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# Imaging Humanitarianism: NGO Identity and the Iconography of Childhood

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**Abstract:** This paper asks how images of children are used by prominent signatories to NGO codes of conduct. The answer is that images of childhood and shared codes of conduct are both means through which development and relief NGOs produce themselves as rights-based organisations. The iconography of childhood expresses institutional ideals and the key humanitarian values of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, and solidarity. Images of children are useful for NGOs in reinforcing the legitimacy of their ‘emergency’ interventions as well as the very idea of development itself. But the dominant iconography is also inherently paradoxical, as the child image can be read as both a colonial metaphor for the majority world and as a signifier of humanitarian identity. The question then for NGOs using this image in social justice campaigns is whether overtly political accompanying texts can nullify the contradictory subliminal messages that emanate from the iconography of childhood.

**Keywords:** humanitarianism, development, NGOs, iconography, childhood

If I sift back through the countless images of the Third World that have confronted me through the media . . . one persistent iconography dominates. This is the tight-shot close-up photograph of a single child—usually (apparently) not older than ten or eleven, looking, wide-eyed, directly into the camera (Ruddick 2003:341).

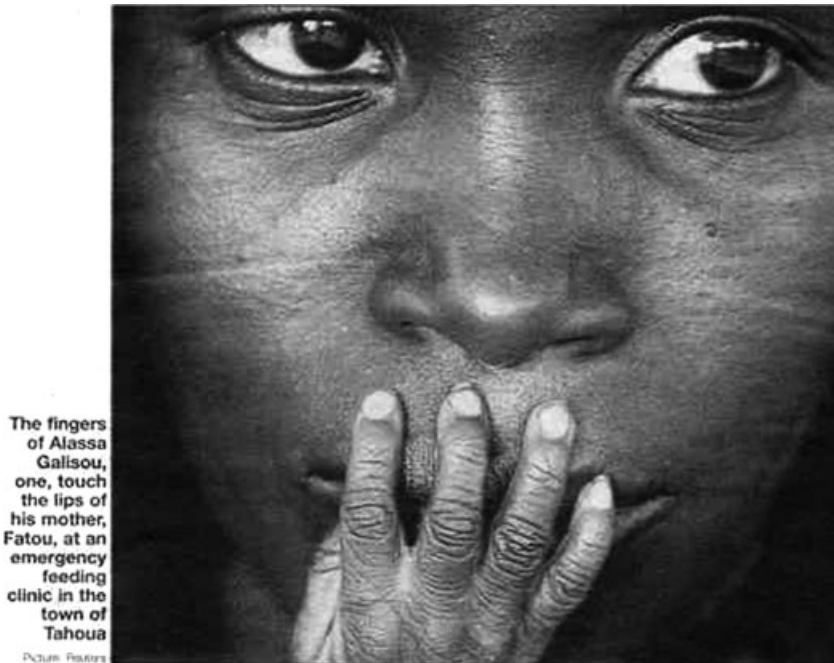
The image of a child is the most frequently appearing image in the posters . . . In some cases it is only the children’s eyes that are portrayed, the face or just a hand (Lamers 2005:47).

## **What is the Appeal? NGOs and the Dominant Iconography**

This paper asks how (for what purpose and with what effect) images of children are used by prominent signatories to NGO codes of conduct. By “prominent” I mean a particular subset of non-governmental development and relief organisations (so-called NGDOs or just NGOs). These are the “BINGOs” that arguably dominate the international NGO landscape (Overseas Development Institute 2003).<sup>1</sup> They include



**Figure 1:** A girl waits for help at a camp for 45,000 refugees in the Darfur region of Sudan (source: *Metro* newspaper, 6 December 2004:1)



**Figure 2:** The fingers of Alassa Galisou, one, touch the lips of his mother, Fatou, at an emergency feeding clinic in the town of Tahoua (source: *Metro* newspaper, 3 August 2005:2)

such well-known associates of the British-based Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign as Oxfam and Save the Children.<sup>2</sup>

My answer is that images of children and shared codes of conduct are two sides of the same coin; they are both means through which NGOs produce themselves as humanitarian. These NGO codes are neither simple reflections of common practice nor signs of an uncontested identity. Rather, they are integral to a larger discursive apparatus through which humanitarian identity in general is constituted, revised, and reaffirmed. The cornerstone of that discursive apparatus is the articulation by the BINGOs of a conceptual framework and set of corresponding principles and norms. In the current context, the overarching schema is provided by the concept of *rights*. The wholesale embrace of international human rights language (and law) by NGOs may be less a reflection of the agendas of others and more an indicator of their own renewed search for legitimacy (Fox 2001:285; Manzo 2003:452). Even so, the enduring principle of humanity and the more contingent principle of innocence-based solidarity appear at the moment to be especially valued (Slim 1997, 2000).

Expressed commitments to the “rights-based” character of their work from within different branches of the aid and development industry suggest not only a “marked convergence towards a common culture” (De Waal 1997:65) but also a shared identity as human rights workers and organisations (Slim 2000:494; see also Manzo 2003). At the level of rhetoric, the “new” humanitarianism demands that “all aid be judged on how it contributes to promoting human rights” (Fox 2001:278), while rights-based development (RBD) turns a classic human development aim of poverty alleviation from a basic need into a human right (Manzo 2003).

Encoded principles are still an expression of institutional ideals, however, reflecting the values that certain NGOs articulate (and the way they would like to appear) rather than the way all NGOs are. The debates over values and identity reviewed in the paper reflect the ongoing debates over images and messages that have given rise in the last three decades to internal codes of conduct, shared NGO guidelines, and stakeholder conferences.<sup>3</sup> These debates expose the tensions and differences existing within (as well as among) the BINGOs in particular. The paper shows that a key issue is the extent to which NGO practices (and thus, by extension, NGOs themselves) are apolitical in nature. Even as the apolitical ideal continues to circulate, the counter proposition that all forms of intervention (whether explicitly rights based or not) are inherently political is gaining currency as well.

With regard to the child image question, my claim is *not* that NGOs rely exclusively on images of needy children as a visual representation of development. Other common examples are images of lone adults (male or female, famous or otherwise), which seem to challenge negative

associations of distant places with suffering and death by offering positive signs of courage, hope, and survival.<sup>4</sup>

My argument is that the iconography of childhood is a signifier of an NGO corporate identity. It is a sort of brand logo that advertises NGOs' encoded humanitarian principles, reflecting back their organisational ideals as much as their purposes and objectives. The paper shows how the dominant iconography of childhood is inherently paradoxical in the way it simultaneously endorses, constructs, and undermines the humanitarian principles espoused by the NGOs concerned. The key humanitarian principles expressed in a variety of NGO codes are the ones identified by Hugo Slim in the Oxfam journal *Development in Practice*. These are humanity; neutrality and impartiality; and solidarity (Slim 1997). Using this taxonomy as an organisational device, the paper demonstrates how some of the most powerful reflections of humanitarianism are found in child images that actually violate the guiding principles of shared codes of conduct on images and messages.

The challenge, then, is to explain this paradox and assess its effects without reproducing simple oppositions between "positive" and "negative" or "true" and "false" images. To do this, I draw inspiration from relevant scholarship on the social construction of meaning. For example, a prior analysis of British NGOs' use of images suggests treating the child image as a text as well as a photograph, with meanings derived as much from a cultural language of codes, signs, and connotations as from a literal reading of elements (Lidchi 1999). Another pertinent literature shows how Western conceptions of childhood reflect wider cultural attitudes, values, and assumptions (see Aitken 2001; Manzo 2006; Robson 2005; Ruddick 2003; see also Burman 1994).

Those studies all suggest that the child image is inherently paradoxical as it is inevitably a carrier of multiple meanings and a sender of mixed messages. Tensions and contradictions therefore exist at the site of the child image itself as well as in the relationship between image, text, and audience.<sup>5</sup> That insight is reinforced in two related ways in what follows. One is the idea that the child image can be read as *both* a contested metaphor for the majority world *and* as a signifier of humanitarian identity. The other is in the nature of NGO debates over images and messages, which have given rise at times to contradictory impulses. Even as efforts have been made to avoid the child image altogether, I show how its reach has been extended from fundraising appeals to social justice campaigns in overt attempts to put the image to work for more political ends.

That point alludes to the key tension the paper explores, which is that between colonial practices and humanitarian principles. Of special relevance here are the shifting parallels between the iconography of childhood and the colonial iconography of savagery. Whereas associations of childhood with universal human rights are relatively

recent, tropes of *innocence*, *dependence* and *protection* have a far longer lineage in colonial ideology (including the child-centrism of missionary iconography) and development theory. These are modes of representation where the discursive relationship “between an individual-developed subject and a non-developed object implicitly contains a parent–child metaphor” (Manzo 1991:14). The paternalism of this discourse is reinforced visually by what the paper calls “paradoxes of absence”, ie the unseen in images as well as the seen. The significance of the iconography of childhood is therefore the way it links traditional conceptions of childhood and savagery not only to each other but also to more contemporary development practice.

The point of the paper is not to condemn NGOs for heavy reliance on child images; rather, it is to highlight the contradictory effects of such images. When read as a metaphor for the majority world, the iconography of childhood reproduces colonial visions of a superior global north and an inferior south. This is counter-productive for NGOs in the sense of undermining their own image guidelines and threatening to reinforce a paternal logic in international development. Internal conflicts, as well as tensions with southern partners, are an inevitable consequence. But then so too is institutional survival and legitimacy—not only of northern NGOs and their varied forms of “rights-based” intervention but also of the very idea of development itself.

### **The Principle of Humanity**

The multi-dimensional principle of humanity contains three key components: alleviation of human suffering; protection of life; and respect for the human being (Slim 1997). The underlying human rights premise of the principle is respect for the right to life or (more broadly) respect for a right to life with dignity. The remainder of this section explores the use of a range of child images (some more contested than others) in relation to various NGO codes of conduct. Highlighted in the process are two fundamental tensions that remain unresolved. One is the tension between formal equality, on the one hand, and operational *inequality* on the other. The second tension is between images of humanitarian intervention as charity (with its connotations of apolitical relief) and more politically charged conceptions of rights-based development.

### *Images of Suffering*

Within the discursive framework provided by the language of rights, the alleviation of suffering is a human right and, by extension, an organisational obligation. The alleviation of suffering is certainly

inscribed within the “humanitarian imperative” that is the number one principle of the Sphere Project (an NGO coalition including the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement). Indeed, within the parameters of the *Code of Conduct* written into the larger *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (2000/2004) (referred to hereafter as the Humanitarian Charter), the alleviation of suffering is the “prime motivation” of the signatories’ response to disaster (Sphere Project 2004:317).

The alleviation of human suffering is arguably a noble goal (De Waal 1997:65). And yet NGOs remain under fire—both the well-intentioned aid worker who demeans suffering with “harried efficiency or working tedium” (Anderson 2000:499) and the powerful institutions that strategically turn suffering into “a commodity to be worked on and recast” (Cohen 2001:169).

Images of suffering are especially contested. The mass media and NGOs alike have been widely criticised for using such images to prompt emotional responses in readers and viewers—everything from sympathy, pity, empathy and sadness to anger and indignation—as a means to elicit donations and capture attention (Campbell 2004:61; Cohen 2001:183–194; Moeller 1999:2–39; Van der Gaag and Nash 1987:64–73; Voluntary Service Overseas 2002:10–12). Images of children in fundraising appeals, in particular, have been condemned for provoking “sympathy for passive suffering rather than support for active (including armed) struggle” (Burman 1994:241; see also Moeller 1999:8).

At the centre of debate about images of suffering stands a particular image—the one described by Stanley Cohen as the “universal icon of human suffering” (Cohen 2001:178). Be it the “Biafra child” of the 1960s or the “Ethiopia child” of the 1980s, this is the stereotypical “starving baby” image once used by Oxfam as a design on a Christmas tree ornament (Benthall 1993:175). Some of the more infamous exemplars have reduced children to body parts, notably the 1970s fundraising appeals that featured an image of “the helpless hand of a dying African child clasped by a fat and healthy adult white hand” (Benthall 1993:179; see also Lamers 2005:47).

Such images are against the spirit of the recently updated 1989 *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages Relating to the Third World* (referred to hereafter as the Code).<sup>6</sup> In the name of development education, the original Code asks European NGOs to avoid “pathetic” images and those that homogenise, falsify, fuel prejudice, and “foster a sense of Northern superiority”.<sup>7</sup> Such images, furthermore, are exemplars of what *not* to do in terms of the path-breaking guidelines developed by Save the Children. Its 1991 *Focus on Images* demanded respect for dignity and cautioned against representing entire communities, continents and worlds as “helpless recipients of handouts”. In Save the Children’s

current version of the guidelines, the injunction to photographers to portray vulnerability without robbing subjects of their dignity is even more forceful: “*Do not* show children as helpless victims—e.g. closely cropped pictures of children with sad eyes looking up to the camera. We should be truthful not sentimental” (emphasis in the original).<sup>8</sup>

And yet such images continue to circulate for a couple of reasons. One factor is intra-organisational conflicts of interest. The continued reappearance, despite NGO codes of practice on images and messages, of tiny hands (such as that of baby Alassa Galisou in Figure 2 above) and emaciated little bodies<sup>9</sup> is a reflection of internal tensions, such as the well-documented rift between fundraising and development education (Burman 1994:250; Cohen 2001:178–180). Contradictory practices are arguably an inevitable product of NGOs’ growth into multi-purpose organisations with competing objectives and mixed motives (Moro 1998; see also De Waal 1997).

A second factor is inter-organisational utility. The recycling of contested images is a sure indication of their usefulness and, in a wider sense, of one common organisational purpose. In the words of Susan Moeller, “if images of starving babies worked in the past to capture attention for a complex crisis of war, refugees and famine, then starving babies will headline the next difficult crisis” (Moeller 1999:2). Thanks to their unquestioned association with the work of disaster response, such images are also useful in securing the one shared objective of all NGOs, which is their own institutional survival (De Waal 1997:65; Moro 1998:77). As noted by Cohen, “stories of social suffering have become stories of humanitarian intervention” (2001:174). In terms of corporate legitimacy, the most useful images are those that validate such intervention and invest the actions of NGOs with authority—whether or not such images depict actual situations with any accuracy or truth (Lidchi 1999:100).

In sum, the “starving baby” image stands accused of demeaning suffering children by robbing them of their dignity and, when read as a spatial metaphor, of demeaning entire geographical areas (ie by representing particular parts of the world as pathetic and helpless). My point here, however, is that continued reliance on such a problematic imagery is paradoxical rather than unprincipled. For all its faults, the “starving baby” image *is* a powerful icon of human suffering thanks to the cultural connotations attached to its compositional elements.

On one level, bloated bellies, skeletal limbs and haunting eyes are clear signifiers of famine when framed within fundraising appeals and newspaper coverage.<sup>10</sup> But this association of emaciation with starvation is a social and media construction. As semiotic theory argues, “Photographs must gain some of their meaningfulness from the newspaper context in which they appear” (Bignell 2002:95). Meaning derives from the text, headlines and captions that surround visual

material as well as from the wider contexts within which they circulate (see also Campbell 2004:62–63; Levenstein 2000; Lidchi 1999; Rose 2001). Skeletal limbs could therefore just as easily signify disease and/or malnutrition.<sup>11</sup> By the same token, the bloated belly is not symptomatic of hunger alone but of an opportunistic disease called kwashiorkor.

On another level, the power of the “starving baby” image derives from the spectre of death that hangs over it. The connotation of impending death is logically consistent with the humanitarian imperative and the injunction to save life. It is a connotation that becomes especially apparent, however, when the “starving baby” image is read in relation to other NGO images of death.

### *Images of Death and Respect for a Right to Life with Dignity*

Premature death from famine and disease is a prominent issue in a wide variety of NGO campaigns. The imperative of death prevention is a traditional motif of emergency fundraising—for example, a 2000 Oxfam appeal for financial support to recently established feeding centres in Africa designed “to prevent fatal disease” (rather than famine *per se*). The advertisement—which was illustrated with nothing more than the Oxfam logo—made no explicit reference to children, instead identifying “10 million people” as the focus of intervention.<sup>12</sup> Now however—at a time when the reduction of child mortality is a millennium development goal<sup>13</sup>—an additional message being sent is that child mortality in the global south is a product of structures of poverty and thus a development issue (rather than an emergency situation calling for short-term relief). A recent illustration is the MPH’s so-called click campaign, with a series of celebrities clicking their fingers at three-second intervals to signify how often children die from “extreme poverty”.<sup>14</sup>

My argument here is that children—whether imaged as starving or not—are the dominant signifier of death. If the bloated belly and/or emaciated limbs of the “starving baby” is the ultimate icon of corporeal suffering, then the tears on the face of the “AIDs orphan” are arguably the exemplary icon of emotional suffering. Examples include the “Orphans of Nkandla” featured in a MPH video and a BBC documentary of the same name,<sup>15</sup> as well as the “two orphaned brothers” photographed in Mozambique in July 2005.<sup>16</sup>

Charges against images of suffering were reviewed in the previous section. A further relevant objection faults a too easy focus on the “grim realities” of pain and loss. According to Mary Anderson, if life is preferable to death then NGOs that draw attention to “horror and anguish” must simultaneously “affirm the joy and pleasures of life” (Anderson 2000:498–499). This raises the question of *how*. How are NGOs supposed to draw attention to premature mortality whilst also illustrating enjoyment of life?



An obvious answer is to show people who smile. A common feature of child sponsorship campaigns, in this regard, is a variation on the conventional mug shot shown at the beginning. In this version a vulnerable child smiles into the camera instead of staring without expression (as in Figure 1).<sup>17</sup> Another example is the photograph of a smiling fisherwoman that was used to accompany newspaper coverage of HIV infection rates in Zambia.<sup>18</sup>

Although less contested than images of suffering, such “positive” images—especially of posed children—are equally paradoxical for a couple of reasons. Firstly, “pictures where the child is posing, or smiling at the camera” are expressly rejected by Save the Children’s current photography guidelines, which include a section on “reality and context”. Preferred images show “children getting on with their lives rather than engaging with the camera”.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, smiling can be read as a signifier of aid efficacy as well as enjoyment of life. An Oxfam study of images of Africa commissioned after the 1985 Live Aid concert found, for example, that smiling Africans were assumed to be the recipients of western aid (Van der Gaag and Nash 1987:17). Positive images and upbeat messages that “show donors how wonderfully their contributions worked” are still just as useful for NGOs in terms of institutional survival and legitimacy as emotive images of suffering (Moro 1998:76). Thus, Oxfam UK now posts “success stories” on its website. One of these is of a smiling refugee (identified as Osman, aged 3 or 4) who has been taught hygiene lessons in a camp in Darfur and is thus a signifier of winning battles against contagious disease.<sup>20</sup> Such imperatives to demonstrate results are actually written into the aforementioned Save the Children guidelines, which ask photographers to show how the organisation’s work “is having an impact and helping to change children’s lives”.<sup>21</sup>

The problem with the smile as a signifier of aid is its cultural associations with charity. There is a connotation of *relief* in a dual sense—of emergency relief as an operational practice and of the human relief of the saved. A lucid illustration of this was the photograph of “a smiling mum and her baby” that appeared on the front cover of the *Daily Mirror* newspaper in the aftermath of the 2004 Asian Tsunami. The banner headline: “Your Help . . . Their Smiles” accompanied a story about the “healing” powers of “aid flows to victims”.<sup>22</sup>

A fundamental tension at the heart of NGO practice is the tension between formal equality (ie principled respect for human beings as moral equals) and the operational inevitability of “circumstantial inequality,” ie the inherent inequality in international aid relations that stems from differences in abilities, options, and accountability levels (Anderson 2000). This tension is arguably creative rather than destructive where inequalities are openly recognised (Anderson 2000:497). But exposing inequality in ways that reinforce the idea of humanitarian intervention

(indeed of development itself) as charitable handouts to the helpless countermands a key humanitarian principle, which is respect for human dignity. The aforementioned NGO Code, for example, lists “respect for the dignity of the people concerned” as one of its three guiding principles.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, the Humanitarian Charter affirms that “those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance” (Sphere Project 2004:5).

In the above quote from the Sphere Charter are echoes of international human rights law, which speaks a political language of accountability, obligation, and entitlement as well as a moral language of respect, equality, and dignity. Use of such political concepts would seem to be one way for NGOs to manage the tension discussed, ie by producing themselves as human rights defenders and not simply as dispensers of charity.

The ways in which images of children have been used in campaigns to change power relations is considered in more detail in the section on solidarity. Suffice it to say here that images of children in human rights campaigns reflect their greater international legal recognition as rights-bearing humans.<sup>24</sup> Such images also reflect the twin humanitarian principles considered in the next section.

## Neutrality and Impartiality

*A hungry child has no politics*—that slogan, which was “devised as the rallying cry of US aid for the 1984 famine in Ethiopia”, has been criticised for “abstracting children from politics” as an operational strategy (Burman 1994:243). This section suggests that images consistent with the slogan are contradictory in effect. Whilst they mirror humanitarian principles enshrined in the Geneva Conventions dating back to 1864, they also undermine more recent NGO guidelines on images and reinforce a contested image of NGOs themselves as apolitical entities.

Non-partisanship is the guiding tenet of the principle of neutrality. Its operational watchwords are *abstention* (of NGOs from involvement in conflict and war) and *prevention* (of NGOs being used to political advantage). Impartiality mandates equal treatment of both sides in a conflict, making it a “close relation” of the principle of neutrality (Slim 1997:348). Another guiding tenet of impartiality is non-discrimination on grounds of race, creed, or nationality. This translates into the operating concept of *proportionality of need*, whereby humanitarian aid obeys “no other imperative than that of the needs of people” (Bouchet-Saulnier 2000:4).

Neutrality is reaffirmed in the Code of Conduct written into the aforementioned Humanitarian Charter. The first principle reasserts an apolitical ideal with the claim that humanitarian assistance “is

not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such” (Sphere Project 2004:317). And yet a number of NGOs have abandoned neutrality in the name of a “new” humanitarianism that “sees apolitical, neutral, humanitarian relief as both naïve and morally questionable” (Fox 2001:275; see also Slim 1997).

Neutrality is the more contested of the two principles because it demands silence during so-called complex political emergencies (CPEs)<sup>25</sup> whereas impartiality allows for outspoken political judgements (Fox 2001:277). Retreat from neutrality (however contested and incomplete) is also a response to questions raised in the wake of aid efforts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where NGOs were accused in both cases of empowering human rights abusers and prolonging conflicts.

Critics agree that the impact of humanitarian intervention in CPEs can never be neutral because “so-called complex emergencies are essentially political in nature” (Duffield 1994:38; see also De Waal 1997:1). Aid can support either peace or war (Anderson 1999), but it can only do the former if NGOs recognise that choice of location and type of assistance inevitably alter relations of power. This was amply demonstrated by the humanitarian response to the Rwandan genocide of the mid 1990s. International NGOs accused of following “the television cameras” and concentrating support on external refugee camps unwittingly supported the perpetrators of genocide in control of those camps (Storey 1997:391).

The basic message that abstraction from context can be counter-productive has implications for the image debate, where it applies equally to neutrality’s more legitimate relative. The “universal child of developing nations” (Ruddick 2003:341) connotes abstraction from politics. Any child image may serve the cause of neutrality, as the use of children “allows NGOs to raise funds for politically loaded topics in a relatively neutral way” (Lamers 2005:48).

Impartiality, however, is arguably better served by the two classic iconographies reviewed earlier. The “starving baby” image signifies proportionality of need as well as (or indeed because of) the spectre of death. The underlying principle of non-discrimination, which precludes “adverse distinction of any kind” (Sphere Project 2004:317), is equally well served by the conventional mug shot of the lone anonymous child. As in Figure 1, children are “often portrayed alone in aid appeals, without markers of culture, history, or community” (Burman 1994:243; see also Ruddick 2003:341). Without any meaningful distinguishing features (at least to the viewer incapable of reading culture, time and place into physiognomy),<sup>26</sup> the lone child represents humanity as a whole and not any of the actual children affected by political circumstances.

And here again there is an obvious paradox, because the Save the Children photography guidelines demand images that “show the circumstances and environments in which children and their families live”. Those who use or take photographs are explicitly asked to avoid

abstract pictures “where the child could be anywhere in the world, in any situation”. As the issue is framed as a matter of “reality and context”,<sup>27</sup> the implicit concern is with accuracy and truth. Abstraction is a problem in itself when the aim is to educate and inform. But as the following section additionally demonstrates, misinformation can leave powerful (mistaken) impressions.

### *Paradoxes of Absence*

In the missionary iconography it is the missionaries who occupy the central and dominating position ... What is remarkable, furthermore, in drawings as well as photographs, is a certain *absence*: representatives of the native population are excluded ... Hence we see the missionaries and nuns ... usually surrounded by children rather than adults (Pieterse 1992:71).

Contemporary images of children recall the child-centrism of what Jan Pieterse calls the “missionary subculture” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Pieterse 1992:71). Statues of African children were sometimes used as collection boxes for missionary fundraising. Furthermore, a missionary society tradition of buying children from slave markets to raise and baptise transmuted after the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 into a latter-day child sponsorship scheme. Purchase of a “heathen child” entitled the buyer to provision of a baptismal name and a photograph of the chosen one (Pieterse 1992:72).

The most significant element of old-style missionary subculture, for current purposes, is the aforementioned iconography. The reference reinforces an insight from theories of visual culture, which highlight the relevance of the “unseen” (Foster 1988:ix) and the importance of “conceptualising absence” (Rogoff 2000:10). Representation, in other words, is about absence (what we *don't* see) as well as about presence (what we *do* see).

The problem with images of anonymous and autonomous children—somehow cast adrift from surrounding adults, local cultures, and indigenous aid organisations—is the way they can doubly mislead. When isolated anonymous children appear without recourse to any indigenous kinship structures or community support mechanisms, an impression of their vulnerability is encouraged. At the same time, the visible connotations of protection and rescue suggested by the presence of colonial missionaries and nuns and (more recently) of contemporary aid workers magnify the power and influence of external forces.

When seen against the colonial backdrop, the absences produced by signifiers of neutrality and impartiality are thus both paradoxical and counter-productive for NGOs. The mistaken impression given of children’s total dependence on outside forces for protection and care can

work to the advantage of NGOs by inflating donors' sense of external efficacy, authority and power. At the same time, the absence of any sign that large international NGOs work with and through indigenous counterparts undermines the "partnership discourse" embraced by a multitude of NGOs as well as the World Bank (Baaz 2005:2).

Also undermined once again are NGO guidelines on images. The Preface to the 2006 Code argues that images should represent "the partnership that often results between local and international NGOs".<sup>28</sup> In similar vein, the current Save the Children guidelines ask for photographs that illustrate more than just children's vulnerability. As an alternative to "pictures of white, expatriate aid workers dispensing aid to passive recipients", they ask to see "local Save the Children staff and partner organisations working to support children and their families".<sup>29</sup>

As noted already, NGOs turn to human rights concepts as a way to manage tensions, contradictions and paradoxes. The human rights framework also offers a way for NGOs to counter the charge that they are latter-day missionary societies and exactly like their colonial counterparts. The concluding section shows how a particular human rights principle—namely solidarity—"is gaining increasing currency within debates about humanitarian positioning" (Slim 1997:349). I also demonstrate that the solidarity principle has been adapted to accommodate concerns about its practical application in ways that only fuel the recycling of stock images of children.

## Solidarity

*Justice not charity*—this slogan, which was run during the *Live 8* pop concert of 2005,<sup>30</sup> is a fitting rallying cry for a principle that "represents the stance of those who wish to abandon both neutrality and impartiality" (Slim 1997:349). The defining elements of solidarity are rights, justice, accountability, and partisanship. Its guiding tenet is respect for human rights as enshrined in two arenas of international law.

The first arena is international humanitarian law (IHL), which focuses on protection and treatment in war. Within this frame, special recognition is accorded only to children under the age of 15, who cannot be recruited into armed services or forced to participate in hostilities. The key distinction in IHL is between combatants and non-combatants. Children are generally covered by the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which extended rights to civilians in war.<sup>31</sup>

The second arena is the more expansive international human rights law. The trailblazer here was the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which "sets out the indivisible rights of individuals and groups, both economic and social, and civil and political" (Bryer and Cairns 1997:364). Subsequent amendments include the 1990 UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which asks states to recall that the UDHR entitles childhood to “special care and assistance”.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of NGO codes of conduct, two of the clearest expressions of shared commitments to solidarity are the 2006 Code (which lists promotion of fairness, solidarity and justice as a guiding principle) and the 1997 *NGDO Charter*—a set of basic principles of “development and humanitarian aid NGOs in the European Union”.<sup>33</sup> The first value listed there is “social justice, equity and respect for human rights”. A universal right to “a basic standard of living” (and not merely to life) based on poverty eradication, social justice, and a fair distribution of wealth and natural resources is identified as a core belief. A related commitment is to empowerment—the affirmation that “all people should be empowered to be able to determine their own values” (*NGDO Charter* 1997:3).

The embrace of solidarity by NGOs is highly political in the sense that its key concepts presuppose unequal power relations and attendant political goals. Abandoning the apolitical ethos by taking the fight to particularly corrupt and abusive regimes is a double-edged sword for NGOs, for as they silence the critics of neutrality they risk territorial expulsion and physical harm to “their beneficiaries and partners” (Smillie 1995:228). A viable alternative—especially for BINGOs whose theatre of operations is necessarily global—is to target the international system and the various forces that sustain it. This is a move with demonstrable implications for NGOs’ use of images, as their own critiques of international trade clearly show.

A main MPH theme is *trade justice*.<sup>34</sup> This has been imaged repeatedly without recourse to the iconography of childhood. Images of producers of primary commodities such as coffee and bananas (or just coffee bushes or bunches of bananas) are arguably the dominant signifiers of trade *injustice* and the attendant fair trade agenda. A fitting example is the photograph of “Peris Mwhiki pruning her coffee bushes after the harvest in Kenya’s Central Province”, which was used in a report for Oxfam’s Make Trade Fair campaign. The accompanying caption describes the pitifully small percentage of the final selling price of coffee being returned to producers like Peris (see Gresser and Tickell 2002).

A critical question is whether such images and messages are consistent with solidarity’s traditional operating concept, which is *concrete action* on behalf of the wronged. This expansive term covers everything from special provision of relief aid to lobbying and advocacy, political protests and legal actions (Slim 1997:349; see also United Nations Development Programme 2000:76). Critics question whether the right and the good can always be easily distinguished from the wrong and the bad (Slim 1997:350; see also Rieff 2002). The answer suggested by the trade justice movement is clear: in a globalising world of “rigged rules and double standards”,<sup>35</sup> the wronged are all those “left

behind” in the expansion of an unequal system of trade. The category may include all “poor countries and poor people” by definition or, alternatively, extend only to export commodity producers (Watkins and Fowler 2003:7).

Perhaps images of poverty (or commodities) are not the best way to convey unfairness and a sense of injustice. When asked to design a suitable alternative, photography students I worked with in China in July 2005 suggested using signifiers of imbalance—either a see-saw with a child at one end and an adult at the other or (even more telling) the scales of justice tipped to one side.<sup>36</sup> A somewhat evocative image was later employed by MPH, in a series of simulated images of sports stars speaking out for fair trade. Among these was an image of athlete Dame Kelly Holmes, burdened at the start of a race with heavy baskets on her wrists. The accompanying caption read: “This is a race not even Kelly Holmes could win”.<sup>37</sup>

The international trading system has been likened to a race in which “the weakest athletes face the highest hurdles” (Watkins and Fowler 2003:8), so MPH’s image of a successful Olympian unable to run is clearly meant to signify the structural reality of unfair competition. Unfortunately, the uniform choice of recognisably British stars—instead of world class athletes like Ethiopia’s Haile Gebre Selassie, for example—is equally evocative of the “cult of celebrity” that some NGO workers see as a threat to their organisational integrity. In the words of an officer of the United Nations’ children’s agency Unicef, for example, “when most people think of the UN now they think of Angelina Jolie on a crusade, not the work that goes on in the field . . . celebrity is at the heart of every Unicef campaign these days and the association is being sold incredibly cheaply” (quoted in McDougall 2006).

NGOs’ use of celebrities is not as novel as it might seem, and the issue may not be celebrities per se but rather the traditionally apolitical nature of their involvement with NGO causes and campaigns. So-called celebrity aid dates back at least to 1954, when the American actor Danny Kaye became the first ambassador for Unicef (Holman 2006). In 1963, the Beatles held a benefit concert in their native Liverpool to support Oxfam’s “no child should die of hunger” fundraising campaign. What if celebrities who want to do more than simply rattle the fundraising tins (as the Beatles were photographed doing backstage)<sup>38</sup> were asked to turn the spotlight on aid’s failures instead of successes? What if they demanded, for example, that, “any aid project [in Africa] should be conditional on matching funds from African sources?” (Holman 2006:5–6). Celebrities willing to speak out in this way might spark a much-needed debate about the most effective forms of aid to the African continent (Holman 2006).

That same argument has been made by NGOs about themselves. In an article in the Oxfam journal *Development in Practice*, for example,

David Bryer and Edmund Cairns advocate conditional aid, arguing that “the impartial provision of aid does not mean providing aid to everyone or without conditions” (Bryer and Cairns 1997:367). This is roundly rejected, on the other hand, by Fiona Fox (from the aid agency CAFOD) in an article in the journal *Disasters* (Fox 2001). Two main aspects of her argument are particularly relevant to the next section of the paper. Firstly, there is concern about the possible construction of a hierarchy of victims (or a dichotomy of deserving and undeserving victim). Solidarity campaigns would then reproduce a hierarchy that is already noticeable in emergency appeals and media coverage of famine, where women and children (or little girls in particular) occupy the ranks at the top (Cohen 2001:176; Burman 1994:242; Manzo 2006).

A further concern is about one practical (retrospective) implication of conditional aid, namely that it should have been operative in the refugee camps established on the borders of Rwanda. This is also rejected on the grounds that it would have meant overlooking the needs of the great number of “innocent people in the camps” (Fox 2001:280). What is meant by “innocence” in this context is quite specific; it is the absence of any conviction for crime (Fox 2001:286).

The next section considers how innocence has become associated more generally with childhood. The bigger issue is the extent to which NGOs are amending the solidarity principle in ways that re-ignite concerns about colonial metaphors.

### *Innocence-based Solidarity*

A significant amendment to the solidarity principle is what Slim calls “innocence-based solidarity” (1997:350). Here, NGOs do not claim solidarity with all the “wronged” (or the entire global poor) but only with those perceived as most innocent, vulnerable, and disadvantaged.

Evidence that this new category is dominated by “women, children, and the elderly” (Slim 1997:350) can be seen in NGO codes as well as particular campaigns. For example, the aforementioned NGDO Charter calls on NGOs working for the empowerment of “particularly disadvantaged groups” to pay special attention to “children, minorities and other groups at risk” (1997:4). An apt illustration of this is a fundraising appeal for Oxfam UK’s *I’m in* campaign. The appeal is dominated by a close-up shot of an unsmiling woman. The subject of the photograph appears to be alone in the world and is thus portrayed as autonomous in the manner of the classic iconography of neutrality and impartiality. The subject is not anonymous, however, as she is made known by accompanying captions. These identify the woman as Poonam Toppo and describe her as a “change-maker” living in India, where she is among those trained by Oxfam to “go out into their own communities



and alter the social attitudes and beliefs that support violence against women". The message to the viewer is clear: "Say *I'm in* and give £8 a month" as a sign of commitment to the fight against world poverty and a willingness to help make poverty's voice heard.<sup>39</sup>

The *I'm in* appeal stands in notable contrast to traditional child sponsorship campaigns, such as the one by Plan UK which asks for "£12 a month" to help fund "community-based projects that address children's basic needs".<sup>40</sup> While there is the same call for a monthly donation, Oxfam's commitment to concrete action is expressed in far more political language, ie as support for political empowerment or "voice". The metaphor of battle (against world poverty), furthermore, shifts the very idea of development itself—from apolitical project provision and administration to advocacy on behalf of political change.

Asking for donations to political campaigns is risky for NGOs in the absence of a general acceptance of aims. At a time when action against extreme poverty (and hunger) is the UN's number one millennium development goal, world poverty would seem to be a pretty safe target. Innocence-based solidarity as a mode of attack is also a relatively safe bet, because its construction of a category of deserving poor taps into a cultural "sinking ship" ethos of women and children first. But this only exposes the inherent tension in innocence-based solidarity appeals, which is the danger of mixed signals and messages. *Salvation* was the missionary project, and *rescue* is the underlying motif of emergency relief. When Poonam Toppo's face is overwritten by Oxfam's text, the "voice of poverty" might seem to be saying two different things: "Rescue me! I'm poor" as well as "support me in my struggle for change". This juxtaposition changes the solidarity slogan (and, by extension, public understanding of development itself) from "justice *not* charity" to "justice *and* charity".

That latter slogan is arguably a better reflection of what multi-purpose BINGOs actually do than the former. But the counter-productive implications for NGO codes of conduct of mixed signals and messages become particularly stark when images of children enter the solidarity frame. Solidarity with the young is a reflection of a sense of their powerlessness as well as an indication of a "new development agenda on children" (White 2002:725). Within the discursive framework of human rights, the claims of disadvantaged minors are pressed (as for adults) in the language of universal rights and entitlements. Only children, however, are positioned as having special rights to education, play, and freedom from responsibility (Manzo 2005:395).

In terms of practice, aid aimed at an "archetypical child" perceived as passive, dependent, and innocent of wrongdoing has been "framed primarily as efforts to provide for and protect" (Moore 2000:532). Such efforts are especially apparent where the child in question is a refugee

(as in Figure 1). In May 2000, for example, a Save the Children call for help to enforce the IHL right of civilian protection in war used the imagery of a goldfish being torn from its bowl. Under the heading: “You think this is sick? Now imagine it’s happening to a child”, the appeal holds “adults” responsible on the grounds that “children don’t start wars”. The viewer is then reminded that those children unfortunate enough to be displaced by warfare “have a fundamental human right, under international law, to be protected”.<sup>41</sup>

That same type of protectionist agenda has now extended even further, into education campaigns and abolitionist interventions against child labour (Bass 2004; Manzo 2003, 2005). Attempts to develop objective measures of vulnerability so that the neediest children can be effectively targeted are also underway (Moore 2000:541). These follow the “adjustment with a human face” trail blazed by a 1980s study for Unicef, which used a close-up shot of a single child on its cover to signify vulnerability and the need for protection (see Cornia, Jolly and Stewart 1987).

Childhood is “a problematic social construction” (Aitken 2001:120) in the sense that even where particular traits remain relatively constant and thus appear natural, their meaning and significance clearly vary over time. This can be seen historically in the way that changing attitudes toward the treatment of English children “paralleled shifting conceptions of the nature of the child, from being innately bad to good and back again” (Jahoda 1999:141). Where contemporary images are concerned, an especially relevant aspect of the current children’s rights agenda is the way that Western fantasies of childhood dependence and innocence have come to assume universal status (Manzo 2005:394; Moore 2000:536).

Dependence as an attribute of childhood is a motif that dates back to Greco-Roman antiquity (Jahoda 1999:9). Its longevity is a function of its adaptability to changing (and inconsistent) underlying representations and ideals. A traditionally negative view sees childhood principally in terms of an absence of understanding and reason, which condemns the child to ignorance and prevents it from handling its own affairs (Jahoda 1999:9). On the more positive side, a relatively novel ideal of children as “free from burdens of work, care and onerous responsibilities” (Robson 2004:230) dates back to nineteenth century idealisations of childhood as a space of education and play (see Aitken 2001:121; Moore 2000:533–537).

That negative view of childhood as an imperfect and inferior state on the way to adulthood was recycled in “a wide range of references to savages which employ the child image from the early nineteenth century onwards” (Jahoda 1999:143). The colonial principle of guardianship implicitly contained a parent–child metaphor, with its underlying message that colonised peoples require guidance from “civilized”

Europeans in the same way that minors need guidance from parents. The same (colonial) metaphor is traceable to more recent development theory (Manzo 1991).

Concerns about the use of the child image as a spatial metaphor are thus partly a consequence of the negative connotations still attaching to childhood. Iconic representations of the majority world as ignorant, passive and helpless have been condemned for reinforcing “existing, patronising, colonial stereotypes” (Lamers 2005:54). At the same time, as many have argued, childhood is still a signifier of more “positive” traits such as vulnerability and innocence (Burman 1994:243; Cohen 2001:182–183; Lamers 2005:47). What Gustav Jahoda calls the “romantic idealisation of childhood innocence” is often traced to the philosopher Rousseau despite its roots in ancient political thought (Jahoda 1999:142). Studies suggest that audiences are often captivated by idealised images of “innocent” children as they appeal to parenting instincts of care and protection (Lamers 2005; Levenstein 2000; Maxwell 1999:156).

The question, then, is whether the child image can effectively support the principle of solidarity’s political demands without necessarily emitting contradictory signals and messages. Can “unhelpful significations of childhood” be “warded off by reading them within the context of critique,” as Erica Burman suggests? (Burman 1994:250). By the same token, do attendant political messages inevitably preclude a conventional reading of the child image as a (contested) metaphor for the majority world?

A promising example is another one of the photographs from Oxfam UK’s *I’m in* campaign. This time the image is of an expressionless baby looking back at the camera. The accompanying text (of which there are two different versions) demonstrates that this is a campaign advertisement and not a fundraising appeal.<sup>42</sup> Not only is there no mention of money; there is also a clearly defined target and political problem rather than an abstract conception of wrongdoing (such as unfair competition or warfare). The target is the leaders of the G8 group of countries; the attendant political problem is its record of broken promises on MPH issues such as debt cancellation. Furthermore, there is a concrete political demand on the reader—to sign a petition to the Prime Minister telling him to keep up the pressure for change.

So the message is a lucid expression of the principle of solidarity. When read within the context of Oxfam’s critique of the G8, the baby’s image is a signifier of innocence-based solidarity rather than neutrality or impartiality. The image, furthermore, is a way to draw attention to the political message. If the petition gets signed as a consequence, then the image has served a useful political purpose.

Nonetheless, the campaign’s use of this baby is problematic in terms of NGO codes of conduct—including Oxfam’s own image guidelines,

which ask (among other things) for the subjects of images to be named and made known.<sup>43</sup> In neither version of the “G8” advertisement is there a name or a place for the baby. This baby is therefore not “real” in the same way that named subjects—such as Figure 2’s Alassa Galisou in Niger and the aforementioned Poonam Toppo in India—are real. The baby can only be read as a representation of something, such as humanity or poverty or debt. *Any* image of a lone baby (with its absences and cultural iconography of childhood) can always be read as an infantilising spatial metaphor of the majority world—whether image guidelines are followed or not. But a main point of such guidelines is to make colonial parent–child metaphors of development more difficult.

## Conclusion

This paper focused on what others have described as the dominant iconography of the global south, namely, images of children. The decision to limit the scope of the inquiry to major British-based NGOs associated with the MPH campaign was taken for several reasons. Firstly, BINGOs such as Oxfam and Save the Children, are among a handful of organisations that dominate the international NGO scene. In that sense they enjoy a degree of global power and influence as well as popular domestic recognition thanks to their routine media presence. Secondly, these organisations are signatories to all the major codes of conduct reviewed in the paper. Thirdly, they are organisations that both use child images extensively and also debate them as well. Shared codes of conduct on images and messages, internal image guidelines, and inter-organisational conferences show the extent to which these NGOs express concerns about themes such as representation, development practice, and development education. Fourthly, these are multi-purpose organisations that represent all contemporary aspects of international development—everything from emergency relief to service provision and advocacy campaigns. Finally, these organisations are dynamic. Their enduring yet changing agendas are reflected both in the principles they espouse and in the images they adopt to advertise their various activities and draw attention to particular causes.

The basic answer offered to the question of how (and with what effect) child images are used by prominent NGOs is that they work in the same way as their shared codes of conduct—to produce a humanitarian identity for the NGO. Humanitarianism itself is a site of debate, as the paper has shown, because international development is a site of debate. Organisational embrace of human rights language and law only invites questions about the extent to which NGO operations (in their entirety) can ever be apolitical, unconditional and value free. Nonetheless, and within this context, the iconography of childhood operates like a shared brand logo that advertises NGOs’ humanitarian ideals.

The paper has shown how the iconography of childhood also works for NGOs in the same way that missionary iconography worked in the colonial age. It reinforces an impression of both institutional efficacy and the power to act in *loco parentis* by tapping into cultural associations of childhood with dependence, innocence, and the need for protection and care. What makes these images politically interesting is their paradoxical nature. They can be read as both signifiers and metaphors: the same image (such as the much critiqued “starving baby” image still featured in many emergency appeals) can faithfully represent a shared value such as the principle of humanity whilst problematically representing one part of the world as infantile, helpless, and inferior. Whether conventional child images can ever effectively serve NGO causes such as development education and debt cancellation depends in part on the impressions given by the surrounding text, messages, and captions. What seems certain is that such images will never be abandoned entirely as long as they help to legitimise the foundational idea of all western-based development—that the global south is inevitably better off with ongoing interventions (in the name of development) than it would be without them.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “BINGOs” stands for “big international NGOs” involved, traditionally, in both short-term humanitarian relief and long-term development projects. The Overseas Development Institute (2003) identifies the key players as Oxfam, Save the Children, CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), and World Vision. For a useful overview of NGO-related acronyms in general, see Hulme and Edwards (1997:xi).

<sup>2</sup> MPH is the political wing of (and successor to) the Band Aid 20 single “Do they know its Christmas?” (see BBC One 2004). While officially a coalition of over 500 aid and development organisations, MPH was unofficially dominated—according to an informant who wishes to remain anonymous—by the British government, Oxfam, and Comic Relief. Although it continues to exist in virtual space, MPH was formally disbanded six months after the *Live 8* concert of July 2005 (see Bowcott 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Recent stakeholder conferences held in the UK and Ireland include *Imaging Famine*, a public exhibition and two-day conference I co-hosted and organised in 2005 (see <http://www.imaging-famine.org>); the 2006 *World in the UK* conference, which refocused attention on media representation of the majority world (Development Education Association 2006; see also Manzo 2006); and the 2007 conference convened by Dochas (the umbrella organisation of Irish NGOs) to consider updates to the 1989 European Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (available at [http://www.dochas.ie/Documents/Code\\_images\\_98.htm](http://www.dochas.ie/Documents/Code_images_98.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> Although, even here, the spectre of death is arguably always in the background—haunting the lives of those represented as exceptional in their capacity to thrive. Apart from Nelson Mandela—perhaps the ultimate celebrity male icon—prominent examples include Grace Matnanga, the HIV-positive woman from Malawi featured in *The Guardian* newspaper’s special report into the costs of anti-retroviral drugs (see, for example, Boseley 2004:4) and Birhan Woldu, the grown-up survivor of the 1984–1985 Ethiopian famine and “Live 8 heroine” featured in *The Sun* (see, for example, Harvey 2005:1, 3).

<sup>5</sup> Although the paper does not undertake a formal semiotic analysis, it does share with semiotics an analytical focus on what Gillian Rose calls the “site of the image itself” (Rose 2001:29–30). I derive meaning, in other words, from an academically inspired reading of images and text, rather than from audience studies or interviews with image producers. For more on visual methodologies, see in general Rose (2001); see also Bignell (2002).

<sup>6</sup> After a process of consultation with the original signatories, the updated code of 2006 dropped the reference to the Third World and is titled simply *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*. It is available from [http://www.dochas.ie/document/Images\\_and\\_Messages.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/document/Images_and_Messages.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 3 for reference to the 1989 Code.

<sup>8</sup> The original guidelines from Save the Children were supplied to the author by photographer D J Clark—a co-curator of Imaging Famine. The current guidelines were distributed at the aforementioned Dochas conference of 2007. For more information about availability, contact the Picture Editor: [pictureeditor@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:pictureeditor@savethechildren.org.uk).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the critique of such images in the *New Internationalist* (2005:6).

<sup>10</sup> See boards 1 and 2 of the Imaging Famine exhibition—available at <http://www.imaging-famine.org>.

<sup>11</sup> This is especially so in Africa, where HIV/AIDs and the deadly tropical disease kala azar react parasitically with malnutrition to produce emaciation (Bonet 2005).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the advertisement entitled “Oxfam Emergency” in *The Guardian* newspaper, 12 August 2005:5.

<sup>13</sup> “Reduce child mortality” is fourth on the list of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These can be seen at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

<sup>14</sup> The video images can be seen on the MPH website at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/video>

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 14 and BBC Four (2005).

<sup>16</sup> See the “Live 8 souvenir special” published in *The Observer* 3 July 2005:8.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the “5 reasons why you should sponsor a child with Plan” in the “Live 8 souvenir special” (see footnote 16).

<sup>18</sup> Both the article and the image—which was captioned “Hope in a time of HIV”—was part of a larger joint charity appeal by *The Guardian* newspaper and the BINGO Medecins sans Frontieres—Doctors without Borders in English (Vidal 2006:21). The photograph was also part of a larger portfolio of images of Africans living with HIV/AIDs (Bonet 2005).

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 8 for reference.

<sup>20</sup> See Osman at [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam\\_in\\_action/impact/success\\_stories/kalma.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/impact/success_stories/kalma.html)

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 8 for reference.

<sup>22</sup> See the *Daily Mirror* 7 January 2005:1.

<sup>23</sup> The other two are: “belief in the equality of all people” and “acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice”. See footnote 6 for reference.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/fulltext.htm>

<sup>25</sup> According to Mark Duffield, the term complex political emergency emerged in Africa in the late 1980s and is understood by the United Nations to mean “a major humanitarian crisis of a multi-causal nature that requires a system-wide response” (Duffield 1994:38).

<sup>26</sup> This point was made to me by a delegate to the aforementioned Dochas conference who was from Kenya originally. She suggested that markers of identification are more obvious to African readers of images than to non-Africans.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 8 for reference.

<sup>28</sup> Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (2006:2). See footnote 6 for reference.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote 8 for reference.

- <sup>30</sup> See also the earlier documentary about the making of the Band Aid 20 charity single, "Band Aid 20: Justice, not charity" (BBC One 2004).
- <sup>31</sup> An overview of the Geneva Conventions is available at <http://www.genevaconventions.org>
- <sup>32</sup> The quote is from the preamble to the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child. The full text is available at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/fulltext.htm>
- <sup>33</sup> The *NGDO Charter* (1997) is available at: [http://www.dochas.ie/Documents/NGDO\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/Documents/NGDO_Charter.pdf)
- <sup>34</sup> See <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/whatwewant/trade/shtml>
- <sup>35</sup> This was the title of a report for Oxfam's Make Trade Fair campaign by Watkins and Fowler (2003).
- <sup>36</sup> My thanks to all the students on the MA in Photography programme at the University of Dalian, China, July 2005, for their imaginative contributions to discussion.
- <sup>37</sup> See "Sports stars speak out for fair trade," *The Observer* 4 December 2005:14.
- <sup>38</sup> A photograph of the Beatles with an Oxfam poster and fundraising tins was reproduced in *The Guardian* 3 March 2000:6.
- <sup>39</sup> For a copy of the appeal see *The Guardian* 13 September 2007:13. The viewer of the appeal is also directed to a website: <http://www.povertyhasavoice.com>
- <sup>40</sup> See footnote 17 for reference.
- <sup>41</sup> The appeal can be seen in *The Guardian* 8 May 2000:13.
- <sup>42</sup> In the first version of the advertisement there is a long piece of text that ends just above the head of the baby. It can be seen in *The Guardian* 27 May 2007:38. The second, shorter version overwrites the baby with a slogan: "Even the G8 leaders need reminding of how important they are". Accompanying information and the call to sign the petition are set off in smaller type to the side of the image. See *The Guardian* 29 May 2007:4.
- <sup>43</sup> The Oxfam guidelines on images (1993) are currently out of print, but the guidelines themselves suggest making inquiries to: Oxfam Publications, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

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