and include all institutions whose works impinge on development. The media are part of such institutions.

Even though the role of the media in development has long been recognized, it would seem more attention has been given to their role as purveyors and disseminators of development news and little on how such news are framed. As noted by Moemeka (2000:275), a common mistake in development planning is the practice of treating communication not as a full-fledged component of the resources for development, “but as a ‘matter-of- fact’ adjunct that does not need any serious and separate consideration in the context of development projects”, hence the failure of most development interventions including peace building efforts. Facts from studies indicate the need to nudge planners to mainstream media and communications into the central context of their development interventions. It is only then that the full benefits of development journalism can be reaped.

The Nexus of Peace and Development

Are development and peace intertwined? Most people would say yes. Yet there is considerable disagreement as to the nature of the relationship between these two economic and political phenomena. Some argue that development encourages peace. People in better economic condition are less likely to initiate violent conflict both because they are more contented and because they have more to lose from the physical danger and economic disruption that war brings. Others say that development discourages peace, either because the continued development of some depends on their forceful suppression or control of others. Still others argue that development and peace have no significant connection to each other.

The idea that political development has a direct, organic connection to peace is a main tenet of political liberalism, going back to the eighteenth century writings of Immanuel Kant (e.g. *Perpetual Peace*). It holds that republics in which individuals have fundamental civil rights are less likely to go to war than are autocratic forms of government. A more modern variant is the so-called “democratic peace” argument,

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