



SPECIAL REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY, ANALYSIS OR REVIEW EXPLORING THE MEDIA

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July 13, 2005

Crazy 8s

Live 8, G-8 coverage cheerleads
sending billions of U.S. dollars to Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Live 8 concerts were tuned to a rare collaboration of politics and music. Organizer and rock star Bob Geldof used the July 2, 2005, event to pressure wealthy nations into increasing foreign aid to Africa. The international performance left the TV media seeing stars and unable to report on Live 8 as anything other than a "good cause." News people awed by celebrities delivered one-sided accounts about African poverty that were light on facts and heavy on promotion. Even after the event, journalists carried this skewed outlook to the G-8 conference harping on America's "low" foreign aid and criticizing the U.S. stance on global warming.

The Media Research Center's Free Market Project analyzed all TV news and news-related programs on the five major networks - ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox News - for a two-week span leading up to the Live 8 concerts and ending just after the conclusion of the G-8 meeting. It included 121 stories that focused on the concerts or on the issues of African aid or climate change, which topped the summit agenda.

- **TV Leads the Cheer for African Aid:** More than one third of all stories on Live 8 or the G-8 meeting that followed (43 out of 121) emphasized the concerts weren't about money, when nothing could be further from the truth. Not a single story should have said that, because in reality, Live 8 was perhaps the biggest fund-raiser in history. Activists were pushing for \$50 billion in aid while insisting they didn't want people to "open their wallets."

MORE

- **Where Has the Money Gone?:** Twenty years after Live Aid, founder Bob

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Geldof admitted “Africa’s declined economically 25 percent in 20 years,” but the networks didn’t explore the effectiveness of the billions of dollars in aid that has gone to Africa except to say that much of it was lost to corruption.

- **Meet the Press...Release:** News people didn’t just promote Live 8; they relied on phrases spouted by concert organizers or found in Live 8 press releases. The concerts weren’t part of a fund-raiser; they were “raising awareness” as part of Africa’s “long walk to justice.” If the networks had been concerned with justice they wouldn’t have ignored the fact that Live 8’s predecessor, Live Aid, worked with the Ethiopian government of Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, who is still wanted for the crime of genocide. Only one story even mentioned Mengistu.
- **America the Cheap:** Twenty-three stories (19 percent) made reference to limited U.S. aid even though America gives more foreign aid than any other nation. That didn’t stop CNN from saying “the U.S. budget is quite low in terms of foreign aid.” There was only one passing comment alluding to about \$62 billion donated worldwide through American charities each year.
- **A Billion Here, A Billion There:** The networks rattled off a wide variety of numbers – some for debt relief, some for aid, even some for specific U.S. programs. There was little consistency on how much aid left-wing activists wanted for Africa. Numbers ranged from a couple billion dollars to \$200 billion or \$300 billion and included little explanation.
- **Global Warming Hot Air:** The climate change discussions at the G-8 meeting drew typical media scare stories of rising oceans and searing temperatures. News shows blamed President Bush for his opposition to the Kyoto treaty in 19 percent of the stories. Only one story on Fox News mentioned that the Senate had also voted 95-0 against Kyoto.
- **CNN Worst Network, Fox News Best:** Thirty-six percent of the CNN stories embraced the idea that the concerts weren’t about money, and the network also had the highest number of stories criticizing the United States for a low foreign aid budget. Fox News didn’t fall into the Live 8 public relations trap. The network also delivered the most in-depth global warming coverage.
- **CNN’s Christiane Amanpour Most Biased; Ken Dolan A Bright Spot:** Amanpour outdid herself with a mixture of U.S. criticism and outrage that corrupt African nations be forced to clean up their act to receive aid. The network’s major bright spot was “Dolans Unscripted” co-host Ken Dolan who dared to ask tough questions about increased African aid.

July 13, 2004

Crazy 8s

Live 8, G-8 coverage cheerleads sending billions of U.S. dollars to Africa

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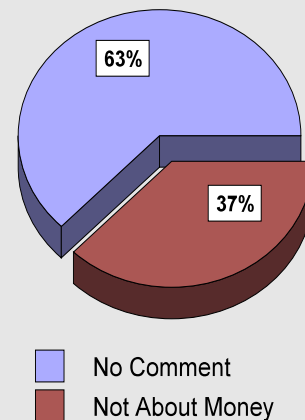
Live 8 blared onto TVs worldwide with artists from U2 to Madonna. Even Pink Floyd reunited and performed their signature song “Money.” That one word summed up the event more honestly than most of the media coverage.

Organizer and rock star Bob Geldof claimed the July 2, 2005, concerts were a way to teach people about poverty and “raise awareness” about the crisis in Africa. Journalists didn’t just agree, they repeated Live 8 phrases like they lifted them from a press release. Rather than ask difficult questions, news people gushed over celebrity pitchmen and celebrated the “good cause” of increasing foreign aid to Africa.

CNN devoted an entire special to African poverty entitled “Can We Save Them?” The July 2, 2005, story concluded with reporter Christiane Amanpour saying: “We have the money. We have the ability. But do we have the will? At concert stages and at conference tables and here in Ethiopia, people of good will are making a start.”

The Media Research Center’s Free Market Project analyzed TV news coverage

37% of Stories Embrace Hype That Live 8 Not About Money



from June 27 through July 10, 2005, and found much of the coverage took a similarly uncritical tone. More than one third of the stories repeated the claim of Live 8 organizers that the concerts weren't about money.

Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The Live 8 concerts were part of a worldwide fund-raiser. Organizer and former Boomtown Rats front man Bob Geldof used the event to pressure wealthy nations into increasing foreign aid to Africa to \$50 billion, in addition to billions of dollars in debt relief. Geldof timed the performance to mark the 20th anniversary of his previous charity effort, Live Aid.

This time the concerts were free to attendees, while organizers tried to send a billion-dollar bill to the G-8 nations, especially the United States.

Starstruck news people delivered one-sided accounts about African poverty that were light on facts and heavy on promotion. Even after the event, journalists carried this skewed outlook into the G-8 conference of the world's wealthiest eight nations by harping on America's "low" foreign aid and criticizing the U.S. stance on global warming.

On "Wolf Blitzer Reports," July 5, 2005, CNN World Affairs Analyst William Cohen was openly promoting increased assistance: "Aid to Africa is important to Tony Blair, but it should be very important to us as well as a great humanitarian effort that needs to be undertaken."

Host John King responded with a view common in the study: "Let me stop you on that point, just because I don't think anyone could disagree with that point."

Cohen, the former Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton, followed up by saying: "We have an obligation to help in a major way."

While deficits are normally criticized in the media, there was little linkage of the idea of increased aid with increased deficits.

In a closing commentary on the April 24, 2005, "Face the Nation," CBS anchor Bob

"Their goal, to raise awareness about the crushing debt and trade laws that help keep African nations in poverty."

*- Anchor Carol Lin
CNN's "Saturday Night," July 2, 2005*

"Unlike Live Aid 20 years ago, no fund-raising, instead raising awareness of poverty in Africa."

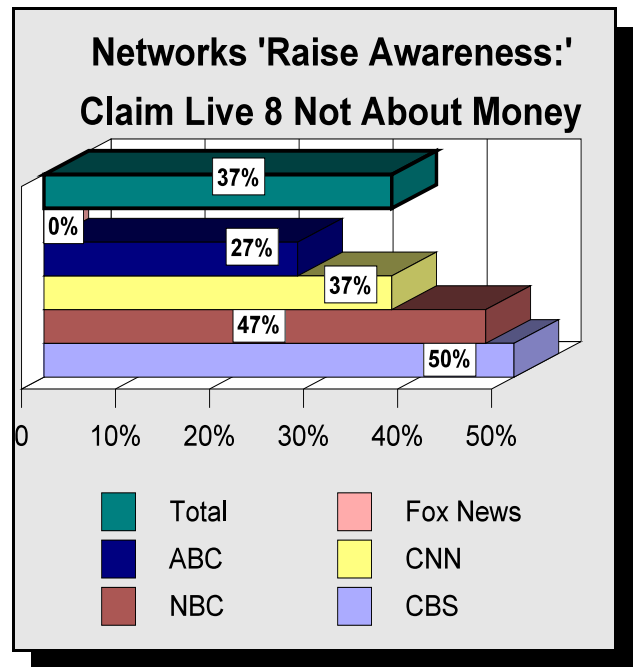
*- Janet Shamlian
NBC's "Today," July 2, 2005*

Schieffer was highly critical of deficit spending. "Buried in the back pages of The Washington Post [was] a story in which Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said the runaway federal deficit was getting so bad, he expected taxes would have to be raised....We haven't heard much about that story, have we?" he asked. Schieffer made no such complaint about increasing U.S. aid to Africa.

Skepticism was hard to find even when the event founder pointed out what had happened since the last Live Aid concert. On CNN's "Morning News" July 2, 2005, Geldof showed how little had been accomplished despite the previous outpouring of aid. "Africa's got worse. Africa's declined economically 25 percent in 20 years. It's the only continent in economic decline."

But journalists didn't even try to connect the dots between an influx of aid and the deterioration of an entire continent. Instead, positive media sentiment was typical on news and entertainment news shows alike.

On July 1, 2005, A.J. Hammer, co-host of CNN's "Showbiz Tonight," gave this upbeat appraisal of Live 8. "Well, this weekend, we're going to see the musical event that will go down in history, and it's all for a good cause." He added the common claim that the event wasn't about money. "And while the sequel, Live 8, is not a fund-raiser, it promises to be even bigger than its predecessor," he said.



TV Leads the Cheer for African Aid

When journalists weren't advocating aid to Africa, they were catering to the celebrities who were doing that job for them. Journalists remarked how they loved bands or even particular celebrity activists. The red-carpet treatment pulled the rug out from under any claim of objectivity. Robin Roberts of ABC's "Good Morning America" gave actor George Clooney a taste of the star treatment during his July 6, 2005, appearance in support of aid to Africa. Clooney joked about being in the studio and Roberts responded: "We wish. And come see us any time, George and I know it's important work that you and others are trying to get across. And many people appreciate that."

Roberts wasn't the only "Good Morning America" regular to be starstruck. On the show's July 3, 2005, broadcast, Dan Harris admitted that he was "a little jealous" of reporter Marysol Castro who got to cover the Philadelphia Live 8 concert.

Castro was equally upbeat. "You know, it was truly extraordinary, eight, 160 bands performing in nine cities across four continents. And though Live 8 was entertainment on a grand scale, its message was simple, end poverty in Africa." Later in that same report, Castro admitted Live 8 performer "Stevie Wonder still makes me weak in the knees."

Given the musical nature of Live 8, MTV staffers showed up with some frequency. MTV correspondent John Morris appeared on CBS's "Early Show" on July 2, 2005, with this comment about the performers: "Whether or not they're all well versed in the issue or not, their hearts are in the right place. I'm certain of that."

NBC's "Today" delivered similar support. On July 2, 2005, Lester Holt interviewed actor Chris Tucker, saying, "You know, it's interesting, we've seen concerts, of course, raising money, but raising awareness and effecting the kind of change that this is all about, how high a bar has been set, and do you think this will make a difference as those leaders sit down at the G-8?" Holt added, "Well, Chris, we appreciate the work." He concluded the interview with, "it's an incredible effort, and you've got an incredible line-up of talent."

Money Changes Everything

Holt's reference to the concerts not being about money was commonplace. More than one third of all stories on Live 8 or the G-8 meeting that followed (43 out of 121) emphasized the event wasn't about money. CBS was the worst of the five networks studied. Half of the stories included references like this June 30, 2005, example from "The Early Show" and reporter Sheila MacVicar. "This time it's not about your wallets but your mind, your conscience." CBS is owned by Viacom, which also owns MTV, the broadcaster of the concerts.

A Detailed Analysis of Network Coverage

The Media Research Center's Free Market Project (FMP) analyzed all TV news and news-related programs on the five major networks – ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox News – for a two-week span leading up to the Live 8 concerts and ending just after the conclusion of the G-8 meeting. This analysis covered June 27 through July 10, 2005, and included 121 stories that focused on the concerts or on the issues of African aid or climate change, which topped the summit agenda.

FMP researchers tracked coverage of the two events, setting aside casual mentions that included President Bush's travel. G-8 stories relating solely to terrorism were also excluded from the analysis.

CNN was almost as overt. More than one third of its poverty stories (36 percent) echoed MacVicar's comment. Anchor Carol Lin and reporter Mallika Kapur emphasized Geldof's public relations ploy by claiming the concerts weren't about money.

On CNN's "Saturday Night," July 2, 2005, Lin referred to the concerts "to call attention to the world's poor." She added, "Their goal, to raise awareness about the crushing debt and trade laws that help keep African nations in poverty."

Kapur added a line nearly ripped right from a Live 8 press release about Geldof: "Instead of asking for money, he's asking the world leaders to wipe out poverty." How? With billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded aid, of course.

Many stories agreed that corruption has been a problem in Africa and has limited the effectiveness of aid efforts. On CNN's "Your World Today," July 4, 2005: reporter Jeff Koinage explained that "billions of dollars in aid have been siphoned."

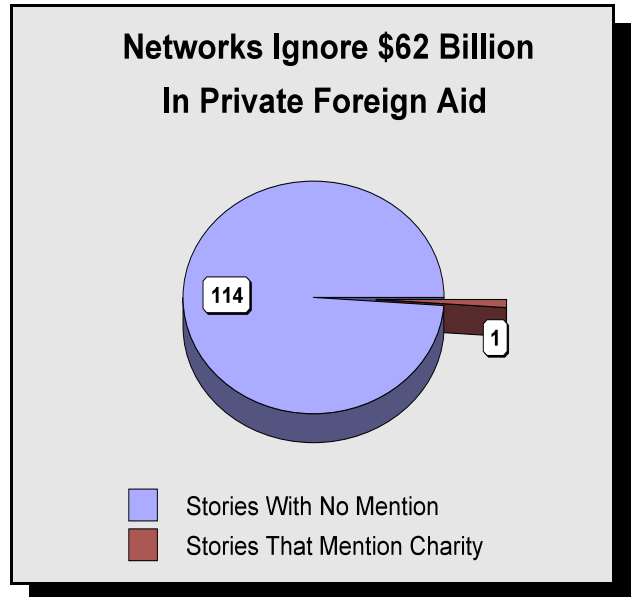
He went on to say that the head of the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission "puts that figure at more than \$20 billion. Of course, the ultimate victims of this rampant corruption are ordinary Nigerians."

Koinage left out the western taxpayers whose leaders, according to the report, "had just agreed in principle to forgive two-thirds of Nigeria's debt. That comes to about \$18 billion." The remaining \$17 billion "may be forgiven by the end of the year."

Forgiving African debt was discussed on CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight," on July 6, 2005. Anchor Kitty Pilgrim launched into a new refrain: "Protesters are out to pressure the G-8 on aid to Africa, but is more money for failed and corrupt African states really the answer?"

She "answered" that question by interviewing Charles Kupchan, of the Council on Foreign Relations, who proceeded to criticize the United States for its funding levels but pointed out that trying to cut down on corruption made sense.

However, Kupchan never questioned the massive funding going to Africa.



Meet the Press ... Release

The June 1, 2005, Live 8 press release was headlined "Bob Geldof Launches Live 8 - 'The Long Walk To Justice.'" On the July 5, 2005, broadcast of CNN's "American Morning," reporter Paula Hancocks didn't just repeat the sentiment, but the headline: "I'm here in Murrayfield Stadium, where the protests will actually end. This is the end of the long walk to justice." The PR continued: "Here's the news... This is not a charity event. The concerts will be *free*. They are not fund-raisers but rallying points for the largest political constituency ever mobilized to call for justice for Africa and the world's poor."

The July 2, 2005, NBC "Today" show report looked quite similar. Reporter Janet Shamlian had this to say, "Unlike Live Aid 20 years ago, no fund-raising, instead raising awareness of poverty in Africa."

News people didn't just promote the event; they relied on phrases spouted by concerts organizers or found in various Live 8 press releases. The concerts weren't part of a fund-raiser; they were "raising awareness" as part of Africa's "long walk to justice."

American Online teamed up with Live 8 to broadcast the concerts. An AOL press release about the concerts from June 16, 2005, used the "raise awareness" comment two weeks before NBC. "Live 8 will feature concerts in five cities - Philadelphia, London, Paris, Berlin and Rome - to raise awareness around the world to help eliminate poverty in Africa by encouraging the G8 nations to eliminate debt, increase aid and adopt fair trade practices." Another release by Nokia, a concert sponsor, used the phrase in a quote from one of its own executives.

"The president can rightly claim the U.S. gives the most money in actual dollars. But more revealing, critics say, is the U.S. gives the smallest percentage of its wealth than any of the countries here."

- Kelly O'Donnell
"NBC Nightly News," July 6, 2005

On the July 2, 2005, broadcast of CNN's "Dolans Unscripted," reporter Monita Rajpal continued the reliance on Live 8 talking points. "Of course, all of this is to raise awareness. And last time, 20 years ago, Live Aid was all about raising money, raising funds for famine-stricken Ethiopia."

That night, on the "NBC Nightly News," Ron Allen used another press release phrase. "That event 20 years ago was for money." He added, "Today, they say, is for justice." Of course, Allen immediately contradicted the statement by explaining: "Specifically, Live 8 calls for rich nations to erase more than \$200 billion in African debt. They want aid doubled and better trade deals for Africa."

Occasionally, even on CNN, reporters broke from the pack and explained the reality of the Live 8 events. Carol Costello did just that on CNN's "Daybreak" on July 1, 2005. "The purpose, of course, is to raise money to help Africa. Unlike other charity concerns, this effort is focused on getting rich nations to pledge aid, rather than relying on your donations."

America the Cheap

U2 singer and concert promoter Paul "Bono" Hewson summed up the media approach to American foreign aid in an interview on ABC's "World News Tonight," June 30, 2005. "I'm, as a, as a personality, always going to be disappointed with the numbers. I think America should give more." Bono repeated his sentiment on the July 8, 2005, CNN "Showbiz Tonight" explaining, "it's never going to be enough for me."

Twenty-three stories (19 percent) made reference to limited U.S. aid even though America gives more foreign aid than any other nation in the world. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United States has given more than \$47 billion (in constant 2002 dollars) in Official Development Assistance to sub-Saharan Africa from 1960 through 2003. That didn't stop CNN from saying "the U.S. budget is quite low in terms of foreign aid," as it did on July 2, 2005.

The story of America's generosity doesn't end with public funding. Yet, there was only one passing comment alluding to the billions of dollars donated through American charities out of 121 stories on all five networks. On ABC's "World News Tonight," July 2, 2005, Terry Moran urged viewers to go to the network Web site to find "more on the fight against global poverty, including the effort of U.S. churches to help."

That was the only reference. A June 2005 report from the Hudson Institute revealed that private U.S. donors gave at least \$62 billion to developing countries in 2003. That was three-and-a-half times the total of Official Development Assistance the U.S. handed out that year.

Despite that information, reporters relied largely on one measure of African aid – percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). That number doesn't take into account either charitable assistance or military aid. Journalists used this number to claim that the U.S. gives less than other nations, when, in reality, the U.S. gives more because its GDP is so high.

On "NBC Nightly News," July 6, 2005, Kelly O'Donnell admitted U.S. donations were the highest, but stressed criticism of those numbers. "The president can rightly claim the U.S. gives the most money in actual dollars. But more revealing, critics say, is the U.S. gives the smallest percentage of its wealth than any of the countries here."

Reporter Ron Allen took the same attitude three days earlier on the same newscast. "Critics say smaller European countries still spend a higher percentage of their income helping Africa." To emphasize this point, Allen interviewed Patrick Watt of Actionaid UK, a British development organization that later came out and criticized even the huge increase in funding that resulted from the G-8 conference. Unsurprisingly, Watt downplayed U.S. contributions: "I don't think it's as major as perhaps the U.S. administration have ... have spun it as being. It's, it's quite small money in real terms."

When that wasn't enough, the networks always had celebrities to make the complaint. CNN's "Morning News" of July 2, 2005, the same day as Live 8, showed concert organizer and co-founder of the Def Jam music label Russell Simmons quick to criticize American generosity. "Americans' perception that they give so much is wrong."

Twelve of CNN's stories made the point about low American aid, but none more clearly than the July 2, 2005, special "Can We Save Them?" Christiane Amanpour repeated the criticism. She asked British Prime Minister Tony Blair about American foreign aid funding levels: "How will you do it if the United States does not move up to 0.7? And there is no indication that it will, and President Bush is being quite firm on that." She followed up this question by describing the African situation as "poverty that kills, that literally kills."

"Africa's got worse. Africa's declined economically 25 percent in 20 years. It's the only continent in economic decline."

– Bob Geldof on Live Aid 20 years after
CNN's "Morning News" July 2, 2005

Amanpour criticized plans to link funding with reform designed at curtailing corruption. "Is it fair to hold people who are dying every day because they live on less than \$1 a day, is it fair to hold them accountable to their bad governments?" She continued: "Do you think that if people in America, which pays 0.1 percent, or people of England or Europe, who pay by now in the region of 0.3 or 0.4, do you think if people knew how little in fact their governments do pay for foreign aid, that they would come around to supporting their governments when they want to increase that?"

While "Can We Save Them?" was promoting the Live 8 concerts, in turn, it used that notoriety to promote a film by HBO, "which is also owned by CNN's parent company, Time Warner." Amanpour described the film: "At first glance, it looks like a love story, but in fact, it is a powerful political wake-up call. The girl in this movie asks one of the key questions of 2005: Will this be the year the world finally gets serious about saving Africa?" CNN then showed more than five-and-a-half minutes of clips from the film including a woman from the film making this point: "I don't believe for a moment that people in our country wouldn't want you to represent their interest if you were doing it instead of talking about saving the lives of millions and millions of children."

A Billion Here, A Billion There

Numbers are the backbone of solid financial reporting. The networks rattled off a wide variety of numbers in their Live 8 and G-8 coverage – some for debt relief, some for aid, even some for specific U.S. programs. There was little consistency on how much aid left-wing activists wanted for Africa. Numbers ranged from a couple billion to \$200 billion or \$300 billion and included little explanation.

CNN's Aaron Brown summarized the scope of the problem on the July 6, 2005, "Newsnight with Aaron Brown." "Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois famously said, a billion here, a billion there. Pretty soon you're talking about real money. But maybe not enough for Africa, a continent with a lot of everything: diamonds and disease, people and poverty."

Reporter Ron Allen summed up the desires of activists with his July 2, 2005, "NBC Nightly News" report. "Specifically, Live 8 calls for rich nations to erase more than \$200 billion in African debt. They want aid doubled and better trade deals for Africa."

Viewers of NBC were likely confused when "Today's" Lester Holt explained the next morning that Geldof's goal was "to squeeze \$25 billion in African aid out of next week's Group of Eight summit in Scotland." Journalists didn't expound on aid increases, debt forgiveness or the difference between the two. They also failed to explain that there are different types of aid, such as humanitarian aid and development assistance.

"Where's the \$450 billion gone we put over there, we, the world, has put over there in the last generation. Where the hell is it all?"

– Ken Dolan
"Dolans Unscripted," July 2, 2005

At CNN, the network mixed its numbers between \$25 billion and \$50 billion. On the July 8, 2005 broadcast of "CNN Live Today," reporter Robin Oakley chose the \$50 billion number when talking about the decisions of the summit referring to "A \$50 billion boost in aid." Just six days before, CNN reporter Betty Nguyen had given the other number on the network's "Saturday Morning." "Now, this effort is \$25 billion by the year 2010."

Compared to ABC, CNN's approach was easy to understand. ABC referenced six different billion-dollar numbers in just two weeks. Viewers were confronted with everything from \$1 billion to \$50 billion. The July 6, 2005, "Good Morning America" actually cited President Bush saying "I can't give the \$25 billion that Tony Blair wants." Later in that broadcast, George Stephanopoulos added that G-8 leaders had agreed to \$40 billion in debt relief for Africa.

The June 30, 2005, "World News Tonight" had chosen far lower numbers. In an interview with Bono, Bob Woodruff said, "You've said before that another billion dollars from the U.S. could save a million lives. But another \$4 billion could change the world. Is that what you're pushing for now?"

No matter what numbers the networks predicted, CBS reporter Allen Pizzey predicted they wouldn't be reached. On "The Early Show," July 5, 2005 Pizzey explained, "The G-8 leaders will be hoping that protesters and everyone else will be so caught up in rock 'n' roll goodwill and diplomatic rhetoric that they won't notice how little is actually achieved here."

Of course, he was proven wrong when the G-8 nations agreed to increase their aid to Africa - adding \$25 billion, to bring the total to \$50 billion by 2010.

Broadcasters couldn't even come up with accurate numbers for the Live 8 TV audience. Those estimates were as low as the millions or as high as more than five billion. Actual ratings for U.S. broadcasts of Live 8 were atrocious.

According to The Washington Post article, "In Ratings, Live 8 Was Dead Weight for ABC," "NBC's coverage of the rain delay of NASCAR's Pepsi 400 in the same time period drew nearly double the audience."

The overall audience for the concerts was just more than 5 million for three networks - ABC, MTV and VH1.

'Fair Trade' Not Free Trade

On "CNN Live Today," July 5, 2005, anchor Daryn Kagan detailed what activists were seeking: "debt relief, free trade - more free trade and doubling of international aid." Andrew Natsios, director of the US Agency for International Development, explained: "The World Bank estimates that if we had a free trading system, we could increase the incomes of poor countries by up to \$300 billion a year - a huge amount of money that would really lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty."

Natsios showed that the U.S. aid budget had increased 500 percent faster than the European aid budget. "And when the president took office, the total aid budget for the U.S. government, for foreign aid, was \$10 billion. Last year, it was \$19 billion. We expect it will be somewhere in the order of \$24 billion this year."

While the networks emphasized "ending poverty," reports rarely explained the causes of African poverty or the benefits of trade-related economic solutions. CNN "Morning News" July 2, 2005, reporter Paula Hancocks said "They want fair trade."

What was meant by “fair trade” was never really explained in any of the broadcasts. According to the Live 8 Web site <http://www.live8live.com/>, fixing trade isn’t a problem. “It’s simple really, change the rules. Now.” The site advocated using “trade rules to end world poverty as we know it.” Visitors were directed to the site for Make Poverty History to learn more. There, various short essays criticized price supports used in the industrial world. Rather than argue for free trade, the site advocated “fair trade” or another set of price supports that aids third world nations by setting minimum prices for goods purchased from those nations.

Fixing Africa’s trade deficiencies isn’t really that simple. Dr. Roger Bate, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, has written extensively on poverty and African aid. Trading with rich Western nations would be a great help to African economies, Bate said. However, tariffs between African nations are sometimes higher than those blocking trade between Africa and the west.

Even if trade barriers were removed, that wouldn’t provide much immediate aid, said Dr. Marian Tupy, assistant director of the Cato Institute’s Project on Global Economic Liberty. “Africa produces very little,” he explained. In order to increase production, African nations need peace, impartial court systems, private property rights and infrastructure. Tupy said governments own significant amounts of land and often control shipping, making it difficult to do business in many countries.

Opposing Voices Seldom Heard

Few opposition voices were heard amidst the clamor of the Live 8 song and dance. Only 16 stories out of 121 included any dissenting view about the African poverty situation. Many of those were lone comments in the midst of much longer broadcasts extolling the virtues of aid.

One of the most vocal and informed critics was “Dolans Unscripted” co-host Ken Dolan of CNN, who dared to ask tough questions about increased African aid. On the July 2, 2005, show, Dolan dared to criticize the theme of the day: “Mozambique, roughly 50 percent of the national income of that country is aid. Others are in that 25 – many in the 25 to 30 percent. Throwing money at a country may, in fact, discourage foreign investors, discourage individual incentive.” Dolan added: “Where’s the \$450 billion gone we put over there, we, the world, has put over there in the last generation. Where the hell is it all?”

While discouraging words were hard to find, there were a few. CBS’s “Early Show,” July 2, 2005, interviewed David Rieff, author of “At the Point of a Gun” and a humanitarian policy analyst. Rieff pointed out flaws in the original Live Aid execution. “The first Live Aid collaborated with one of the worst governments in African history....the Mengistu government. [in Ethiopia] They helped a lot of people survive.

They also helped the government kill a lot of people – not intentionally, but that was the actual effect.”

Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam is wanted in his native Ethiopia for the crime of genocide. According to a Dec. 28, 1999, BBC report, “Thousands of people were killed by Mr Mengistu's Dergue regime during the period now known as the Red Terror Campaign.”

Although one Live 8 concert featured an Ethiopian survivor assisted by the original Live Aid concert, the problems of Ethiopia received little attention. CBS reporter Tracy Smith gave rare voice to such criticisms on “The Early Show,” July 1, 2005. “Now you know there are naysayers out there who say Live Aid 20 years ago raised a lot of money, but look what happened. Two years ago, there was another famine in Ethiopia. Nothing really changed.”

Some of the most critical comments came from the audience. CNN’s “Showbiz Tonight,” on July 6, 2005, solicited viewer feedback on Live 8. “But Barry from Georgia writes ‘Celebrities do not belong there. They should stop telling my government how to spend my money and spend theirs instead.’” The July 4, 2005, broadcast of CNN’s “Your World Today,” showed the attitude also appeared in Britain as one unidentified male explained: “The vast majority of the British population, they are fed up. They are tired with aid to Africa. They believe Africa should address its problems.”

By limiting dissent, network stories glossed over the complexity of African poverty. Journalists could have turned to experts such as the American Enterprise Institute’s Bate, who said of Ethiopia, “Humanitarian food aid is one thing. Writing off debt for a country that is basically following Marxist policies is another.” He also gave the example of Zimbabwe, where rule of law and property rights were destroyed, sending the economy into a downward spiral.

Another expert who could have been consulted was the Cato Institute’s Tupy who explained that development aid won’t do any good until African nations change the way they are governed. “I think that money’s completely wasted,” he said. Both Tupy and Bate could have brought perspective to the effectiveness of humanitarian aid as opposed to development assistance.

“Polar ice caps retreating at an alarming rate. Oceans heating up, expanding, threatening coastal cities. More than a few species, even humans, may be threatened by climate change. Blame itself, however, is flourishing.”

– CNN’S Walter Rodgers
“Lou Dobbs Tonight,” July 5, 2005

Global Warming Hot Air

Live 8 had the world dancing to its tune of African poverty, but the G-8 meeting also addressed the issue of global warming. The disparity in coverage between these events showed the marketing power of the mega concerts. The networks reported on African poverty more than three times as often (115 stories compared to 37 stories) as they did on global warming, though both issues were high on the G-8 agenda.

Walter Rodgers, CNN's senior international correspondent, painted an apocalyptic picture on the July 5, 2005, "Lou Dobbs Tonight." "Polar ice caps retreating at an alarming rate. Oceans heating up, expanding, threatening coastal cities. More than a few species, even humans, may be threatened by climate change. Blame itself, however, is flourishing."

Blame was indeed flourishing. In eight of 37 global warming stories, the networks blamed President Bush for keeping America out of the Kyoto treaty on climate change. "The agreement known as the Kyoto protocol went into effect in February, but the Bush administration has steadfastly refused to sign on," Rodgers went on to say.

Only Fox News reported the full story. On the July 8, 2005, "Special Report with Brit Hume," Jim Angle explained what happened at the G-8 conference. "[T]hey also inched forward on climate change language. Now, President Bush made clear he didn't want to go too far on that, nor does anyone else in the U.S. If you look back at the latter days of the Clinton administration when the Senate voted 95-0 to tell President Clinton not to send that treaty up to the hill because it would not pass..." That unanimous vote against Kyoto included former Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), although that was never discussed in any of the reports.

That didn't stop the network from repeating the blame game in three of its seven stories on the topic. Fox News did a better job on the economic issues related to the Kyoto treaty, explaining that signing on would have harmed the U.S. economy. The July 8, 2005, "Special Report with Brit Hume," made the point, but with typical TV news spin. Fox's Chief White House Correspondent Carl Cameron made one of the common mistakes explaining the dangers of Kyoto. Cameron presented economic facts as the opinions of the president. "Mr. Bush argues Kyoto was flawed for not including developing nations and would have cost the U.S. jobs."

In the eight years since Kyoto was tentatively agreed to, there have been several economic surveys about its impact on the United States. These reports estimated signing the accord could cost the U.S. more than \$400 billion per year. The U.S. Energy Information Administration also predicted Kyoto would cause widespread employment loss nationwide ranging from 1.1 million to 4.9 million jobs. Those predictions didn't come from Bush; they came from the U.S. government in 1998 – during the Clinton administration.

News coverage of climate change has been one-sided for years. The latest coverage mirrored results found in another Free Market Project analysis: "Destroying America To Save The World." That study found similar problems. "For nearly four years, network news programs have presented a skewed view of global warming and the Kyoto treaty that liberal environmentalists claim would cure it. Those same newscasts have all-but ignored the negative economic consequences that ratifying Kyoto would have on the U.S. The network coverage also largely ignored scientific evidence questioning global warming theory, while touting dramatic claims of liberal environmental activists."

http://www.freemarketproject.org/specialreports/2004/globalwarming_study/sr20041108exec_sum.asp

CONCLUSIONS

Network coverage of the Live 8 concerts and the G-8 conference was so skewed that veteran reporters found themselves competing with celebrity activists over who could make the most positive comments. The result wasn't journalism, it was marketing. Celebrity pitchmen and reporters repeated the false claim that American foreign aid is "low" and ignored not only the total amount of U.S. contributions, but also billions of dollars in private donations. Network news shows gave air time to any argument about increased taxpayer-funded aid to Africa, even when it came from the richest man in the world. The July 5, 2005, "CBS Morning News" ran a clip of Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates urging nations to contribute to Africa without noting the irony. "Well, if the resources are given by the rich countries, lives can be saved," he said.

Will the Live 8 approach to solving Africa's problems work? It's too early to tell, but it is obvious that the networks rarely even entertained the question. And that is even more amazing because Africa has declined so precipitously since the first Live Aid concert. The carefully orchestrated events of Live 8 make the job of journalists that much more difficult. To help with that concern, here are some recommendations for better coverage:

- **Look Critically at Major Events:** Journalists cover the news only; they aren't intended to be cheerleaders. That means that charities and major fund-raising events need to be analyzed with a critical eye. In this case, that would have meant a critical assessment of the successes and failures of the Live Aid events.
- **Cover Both Sides of an Issue:** This recommendation shouldn't be necessary, but the Live 8 reporting was so slanted that the few critical voices were either given little time or marginalized. There were numerous experts who questioned the viability of aid to Africa, but the media gave them little time.

- **Don't Treat Africa as One Nation:** Africa is a continent, not a nation. There are 53 nations within the continent and that means 53 separate governments, business climates and problems. Journalists need to go beyond the news shorthand and explain to readers that some African nations are doing the right things to lift their citizens out of poverty, while others are doing their best to limit opportunity.
- **Explain What Numbers Mean:** No matter which network they watched, viewers were treated to a variety of estimates about the cost of African aid with little or no explanation. Reporters need to work harder to explain what numbers mean and how they impact viewers.
- **Focus on the Issue at Hand:** Clearly, African poverty was the issue behind both Live 8 and the G-8 conference. All too often, journalists got wrapped up in the petty details of the concerts while ignoring the major problems that the event was trying to address. An issue as complex as African poverty has multiple causes and no simple solution.