

Representations of Africa in INGO Fundraising Advertisements

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the representations of the MW and Africa in particular, in INGO fundraising advertisements. A descriptive research, the paper presents and discusses the findings of three pieces of already existing research from the field, to identify, evaluate and discuss the representation of the MW and Africans in INGO fundraising advertisements and its implications.

Keywords: Fundraising, Advertising, INGO, Representation, Africa

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Glossary of Terms

Developed World (DW)	West, North, Global North, First World, developed countries, rich countries, self, we, us (our), here ¹
Majority World (MW)	South, Global-South, non-West, the Rest, underdeveloped, developing, less-developed, Others, them, there, Third World, global poor, poor (countries, world, regions, communities) ²
INGO	International development non-governmental organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SAIH	Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund
VSO	Volunteer Work Abroad

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London. (p.21)

² Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London. (p.21)

1 Introduction

In June 1981, *New Internationalist* published ‘Merchants of Misery’, an article by Jorgen Lissner, a Danish Aid worker, that launched a scorching attack on the use of images of starving African children in NGO fundraising. In the article, he accused NGOs of spreading ‘social pornography’, robbing children of their dignity, representing them as ‘helpless objects,’ without any form of social or political context, to the Western audience in the developed world (DW).¹ Lissner called for an end to these types of ‘pornographic’ images and ‘racist distortion’ that was planted in the DW and the conceptions that it brought concerning the majority world (MW). Lissner highlighted that similar representation of children was considered unacceptable for fundraising for children’s charities at home; so how could NGOs get away use the same images, simply because the children were from another part of the world?

When you think ‘Africa’, what is the first image that comes to your mind? A starving child, a poor and desperate mother, drought, famine, or disaster, perhaps? If these were one of the images that came to you, do not despair; you are not alone. In fact, a 2012 survey by Oxfam reported that just over half (55%) of respondents mentioned issues related to hunger, famine of poverty, when asked to name “the first things that come to mind when you think of Africa”. Moreover, 43% responded that they felt conditions for people living in the developing world would never improve and were ‘depressing, manipulative and hopeless’.²

In December 2014, John Hilary, published the article ‘The Unwelcomed Return of Development Pornography’ in *New Internationalist*. Despite the far-reaching impact of Lissner’s 1981 article, which meant that by the end of the decade, the General Assembly of European NGOs had adopted a code of conduct instructing all NGOs to stop using ‘pathetic images’ or ‘images which fuel prejudice’ in their representation of the MW, and an update of this code in 2007 which reaffirmed that all communication by NGOs must advocate core

¹ Lissner, J. 1981. Merchants of Misery. *New Internationalist*.
<http://newint.org/features/1981/06/01/merchants-of-misery/>

² Oxfam, 2012. Show Africa’s potential not just its problems, says Oxfam.
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2012/12/show-africas-potential-not-just-its-problems-says-oxfam>

values of human dignity, recent years have witnessed a return of the ‘starving black child’ in NGO fundraising advertisements, he argues.¹

Hilary is far from alone in his criticism of NGOs, and their continuation in acting as ‘merchants of misery’ and misrepresenting the MW in their fundraising advertisement messages. In November 2012, the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) said they had been ‘caught off guard’ when their spoof charity single ‘Africa for Norway’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyuxm96k>) reached viral popularity online in a matter of days, drawing focus to the fact that a broad spectrum of people from across the world agreed that it was time to end the stereotypical projection of Africa and the MW, said the makers of the video.²

How *are* Africans and MW represented in INGO charity fundraising advertisements? Is there any truth to Hilary’s article, which claims a return of development ‘pornography’ and if so, what are its implications? Does this hold any importance to INGOs?

¹ Hilary, J. 2014. The Unwelcomed Return of Development Pornography. New Internationalist. <http://newint.org/features/2014/12/01/development-pornography/>

² Radi-Aid: The Making of a Viral Video. The Guardian. 26 November 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/26/radiaid-norway-charity-single>

1.1 Research Aim

The aim of this paper is to identify and evaluate the representations of the MW and Africans in contemporary INGO fundraising advertisements.

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To identify the representations of the MW and Africa in particular used in contemporary INGO fundraising advertisement campaigns
2. To evaluate the representations of the MW and Africa in particular used in contemporary INGO fundraising advertisement campaigns
3. To discuss the implications that representations of the MW, and African particular, in INGO fundraising advertisement campaigns can have for INGOs

1.3. Contribution

Based on literature on third sector management, international development, and marketing and communication, this paper will add to the very limited existing literature exploring the representation of the MW and Africa in particular in contemporary INGOs fundraising advertisements.

1.4 Definition of Key Concepts

1.4.1. INGO

Anheir et al. (2001) define INGOs as “*autonomous organizations that are governmental, that is, they are not instrumentalities of government; and nonprofit, this is not distributing revenue as income to owners; and formal, legal entities.*”¹ Ronalds (2010) explains that there is a normative expectation that INGOs will promote the public good and that this normative element is particularly important in the case on INGOs, because their moral authority, is based on “*a widespread belief that they operate to promote the public good*” and is thus a key source of their influence in international relations.² The focus of this paper, is on those INGOs that provide international aid and development in Africa. Ronalds (2010) states that “*challenges faced by these organizations arise out of the international nature of their activities and not apply in the same way, to aid and development organisations with activities in just one state.*”³

1.4.2. Representation

Hall (1997) defines representation as “*the production of meaning through language. In representation... We use signs, organized into languages of different kinds, to communicate meaningfully with others. Languages can use signs to symbolize, stand for or reference objects, people and events in the so-called ‘real’ world.*”⁴ Donnelly (2002, in Hansson & Henriksson, 2013) explains that representation is how language, images and signs are used to communicate and give meaning to ones understanding of the world.⁵ Thus, argue Hansson & Henriksson (2013) representation holds implications within the arena of socio-political agency, as representing one group of people as ‘Others’ can give the group a feeling of ‘otherness’ and creates an ‘us and them’ divide in both thought and action. Moreover, they explain, representation impacts power relations, as one group of actors can be

¹ Anheir, H., M. Glasius, and M. Kaldor. 2011. Introductiong Global Civil Society. In *Global Civil Society 2011*, edited by H. Anheir, M. Glasius, and M. Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 4

² Ronalds, P., 2010. *The Change Imperative. Creating the Next Generation NGO*. Sterling: Kumerian Press, pp. 2-5

³ Ronalds, P., 2010. *The Change Imperative. Creating the Next Generation NGO*. Sterling: Kumerian Press, p. 5

⁴ Hall, S., 1997. *The Work of Representation*. Sage. http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/55352_Hall_ch_1.pdf, p.14

⁵ Hansson, J., Henriksson, M., 2013. *Western NGOs Representation of ‘Third World Women’*. University West. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:632032/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, p.11

represented in a more privileged position in terms of impact, than the representation of another group.¹

1.4.3. Fundraising Advertisements

Kotler (1984) defines advertising as “*any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor.*”² While the most popular idea, is that advertising is about selling a product, Perucha (2009) states that several authors have pointed out that they can also aim at enhancing the image of an organisation or increasing financial support for fundraising groups or charities.³ Čačija (2013) explains that nonprofit organisations need resources to meet organisational goals, fulfil their mission and to grow and develop their activities. Amongst these resources, the success in raising funds is crucial for nonprofits, she states.⁴ Andreasen and Kotler (2008, in Čačija, 2013) defines fundraising as an activity of identifying the main sources of funds and collection financial resources hereof. Das (2008) explains that a particularly challenge that INGOs face in fundraising advertising, is how to convey to the public that their cause is valid, urgent and serious enough to compete with other problems significant to their audiences, due to the rapidly growing numbers of charities.⁵ Another challenge, states Chang & Lee (2009) is that nongovernmental organisations can no longer rely heavily on government funding to sustain or expand their activities due to government budgets cuts, and therefore increasingly rely on donations.⁶ Thus, successful fundraising advertisements have gained increased importance.

¹ Hansson, J., Henriksson, M., 2013. Western NGOs Representation of 'Third World Women'. University West. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:632032/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, p.11

² Kotler, P., 1984. Marketing Essentials. Northwestern University: Prentice-Hall, Inc., p.58

³ Perucha, B., 2009. On the Use of Narrative Discourse in Advertising. Hybridity, Textual Voices and Gender Identities. Resla 22, p. 291

⁴ Čačija, L., 2013 Fundraising in the Context of Nonprofit Strategic Marketing: Toward a Conceptual Model, p.2

⁵ Das, E., Kerkhof, P., Kuiper, J., 2008. Improving the Effectiveness of Fundraising Messages: The Impact of Charity Goal Attainment, Message Framing, and Evidence on Persuasion. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 36:2, p. 162

⁶ Chang, T-K, Lee, Y-K., 2009. Framing Charity Advertising: Influences of Message Framing, Image Valence, and Temporal Framing on a Charitable Appeal. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 2009, 39, 12, p.2910

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide an overview of the academic theory that underpins representation in INGO fundraising advertisements. Moreover, it will present the findings of a 2012 study carried out by Nandita Dogra, the first contemporary and comprehensive study of the communications and imagery used by INGOs to represent the MW.

2.1. Historical Context

The academic imagery on INGOs is small and peaks around and succeeding the Ethiopian crisis in 1984, which marked a breaking point in the practises and studies of INGOs' representations of the MW and in particular Africa, states Dogra.¹ The period, led to what Dogra terms the 'image debate' of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, which as a consequence, led to policy changes within many INGOs.² Development practitioners and academics alike, argued that the negative images of Africa used were reproducing colonial stereotypes of 'a dark continent of misery and hunger' states Bethall (1993) and Lidchi, (1995)³, and development worker, Jorgen Lissner (1981) famously called the images 'pornographic'.⁴ Benthall (1993) suggests that close to all fundraising appeals by INGOs up until the 1980s portrayed images characterised as 'negative', depicting helpless and passive 'victims', particularly Africans, and Westerners represented as their heroic saviours.⁵ Thus, the 1980s was the period in which many INGOs began to question and understand the importance of advocacy and development education, states Dogra.⁶

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.2

² Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.3

³ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.4

⁴ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.4

⁵ Dogra, N. 2007. Reading NGOs visually – implications of visual images for NGO management. Journal of International Development. J. Int. Dev. 19, p. 161

⁶ Dogra, N. 2007. Reading NGOs visually – implications of visual images for NGO management. Journal of International Development. J. Int. Dev. 19, p. 161

2.2. INGO's as Institutions of Representation

Dogra (2012) describes that we understand the world through its representations and that our perceptions about global poverty and development are formed from our 'knowledge stock'. This includes what we know, see, hear, believe and feel.¹ When it comes to the 'majority world' (MW) or 'developing countries', a key ingredient which has helped shape our understanding, are the representations presented to us by aid agencies and INGOs, she states (Dogra, 2012).² Shaw (1996) describes that aid agencies, social movements and community organisations have become the 'new institutions of representation.'³ INGOs are largely based and develop most of their funds through fundraising in the 'developed world' (DW) or 'the West', but work for and in the 'majority world' (MW)⁴, including the African continent. Due to this very distinctive feature, Dogra (2012) argues that representations and images put forward by INGOs hold immense importance.⁵

2.3. The Rift Between Fundraising Advertisement Images and Advocacy

Representations has a special significance for INGOs due to competing concerns for fundraising and advocacy, states Dogra (2012).⁶ As a result of what Dogra (2012) termed the 'image debate of the 1980s and beginning of 1990s,'⁷ Minear (1987) explains that the 1980s saw an increased emphasis on educating Northern publics on global issues and that the promotion of humanitarian values, community action and an attempt to influence Northern government policies began to prominently grow.⁸ Dogra (2012) explains that while nongovernmental organisations had previously focused on responding to disasters in the MW, they now began to support 'development'.⁹ From the 1980s and onwards, INGOs began

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.1

² Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.1

³ Dogra, N. 2007. Reading NGOs visually – implications of visual images for NGO management. Journal of International Development. J. Int. Dev. 19, 161–171, p.1

⁴ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.2

⁵ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.3

⁶ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.2

⁷ Dogra, N. 2007. Reading NGOs visually – implications of visual images for NGO management. Journal of International Development. J. Int. Dev. 19, p.168

⁸ Dogra, N. 2007. Reading NGOs visually – implications of visual images for NGO management. Journal of International Development. J. Int. Dev. 19, p.168

⁹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p. 4

to focus on ‘development education’, producing a wide variety of materials and publications concerning development issues and global problems.¹ Black (1992) explains the transformation as a ‘*new emphasis on solidarity with the Third World.*’² Today, states Dogra (2012) the public profile of INGOs has consistently most dramatically increased during disasters, which makes their fundraising strategies particularly reliant on disaster imagery.³ Moreover, states Dogra (2012) blurring lines exists between fundraising and advocacy.⁴ Wilson (2011) states that ‘agency’ or ‘advocacy’ is currently cited in the discourse of development almost exclusively in the context of survival strategies, rather than strategies of transformation.

2.3. Contemporary Representations of Africans in INGO Fundraising Advertisements

Dogra (2012) states that a review of recent studies indicates a limited and unclear status of INGOs’ current representations⁵ Some studies, she states, suggests that images of representation in INGO fundraising advertisements are becoming increasingly mixed and ambivalent. Matt Smith (in Dogra, 2012) argues that the traditional ‘negative’ images of need are now increasingly being combined with a ‘positive’ agenda, with themes such as ‘empowerment’.⁶ Clark (2003) found that INGOs believed their visual imagery had improved over time and that they consciously avoided ‘negative’ and ‘helpless’ imagery and used ‘positive’ and ‘active’ images instead.⁷ Scholars Shaw (1996), Shohat and Stam (1998) and Hutnyk (2004) however argue that INGOs imagery remains simplistic and occasionally ‘negative’.⁸ Dogra (2012) stipulates that strong reactions to disaster imagery stemming from the Ethiopian crisis has restricted the scope of discussions all together. Rather than considering a deeper investigation of the practise and potential of INGOs’ public messages, it

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, pp. 4-6

² Black, M. 1992. A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam the First 60 Years. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.4

³ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London.

⁴ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.29

⁵ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.8

⁶ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.8

⁷ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.8

⁸ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.9

has resulted in a *'polarised, narrow, simplified and generalised conceptualisation of imagery across a 'negative'/'positive' divide'*, she argues.¹

2.3.1. Innocent Children, Deserving Women and Bad Men

In her research, Dogra (2012) found that characters represented in INGOs fundraising advertisements were predominantly children, followed by women (including mother and child), and the smallest amount, men. The findings, she states, lends support to the arguments of 'infantilisation' and 'feminisation' of the MW.² In terms of their popularity, children were the 'development candy' of INGO messages, she states.³ Children were either depicted as 'needy' ('as they should *not* be') or as idealised and happy ('as they *should* be') and rarely spoke for themselves, she states.⁴ Nandy (1983), Mudimbe (1988) and Escobar (1995) argue that children have come to symbolise the MW and Shohat and Stam (1994) argue that the non-West has been infantilised.⁵ Dogra (2012) agrees with this notion and argues that the infantilisation of the MW brings notions such as 'innocence', 'ignorance', 'under-development' and 'paternalism'.⁶ Nandy (1983) argues that the image of childhood is used as *'a blank slate on which adults must write their moral codes'*.⁷ The 'infantilisation of the MW' is linked to the 'feminisation of the MW', argues Dogra (2012)⁸. Women, she states, are represented as 'good', 'religious' and traditional. The low representation of men in fundraising adverts suggests 'de-masculinisation' and men portrayed were often represented as 'bad', such as corrupt leaders or violent guerrilla fighters.⁹ The overrepresentation of children and women, on the other hand, placed the MW as a place mostly inhabited by

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London.

² Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.32

³ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.33

⁴ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.38

⁵ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.38

⁶ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.38

⁷ Nandy, A. 1983. *The Inimical Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁸ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.38

⁹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.63

vulnerable women and children, towards who males and adults of the DW could be helpful which was found to suggest a call for ‘outside intervention’.¹

2.3.2. Active ‘Givers’ and Passive ‘Takers’

Dogra (2012) found that two main differences between DW and MW people were evident in the fundraising advertisements; the proportion of active people and the type of activity they were engaged in. Almost half of MW children fell under the category of ‘active’ and were shown engaging in either play or study. Mothers with children fell under the category of ‘passive’, often portrayed as sitting around and waiting for help in a camp or at a clinic. When portrayed alone, MW women were often portrayed as ‘active’ and engaged in either agriculture, craft or trade. MW men were most commonly portrayed as ‘active’ and engaged in agriculture, water projects or shed building. Whilst one third of MW people were shown as ‘passive’, no instances of ‘passive’ DW men were found in the advertisements. In general, almost all DW characters were shown as ‘active’ and MW people as ‘passive’. Adding to that, the ‘activeness’ of MW people was generally at micro level, doing activities such as development work but rarely seen, for example, as political activists, which Dogra (2012) suggest might indicate ‘a lack of a ‘normal’ democratic system of the existence of government or leaders²’ in the MW to DW audiences. Conversely, DW people were portrayed as demanding macro-level changes and in ‘active’ roles, often as protesters, fighting for the MW, raising funds, running marathons, or being sponsors or visitors, which Dogra suggested connotes their ‘goodness’ and ‘heroism’. The general difference between how MW and DW people were portrayed in the fundraising adverts, states Dogra (2012), was MW people as ‘farmers/peasants’ and DW people as ‘campaigners’ for the MW. Concluding the differences, Dogra (2012) states that the representations sets out both a masculine/feminine distinction between DW and MW, heightens the notions of ‘difference’ and ‘distance’ between DW and MW, projects a one-way relationship, reduces in-between spaces and suggests superiority Vs inferiority between DW and MW.³

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.63

² Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, p.63

³ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, pp.39-63

2.3.3. Far Away Land of Villages, Famine and Disaster

Dogra (2012) found that ‘space’ featured in INGO fundraising advertisements as a means to enhance the distance between DW and MW countries. This was done through the absence of urban life and modern symbols in the images. Moreover, MW countries, she found, were portrayed as lands of famine, disaster and unchanging villages. The lines between developmental and disaster fundraising advertisements were blurred she argued, as images of disaster were often used in the context of development. Despite images of starving children, as well as children and mothers, having historically been criticized for being ‘pornographic’ and ‘dehumanising’, Dogra found that the images were still being used and had widely come to represent Africa in particular, contributing to the enhanced sense of vulnerability of Africans and the MW. Whereas the 1980s disaster advertisements were characterised by the presence of DW ‘saviors’, Dogra found that these had been removed and replaced with by local staff, if any representation of a ‘saviour’ was shown at all. Images of ‘starving children’ still lacked context and did not provide an explanation of why it had reached that stage, she found. Moreover, she contests that images of tragedy and suffering enhanced the distance between MW and DW; the MW most often depicted as rural, timeless, ahistoric and its population as homogenous.¹

¹ Dogra, N. 2012. Representations of Global Poverty: Aid, Development and International NGOs. I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, pp. 64-73

3. Methodology

This paper is based on the social theory of constructivism and its ontological assumptions. Bryman (2012) defines constructivism as *“an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors.”*¹ Thus, the basic premise of constructivism is that people act in the world based on the meaning that the world has for them. In turn, human understandings of the world are, constructed with ideas, knowledge, norms and “truths” which are based on the social forces surrounding us. Bacchi (2010) argues that the way we understand a ‘problem’ is socially constructed; thus, how we acknowledge what is a ‘problem; and what is not is a result of social construct.² In this view, how the representation of ‘Africans’ is understood and acted upon, will depend on how its viewer understands the representation. As highlighted by Dogra (2012) the discussion of INGOs messages is most commonly grouped as ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ which, she states, are rooted in certain world views and ‘ways of seeing’. Here, humanitarian discourses often represent the ‘positive’ side and colonial discourses on the ‘negative’ side. This paper presents the findings of three separate pieces of research concerning the representations of the MW, and Africa in particular, in INGO fundraising advertisements.

¹ Bryman, A., 2012. Social Research Methods, 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, p. 710

² Hansson, J., Henriksson, M., 2013. Western NGOs Representation of ‘Third World Women’. University West. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:632032/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, p.11

4. Secondary Research

The following sections will present the secondary desk research findings of this paper. As stated by Dogra (2012) the previous research on INGOs imagery is small and peaks just after 1984 and the Ethiopian crisis, which brought focus to the subject of imagery and representation in nongovernmental organisations' fundraising advertisements. A mere two contemporary studies which investigated the representation of Africans and the MW were found. Of these, the only comprehensive study which provided an in-depth analysis was that of Dogra (2012), which was discussed in the literature review. Thus, this section will focus on the DW audiences and how they perceive the representations of Africans and MW based on INGO fundraising advertisements, and the media at broad. Moreover, a study presenting Africans' attitudes to their representation in INGO fundraising advertisements will be presented.

4.1 DW Perceptions of Africans and their Representation in Fundraising Campaigns

4.1.1 Oxfam: Africa Perceived as 'Depressing, Manipulative and Hopeless'

A survey carried out by Oxfam (2012) in cooperation with YouGov, which sampled 2009 GB adults aged 18+ online between the 7th and 10th of December 2012, found that the *'overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Africa to the British public is undermining popular supports to bring an end to hunger on the continent.'*¹

When the sample was asked what they thought were the three most urgent problems that Africa was facing in 2013, close to half (47%) of respondents survey identified 'hunger'. Moreover, three-fourths (74%) of respondents believed it was possible to bring an end to hunger on the African continents, but only 1 out of 5 respondents believed they were able to actively play a role in solving the hunger problem in Africa or elsewhere. Based on the findings, Oxfam reported that an over-exposure to negative advertising and media representations of Africans and MW countries in general may contribute to a sense of disempowerment of DW publics.

¹ Oxfam, 2012. Show Africa's potential not just its problems, says Oxfam.
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2012/12/show-africas-potential-not-just-its-problems-says-oxfam>

When questioned about the portrayal of Africa in the advertisements and media, the sample described the representation as *'depressing, manipulative and hopeless'* and 43% of respondents added that it made them feel that conditions for those living in MW would not improve. Moreover, 3 out of 5 respondents reported that they had become, or were already, *'desensitised to images depicting issues such as hunger, drought and disease'* and 23% of respondents reported that they *'turned away when confronted with such images.'* In response to the findings, CEO of Oxfam, Barbara Stocking, stated that they *'had come a long way since the 1980s,'* that they needed to *'shrug off the old stereotypes and celebrate the continents diversity and complexity'* and that *'the relentless focus on ongoing problems at the expense of a more nuanced portrait of the continent [was] obscuring the progress that is being made.'* That respondents had reported that they turned away from such images, she said, was *'a natural instinct... when you feel you can do nothing to alleviate it.'*

4.1.2 VSO: Depth of MW Stereotypes Still Prevalent

Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), which is the largest independent international development organisation which offers volunteers work in MW countries, carried out a similar survey in 2001 and reported having *'been taken aback by the depth of the stereotypes revealed in their research.'*¹

VSO commissioned two independent pieces of research to investigate how British people viewed the MW. Quantitative research was carried out through an NPO poll, with a sample of 1018 UK adults ages 15+ and was carried out between the 17th and 22nd of November 2001. Qualitative research was carried out by Directions Research and Marketing, who conducted in-depth qualitative research with: 1) two groups of 12-34 years ABC1 UK interviewees, who had never lived or extensively travelled in MW countries but had an interest in current affairs, and 2) two groups of non-UK interviewees from MW countries (Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan), who had been living or working in the UK for less than a year, as well as: 1) email questionnaires and two interviews with recently returned VSO volunteers, and 2) seven mini in-depth interviews with expert commentators in the field.²

On the basis of quantitative and qualitative research, VSO found that Africa is the starting point when UK consumers think about the MW. When asked about the words that came to

¹ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>

² Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 5

mind when asked to think about the developing world, 80% of respondents had negative associations such as ‘war, famine, death, starving people, natural disaster, poverty and corruption’. The strongest association images included those of extreme poverty, such as no food, no sanitation, no water, walking to well, mud huts and shanty towns. Moreover, people living in the MW were perceived as ‘helpless, with little or no control over their current situation or destiny.’ A UK respondent said the MW was ‘*a place you wouldn’t go to, and wouldn’t want to go to.*’ Associations to agriculture were made, for example, one UK respondent thought Africans ‘*rely so much on crops, so if they have a bad year, it’s all back to square one – it will all happen again and they will need our help.*’¹

There was a strong belief that MW countries depended on DW aid for their development; 74% of UK adults believed that MW countries depended on the money and knowledge of the west to progress. One UK respondent said that ‘*they have the desire to change, but no ability to support that. There is a mismatch between what they would like to achieve and what they are able to achieve.*’² VOS concluded that that stereotypes of extreme poverty and deprivation as well as the images of MW aid caused a strong sense of Africa as a helpless victim, requiring and deserving MW assistance in the form of aid to progress. Researchers also reported having to probe deeply in order for UK respondents to move past association of Africa only, towards association of the MW at broad. Overall, it was reported that respondents the majority of UK consumers thought of ‘Africa’ when they heard the word ‘developing’.

Or though UK respondents were not answering ‘I don’t know’ or looking for validation of their views, researchers found that UK perceptions were asserted, confident and defined, despite the fact that some respondents had very little knowledge about the location of the countries. For example, one respondent has asked: ‘*Kenya, that’s in the Congo, right?*’ Moreover, there was a strong indication that development was seen as synonymous with Westernisation and the relationship between the UK and MW countries was ‘*defined around the roles of powerful giver and grateful receiver.*’³

In the second part of the interview with UK consumers, interviewees were presented with a different view of MW countries, by being shown photographs, given facts and speaking to

¹ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 6

² Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 6

³ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 7

VSO volunteers who had spent time in MW countries. In each of the cases, the respondents' initial perceptions were challenged by the new information they were presented with. Researchers reported that interviewees had reported feeling 'anger' towards the media and some claiming 'they felt manipulated'. The most common reactions were: feeling ignorant due to their perceived lack of knowledge, expressions increased interest and wanting to know more, relief that there were positive stories out there too and not only negative, anger and looking for someone to blame. A blame was also attributed to charities that work in the developing world, whose fundraising materials, in particular, were attributed for using 'victim images'.¹

VSO reported finding that there was a demand from respondents for the media to provide a more nuanced and realistic view of Africa and development. Respondents specifically asked for stories of how disasters come about as well as combated, continuity in reporting by providing accounts of what has happened over time, representations of both 'good' and 'bad', 'negative' and 'positive', and an increased emphasis on 'context' of stories reported. For journalists and programme-makers interviewed, a call for to create more 'emotional points of connection' and not only 'education' was expressed. Moreover, the researchers pointed out that the research found that stereotypes had created a perception of 'distance' which 'devalued' and 'dehumanised' people by *'discounting the strengths and positive qualities of individuals in developing countries,'* adding that *'the relationship of power suggests helplessness, and a victim can become less worthy of our interest – even less human.'*² One professional highlighted the problem of aid agencies failing to represent and give voice to African representatives even within organisations, stating: *'Oxfam employed 108 people in Ethiopia, 8 of whom were expatriate... 100 of whom were Ethiopian. The bulk of people helping Ethiopia were Ethiopian but you wouldn't have got that sense from the [UK] media coverage.'*³ The report underlined that current stereotypes were reinforcing and generating a perception of 'powerful giver' and 'helpless recipient' and creating an impression of *'a one-way rather than two-way relationship.'*⁴

¹ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 10

² Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 12

³ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 12

⁴ Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO), 2001. The Live Aid Legacy. The Developing World Through British Eyes, A Research Report. <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1830.pdf>, p. 16

5. Discussion

In June 1981, Jorgen Lissner, launched an attack on the use of images of starving African children in NGO fundraising, accusing NGOs of spreading ‘*social pornography*’ and robbing children of their dignity by representing them as ‘helpless objects’, without reference to political or social context. Lissner’s outcry and criticism had far-reach and led to a heated public debate surrounding the representations of MW people in NGO material which Dogra (2012) termed the ‘*image debate*’. The debate, which continued throughout the 1980s and beginning of 1990s led to policy changes in many NGOs, and development practitioners and academics alike widely agreed that the negative portrayal of Africa, kept the continent locked in a state of colonial-representation, associated with ‘darkness, misery and hunger.’ The debate led to the adoption of a code of conduct by the General Assembly of European NGOS in 1989, instructing NGOs to refrain from using images that fostered a sense of DW superiority and portrayed the MW as lesser, partly, by avoiding the use of images which fuelled misconceptions. An update of the code of conduct was reaffirmed in 2007 and once it again it was highlighted that all communication by NGOs must advocate core values of ‘*human dignity, respect and truthfulness*’¹

John Hilary’s article ‘*The Unwelcomed Return of Development Pornography*’, published in December 2014 in *New Internationalist* claimed that recent years had witnessed a return of the ‘starving black child’ in NGO fundraising advertisements.² This paper in itself is not sufficient to be conclusive of his statement but the findings presented by Dogra, VOS and Oxfam does indicate that the representation of Africans and the MW in INGO fundraising advertisements, has created certain stereotypes of Africa and the MW which are still prevalent today. The first research objective of this paper, questioned the representation of Africa in contemporary INGO fundraising advertisements. Dogra’s 2012 study which through content analysis investigated representations used, indicated that there is still a tendency for INGOs to use stereotypes in their fundraising messages which represents Africa, and the MW at large, as a place dependent on the DW to work its way out of poverty. Dogra (2012) found that INGO fundraising advertisements were especially prone to use children,

¹Concord, 2007. Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

<http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/115-code-of-conduct-on-images-and-messages>

² Hilary, J. 2014. The Unwelcomed Return of Development Pornography. *New Internationalist*.

<http://newint.org/features/2014/12/01/development-pornography/>

women and the image of 'mother and child' in their advertisements, which she claimed 'infantilised' the MW and brought notions such as underdevelopment and paternalism to mind. The low representation of men in the advertisements, she said, suggested 'de-masculinisation' and an overall picture of the continent as a place of 'innocent children and women' and 'bad men' was suggestive of a call for intervention from the DW, she suggested. Moreover, Dogra found that while DW people in the advertisements tended to be represented as 'active' and engaged in social change at a macro-level and given 'hero-like' statuses in the advertisements, MW people would often be represented as 'passive' and engaged in only micro-level activities such as agriculture. This, she thought, created the association that the relationship between the MW and DW was 'one-way' and heightened the feeling of 'difference' and 'distance' between the two, creating a superior/ inferior relationship. Africa in particular, she found, was portrayed as a land of famine, disaster and unchanging villages, an image, which had come to represent the continent, she concluded. Images of starving children were still prevalent and lacked context and a lack of modern symbols and urban life in the advertisements positioned the MW as a rural and timeless place, set back and at distance from the DW.

The second research objective of this paper was to evaluate the representations of the MW and Africa in particular in INGO fundraising advertisements. As outlined in the methodology of this paper, human understandings of the world are constructed by the 'truths', ideas, norms and knowledge which surround us. Constructivism argues that phenomena and their meanings are accomplished by social actors continually. In this view, how the representation of 'Africans' is understood and acted upon will depend on who is 'reading' the message. The secondary research of this paper provided insight into the attitudes of the DW audiences that are 'reading' the INGO fundraising advertisement messages, as it was found necessary to identify their perceptions of the understandings gained from the representations presented to them. Here, it was found that UK and GB audiences, much like Dogra's observations, perceived the MW and Africa in particular as a continent of war, famine, disaster, poverty and corruption, whose inhabitants were helpless, with no control over their destiny, and in need of DW to overcome their situation. It is not possible to make conclusive statements representative of the DW at large based on these findings, as INGO fundraising advertisements as well as audience perceptions might vary substantially from region to region and country to country.

The final aim of this paper was to discuss the implication that the findings can have for INGOs. As Dogra (2012) pointed out, INGOs are unique organisations in that they work in and for the MW but collect most of their funds in the DW. They depend on DW audiences to gather funds. While it is recognized that ‘shock advertising’ is used by the media at broad to gather attention and emotional reactions from audiences, there is an indication that decades of imagery depicting the MW, and Africa in particular, as a place of poverty, famine, war and corruption, whose inhabitants are unable to fend for themselves and depend on the DW for rescue, has created audience fatigue. Findings by Oxfam and VOS gave a clear indication that there is a general call for INGOs to incorporate context, awareness, advocacy, and a sense of the developments and improvements made over time, into their fundraising advertisements, if they wish to keep the attention and support of their publics.

6. Conclusion

This paper indicates that INGOs fundraising advertisements constructs the DW and MW and has implication both within the areas of socio-political agency, by representing the MW and Africa as ‘Others’, which has consequently created an ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ divide. More than fuelling and adding to already existing stereotypes, the representations also holds implications for INGOs themselves, who are faced with the challenge of donor fatigue, as a result of decades of images creating a divide, with a seemingly lacking effort to create agency and advocacy, and placing the MW in a context with whom DW audiences can connect and related to.

6.1. Research Limitations

This paper described the findings of three separate researches concerning the representation of the MW, and Africa in particular, in INGO fundraising campaigns. The paper is thus unable to make conclusive statements concerning representations and its effects at large, but provides an indication which may be useful for future research.

6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

The academic literature concerning contemporary representations of the MW, and Africa in particular, is scarce. It is recommended that further research is carried out to gain insight into the implication of the representations, which indicates repercussions on both a socio-political

level and the way we see ourselves and our place in the world and for INGOs at an organisational level.

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