

## PSBs should not shirk their responsibility to the world

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What are awards for? In our highly competitive industry, winning awards certainly helps people get on. Win enough and ‘distinguished’ might even be attached to a namecheck.

At One World Media, we’re glad our awards are so highly prized. Their currency helps us influence media people to promote global dialogue, tolerance and understanding; give marginalised people a voice; and contribute to international development. They identify standards to be emulated by others, and are a snapshot of how well the media is doing in bringing the complex realities of the wider world home to the UK.

One of our awards’ strengths is our distinguished, award-winning jurors – people who know what they are talking about.

So it is significant when a jury says, as our TV jury did this year, that while they were impressed with the quality of the 12 shortlisted entries, they were “disappointed with the range and quality of programming about the developing world submitted by the main terrestrial broadcasters”.

They added: “It would be a shame if the challenging economic climate led broadcasters to fight shy of tackling the really big issues facing the planet.”

In a year dominated by news from North Africa, the Middle East, Japan and Ivory Coast, that might seem odd. But news coverage masks the true picture of the range and depth of the content the public sees. Outside of news, only the BBC and Channel 4 have any obligation to internationalism.

Much of the BBC’s output is on its niche channels, such as BBC3, whose Blood, Sweat And... series is nominated for our popular features award. BBC1 and ITV1 still get the lion’s share of viewers but are resolutely focused on UK topics. John Pilger’s film for ITV1, The War You Don’t See, nominated for our docs award, is a rarity.

As mainstream channels retreat from international work, can new services such as Al-Jazeera English fill the gap? Al-Jazeera’s star has risen due to its dedication at a time of compelling news events. It’s good to see one of its excellent docs in contention for our

TV award this year. But, like the BBC World Service, it does not reach big audiences in the UK. BBC1 and ITV1, key public service broadcasters, remain critical to understanding the wider world, so it matters if their offerings are thin on the ground.

Despite this, our 250 entries this year suggest that across all media, there is still a diverse range of work on offer, from Reader's Digest to Sky News to the Mail On Sunday. Entrants tackled big issues like rapid urbanisation, and the impact of Western consumerism on workers in poor countries, not just the emergencies and conflicts that drive news and NGO fundraising.

The government, against the wishes of a significant section of the public, is increasing its international aid budget and using the TV licence fee to pay for the World Service. We must hope that these media efforts, often made against the odds, lead to better standards of public debate and understanding about what's going on around the globe, adding to the richness of our own culture and experience as citizens of one world.

**Marion Bowman is director of One World Media. Jon Snow hosts the 23rd One World Media Awards at Kings Place in London on 10 May. More details at [www.oneworldmedia.org.uk](http://www.oneworldmedia.org.uk)**