

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

IRIN Readership Evaluation 2004

Executive Summary

Introduction:

1. The **Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)**, is a humanitarian information service providing continuous coverage of ongoing, recurring and evolving humanitarian issues/crises in an accessible and readable format. IRIN provides coverage of 46 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, eight countries in Central Asia and Iraq.
2. To ensure that the quality and products of the IRIN services continue to meet the needs of the humanitarian community, IRIN undertakes an annual readership evaluation. The 2004 survey was conducted at the end of April, using 6 distinctive e-mail and web-based surveys. Over 5,000 e-mail subscribers, 16 percent of IRIN's subscriber base, and 524 web users, 0.1 percent of IRIN monthly web visitors, responded. Demographic information from the respondents indicated that they adequately reflected the IRIN subscriber base and targeted audience, thus validating the study.

Purpose of the Evaluation:

3. To review the experience of IRIN's readership and provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and IRIN's constituencies and target audience – the humanitarian community.
4. To determine the continued need for IRIN's crisis reporting on Iraq.
5. In accordance with 2004 ECHO funding, to examine the feasibility of expanding IRIN's coverage to other geographical regions.
6. To garner information to inform the IRIN web site redesign process.
7. To solicit user feedback on IRIN services for the annual IRIN mid-term review.

Principal Findings and Recommendations:

Effectiveness of IRIN Reporting

8. A majority of respondents indicated they were regular IRIN readers and 47 percent asked to receive a copy of the survey findings, indicating a high vested interest in IRIN by its readership.
9. Overall, the results confirmed that IRIN, far from duplicating other reporting services, is in fact providing value-added content not available elsewhere, even through mainstream media sources like BBC, Reuters and AFP, which are regularly consulted by 75 percent of subscribers. This was further underscored by the fact that 37 percent indicated that IRIN reporting had raised an issue they were unaware of that week.
10. Respondents confirmed IRIN's credibility as an objective and balanced service with 98 percent rating it as objective and 75 percent stating that its editorial approach struck the right balance. The latter average was lowered by the fact that respondents felt the output of the French and Iraq services needed to be increased.
11. Globally, 61 percent of respondents felt the service represented the views of the broader humanitarian community and/or affected populations. Only 12 percent said that IRIN represented the views of just the UN.
12. Globally 85 percent of respondents found IRIN reporting to be good or excellent. The exception was the French service, which received a slightly lower than average rating. This was linked to the quantity rather than quality of reporting. Due to continued lack of donor support for this service, the output over the last 3 years has experienced a steady decline. Ironically, funding difficulties contrast with a rising demand for the French-

- language service and a concerted call by survey respondents for IRIN to be accessible to local populations in languages offering the greatest accessibility to all – English, French, Portuguese and KiSwahili for the Africa service and Arabic for the Iraq service.
13. Survey results indicated a high readership and approval rating for the IRIN daily and in-depth report formats, with over 75 percent of the respondents rating them as good or excellent. Additionally, survey findings suggest that daily output for most of the services was meeting the perceived requirements and that editorial coverage for 2004-5 should focus on increasing in-depth reporting.
 14. Seventy-four (74) percent of respondents said they read one or more of the weekly round-ups, with 86 percent rating them good or excellent. This underscores their importance as an information product and is indicative of a larger readership than expected. Because the weekly is automatically included as part of a subscription, the actual readership as measured by demand was difficult to ascertain. However, 45 percent indicated they were regular readers and 30 percent periodic readers. Some 53 percent said the current weekly format was satisfactory and 26 percent indicated they would like to see a synthesis of the main regional events.
 15. The Asia News Wrap had a comparatively lower readership rate of 48 percent but a high satisfaction rating: 78 percent rated it good or excellent. In the interest of preventing information overload, the low readership rate for this product suggests it should be an optional service: it is currently sent to all Asia subscribers.
 16. The majority, 60 percent, of those who rated the above products found them to be good as opposed to excellent. Although positive, the results also indicate a margin for improvement and underscore the need for regular editorial feedback in view of improving the report products.
 17. As in previous years, interviews tended to be the least appreciated report product. It was recognised that although question-and-answer interviews are often less journalistic – lengthier and less direct - they simultaneously offer a platform for the sharing of more controversial statements, hence, the key lies in maximising their advantage while avoiding their overuse.
 18. Globally, 89 percent of respondents indicated that IRIN reports enhanced or influenced their work. Some 84 percent said they used them to keep-up-to-date and 57 to alerts them to issues. A further 46 percent said they used IRIN as source material for their reports and briefs. Some 29 percent indicated that IRIN reporting saved them time and 25 percent said IRIN informed their decision-making.
 19. Over 70 percent said they had forwarded or reprinted an IRIN report at some point. The high rate of re-circulation further underscored IRIN's added value and influence as a news service. Combined re-circulation was estimated to reach some 700,000 readers. This confirms that IRIN's readership extends well beyond its direct e-mail subscriber base and web site visitors, and indicates a multiplier rate of 140. Hence, IRIN's extended readership is estimated at just under 4 million.
 20. Overall, IRIN rated highly as a value-added and influential news source.

Awareness of IRIN

21. In responses to questions that assessed respondents' general awareness of other IRIN services and products, it was evident that IRIN and its growing portfolio of products and services needed to be more widely promoted to current and potential users alike. Most e-mail and web respondents indicated a greater awareness of the Africa services, the largest and oldest of the services, which benefited from a small but targeted promotional campaign in 1998. The findings indicate that IRIN's readership growth is primarily a result of ad hoc 'word-of-mouth' promotion. Given the current readership numbers, this is a strong testimony to the relevance and quality of the IRIN services. However, 72 percent of respondents said they were not aware of all the IRIN services, indicating that continued reliance on word of mouth to promote IRIN, notably the newer services, was unreliable. Further, over 50 percent said they were unaware that IRIN permitted the reprinting/reposting of IRIN articles and photos free-of-charge.
22. IRIN needs to prioritise the completion of the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) news feed and promote the service to search engines and news aggregator services, which are currently picking up only a fraction of IRIN articles.

23. Promotion also includes remaining vigilant about copyright and the use of IRIN staff and stringers for limited in-country promotional activities.

Iraq Crisis Service

24. The Iraq survey represents the first evaluation of this service one year after its inception. Twelve percent of the Iraq e-mail subscribers participated. A near unanimous 93 percent of respondents said there was a need to continue the Iraq Crisis coverage. Only 2 percent said no. Further, 73 percent of respondents advocated the provision of IRIN reporting in Arabic to enable access by local populations.
25. A significant number of Iraq respondents, 75 percent, rated the service as good or excellent – with the majority, 55 percent, rating it as 'excellent' – twice as high as other IRIN services. With 94 percent stating they found it objective, respondents further gave the service an exemplary credibility rating. Some 74 percent said the Iraq reporting struck the right balance. As with other IRIN services, there was a high level of satisfaction indicated for overall Iraq products. What criticism there was of the Iraq service was levelled at what respondents felt was not adequately covered, rather than the quality of the current reporting. In this regard, respondents called for broader coverage of more politically sensitive topics such as human rights and policing/security issues.
26. Some 93 percent of the Iraq respondents indicated that they consulted one or more major news sources on a regular basis, with the majority, 73 percent, indicating that they consulted BBC, Reuters and AFP. A majority of respondents indicated they were regular readers of the Iraq Crisis service, with 73 percent having read an IRIN article within the week and 43 percent that day. Further, some 82 percent indicated they read the dailies – a higher daily readership rate than any other IRIN service. Despite the fact that Iraq is one of the few IRIN countries regularly covered by major news services, 41 percent of respondents indicated that the Iraq service had raised an issue they were unaware of within the last week. The fact that both IRIN Iraq and mainstream news sources are regularly consulted by a significant majority of respondents confirms that IRIN Iraq is providing coverage not available through mainstream news sources, underlining its added value and key role as an information provider.
27. Some 73 percent of respondents said they had forwarded an Iraq report to another person - 23 percent had done so in the previous two weeks. Respondents indicated redistributing IRIN reports to an additional 11,000 readers. Using the multiplier rate, this suggests that the Iraq service has an extended readership of just over 195,000 in addition to those accessing Iraq articles through other web sites and the e-mail service.
28. Some 67 percent of respondents were members of the humanitarian community and 9 percent were drawn from media. Seventy-nine (79) percent of respondents said they used IRIN reports to keep-up-to date and 59 percent to alert them to issues in the field. A further 40 percent said they used IRIN as source material for their reports and briefs. Some 26 percent indicated that IRIN Iraq reporting saved them time and 17 percent said IRIN informed their decision-making. On average, 15 percent used IRIN reports in training material. Some 7 percent said they used IRIN reports in the preparation of press releases and press briefings. Only 5 percent said the Iraq reporting had no influence. This, combined with the high re-circulation of IRIN reporting, clearly underscores IRIN's strong influence with key decision-makers and humanitarian operatives and suggests a strong IRIN role in advocacy on behalf of the Iraqi people.
29. Respondents indicated the need for a major web page redesign for the Iraq services as well as the need for a broader promotional campaign.

Expansion of the IRIN Service Model

30. Expansion of the IRIN service was examined from three perspectives. In the first, respondents were asked to identify two regions not currently covered by IRIN in which an IRIN service model was most needed. The second explored expanding the existing coverage of the Central Asia service into one other country. And thirdly, the expansion of access to existing services through the provision of translation services aimed at increasing local populations' access to IRIN articles.

31. The majority, 51 percent, of respondents identified the Middle East as a priority area for expansion of the IRIN service. This was almost double the demand for other regions: North Africa, 27 percent, Latin America, 19 percent, the Caucasus, 14 percent, South America, 13 percent and the Balkans, 12 percent. Some 29 percent prioritised Turkey for expansion of the Central Asia service, followed by 21 percent for Azerbaijan, 17 percent for Georgia and 7 percent for Armenia.
32. Respondents aware of in-country needs called for wider linguistic access to IRIN reporting for local populations. Some 66 percent of respondents said that local populations would benefit from being able to read IRIN reports. Another 24 percent indicated they were not sure or did not know - only 6 percent responded in the negative.
33. When subscribers were asked to indicate which other languages IRIN Africa should be available in, the requests were evenly divided between French, Portuguese and Kiswahili – the continent’s dominant and unifying languages. The survey further indicated that provision of the IRIN Africa service in two major languages enabled greater access by non-French and non-English-speakers throughout the European continent.

PlusNews

34. Highlighting its unique position as an HIV/AIDS information service, 51 percent of respondents said IRIN/PlusNews¹ was their most important source of information on HIV/AIDS issues. The next most important source was UNAIDS with 16 percent and the Kaiser Foundation with 6 percent. Further, 78 percent said PlusNews provided information not available from other agencies and news services, confirming its effectiveness and added-value as an HIV/AIDS information service.
35. A majority of respondents, 97 percent, said they found PlusNews to be objective, with a further 86 percent stating that it provided the right coverage balance. Respondents indicated a strong overall approval rating for all PlusNews products, with 83 percent rating PlusNews reporting as good to excellent.
36. According to respondents, the weekly was the most popular PlusNews product: 37 percent indicated they read only the weekly. Within the weekly, the news round-up and links were the most widely read sections. As a high number of PlusNews respondents, 68 percent, were also subscribed to the IRIN Africa service, through which they would receive the PlusNews dailies but under the IRIN by-line, it was postulated that the daily readership was actually greater than indicated by the survey results. Few respondents, 28 percent, evaluated the PlusNews News Briefs, which suggested that they were the least read of all the PlusNews products. They are also the newest product and as an opt-in service may suffer from a lack of publicity to older subscribers.
37. The high rate of PlusNews/Africa cross subscriptions and the popularity of the weekly suggest that Africa subscribers may be subscribing to PlusNews specifically for the weekly as a complement to their general Africa subscription. As part of the redesign, IRIN should consider greater integration of PlusNews products into the general Africa subscription form. It should also continue to exist as a separate service.
38. Some 74 percent of respondents said they had forwarded a PlusNews report to another person - 25 percent had done so in the previous two weeks. Respondents indicated redistributing PlusNews to an additional 14,500 readers. Using the multiplier rate, this suggests that the PlusNews service has an extended readership of just over 330,000 in addition to those accessing PlusNews articles through other web sites and e-mail services, including the IRIN e-mail service which according to the multiplier rate is redistributed to over 3 million.
39. The PlusNews service had the highest number of humanitarian respondents, 77 percent, and the highest field representation, with 46 percent indicating they were based in a country covered by the service. Some 86 percent of respondents said they used PlusNews reports to keep-up-to-date and 53 percent to alert them to issues in the field. A further 53 percent said they used PlusNews as source material for their reports and briefs. Some 32 percent indicated that PlusNews reporting saved them time, 40 percent

¹ PlusNews ranked highest with 34 percent and IRIN second with 17 percent. As part of efforts to mainstream HIV/AIDS issues within the broader humanitarian community a significant number of PlusNews articles are also issued on the IRIN Africa service.

said it informed their decision-making and 20 percent used the reports in training – these were higher than the averages for all IRIN services. Some 7 percent said they used PlusNews in the preparation of press releases and press briefings. Only 1 percent said PlusNews reporting had no influence. This, combined with the high re-circulation of PlusNews reports, clearly underscores its strong influence within the community of decision-makers and humanitarian actors who focus on HIV/AIDS.

40. Survey respondents, and e-mail subscriber demographics, indicated a poor representation of francophone users. PlusNews in its current unilingual format is not reaching a significant portion of its potential audience. If PlusNews is to encompass the needs of all of sub-Saharan Africa, the service must be made available in French in order to ensure access to the francophone African community.

Web Redesign

41. Survey findings indicated the need for a substantive redesign not only in terms of the site's information architecture but also with a view to improving the graphics, presentation and layout. It was further noted that the quality and variety of photos also required improvement, which was identified as an editorial and supply/acquisition issue.
42. Web respondents were significantly more critical of overall coverage as compared to e-mail respondents. Given that the articles on the web service are the same as those distributed on the IRIN Africa service and 83 percent of web respondents claimed to read the Africa English service, the findings suggest a problem with the site design rather than the reporting itself. The problem may stem from a lack of awareness of how to access all reports. Not all stories are posted to the IRIN front or regional pages, hence some web users may be unaware that they are missing stories that are only posted to the individual country pages. This could lead to a perception that the service is too narrow. This possibility will need to be considered and further tested as part of the web site redesign.
43. While web respondents gave high ratings to web specials and the presentation on the web of the various report formats (dailies, specials, features...) in general, all other areas needed improvement. Survey results indicate that the current site design is not adequately promoting the newer IRIN services. The French, Radio, Iraq and PlusNews front pages all rated poorly. Significantly, 41 percent of web users, who in theory through navigation bars are confronted with a daily visual reminder of the other services, were also least aware of other services.
44. It was further noted that the current design of the front page favoured the promotion of the Africa service over the smaller services. The visibility of these services needs to be increased both in terms of their individual front pages but also in the promotion of their articles on the IRIN front page and through their inclusion in the IRIN RSS news feed. Some 41 percent said they would like to have the option of creating their own IRIN page for which they would select a news feed for only those countries that interest them.
45. Further, given that e-mail users indicated a significantly low use of the IRIN web site to access IRIN articles, efforts must be undertaken to ensure that e-mail subscribers are systematically and regularly informed of new products and services, notably those that are only offered through the web site.
46. Globally, 34 percent of respondents indicated that they were subscribed to at least one other IRIN e-mail service. Given the high level of cross subscriptions for some services, IRIN's web site redesign should explore the need for and feasibility of offering, in addition to the current services, a vehicle for subscribing to multiple services through one subscription. Moreover, a greater integration of PlusNews products into the Africa subscription should be examined, as well as its continuing to exist as a separate service.

Conclusion:

47. Users gave IRIN a high rating for all major factors by which a humanitarian information agency can be best assessed. The survey confirms that IRIN is fulfilling its mandate and remains highly responsive to the needs of the humanitarian community. Although IRIN is a UN service, its reporting is perceived to represent the broader humanitarian community and affected populations rather than any one organisation.

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48. The fact that both IRIN Iraq and mainstream news sources are regularly consulted by a significant majority of respondents confirms that IRIN is providing coverage not available through mainstream news sources, underlining its added value and key role as an information provider.
49. In addition to meeting key information needs, collective responses demonstrate that IRIN reporting has a strong influence on the discourse, behaviours and policy approaches of key decision-makers and humanitarian operatives and further implies a strong IRIN role in humanitarian advocacy.
50. Overall, the survey showed that IRIN users continued to have a very high regard for IRIN and placed a high value on its products and services. However, the IRIN editorial team needs to focus on improvements aimed at moving the users' perception of the reporting products from good to excellent.
51. According to findings, IRIN and its growing portfolio of products and services need to be more widely promoted to both current users and potential users alike.
52. The Iraq service should be continued and the feasibility of establishing an IRIN service in the Middle East fully examined.
53. Further, in accordance with respondents' calls for wider linguistic access to IRIN reporting on behalf of local populations, IRIN should be made available in languages offering the greatest accessibility to all – English, French, Portuguese and KiSwahili for the Africa service and Arabic for the Iraq service.
54. A substantive redesign both in terms of the site's information architecture but also in view of improving the visual design - graphics, presentation and layout - needs to be undertaken in the immediate future.

Part 1: Background and Introduction

Introduction:

1. The **Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)**, a project of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), seeks to strengthen access to timely, strategic and non-partisan information by all levels of society so as to enhance the capacity of the humanitarian community² to understand, prepare for, respond to, and avert emergencies. In so doing, it also assists local communities to participate in decision-making and supports efforts aimed at bringing about conflict resolution and reconciliation. Operationally, IRIN functions like a news service but with a unique mandate - to provide continuous coverage of ongoing, recurring and evolving humanitarian issues/crises in an accessible and readable format.
2. IRIN, which opened its first office in Nairobi, Kenya, in late 1995, was developed as a response to the 1994 Great Lakes crisis, the magnitude and complexity of which underscored the need for more effective information management in support of crisis mitigation and response. IRIN was thus established to provide accurate, timely and contextual information from a regional perspective to humanitarian workers in the field and decision makers at headquarters. Nine years on, IRIN provides coverage of 46 counties in sub-Saharan Africa and eight countries in Central Asia, and has extended its outreach to local and affected populations.
3. In early 2003, faced with an imminent war in Iraq, IRIN proposed the creation of a crisis-orientated humanitarian reporting and information service based on its expertise and proven services in Africa and Central Asia. Designed to meet the immediate need for information on the humanitarian crisis created by the war, the Iraq Crisis service was IRIN's first venture in responding to emergency coverage needs in a country outside its normal purview. Following the end of the war, the service was extended to mid-2004 based on a perceived need for continued humanitarian coverage by OCHA management and informal consultations with humanitarian agencies.
4. IRIN's overall readership is a composite of direct e-mail subscribers, IRINnews.org web visitors and secondary readers who access IRIN through other web sites or media services (radio, TV and print – both local and international). E-mail subscribers are considered to be most representative of IRIN's targeted audience, with some 64% working within the humanitarian community – 76% if academics, who often act as humanitarian policy advisors, are included. A further 7% are media sources that monitor IRIN for new developments and to remain abreast of ongoing crises. IRINnews.org web visitors, over half a million monthly, represent a more diverse audience. In addition to humanitarian operatives and the media, visitors include a significant number of diasporas and a growing number of in-country users³. Secondary readership continues to grow but is the most difficult to quantify and beyond the scope of this readership survey. However, general tracking of this phenomenon suggests that the number greatly exceeds the combined IRIN e-mail and IRINnews.org readerships.
5. To ensure that the quality and products of the IRIN services continue to meet the needs of the humanitarian community, IRIN undertakes an annual readership survey, the results of which are discussed at the annual IRIN mid-term meeting with a view to informing strategy decisions for the forthcoming year. Given that the results of the

² In this report the term 'humanitarian community' includes those who work for UN, NGO, donor and international organisations as well as academic institutions.

³ Although an exact breakdown of web-user demographics is impossible, informal feedback from web users and media tracking have provided some indications of user profiles.

independent 2003 evaluation⁴ had validated IRIN's previous survey findings and methodology, and for financial reasons, the 2004 survey was conducted in-house.

Purpose of the 2004 Evaluation

6. As with previous surveys, the purpose of the 2004 readership survey was to review the experience of IRIN's readership and provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and IRIN's constituency and targeted audience – the humanitarian community. In so doing, the survey sought to **obtain feedback on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and value-added impact of IRIN reporting and products, including its non-English services.**
7. The Iraq survey represents the first evaluation of this service one year after its inception. Survey questions were specifically designed to evaluate and solicit feedback from the readership on current reporting as well as the **continued need for an Iraq service.**
8. Under a 2004 ECHO funding agreement, IRIN undertook to examine **the feasibility of expanding its geographical coverage to other humanitarian crises.** The first step in this process was the identification of those areas in greatest need of an IRIN service model. Informal consultation with OCHA desk officers and members of the humanitarian community responsible for programmes in geographical regions not yet covered by IRIN indicated a near unanimous call for the establishment of an IRIN service for their respective regions. The challenge was to identify an informed but more impartial consultative group. Under the premise that IRIN's current readership not only has a firsthand understanding of the IRIN service model and represents a broad cross-section of the humanitarian community, IRIN queried its current subscriber base as to the region presenting the most pressing need for an IRIN news service. It was postulated that current readers, given that their geographical information needs were already being met by an IRIN service, would be more likely to respond based on their perception of global rather than personal need.
9. Due to a growth in the number of geographical regions covered by IRIN and the introduction of new services such as PlusNews, IRIN Radio and advocacy film productions, IRIN needs to implement **design changes to its web site** that will validate all the services and maximize information management for its users, as well as provide IRIN management with analytical and administrative tools. Results from the readership survey were designed to inform this process.
10. IRIN holds an **annual mid-term review** of which the readership survey is a key component, informing and guiding decision making for the forthcoming year.

Evaluation Method

11. As a result of the growing demand for its services and to ensure that IRIN continues to meet the evolving needs of the humanitarian community, IRIN has undertaken an annual readership evaluation since 2000. Prior to this, feedback was solicited through informal consultations and ad hoc readership surveys. Building on previous experiences, IRIN continually strives to improve the evaluation process. In this year's survey, IRIN focused on increasing the response rate, which in 2003 represented 10 percent of its e-mail readership, the minimum for ensuring statistical relevance. While 2003 marked IRIN's first endeavour to solicit feedback from its web readership, the online web survey received only 93 responses. Given the inherent problems in obtaining feedback from web visitors⁵, harnessing the views of IRIN web visitors posed a particular challenge. Achieving a 10-percent response rate from IRIN web users - 50,000 respondents - was considered unrealistic. In view of this, IRIN determined that a realistic goal would be to double the number of web respondents

⁴ Copies are available on the IRIN web site www.IRINnews.org.

⁵ This is a problem shared by all web sites and not particular to IRIN.

- from 2003. The results would be considered significant if 50% of the respondents were representative of IRIN's target audience – the humanitarian community.
12. Six, instead of one generic survey, were employed in 2004, marking IRIN's first attempt to harvest more individualised feedback on each of the five IRIN services and the web site. For the first time, and because of their growing numbers, French users were also included in the evaluation process. Five distinctive e-mail surveys tailored to each of the IRIN services were sent to the subscriber lists with a URL link to the web version of the survey, which was not publicly accessible without the URL. E-mail subscribers were encouraged to fill in the on-line version for the service they used most frequently. A sixth survey, targeting web visitors, was posted to the IRIN web site. To ensure that those without web access could participate in the evaluation, e-mail subscribers were given the option of filling in the questionnaire by e-mail. Some 1,227 survey responses, 27 percent, were returned by e-mail and had to be manually entered into the web-based survey form. Response levels for all surveys were monitored at regular intervals. Reminders that varied in nature and presentation were sent out at three different stages and the web survey was converted to a pop-up notice with the subsequent addition of an end-date notification. The services evaluated included the IRIN Africa English service, IRIN Africa French service, PlusNews HIV/AIDS Africa service, IRIN Central Asia service, IRIN Iraq Crisis service and the IRIN web site. Although questions pertaining to the IRIN Radio service were incorporated into the surveys, the radio service itself was not reviewed as part of this process. The 2004 evaluation was undertaken from 22 April to 9 May. (**Refer to Annex 2 for an example of the survey.**⁶)
 13. Criteria for measuring IRIN's success were again based on the results of the independent evaluation commissioned by OCHA in late 2002. The evaluation, which was completed in March 2003, reviewed the experience of the IRIN network and, based on extensive research and consultations, concluded, among other things, that an effective IRIN was one with:
 - a reputation for rigorous analysis and investigative reporting
 - a focused communications/media strategy in planning and operations, which demonstrably communicates with and educates strategic audiences and decision-makers
 - strong influence on the discourse, behaviours and policy approaches of key decision-makers or key groups associated with major IRIN advocacy initiatives
 - a high level of credibility and access to key stakeholders, whether international agencies or media or local actors, and success in mainstreaming key issues thereafter.
 14. Using the above criteria, questions were developed with a view to measuring the effectiveness of IRIN's reporting as a humanitarian news service by analysing user perceptions of IRIN products and services. **IRIN's impact and extended outreach** were also explored through questions that solicited information on how IRIN articles were utilised and redistributed by IRIN readers. Further, respondents were asked direct questions about the **need to continue the Iraq service** and what geographical area should be prioritised in terms of the possible **expansion of the IRIN service into a new geographical region**.
 15. In several of the questions respondents were given the option of answering 'other' and asked to clarify what they meant. Statistically, this option was rarely selected, indicating an appropriate selection of multiple-choice options. In most cases, responses to the 'other' sections could have fit within one of the multiple choice options offered in the question. Answers to this section will be utilised to improve the response options and clarity of questions for the 2005 survey.

⁶ Copies of all the surveys are available upon request.

16. It should be noted that in most instances percentages were calculated against the total number of respondents to the surveys, thus the results take into consideration the small percentage of non-responses to each question. Given that not all respondents use all products of a given IRIN service, an exception to this calculation was made in questions where respondents were asked to evaluate the services and products (dailies, in-depth reports, weeklies,...) they used. In these instances percentages were calculated against the number of respondents to the question itself.
17. With the exception of question one, all comments and text responses made by the respondents are available upon request. Question one asked respondents to provide their e-mail addresses if they wished to receive a copy of the survey results. The e-mail addresses have been withheld to protect their privacy. General commentary in terms of reporting issues and web specials has been shared with the appropriate regional editors and IRIN management to inform editorial coverage decisions.
18. As part of the ongoing improvement to the annual review process, IRIN will compile an in-house report on the evaluation process and survey questions in view of improving that of 2005.

Statistical Relevance of Results

19. The 2004 survey ran for 18 days and elicited a 16-percent response rate from e-mail subscribers and almost a five-fold increase in web responses over that of the previous year. Over 5,000 readers participated in the survey. All services had a response rate of 11 percent or more, ensuring the statistical relevance of the survey responses (refer to table: 2004 Survey Responses). Web responses represented 0.1 percent of IRIN's monthly visitors. Although the 500 plus responses did not represent 10 percent of the web users, the number of responses was considered a large enough base from which to draw inferences about IRIN's web users and has been included in the report. In comparison, the 2003 survey, which targeted only the English language services ran for 29 days and solicited 1,891 responses from e-mail subscribers, representing 10 percent of IRIN subscribers for those services surveyed, and 91 responses from web users. The strategies employed in administering the 2004 survey were successful in increasing the overall readership responses for both e-mail and web users.

2004 Survey Responses

IRIN Service	Users	Survey	%
Africa English	16,232	3,055	19%
Africa French	3,463	531	15%
Africa subtotal	19,695	3,586	18%
PlusNews Africa	2,372	281	12%
Central Asia	4,445	501	11%
Iraq	1,396	164	12%
sub-total	27,908	4,532	16%
Web*	N/A	525	476%
Total	27,908	5,057	N/A

* % indicates increase over 2003

20. Respondents were asked to indicate their organizational affiliation in order to determine if the responses could be viewed as representative of the IRIN e-mail subscriber base and target audience, the humanitarian community

Humanitarian Community

Service	Readers	Survey	Diff.
Africa Eng.	76%	70%	5%
Africa Fr.	71%	60%	10%
PlusNews	77%	77%	0%
C. Asia	78%	76%	2%
Iraq Crisis	77%	66%	11%
sub-total	76%	70%	6%
web	N/A	56%	N/A
Total	76%	68%	7%

(refer to Annex 1.a for detailed demographic tables of e-mail subscribers and survey respondents). In terms of individual groups, UN and government/donor⁷ survey respondents were slightly lower, while both media and academic respondents were slightly higher than the IRIN e-mail subscriber base. Of note was the 11 percent response rate from media respondents to the web survey as compared to the 7 percent average for both IRIN subscribers and e-mail survey respondents. This, combined with comments made by media respondents, suggests **a greater use by media of the IRIN web site in researching stories**. Some 70 percent of e-mail survey respondents and 76 percent of IRIN e-mail subscribers worked within the humanitarian community – a difference of 6 percent. Some 56 percent of web respondents indicated they were members of the humanitarian community, well over the established 50-percent target. Thus, both the e-mail and web results were considered to be of relevance to an evaluation of the IRIN services.

21. To ensure that field as well as headquarter perspectives and needs were captured in the evaluation, respondents were asked if they lived in a country covered by one of the IRIN services.

Respondents Based in Country Covered by IRIN Service

IRIN Service	Yes	No	No Rsp.
Africa Eng.	37%	62%	1%
Africa Fr.	42%	52%	6%
Africa subtotal	38%	61%	2%
PlusNews Africa	46%	51%	3%
Central Asia	33%	65%	2%
Iraq	28%	71%	1%
Web	38%	60%	2%
Total	37%	61%	2%

With the exception of the PlusNews service, in-country respondents to the surveys closely mirrored the IRIN subscriber base with 37 percent based in the field, only 5 percent less than IRIN's subscriber base. Some 46 percent of PlusNews respondents, compared to 56 percent for the e-mail subscribers - an acceptable 10 percent margin - claimed to live in a country covered by PlusNews reporting (refer to table: Respondents Based in Country Covered by IRIN Service)⁸.

22. Demographic information from the respondents indicated that they adequately reflected IRIN's subscriber base and target audience. Web respondents were more than double the projected target number and the percentage of humanitarian respondents was well within the margin set for statistical relevance.

Part 2: Findings

Effectiveness of IRIN Reporting

23. It is significant to note that 47 percent of respondents asked to receive a copy of the survey findings, indicating a high vested interest in IRIN by its readership.
24. In a multiple response question, respondents were asked to indicate which news sources they consulted on a regular basis for news on countries covered by IRIN. The vast majority consulted BBC and/or Reuters, with AFP showing an equally high rating for the Africa services (refer to Annex 1.b for detailed table). On average, some 75 percent of respondents (93 percent for Iraq and 89 percent for web respondents)

⁷ Actual government respondents were much higher as several respondents who selected 'other' indicated they worked for an embassy or government service.

⁸ It should be noted that the number of subscribers living in a country covered by PlusNews is greater than other IRIN services as it was designed to specifically target local populations and HIV/AIDS organisations and their reporting needs.

said they consulted one or more major news sources. Of these new sources, the three largest in the English and French languages - BBC, Reuters and AFP - were regularly consulted by 64 percent of the respondents. The prevalence was highest amongst Iraq and web users, with 73 and 80 percent respectively. Concurrently, 75 percent of respondents also indicated that they regularly read IRIN, with 75 percent having read an IRIN article within the week and 45 percent that day. **The fact that both IRIN and mainstream news sources are regularly consulted by a significant majority of respondents, implies that IRIN is providing coverage not available through mainstream news sources, which confirms that IRIN is meeting its objective - that of a value-added news source.** This is further supported by web tracking, which indicates that IRIN stories are frequently published concurrently with reports from mainstream press on numerous web sites. In addition, IRIN articles are a regular source of information for more specialised web sites and discussion lists focusing on issues such as access to water, human rights, food security and women, among many others.

Other Sources of On-line News

IRIN Service	BBC	Reuters	AFP	All*
Africa English	59%	23%	15%	66%
Africa French	31%	24%	48%	63%
Africa subtotal	55%	23%	20%	66%
Central Asia	61%	32%	16%	69%
Iraq	62%	43%	16%	73%
Web	71%	35%	23%	80%
Total	54%	25%	18%	64%

* Respondents consulting one of 3 - double counting eliminated.

25. Some 37 percent indicated that IRIN reporting had raised an issue they were unaware of that week. This, coupled with the high cross use of mainstream media sources, again underscores IRIN's relevance as a news source providing coverage not available elsewhere. Iraq showed the highest rating with 41 percent – despite the fact that Iraq is one of the few IRIN countries regularly covered by major news services.

Raised Issue

	Today	This Wk
Africa English	12%	40%
Africa French	8%	25%
Africa subtotal	11%	38%
PlusNews Africa	8%	30%
Central Asia	6%	31%
Iraq	14%	41%
Web	20%	37%
Total	12%	37%

26. In a similar question, PlusNews subscribers were asked to choose from a list of news services specialising in HIV/AIDS news and information – multiple selections were permitted (refer to Annex 1.e for detailed table). As respondents were already subscribed to the service, PlusNews was not an option. UNAIDS with 50 percent and IRIN with 45 percent ranked as the most frequently consulted sources for HIV/AIDS information. Respondents were then asked to identify their one most important source of information from the list.

Sources of HIV/AIDS Information

Source	PlusNews	IRIN	UNAIDS	Kaiser	Af-AIDS	AEGIS	Global Fd	World Bk
Most Important	34%	17%	16%	6%	4%	2%	1%	1%
Consulted	100%	45%	50%	17%	48%	12%	20%	20%

PlusNews ranked highest with 34 percent and IRIN second with 17 percent - **a total of 51 percent said IRIN/PlusNews⁹ was their most important source of information for HIV/AIDS issues.** The next most important source was UNAIDS with 16 percent and the Kaiser Foundation with 6 percent. In a subsequent question, some **78 percent said PlusNews provided information not available from other**

⁹ As part of efforts to mainstream HIV/AIDS issues within the broader humanitarian community a significant number of PlusNews articles are also issued on the IRIN Africa service.

agencies and news services, confirming its effectiveness and added value as an HIV/AIDS information service.

27. Respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of IRIN reporting as excellent, good, adequate, variable or poor. Less than 2 to 3 percent of respondents said the reporting was variable or poor and 11 percent rated it as adequate. **Globally, 85 percent of respondents found IRIN reporting to be good to excellent – 25 percent gave it a rating of excellent** (refer to Annex 1.d for detailed table).

28. Slightly lower than the average, some 75 percent of the Iraq respondents rated that service as good or better. However, **with 55 percent, Iraq had the highest rating of ‘excellent’ – twice as high as that of all other services.** When cross-referenced with the text responses, much of the criticism of the Iraq service

Quality of IRIN Reporting

IRIN Service	Ex/G	Adequate	V/P
Africa English	89%	8%	2%
Africa French	68%	21%	6%
Africa subtotal	86%	10%	2%
PlusNews Africa	83%	12%	2%
Central Asia	82%	14%	2%
Iraq	75%	19%	3%
Web	84%	10%	3%
Total	85%	11%	2%

Ex/G-excellent/good

V/P - variable/poor

was levelled at what respondents felt was not adequately covered, rather than the quality of the reporting. In addition to several requests for more reporting on humanitarian rights and policing/security issues, the following are a few examples of the comments received on areas in need of additional coverage:

- o coalition involvement in Iraq
- o more coverage of the controversial issues: blurring of lines between humanitarian / military / contractor roles; the compromises of humanitarian principles by many aid agencies in Iraq and the costs of these compromises.
- o how humanitarian issues are affected by politics.
- o impact of weapons and munitions on civilians and communities in conflict zones.
- o more in-depth information about the occupying forces
- o situation of the Iraqi people, prisoners, effects of depleted uranium
- o brilliant writing but needs more political analysis

29. Some 68 percent of the Africa French respondents rated the service as good to excellent. Although still positive, his lower rating as compared to the Africa English service is not unexpected and, given that the articles are the same, likely reflects the quantity rather than quality of service. In 2002, due to a lack of funding, the French service was reduced to less than 20 percent of the Africa English language output. In 2003, the continued lack of donor support for this service necessitated the termination of professional translating services in favour of sporadic in-house translations, staff time permitting. Ironically, **funding difficulties are juxtaposed against a rising demand for the French language service¹⁰ and a concerted call by survey respondents for IRIN to be accessible to local populations in languages offering the greatest accessibility to all – English, French, Portuguese and KiSwahili for the Africa service and Arabic for the Iraq service.**

30. To assess the credibility and editorial balance, respondents were asked to indicate if they found IRIN services objective or not objective. **Some 98 percent of respondents described IRIN reporting as objective¹¹.** Respondents were further asked to evaluate IRIN’s editorial approach by indicating if IRIN reporting struck the right balance, was too narrow or too broad. **Some 75 percent of those responding to the question said it struck the right balance.** A further 20 percent said the reporting was too narrow and needed to be expanded. Respondents to the Iraq,

¹⁰ The French e-mail service has experienced an annual growth of 20-30 percent since 2000.

¹¹ Percentage is based on the number of respondents that answered this question.

Africa French and web surveys had the highest number of respondents stating that coverage was too narrow. Reasons for this discrepancy vary. As indicated previously, the divergence between the two Africa services is attributed to the lower number of reports published on the French service compared to the English service. The slightly higher rating of 'too narrow' for the Iraq service is attributed to the demand for increased coverage of sensitive issues in Iraq, as discussed in paragraph 28.

Content of IRIN Reporting is...

IRIN Service	Objective	Not Obj.	Narrow	Right	Broad
Africa English	98%	2%	13%	82%	5%
Africa French	97%	3%	61%	36%	3%
Africa subtotal	98%	2%	21%	75%	5%
PlusNews Africa	97%	3%	8%	86%	7%
Central Asia	96%	4%	14%	82%	4%
Iraq	94%	6%	24%	74%	3%
Web	97%	3%	23%	62%	15%
Total	98%	2%	20%	75%	6%

Calculated against respondents to this question

31. Given that the articles on the web are the same as those distributed on the IRIN Africa, Central Asia and Iraq e-mail services, the lower rating for the web service was surprising. One reason for the difference may lie in the fact that fewer of the respondents are drawn from the humanitarian community, 56 percent compared to 70 percent, and thus have a different perception and expectation of IRIN reporting. Alternately, **it may also indicate a design problem with the web site.** As 83 percent of web respondents claimed to read the Africa English service, one would expect their ratings to parallel that of the Africa e-mail respondents. However, web respondents were 20 percent less likely to rate the service as striking the right balance than the Africa English e-mail respondents. Given that the lower rating for the French service correlates with the low report output for the service and not the quality of the articles, it raises the possibility that a parallel problem may exist for web users. The problem may be related to web users' lack of awareness of the organisation of the IRIN web site in terms of the posting of articles. That is, they may be unaware of the fact that not all stories are posted to the IRIN front or regional pages. Thus, some web users who access only those pages may be unaware that they are missing stories of interest to them, which are only posted to individual country pages. This would lead to the perception that the service was too narrow. This possibility will need to be considered and tested as part of the web site redesign.

32. In the 2003 evaluation, several of those interviewed indicated that IRIN's UN association raised concerns for them about its objectivity. Conversely, all said they found IRIN to be highly credible and objective. To ensure IRIN continued to maintain this reputation for objective reporting and impartiality, respondents were asked, in a multiple response question, to indicate whose views IRIN reporting represented. Choices included: the UN, the donor community, the broader humanitarian community, affected populations, had not thought about it / do not know and other. In general, most respondents made multiple selections within the first four choices, indicating that IRIN is perceived to represent a broad cross section of the humanitarian community rather than one agency. Further, several respondents who selected 'other' noted in the comment section that IRIN provided impartial and/or neutral reporting. **Globally, 61 percent of respondents felt the service represented the views of the broader humanitarian community and/or affected populations.** Only 12 percent said that IRIN represented the views

IRIN Represents...

IRIN Service	HC/Aff P.*	UN only
Africa English	63%	11%
Africa French	47%	23%
Africa subtotal	60%	13%
Central Asia	63%	11%
Iraq	68%	12%
Web	59%	12%
Total	61%	12%

** Humanitarian community / Affected Populations*

of just the UN. **Although a UN service, it is clear that IRIN reporting is succeeding in its mandate to represent the broader humanitarian community.**

33. Respondents were asked to evaluate the various types of IRIN reports – dailies, in-depth reports (focuses and special reports), interviews and, in a subsequent question, weeklies. Where appropriate respondents were also asked to evaluate the Asia Weekly News Wrap (a separate product from the weekly round-up) and the PlusNews Daily Brief. The number of respondents evaluating each product was considered indicative of the interest in each product (refer to table: Percentage of Respondents Evaluating Products). This should not be confused with an evaluation of the quality of the products, which is discussed in paragraph 38. The figures in the table can be extrapolated to say that some 72 percent of subscribers read the dailies, 69 percent the in-depth products, 68 percent the interviews and 74 percent at least one of the weeklies. Africa and Iraq were the two services in which subscribers were most likely to read most of the products. In general, after the weeklies, daily reports had the highest response rate, 72 percent. They are the most widely and regularly read IRIN product other than the weeklies. A supposition that concurs with informal consultation and feedback. In-depth products and interviews were fairly equal in terms of readership. Given that regional managers are more likely to read weekly round-ups

and desk officers the daily reports, less than 100 percent readership for each product is considered normal. However, survey results suggest a high readership for all IRIN products.

Percentage of Respondents Evaluating Products

IRIN Service	Daily	In-depth	Interview	Asia Wr.
Africa English	76%	73%	72%	N/A
Africa French	60%	51%	49%	N/A
Africa subtotal	73%	70%	68%	N/A
PlusNews Africa	55%	52%	50%	N/A
Central Asia	69%	66%	65%	48%
Iraq	82%	77%	74%	N/A
Web	74%	71%	71%	14%
Total*	72%	69%	68%	31%

* Asia Wrap total is for Asia and Web respondents.

34. It should be noted that of the 74 percent who read the weeklies, 45 percent said they were regular readers and 30 percent periodic readers (refer to table: Respondents Reading Weeklies). The weekly was designed to meet the needs of regional managers faced with information overload. They further offer a regional perspective to those who may only read a limited country selection on a daily basis. What is interesting is the high number of readers who read both the dailies and weeklies. Because the weekly is automatically included as part of a subscription and the subscription form must be revisited to remove the option, the actual readership as measured by demand had been difficult to ascertain.

However, the result of the survey suggests a high readership and, as discussed in paragraph 40, a high approval rating for this product.

Respondents Reading Weeklies

IRIN Service	Regular	Periodic	Total
Africa English	48%	29%	77%
Africa French	40%	32%	73%
Africa subtotal	47%	29%	76%
PlusNews Africa	47%	24%	72%
Central Asia	33%	35%	67%
Iraq	33%	24%	57%
Total	45%	30%	74%

35. It should be noted that the question did not ask respondents if they read the weekly for the service they were evaluating, hence the 72 percent for PlusNews cannot be assumed to represent just the PlusNews weekly readership, given the fact that a high percentage of PlusNews readers indicated they used the Africa service as well.

36. Of note is that some 82 percent of the Iraq respondents evaluated the daily reports, significantly more than any other service, which indicates a higher-than-average readership rate for these daily reports. This can be attributed to the fact that Iraq is a crisis service and, as the survey findings confirm, the service provides reporting not available elsewhere.

37. Some 72 percent of PlusNews respondents evaluated the weekly, making it the most popular PlusNews product followed by daily reports. With the exception of the PlusNews weekly, the number of PlusNews respondents who evaluated the report formats was lower than any other service (55 percent for dailies, 52 percent for in-depth reports, 50 percent for interviews, 72 percent for weeklies and 28 percent for the News Brief). However, 37 percent of respondents said they only read the PlusNews weekly, significantly higher than any other service. Moreover, it should be noted that there were a high number of PlusNews respondents, 68 percent, who indicated that they were also subscribed to the IRIN Africa service through which they would receive PlusNews dailies but under the IRIN by-line. Thus, readership levels for PlusNews daily reports are in fact greater than indicated by the survey results. Few PlusNews respondents, 28 percent, evaluated the PlusNews News Briefs, suggesting they are the least read of all the PlusNews products. They are also the newest product and as an opt-in service may suffer from a lack of publicity to older subscribers, nor are they immediately visible as a distinctive product on the web site. The high rate of cross subscriptions and the popularity of the weekly suggests that Africa subscribers may be subscribing to PlusNews specifically for the weekly as a complement to their general Africa subscription. As part of the redesign IRIN should consider greater integration of the PlusNews weekly and daily News Briefs into the Africa e-mail service. This would not circumvent the continued need for a separate PlusNews service.

Respondents Reading Just Weekly

IRIN Service	%
Africa English	7%
Africa French	28%
Africa subtotal	11%
PlusNews Africa	37%
Central Asia	24%
Iraq	12%
Web	19%
Total	14%

38. The Asia News Wrap had a comparatively lower readership rate of 48 percent, but as indicated in paragraph 38, a high satisfaction rating, with 78 percent of readers finding it good or excellent. As it is not indicated as a separate service either on the subscription form or the Asia web page and is sent out to all subscribers, the low readership rate suggests the need for a review of its mass distribution. For 52 percent of subscribers, the fact that they automatically receive this product, which they do not read, is likely adding to information overload. **As part of the web redesign subscription to the Asia News Wrap should be made optional.**

39. Globally, 87 percent of respondents rated the daily reports as good or excellent, while the corresponding percentages for the in-depth reports and interviews were 79 and 57 respectively (refer to Annex 1.e for detailed tables). Some 48 percent of Asia subscribers and 14 percent of web users read the Asia Weekly News Wrap, with 76 percent rating it as good or excellent. Overall, with the exception of the interviews, **respondents' gave a strong overall approval rating to IRIN products.**

Combined Excellent & Good Rating by Product

IRIN Service	Daily	In-depth	Interview	Asia Wrap	Plus Brief
Africa English	89%	81%	58%	N/A	N/A
Africa French	75%	57%	46%	N/A	N/A
Africa subtotal	88%	78%	57%	N/A	N/A
PlusNews Africa	86%	80%	60%	N/A	75%
Central Asia	83%	83%	60%	78%	N/A
Iraq	78%	76%	56%	N/A	N/A
Web	87%	80%	57%	71%	N/A
Total	87%	79%	57%	76%	75%

* Asia Wrap total is for Asia and Web respondents.

40. It should be noted that, with the exception of the Iraq service, the majority -around 60 percent- of those who rated the products good or excellent found them to be good (refer to Annex 1.e for detailed tables). Some 55 percent of those rating the overall quality of the Iraq service said it was excellent. While good, **the results also indicate a margin for improvement and underscore the need for regular editorial feedback in view of improving the report products.**
41. As in previous years, interviews tended to be the least appreciated of the three main types of report products. In part, the very nature of the question-and-answer interview is itself problematic. In an interview write-up, IRIN reporters have less control over style, length and organisation of information. Hence the nature of an interview often results in an article that is lengthier and less direct, which may explain in part the comparatively lower rating. However, the interview serves a vital role in that it allows the presentation of more controversial opinions while maintaining IRIN's neutrality, and as a recent media study indicated, provides needed quotes for mainstream journalists to use in the preparation of their own articles.¹² Media tracking indicates that quotes in IRIN often appear in other media articles. **Given the fact that, for reasons mentioned above, interviews may be less readable than other IRIN products, the key lies in maximising their advantage while avoiding their overuse.**
42. When asked what type of reporting respondents would like to see more of, 45 percent said they wanted more in-depth reports and 41 percent more background reporting. With the exception of the French and web services, fewer than 20 percent wanted more daily reporting and fewer than 13 percent wanted more interviews. The high level of satisfaction indicated for overall IRIN reporting and individual products, combined with the low demand for more dailies and interviews, suggests that IRIN has achieved the right editorial balance between coverage needs and product output. The higher demand for more daily reporting indicated by French and web service respondents has been dealt with in paragraphs 28 and 29 above. Daily output for most services, except French, can thus be said to be meeting the perceived requirements. **Editorial coverage for 2004 should focus on increasing more in-depth reporting products.**

More Reporting Requested

IRIN Service	Daily	Indepth	Interview	Bkground	Other*	No Rsp
Africa English	16%	45%	12%	42%	3%	24%
Africa French	38%	40%	15%	39%	1%	22%
Africa subtotal	19%	44%	13%	42%	2%	24%
PlusNews Africa	8%	40%	9%	33%	4%	31%
Central Asia	18%	46%	12%	45%	2%	24%
Iraq	16%	62%	16%	38%	3%	13%
Web	31%	48%	13%	39%	3%	17%
Total	20%	45%	13%	41%	3%	23%

43. Respondents were asked to rate the weeklies. With 86 percent of respondents rating them as good to excellent, the weeklies had a comparable rating to the daily report product. However, as with the daily, the majority, 62 percent, found them to be good and 23 percent excellent, indicating a margin for improvement. **Overall, the result of the survey suggests a high readership rate and approval rating for the weeklies.**

¹² *Towards a New Understanding: Journalists & Humanitarian Relief Coverage* © 2004 Fritz Institute

Weekly Round-up Ratings

IRIN Service	Excellent	Good	Ex/Good	Adequate	Not Inform.
IRIN-CEA	23%	65%	89%	11%	1%
IRIN-WA	24%	62%	85%	14%	1%
IRIN-SA	25%	61%	86%	14%	1%
English Total	24%	63%	87%	12%	1%
French CEA	18%	58%	77%	22%	1%
French WA	15%	52%	67%	32%	1%
French Total	17%	56%	73%	26%	1%
Africa subtotal	24%	62%	86%	13%	1%
Central Asia	15%	68%	83%	15%	1%
Iraq	28%	58%	87%	13%	0%
Total	23%	62%	86%	13%	1%

* percentage calculated against respondents who commented on each section

44. When asked which format would best suit their needs for the weekly round-ups, 53 percent indicated that the current format was satisfactory. A further 26 percent indicated they would like to see a synthesis of the main regional events. It

Weekly Format Preference

IRIN Service	Current	Summ.	Synthesis
Africa English	52%	21%	26%
Africa French	50%	22%	28%
Africa subtotal	52%	21%	26%
Central Asia	64%	13%	23%
Iraq	52%	16%	30%
Total	53%	20%	26%

should be noted that more respondents answered this question than those who actually indicated that they read the weekly, suggesting a greater possible readership if a synthesis option were offered. However, the time required to create weekly syntheses would have to be weighed against their added value given that 53 percent are happy with the current format.

45. In the PlusNews survey, the number of respondents evaluating each section was also seen to provide an indication of readership interest in the various sections¹³.

PlusNews Weekly Sections*

PlusNews	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform	Rsp to Q.
News round-up	26%	63%	90%	10%	0%	50%
Links	32%	61%	93%	7%	0%	40%
Conferences	16%	55%	71%	28%	1%	30%
Jobs	18%	48%	66%	28%	6%	22%

Ex/G - Excellent & good

* as % of those who commented

Some 50 percent of PlusNews survey respondents read the news round-up section, 40 percent the links, 30 percent the conferences and 22 percent the jobs section. Of those who claimed to read each section, over 90 percent rated the news round-ups and links sections as good or excellent. Although read by a more limited audience, of these 71 percent rated the conference section and 88 percent the links section as good or excellent. Again the majority of respondents predominantly rated the sections as good, rather than excellent, indicating some room for improvement.

¹³ Percentages were calculated against those evaluating each section as opposed to the total number of respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate when they had last read an IRIN report. The results indicate that 75 percent of respondents had read a report that week, with 45 percent indicating that they had read one that day. This suggests a regular IRIN readership and that IRIN is continuing to meet reporting needs not available elsewhere. (refer to Annex 1.f for detailed table).

Last Read a Report

IRIN Service	Today	This Wk	Total
Africa English	51%	31%	82%
Africa French	19%	27%	46%
Africa subtotal	46%	30%	77%
PlusNews Africa	32%	40%	72%
Central Asia	33%	33%	66%
Iraq	43%	30%	73%
Web	58%	20%	78%
Total	45%	30%	75%

Impact & Extended Outreach

46. Some 40 percent of all respondents said they had forwarded an IRIN report to someone within the previous two weeks. Over 70 percent said they had forwarded an IRIN report at some point. Assuming that most people do not re-circulate an article or report unless it has added value or raises a unique issue, **the high rate of re-circulation of IRIN products underscores its added value as a news service.**

Last Forwarded a Report

IRIN Service	Today	This Wk	Last Wk	Subtotal	2 Wks+	Forwards
Africa English	7%	16%	19%	42%	35%	78%
Africa French	5%	13%	13%	31%	34%	65%
Africa subtotal	7%	15%	18%	41%	35%	76%
PlusNews Africa	6%	15%	25%	45%	30%	74%
Central Asia	7%	14%	19%	40%	33%	73%
Iraq	10%	20%	17%	47%	26%	73%
Web	8%	11%	15%	34%	23%	57%
Total	7%	15%	18%	40%	33%	73%

47. Some 29 percent of respondents said they or their agencies re-distributed IRIN reports or extracts of reports via in-house and public e-mail lists/newsletters or reprinted them in hard-copy publications (refer to Annex 1.g for detailed table).

Respondents who were aware of their circulation numbers indicated that IRIN was re-distributed via them or their agency to over 700,000 additional readers. This confirms that IRIN's readership extends well beyond its direct e-mail subscriber base and web site visitors. It further indicates a multiplier rate of 140¹⁴. Hence, **IRIN's extended readership is estimated at just under 4 million.**

Re-distribution of IRIN

IRIN Service	#	Multiplier*
Africa English	468,330	2,272,480
Africa French	122,560	484,820
Africa subtotal	590,890	2,757,300
PlusNews Africa	14,538	332,080
Central Asia	20,684	622,300
Iraq	10,931	195,440
Web	70,276	N/A
Total	707,319	3,907,120

* Multiplier as applied to subscriber numbers

48. In a multiple-response question, respondents were asked to indicate how they or their organisation used IRIN reports. Responses indicated that IRIN is regularly used as

¹⁴ Some 500,000 respondents claim to distribute to 700,000 readers, resulting in a multiplier rate of 140 per respondent (700,000/500=140). This figure is then applied against subscriber numbers as a multiplier rate (27,908x140=3,907,120). Further, IRIN has also received confirmation from various sources about the extended distribution, one Southern Africa service alone claims to reach a million readers.

source material by 42 percent of respondents in the preparation of internal reports and by 28 percent in external reports. On average 12 percent used IRIN reports in training material. Some 4 and 6 percent said they used IRIN reports in the preparation of press releases and press briefings respectively. **The use of IRIN reports as source material in official documents, media briefings and training suggests a high credibility rating and confirms an extended influence well beyond is direct readership.**

How IRIN Reports Are Utilised

IRIN Service	Int. Rpts	Ext. Rpts	Reprint	Press Rel.	Media Bf	Training
Africa English	44%	30%	4%	6%	7%	12%
Africa French	33%	16%	2%	5%	12%	14%
Africa subtotal	43%	28%	3%	6%	7%	12%
PlusNews Africa	40%	25%	2%	4%	5%	20%
Central Asia	43%	27%	5%	7%	9%	10%
Iraq	44%	25%	5%	7%	7%	15%
Web	37%	31%	4%	7%	8%	10%
Total	42%	28%	4%	6%	7%	12%

Media Bf - Media Brief

49. Globally, 89 percent of the survey respondents indicated that IRIN reports enhanced or influenced their work in some aspect, confirming IRIN’s niche as a key information provider and its strong role in advocacy. Of these, 84 percent said they used IRIN reports to keep up to date and 57 percent to alert them to issues in the field. Given the high cross-use of media sources like BBC, Reuters and AFP, this again implies that IRIN provides reporting not available through mainstream media sources. A further 46 percent said they used IRIN as source material for their reports and briefs. Some 29 percent indicated that IRIN reporting saved them time and 25 percent said IRIN informed their decision-making. **This combined with the high re-circulation of IRIN reporting clearly underscores IRIN’s strong influence on the discourse, behaviours and policy approaches of key decision-makers and humanitarian operatives and suggests a strong IRIN role in advocacy.**

Enhance or Influence Work

IRIN Service	Up-to-date	Source	Saves time	Att Issue	Decisions	Little/No
Africa English	87%	49%	32%	62%	21%	2%
Africa French	79%	27%	21%	40%	19%	5%
Africa subtotal	86%	45%	30%	59%	20%	2%
PlusNews Africa	86%	53%	32%	49%	40%	1%
Central Asia	79%	48%	25%	51%	31%	2%
Iraq	79%	40%	26%	59%	17%	5%
Web	74%	49%	24%	49%	21%	3%
Total	84%	46%	29%	57%	23%	2%

Expansion/Coverage Needs

50. A near unanimous 93 percent of Iraq respondents said there was a continued need for the IRIN Iraq Crisis coverage service. Only 2 percent said no and 5 percent were unsure or did not comment.

51. Expansion of the IRIN service was looked at from three perspectives. In the first, respondents were asked to identify two regions not currently covered by IRIN in which an IRIN service model was most needed. The second explored expanding the existing coverage of the Central Asia service into one other country. And thirdly, the expansion of access to existing services through the provision of translation services aimed at increasing access to IRIN articles by local populations.

52. Respondents were asked to select two geographical regions to be prioritised in terms of the area most in need of an IRIN service model. **The largest response favoured the Middle East, with 51 percent of respondents identifying it as a priority area.** This was almost double the demand for other regions: North Africa, 27 percent, Latin America, 19 percent, The Caucasus, 14 percent, South America, 13 percent and the Balkans, 12 percent.

Priority Region for IRIN Reporting

IRIN Service	ME	N. Africa	L. Amer.	Asia-Pac.	Caucasus	S Amer.	Balkans
Africa English	51%	30%	20%	17%	11%	13%	11%
Africa French	47%	28%	18%	11%	10%	20%	11%
Africa subtotal	50%	30%	20%	16%	10%	14%	11%
Central Asia	55%	15%	14%	25%	34%	8%	16%
Iraq	66%	17%	15%	18%	26%	8%	17%
Total	51%	27%	19%	17%	14%	13%	12%

53. Respondents were asked to indicate which country IRIN should prioritise if the IRIN Central Asia service were to expand into one other country. **Some 29 percent prioritised Turkey for expansion of the Asia service,** followed by 21 percent for Azerbaijan, 17 percent for Georgia and 7 percent for Armenia.
54. A significant number of respondents called for wider linguistic access to IRIN reporting on behalf of local populations. **Some 66 percent said that local populations would benefit from being able to read IRIN reports, 24 percent indicated they were not sure or did not know and only 6 percent responded in the negative** (refer to Annex table 1.i). Significantly, 73 percent of respondents to the Iraq survey called for IRIN reporting to be made available in Arabic, reflecting a generalised lack of local media services in Iraq itself. Immediately following the war, hundreds of newspapers were established in Iraq, but over the past 6 months their numbers have dwindled significantly due primarily to funding and security constraints. The leading English-language paper the *Iraqi Daily*, which reprinted IRIN articles, suspended its print edition following repeated threats against the editor, forcing him to leave the country. The online version of the paper is still in operation and continues to carry IRIN articles. According to one UN respondent,

“[It] might be an idea to have IRIN translated in Arabic and actually distribute it amongst the Iraqi media/population, in order for them to better understand what is happening all over Iraq and what support they are getting from the international/UN community. It might help in decreasing the anti-UN feeling (double standards, UN=US) and increase awareness about what else is done for the people.”

55. When asked to indicate which other languages IRIN Africa should be available in, the requests were evenly divided among the dominant and unifying African languages – French, Portuguese and KiSwahili. This demand did not reflect respondents’ linguistic affiliations or needs, as most non-English respondents claimed to be from countries such as Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Spain and Italy. **This again is an indication of respondents’ support for IRIN to be made available in languages accessible to local populations.**

Respondents' First Language

IRIN Service	English	French
Africa English	56%	9%
Africa French	3%	60%
Africa subtotal	48%	16%
PlusNews Africa	63%	5%
Central Asia	51%	7%
Iraq	51%	7%
Web	M	M
Total	44%	13%

56. Respondents were asked to identify their first language. Some 49 percent of the Iraq and Asia readers and 44 percent of Africa English readers do not speak English as a first language. The next largest linguistic grouping was French, accounting for 13

percent of the respondents. The fact that 54 percent of respondents are non-English speakers confirms that IRIN is reaching a broad cross section of the humanitarian community globally. Further, it underscores the need for continued editorial vigilance in support of a clear and direct writing style. The survey further indicated that provision of the IRIN Africa service in two major languages enabled greater access by non-French and non-English speakers – notably German, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, Italian and Spanish speakers. Iraq was the only service with Arabic speakers and Central Asia the only service with a Russian-speaking respondent.

57. Some 63 percent of PlusNews subscribers identified themselves as English speakers. The actual figure was likely even higher as several responses in the 'Other' section indicated an African language as their first language, while also identifying English as a primary language. Only 7 percent of respondents indicated French as their primary language. Given that the PlusNews service is currently provided in English only, this prevalence is not surprising. Moreover, linguistically fewer members of PlusNews' targeted population in francophone Africa are likely to speak English as compared to users of the general IRIN service. Hence, it was not surprising that survey respondents as well as e-mail subscriber demographics indicated a poor representation of francophone users. **PlusNews in its current unilingual format is not reaching a significant portion of its potential audience. If PlusNews is to meet the needs of all of sub-Saharan Africa, the service must be made available in French in order to ensure access to the francophone Africa community.**

Awareness of IRIN

58. In responses to questions that assessed respondents' general awareness of other IRIN services and products, it was evident that IRIN and its growing portfolio of products and services needed to be more widely promoted to current users and potential users alike.
59. Comparatively, most e-mail and web respondents indicated a greater awareness of the Africa services, which is the largest and oldest of the services and, in 1998, benefited from a small but targeted promotional campaign.

60. Subscribers were given a list of IRIN services and asked if they were aware of all, some or none of these services. Some 18 percent said they were not aware of the other services at all. A further 54 percent said they were aware of only some of the services. Only 25

Subscribers Aware of Other IRIN Services

IRIN Service	All	Some	None
Africa English	25%	57%	16%
Africa French	17%	62%	16%
Africa subtotal	24%	58%	16%
PlusNews Africa	32%	53%	11%
Central Asia	32%	50%	15%
Iraq	28%	53%	16%
Web	20%	38%	41%
Total	25%	54%	18%

percent of subscribers said they were aware of all the IRIN services. Further, in the question asking respondents to identify other geographical regions into which IRIN should expand, comments made under 'Other' included requests for countries already covered by an existing service – like Africa and Central Asian countries. **These results underscore the need for a campaign to promote IRIN's services to its current subscriber base.**

61. The majority of respondents, 51 percent, said they had learned about IRIN through a colleague or friend. The findings indicate that IRIN's readership growth is

Learned About the IRIN Services Via...

IRIN Service	Colleague	Web Srch	Link	Report
Africa English	57%	14%	10%	12%
Africa French	44%	21%	10%	13%
Africa subtotal	55%	15%	10%	12%
PlusNews Africa	40%	18%	20%	15%
Central Asia	50%	16%	11%	15%
Iraq	46%	15%	15%	13%
Web	34%	29%	21%	10%
Total	51%	17%	12%	12%

primarily a result of ad hoc word-of-mouth promotion – given the current readership numbers this is high testimony to the relevance and quality of the IRIN services but

Are Your Work Colleagues Aware of IRIN?

IRIN Service	Yes	No	Unknown
Africa English	60%	18%	14%
Africa French	44%	27%	17%
Africa subtotal	57%	19%	15%
PlusNews Africa	57%	20%	17%
Central Asia	55%	21%	16%
Iraq	49%	22%	23%
Web	48%	21%	20%
Total	56%	20%	16%

does not ensure that potential new users will be informed about the service. Indeed, in a subsequent question some 20 percent said that their colleagues were generally not

aware of IRIN services and a further 16 percent said they were unaware of their colleagues' knowledge of IRIN¹⁵. **This further underscores the need for IRIN to dedicate resources to a promotional campaign.**

62. Some 17 percent of respondents said they had found IRIN through a web search, 12 percent by following a link from another site and a further 12 percent from a report quoting/referencing IRIN. Given today's growing use of online search engines this figure seems relatively low. Parallel monitoring of major search engines, Google and AltaVista, in April 2004 showed that while the IRIN Africa service frequently shows up in news searches, articles from the Africa French, PlusNews, Central Asia and the Iraq services were less likely to appear. This can be attributed to the fact that most search engine news-trawlers only harvest news from the front page of most web sites. Database-driven sites like IRIN, in which all articles are not posted to the main front page, often have only a fraction of their news harvested. Because the Africa service is significantly larger than the other services, 80 to 90 percent of the articles posted to IRIN's front page are from the African service. The solution employed by more and more news services is the creation and promotion of Really Simple Syndication (RSS) news feeds. IRIN has only recently created a RSS news feed for its articles and at present this only encompasses the Africa English and Asia services. **IRIN needs to prioritise the completion of the RSS news feed and promote the service to search engines and news aggregator services like Moreover and News World, which are currently only picking up a fraction of IRIN articles.**

63. The number of respondents who followed a links from another site or from reports quoting IRIN underscores the need for **IRIN to remain vigilant about copyright**, insisting IRIN is clearly credited. However, it is recognised that such vigilance requires resources to track and promote this type of use.

64. Comments noted under 'other' responses indicated that the most frequent other source of referral were IRIN staff and stringers actively engaged in promoting an awareness of IRIN. **IRIN should continue to encourage and, where feasible,**

¹⁵ Respondents were given the option of saying the IRIN was not relevant to their colleagues.

promote this positive trend, including the possible payment of IRIN stringers for limited in-country promotional activities.

65. IRIN respondents were asked if they knew IRIN permitted the reprinting/reposting of IRIN articles and photos free-of-charge. Well over 50 percent said they did not. Although IRIN is reposted extensively throughout the web, few respondents said they or their agencies posted IRIN articles on their web sites. Again this underscores the need for a promotional/information campaign to address this lack of awareness in view of increasing IRIN's extended readership but also in the promotion of its advocacy products.

IRIN Service & Web Redesign

66. Survey findings indicated the need for a substantive redesign in terms of information architecture and web site graphics, presentation and layout.

67. To ascertain users' perception of the site, IRIN web users were asked to rate different aspects of the IRIN web site using a scoring of 1 to 10 with the mid-point, 5, representing a satisfactory rating¹⁶. Globally, only 7 percent of those who evaluated the web site gave it a rating of 4 or less. Some 75 percent gave it a rating of 6 or better and 64 percent 7 or better. While this rating is considered good, it leaves a substantive margin for improving the site's design and visual presentation.

Web Site Preception Rating*

	4 or less	5	6	7	8	9	10
Speed	5%	17%	9%	18%	24%	10%	19%
Ease	7%	13%	8%	19%	25%	14%	15%
Clarity	4%	14%	10%	12%	27%	15%	18%
Attractiveness	9%	21%	16%	16%	22%	7%	9%
Quality	11%	31%	15%	16%	22%	6%	9%
Effectiveness	8%	16%	12%	19%	23%	11%	10%
Total	7%	17%	11%	17%	24%	10%	13%

* Calculated as a percentage of responses to question.

In descending order, the following percentages of respondents gave a rating of 7 or better (70 percent) for each aspect being evaluated:

- o 72 percent for clarity of presentation,
- o 70 percent for speed at which articles/news are accessed,
- o 63 percent for ease of navigation between articles and effectiveness (speed) of search engine,
- o 54 percent for the attractiveness of the graphics, and
- o 53 percent for quality and variety of photos used to highlight stories.

Generally, all areas needed improvement, but the area that requires the greatest attention in the revamp is the attractiveness of the graphics. The quality and variety of photos also requires improvement, which is more an editorial and supply/acquisition issue.

68. Using the same scoring system as in the previous question, respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of various services contained within the IRIN website.

Globally, only 11 percent of those who evaluated the web services gave them a rating of 4 or less. Some 75 percent gave them a rating of 6 or better and 65 percent 7 or better. While good, this also indicates a substantive margin for improvement. In

¹⁶ Results were calculated against the number of respondents per section.

descending order, the following percentages of respondents gave a rating of 7 or better (70 percent) for each aspect being evaluated:

- 73 percent for Web Special Reports
- 70 percent for the News Service
- 71 percent for Special Reports
- 64 percent for Features & Interviews
- 64 percent for IRIN Plus News
- 55 percent for Iraq News
- 39 for IRIN Radio
- 38 percent for the French Service

Web Site Rating for Products and Services*

Rating	4 or less	5	6	7	8	9	10
News Service	10%	10%	10%	16%	26%	14%	13%
Features + Interviews	9%	15%	12%	20%	23%	13%	8%
Special Reports	8%	12%	9%	17%	31%	14%	8%
Web Special Reports	10%	10%	7%	13%	36%	16%	8%
Iraq News	14%	20%	12%	16%	20%	8%	10%
IRIN Radio	25%	32%	3%	15%	12%	8%	3%
French Service	23%	22%	17%	7%	13%	7%	11%
IRIN Plus News	11%	12%	13%	11%	28%	12%	13%
Total	11%	14%	10%	16%	27%	13%	10%

Overall, the highest ratings went to web specials and presentation of the various report formats (dailies, specials, features...) on the web. The two areas in greatest need of attention are IRIN Radio and the IRIN French service, followed by the Iraq and PlusNews services. These were all services added in recent years.

69. **The survey found that 41 percent of web users, who, in theory, are confronted through navigation bars with a daily visual reminder of all the services, were least aware of other IRIN services.** This suggests that the current site design is not adequately promoting all IRIN services – notably the newer ones. Further, given that e-mail users indicated a low use of the IRIN web site to access IRIN articles, efforts must be undertaken to ensure that e-mail subscribers are systematically and regularly informed of new products and services. Ways of informing subscribers about new services without overloading them should be explored as part of the web site redesign. One such option would be the creation of a bi-annual IRIN information e-mail that provides a summary of all services as well as personal details of the subscribers' current subscription profile.
70. Globally, 34 percent of respondents indicated that they were subscribed to at least one other IRIN e-mail service. The lowest rate of multiple subscriptions, 21 percent, was with Africa English respondents. Conversely, respondents to the other services indicated that a significant percentage of their numbers were also subscribed to the English Africa service. PlusNews and Africa French respondents, with some 68 and 53 percent, had the highest subscription crossovers. Given that less than 20 percent of IRIN's output is currently offered in French, this is not surprising. The high cross subscription rate between IRIN and PlusNews is also not surprising, as IRIN is one of the primary news providers for Africa. Survey results also suggest that a significant number of Africa subscribers are accessing the PlusNews weekly as a complement to their Africa subscription. While some crossover in interest was expected between the Asia and Iraq services, of note is that 45 percent of Iraq subscribers claimed to be subscribed to the Africa English service as well. One reason for this high crossover incidence may be linked in part to the fact that most of the non-Africa services have not been extensively promoted except via the existing IRIN Africa services.

Respondent Subscribed to Other IRIN Services

IRIN Service	Africa Eg.	Africa Fr.	PlusNews	Asia	Iraq	Other*
Africa English	N/A	4%	10%	8%	4%	21%
Africa French	53%	N/A	5%	4%	3%	56%
Africa subtotal	8%	3%	9%	7%	4%	26%
PlusNews Africa	68%	4%	N/A	11%	2%	70%
Central Asia	34%	3%	6%	N/A	14%	41%
Iraq	45%	5%	5%	41%	N/A	57%
Web	45%	6%	8%	6%	6%	52%
Total	19%	4%	8%	8%	5%	34%

**Respondents taking other IRIN services in addition to one surveyed.*

Given the high level of cross subscriptions for some services, **IRIN's web site redesign should explore the need for and feasibility of offering, in addition to the current services, a vehicle for subscribing to multiple services through one subscription.** Currently, subscribers have to subscribe to each service separately. To further investigate the need for an "All IRIN Subscription" the number of subscribers taking all IRIN output for each service should be investigated. Moreover, **greater integration of PlusNews products into the Africa subscription should be examined.** It should also continue to exist as a separate service.

71. **E-mail and web users remain two distinctive user groups with little crossover in how they access IRIN reporting.** When asked how they generally access IRIN articles, 87 percent of e-mail subscribers showed a high dependence on the e-mail service and 69 percent of web users showed a slightly lower but corresponding dependence on web access. Only limited cross-usage was indicated (refer to table: Generally Access IRIN Reporting Via...). This has implications for both a potential redesign of the IRIN web site and for IRIN products that are currently only available on the web site – web specials, multi-media productions, downloadable pdf files of books like the Uganda publication "When the sun sets we start to worry..." and other web-based services such as the online photo library currently under development. **Systems for ensuring e-mail subscribers are adequately and regularly informed of web services, as well as ensuring non-web access to these services, must remain a priority.**

Generally Access IRIN Reporting Via...

IRIN Service	IRIN E-mail	IRIN Web	IRIN Both	Other E-mail*	Other Web*
Africa English	88%	2%	8%	0%	1%
Africa French	79%	4%	12%	1%	0%
Africa subtotal	86%	3%	9%	0%	1%
PlusNews Africa	88%	2%	6%	1%	0%
Central Asia	86%	6%	6%	1%	0%
Iraq	90%	1%	9%	0%	0%
sub-total	87%	3%	8%	0%	0%
Web	16%	69%	6%	2%	3%
Total	79%	10%	8%	0%	1%

72. The high number of web visitors, over half a million monthly, coupled with the results of the survey also suggest a low conversion rate of web users to e-mail subscribers. Further issues IRIN will need to explore prior to the redesign are:
- o Given that the e-mail subscriber readership is currently representative of IRIN's targeted audience should an effort be made to encourage web to e-mail subscriber conversion? The fact that some 56 percent of web respondents were also members of the humanitarian community suggests that this has relevance as a goal.

- Are conversion rates low due to a lack of knowledge about the subscription services? The low percentage of subscriber and web users, around 25 percent, who knew about all the other IRIN services suggests this may be an issue.
 - Are there too many services to subscribe to for those who want all IRIN articles?
 - Is the subscription form too complicated, preventing subscribers from addressing/managing information overload and therefore a disincentive to subscribing?
 - Is it clear that the e-mail service is free?
 - Is it evident that there is an e-mail service? Web users may assume 'subscribe' refers to accessing more back-page reporting via the web rather than an e-mail service, as is the case with some services.
 - Are e-mail users having difficulty accessing IRIN articles due to their Internet Service Provider's SPAM software and thus reverting to the web? This was raised as an issue in the survey comment section and feedback to the IRIN client services department indicates it is a growing issue for many subscribers. The IRIN IT department needs to ensure it remains abreast of the latest information for averting IRIN's designation as SPAM. This includes regular removal of non-productive e-mail addresses from the subscriber services. RSS news feed should also be explored as an alternative subscription option to assist those who avoid e-mails subscriptions because they offer a gateway to potential SPAM attacks.
73. Some 22 percent of respondents to the web survey indicated that they used the e-mail service more often or as much as the web. However, 52 percent of web users indicated being subscribed to an IRIN service. This means that 30 percent of web users were subscribed to a service they claimed not to use. The anomaly can be attributed to IRIN's headline service, which offers a brief summary of the IRIN articles with a URL link to the full story on the web site. Although subscribed to an e-mail service, these subscribers would predominantly access IRIN articles via the web.
74. When asked about web use, a high percentage (40 percent) did not respond to this question. In view of the fact that most of the survey respondents were e-mail users who showed a high propensity to stick to the e-mail service, the lower response rate is not surprising. The Africa service was the most frequently accessed web service for both web and e-mail respondents (refer to Annex 1.h for detailed table). Significantly, 83 percent of web respondents accessed the Africa service online. The popularity of the Africa service is not surprising as it is the oldest and best known of the IRIN services. It also benefited from a limited promotional campaign in 1998. Moreover, it is also the largest service, covering 46 countries; hence the proportion of Africa stories, versus those from other services appearing on the IRIN front page is much greater. As news aggregator services often only retrieve news from the front page of many web sites, this would further favour increased visibility for the Africa service. Given the fact that the Iraq service was established as a short-term crisis service and Iraq articles do not appear on the IRIN front page, the low rate of web users and wider web visibility is also not surprising.
75. Of note is the fact that 12 percent of respondents indicated that they regularly visited a service on the web that they were not subscribed to via e-mail.
76. Respondents were asked what type of Internet connection they used. This information will be used to guide decision-making regarding the level of technology employed in the site redesign to ensure greatest access to all users.

Access Service Not Subscribed To	
IRIN Service	No Email
Africa English	10%
Africa French	8%
Africa subtotal	10%
PlusNews Africa	14%
Central Asia	13%
Iraq	13%
Total	12%

- 21 percent dial-up by modem

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- 21 percent ISDN/ASDL dedicated line
- 21 percent office network, terrestrial ISP
- 14 percent broadband, T1
- 8 percent office network, satellite ISP
- 16 percent did not know

77. Respondents were asked if they would like to have the option of creating their own IRIN page for which they would select a news feed covering only those countries that interest them. Some 41 percent said yes, 44 percent, no, and 15 percent were not sure what was being offered. The number of 'yes' responses suggests this needs to be explored as an option in the site redesign.

Annex 1: Survey Finding Results

1.a What is your current affiliation?

- NGO or International Organisation Corporate Media
 United Nations Academic, Research Agency, Think Tank
 Donor Government None (unemployed, retired, student,...)
 Donor Private (foundation) Other, please specify []

E-mail Subscriber Affiliation by Organisation

1st Quarter	UN	NGO	Gov	Media	Acad.	Corp.	Other
Africa Eng.	13%	36%	14%	6%	12%	6%	12%
Africa Fr.	12%	36%	12%	7%	10%	6%	16%
PlusNews	10%	46%	9%	7%	11%	5%	11%
Central Asia	23%	34%	12%	8%	8%	4%	9%
Iraq Crisis	17%	36%	14%	7%	10%	6%	10%
Total IRIN	15%	37%	13%	7%	11%	6%	12%

Survey Respondent Affiliation by Organisation

IRIN Service	UN	NGO/IO	Gov/Priv	Media	Acad.	Corp.	Other
Africa English	9%	35%	11%	7%	15%	4%	19%
Africa French	7%	34%	10%	7%	9%	9%	23%
Africa subtotal	9%	35%	11%	7%	14%	5%	20%
PlusNews Africa	5%	45%	9%	4%	18%	2%	17%
Central Asia	15%	41%	9%	9%	11%	2%	13%
Iraq	10%	34%	9%	9%	14%	2%	23%
sub-total	9%	36%	10%	7%	14%	4%	19%
Web	9%	24%	9%	11%	15%	4%	29%
Total	9%	35%	10%	8%	14%	4%	20%

1.b What other on-line or subscription-based news sources do you consult on a regular basis for news on the countries covered by the IRIN service?

- BBC Web IPS
 Reuters AP
 AFP Other, specify []

Other Sources of On-line News

IRIN Service	BBC	Reuters	AFP	Subtotal*	IPS	AP	Other*	Total Rsp
Africa English	59%	23%	15%	66%	4%	11%	24%	77%
Africa French	31%	24%	48%	63%	6%	15%	24%	79%
Africa subtotal	55%	23%	20%	66%	4%	11%	24%	77%
Central Asia	61%	32%	16%	69%	4%	15%	30%	84%
Iraq	62%	43%	16%	73%	9%	24%	23%	93%
Web	71%	35%	23%	80%	5%	17%	25%	89%
Total	54%	25%	18%	64%	4%	12%	23%	75%

* Subs consulting one or more the three - double counting eliminated.

1.c What other on-line or subscription-based news sources do you consult on a regular basis for HIV/AIDS news on the countries covered by the IRIN/PlusNews service? (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

Which of these would you say was your most important source for HIV/AIDS information? (select one) **PlusNews was added as option.**

- UNAIDS Kaiser Family Foundation Eldis The Global Fund
 Af-AIDS AEGIS Health-E allAfrica.com

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World Bank Inter Press Service IRIN news Other

Other Sources of HIV/AIDS On-line News

Source	UNAIDS	Af-AIDS	World Bk	Eldis	Health-E	IRIN	Kaiser
Responses	141	48	55	29	25	126	47
% Respondents	50%	17%	20%	10%	9%	45%	17%

Cont...	AEGIS	IPS	Global Fd	AllAfrica	Other	Total Rsp	No Rsp
Responses	33	9	57	53	36	232	49
% Respondents	12%	3%	20%	19%	13%	83%	17%

Most Important Source of HIV/AIDS Information

Source	UNAIDS	Af-AIDS	World Bk	Eldis	Health-E	IRIN	Kaiser	AEGIS
Responses	45	11	2	2	2	47	16	6
% of Respondent	16%	4%	1%	1%	1%	17%	6%	2%

Cont...	IPS	Global Fd	AllAfrica	Other	PlusNews	Total Rsp	No Rsp.	IRIN+Plus
Responses	0	3	3	16	96	249	32	143
% Respondents	0%	1%	1%	6%	34%	89%	11%	51%

1.d How would you rate the quality of IRIN's reporting overall?

- Excellent - indispensable service
- Good - very useful
- Adequate – provides some new information
- Variable - of mixed quality
- Poor - of negligible quality

Quality of IRIN Reporting

IRIN Service	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Variable	Poor	No Rsp.	Ex/G	V/P
Africa English	27%	62%	8%	1%	0%	1%	89%	2%
Africa French	17%	51%	21%	6%	0%	5%	68%	6%
Africa subtotal	25%	61%	10%	2%	0%	2%	86%	2%
PlusNews Africa	21%	62%	12%	2%	0%	3%	83%	2%
Central Asia	16%	66%	14%	2%	0%	2%	82%	2%
Iraq	55%	20%	19%	2%	1%	3%	75%	3%
Web	26%	58%	10%	2%	1%	2%	84%	3%
Total	25%	60%	11%	2%	0%	2%	85%	2%

Ex/G-excellent/good V/P - variable/poor

1.e How would you rate the following reports as an information product? (For each topic below, type an X between the brackets preceding the choice you wish to select. Leave blank if you do not read these reports.)

Daily reports (short news articles)

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

In-depth Articles: Focus & Special Reports

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Interviews

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Asia Weekly News Wrap

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

PlusNews Daily News Brief

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Rating Daily Reports*

IRIN Service	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform.
Africa English	31%	59%	89%	10%	0%
Africa French	21%	54%	75%	25%	0%
Africa subtotal	29%	58%	88%	12%	0%
PlusNews Africa	36%	50%	86%	13%	1%
Central Asia	17%	66%	83%	16%	1%
Iraq	17%	61%	78%	20%	2%
Web	30%	57%	87%	11%	2%
Total	28%	59%	87%	13%	1%

* as % of those who commented

Rating In-depth Articles*

IRIN Service	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform.
Africa English	29%	59%	81%	12%	1%
Africa French	19%	56%	57%	24%	1%
Africa subtotal	28%	59%	78%	13%	1%
PlusNews Africa	39%	50%	80%	10%	1%
Central Asia	26%	61%	83%	12%	1%
Iraq	25%	59%	76%	15%	1%
Web	37%	49%	80%	12%	2%
Total	29%	58%	79%	13%	1%

* as % of those who commented

Rating Interviews*

IRIN Service	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform.
Africa English	18%	54%	58%	24%	4%
Africa French	16%	51%	46%	27%	5%
Africa subtotal	18%	54%	57%	24%	4%
PlusNews Africa	29%	52%	60%	17%	2%
Central Asia	17%	54%	60%	25%	4%
Iraq	11%	59%	56%	24%	6%
Web	21%	51%	57%	24%	4%
Total	19%	54%	57%	24%	4%

* as % of those who commented

Rating Asia Weekly News Wrap*

	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform.
Central Asia	19%	59%	78%	21%	1%
Web Users	15%	56%	71%	17%	12%
Total	18%	58%	76%	20%	4%

* as % of those who commented

Rating PlusNews Daily News Briefs*

	Excellent	Good	Ex/G	Adequate	Not Inform.
% Respondents	29%	46%	75%	23%	3%

* as % of those who commented

1.f When did you last read an IRIN report? (Select only one choice.)

- Today more than two weeks ago
 This week Never Last week

Last Read a Report

IRIN Service	Today	This Wk	Total	Last Wk	2 Wks+	Never	No Rsp.
Africa English	51%	31%	82%	13%	4%	0%	1%
Africa French	19%	27%	46%	19%	22%	7%	6%
Africa subtotal	46%	30%	77%	13%	7%	1%	2%
PlusNews Africa	32%	40%	72%	18%	7%	0%	4%
Central Asia	33%	33%	66%	18%	12%	2%	3%
Iraq	43%	30%	73%	16%	6%	4%	1%
Web	58%	20%	78%	12%	7%	2%	1%
Total	45%	30%	75%	14%	7%	1%	2%

1.g Do you or your organisation redistribute IRIN reports or extracts of IRIN reports in any of the following ways. (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- do not redistribute IRIN
- do not know if my organisation redistributes IRIN
- regularly via in-house e-mail redistribution list/newsletter (complete Q.15a)
- regularly via public e-mail redistribution list/newsletter (complete Q. 15a)
- reprint in hard-copy publication (newsletter/newspaper/magazine)

Redistribution of IRIN Reports

IRIN Service	In-house	Pub. e-mal	Hard-copy	Subtotal	Est. Rcp*
Africa English	19%	5%	5%	29%	468,330
Africa French	16%	5%	9%	30%	122,560
Africa subtotal	18%	5%	6%	29%	590,890
PlusNews Africa	27%	1%	4%	33%	14,538
Central Asia	17%	8%	5%	29%	20,684
Iraq	15%	3%	5%	23%	10,931
Web	13%	6%	8%	27%	70,276
Total	18%	5%	6%	29%	707,319

*Est. Rcp - Estimated Recipients

1.g Which IRIN services do you access through the IRIN WEB SITE? (Type an X between the brackets preceding each choice you wish to select. Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- IRIN Africa
- IRIN Afrique Française
- PlusNews (sub-Saharan Africa HIV/AIDS Service)
- IRIN Central Asia
- IRIN Iraq Crises Service
- IRIN Radio Service

Percentage

IRIN Service	Africa Eng.	Africa Fr.	PlusNews	Asia	Iraq	Radio	Total Rsp*
Africa English	56%	5%	8%	4%	4%	2%	60%
Africa French	36%	50%	8%	2%	3%	1%	66%
Africa subtotal	53%	11%	8%	4%	4%	1%	61%
PlusNews Africa	44%	3%	41%	4%	2%	1%	62%
Central Asia	18%	1%	6%	48%	12%	0%	55%
Iraq	22%	2%	8%	11%	38%	1%	48%
Web	83%	9%	13%	20%	10%	3%	94%
Total	51%	9%	10%	10%	6%	1%	64%

* Total responses to this question

1.h In your view, would local populations benefit from being able to read IRIN reports?

- yes
- No
- No not know / not sure

Would Local Populations Benefit from reading IRIN

IRIN Service	Yes	No	Unknown	No Rsp.
Africa English	68%	6%	23%	4%
Africa French	51%	8%	33%	8%
Africa subtotal	65%	6%	24%	4%
PlusNews Africa	62%	6%	25%	7%
Central Asia	69%	6%	22%	4%
Iraq	73%	5%	19%	4%
Total	66%	6%	24%	4%

Annex 2: Sample of Survey

IRIN Questionnaire on the IRIN Africa English Service

Please return by May 4 2004

The IRIN Africa service is a free non-profit service. In exchange we ask you take time to participate in this annual ten-minute survey. You will be providing us with information that will enable us to evaluate the current service and provide invaluable information that will be utilized to improve the service and provide feedback to our donors.

Although IRIN is designed to serve the needs of the humanitarian community we encourage all users to complete the survey.

If you are subscribed to several IRIN services you will receive a separate survey for each one. We apologise for this inconvenience. If you do not have time to fill them all out, please select the one for the service you use most frequently.

To assist us in reducing processing time, if possible, please fill out this questionnaire on line at (http://www.irinnews.info/survey/IRIN_Questionnaire_Africa.asp). If you fill in the e-mail questionnaire below, please send it and any comments to gertrude@irin.ci (this e-mail should appear automatically when you click reply).

All information provided will be treated confidentially.

Thank you for your time and support.

Pat Banks, IRIN Coordinator

The survey is divided into two parts:

- A. General Information,
- B. Rating & Improving the Service

Section A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Q. 1 If you would like a summary of the survey findings, please enter your email address. (Type your answer between the brackets. Do not worry about extra spaces at the end of your responses.)

E-mail (optional): []

IRIN Readership Survey – April 2004

Q. 2 Are you living in a country covered by IRIN reporting? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- Yes
- No

Q. 3 What is your current affiliation? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- NGO or International Organisation
- United Nations
- Donor Government
- Donor Private (foundation)
- Media
- Corporate
- Academic, Research Agency, Think Tank
- None (unemployed, retired, student,...)
- Other, please specify []

Q. 4 Which IRIN **E-MAIL** service(s) do you use? (Type an X between the brackets preceding each choice you wish to select. Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- None
- IRIN Africa
- IRIN Afrique Française
- PlusNews (sub-Saharan Africa HIV/AIDS Service)
- IRIN Central Asia
- IRIN Iraq Crises Service

Q. 5 How do you generally access IRIN articles? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- predominantly through the IRIN E-mail service
- predominantly through the IRIN Web site (please specify in 5a)
- use both IRIN E-mail and IRIN Web Site equally (please specify in 5a)
- predominantly through a NON-IRIN E-mail service, specify []
- predominantly through a NON-IRIN Web site, specify []

Q. 5a Which IRIN services do you access through the **IRIN WEB SITE**? (Type an X between the brackets preceding each choice you wish to select. Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- IRIN Africa
- IRIN Afrique Française
- PlusNews (sub-Saharan Africa HIV/AIDS Service)
- IRIN Central Asia
- IRIN Iraq Crises Service
- IRIN Radio Service

Q. 6 Were you aware of the existence of the IRIN e-mail/web services mentioned in Q5a? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- Yes, all
- Yes, some but not all
- No

Q. 7 How did you find out about IRIN? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- colleague / friend
- web search
- followed link from another web site
- from report quoting/referencing IRIN
- Other, specify []

Q. 8 Are your work colleagues aware of the IRIN services? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- Yes, most are aware
- No, most are not aware
- Do not know
- Not applicable

Q. 9 What other on-line or subscription-based news sources do you consult on a regular basis for news on the countries covered by the IRIN service? (Type an X between the brackets preceding each choice you wish to select. Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- BBC Web
- Reuters
- AFP
- IPS
- AP
- Other, specify []

Q. 10 What is your first language? (Type an X between the brackets preceding your choice. Select only one choice.)

- English
- French
- Arabic
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Other, specify []

Section B. Rating and Improving the IRIN Africa English Service

The IRIN Africa service provides humanitarian and early-warning reporting on all of sub-Saharan Africa. (Even if you are subscribed to other IRIN services please limit your responses to the Africa English service only).

Q. 11 How would you rate the quality of IRIN's Africa reporting overall? (Select only one choice.)

- Excellent - indispensable service
- Good - very useful
- Adequate – provides some new information
- Variable - of mixed quality
- Poor - of negligible quality

IRIN Readership Survey – April 2004

Q. 12 How many IRIN Africa English reports have you read in the last month? (Select only one choice.)

- None
- Between 1 - 5
- Between 6 - 10
- 11 or more

Q. 13 When did you last read an IRIN Africa English report? (Select only one choice.)

- Today
- This week
- Last week
- more than two weeks ago or longer
- Never

Q. 14 When did you last forward an IRIN report to a colleague or friend? (Select only one choice.)

- Today
- This week
- Last week
- Last month or longer
- Never / can't remember

Q. 15 Do you or your organisation redistribute IRIN reports or extracts of IRIN reports in any of the following ways. (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

- do not redistribute IRIN
- do not know if my organisation redistributes IRIN
- regularly via in-house e-mail redistribution list/newsletter (complete Q.15a)
- regularly via public e-mail redistribution list/newsletter (complete Q. 15a)
- reprint in hard-copy publication (newsletter/newspaper/magazine)

Q. 15a Roughly, how many people does the e-mail service reach? (Select only one choice.)

- Input number of subscribers/list members
- do not know

Q. 16 Did you know that IRIN allows the reprinting/reposting of IRIN articles and photos free-of-charge provided the IRIN copyright is retained?

- Yes
- No

Q. 17 Do you or your organisation repost IRIN articles to a web site? (Select only one choice.)

- Yes, the URL is []
- No
- Do not know

Q. 18 Do you or your organisation use IRIN reports in any of the following ways: (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

IRIN Readership Survey – April 2004

Q. 24 How would you rate the following Africa English reports as an information product?
(For each topic below, type an X between the brackets preceding the choice you wish to select. Leave blank if you do not read these reports.)

I only read the weekly (skip to Q. 26)

Daily reports (short news articles)

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

In-depth Articles: Focus & Special Reports

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Interviews

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Q. 25 What type(s) of reporting would you like to see more of? (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

I only read the weekly (skip to Q. 26)

increased daily news reporting

more in-depth reports (specials, focuses, analyses,...)

more Interviews

more background reports (e.g. country profiles, chronologies, summaries)

Other, specify []

Q.26 Do you read at least one of the Africa English weekly round-up(s)? (Select only one choice.)

Yes, most of the time (complete Q. 26a & 26b).

Yes, periodically (complete Q. 26a & 26b)

No, generally never (skip to question, Q.27)

Q. 26a If you answered yes to Q.26, please rate the weekly round-ups. (Type an X between the brackets preceding the choice you wish to select.)

IRIN-Central & East Africa (select one choice below)

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

IRIN-West Africa Weekly round-up (select one choice below)

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

IRIN-Southern Africa Weekly round-up (select one choice below)

-excellent -good -adequate -not informative -do not read

Q. 26b Which format would you find most useful for the weekly round-up? (Select only one choice.)

(Current Service) Individual summaries of only the MAIN IRIN articles for week

Individual summaries of ALL IRIN Africa English articles for that week

Synthesis of main events covered by IRIN for week

Other format, specify []

IRIN Readership Survey – April 2004

Q. 27 IRIN produces comprehensive Web Specials on complex issues requiring a more analytical treatment. What issues in Africa would you like to see dealt with through an IRIN web special? (Type your answer between the brackets.)

[]

Q. 28 In your view, would local populations benefit from being able to read IRIN reports? (Select only one choice.)

yes

No

No not know / not sure

Q. 29 What other languages should the IRIN Africa English service be offered in? (Select as many choices as appropriate.)

French (only a few selected articles are currently translated)

Arabic

Other, specify []

Q. 30 If IRIN were to expand to TWO other regions, which two geographical regions should be prioritised? (Select only two choices.)

Middle East

the Balkans

the Caucasus

Asia-Pacific

Northern Africa

Latin America

South America

Other, specify []

Q. 31 Other recommendations/comments on IRIN's Africa English service. (Type your answer between the brackets.)

[]

END OF SURVEY - THANK YOU