

News Story from Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Posted by George Paterson on 03 Mar 2004

AID AGENCIES SQUEEZED FOR PRESS WORK

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More Information:

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So says a global study out today from Reuters AlertNet and the Fritz Institute which reveals NGOs are under-using technology and skills which could boost their media relations.

The research looks at the 'working' relationships between aid agencies in the field and international journalists. The report points out relief charities face a struggle to publicise many disasters, with some getting little or no on-going attention.

Using celebrities for publicity has limited use, while high death tolls attract more coverage. Also, field offices tend to be staffed by local nationals who are inexperienced in press relations and unfamiliar with what might be at stake when working with a reporter from outside the region.

Lack of funding for field visits topped the list of journalists' problems, followed by lack of timely response from groups at the scene. Relief personnel, meantime, felt they had to push for help from 'headquarters' because they have limited staff time during emergencies and limited knowledge of how the press works.

Mark Jones, Editor of AlertNet said: "Even those disasters in the spotlight often gain a flurry of publicity as the news first breaks, but can be forgotten on a long-term basis.

"It seems that relief charities are lacking in training when it comes to media relations. Of course NGOs have limited time and money resources, but diverting a relatively small proportion of funds to training could reap big dividends in terms of press coverage, and ultimately, donations."