


NGOs and Journalists: not communicating? (Polis at Harvard II)

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/05/29/ngos-and-journalists-not-communicating-polis-at-harvard-ii/

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 Here at [Harvard](#) we are talking about how the news media reports natural disasters. Gruesomely topical.

[Susan Moeller](#) gives an excellent [paper](#) that reflects the shift from old-fashioned journalism to new media communication about these events.

Amongst other interesting things she reflects on is how the NGOs have a role to play:

“Surveys of US, UK and European journalists who cover natural and other crises have found that few use or even know about existing humanitarian crisis aggregating outlets such as Reuters’ AlertNet, OCHA’s ReliefWeb and ECHO’s site. These same surveys also identify that NGOs and governments are missing opportunities to reach media: reporters who go to the websites of specific NGOs for time and place-critical information are often frustrated by a lack of basic information on the sites (such as detailed contact information, especially for in-country staffers), few sites offer LISTSERVs or RSS feeds or text bulletins¹³ of value to reporters, and often search engines don’t index even the information, images and video that are loaded onsite (sometimes because the pages are framed— a technical decision that allows pages to load quickly, but that typically means that those pages are “unseen” by outside search engines such as Google and Yahoo! and oft-times by the onsite search engines, which are frequently iterations of those outside). The partisan perspective on information that is on the sites—or put out via press releases—of organizations such as Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank can also be a disincentive for certain journalists to use the information. Even when journalists share those perspectives, there can be the perception that to run with the news from such a press release is to become merely an advocate for that organization.”

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