

A simple black outline map of the African continent, including the Horn of Africa and Madagascar. The map is centered on the page, and the title and authors' names are printed within its boundaries.

IMAGES OF AFRICA

The UK Report

by

Nikki van der Gaag and Cathy Nash

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IMAGES OF AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

"It is a fact that external emergency aid has saved many thousands of lives. While recognising this, we also have to refuse and fight against the image of Africans as not capable of dealing with their problems. We thus have to show concretely what has been done by Africans and to provide a counter-image of Africa."

(from the report of the first meeting of African consultants in Accra on the "Image of Africa project, January 1987)

"Dawn, and as the sun breaks through the piercing chill of the night on the plain outside Korem, it lights up a biblical famine, now, in the twentieth century. This place, say workers here, is the closest thing to hell on earth" (1).

These words, accompanied by powerful and disturbing images, brought the actuality of the famine in Northern Ethiopia into the lives of millions of British people. Michael Buerk and Mohamed Amin's film was soon to reach viewing figures of half a billion. This was not the first time that the media had used such images. Similar pictures had documented famines in the past, including earlier famines in Africa in the 1970s.

The fact that this time the famine images became the currency of the media and the NGOs created a particular public consciousness of Africa. It was a consciousness that had evolved from a history rooted in a colonial relationship. But the 1984 images confirmed rather than challenged these traditional perceptions of Africa and Africans.

1. Michael Buerk, BBC TV News, 23rd October 1984

The nature of the response to the crisis lay in immediacy, which took little account of an Africa beyond the famine; of Africa as Africans themselves see it. This failure to address the complex relationship of historical, social, political and economic factors has had serious implications for British attitudes both towards black Africa and towards Britain's own black population. It was concerns such as these which led to the establishment of the Images of Africa project by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2). It was felt that an international study of the 1984 famine and resulting campaigns and information material was needed - a study which would be Africa-wide as well as in Europe. NGOs and consultants from Italy, Belgium, Denmark, West Germany, France, Ireland, and the U.K. in Europe, and Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mozambique, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Ethiopia in Africa were invited to take part in a collaborative coordinated project. The details were to be worked out by the consultants, and were as follows:

In Europe:

"1. to undertake a survey of a sample of the national media and examine how it covered events in six African countries suffering from food deficits.

2. to evaluate the NGO information material produced on Africa during 1984-1986, and to compare this with their stated philosophies on development and on Africa.

3. to understand the European public's perceptions of African problems; to identify the conscious and unconscious elements of these perceptions; to draw from this study the necessary conclusions for development education campaigns."(3)

2. Initiated at the end of 1985 by the Freedom from Hunger campaign/Action for Development of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, together with three Italian NGOs (Crocevia, Terra Nuova and CRIC)

3. from the second European meeting, Rome, 13th-15th November 1986

In Africa:

- "1. to evaluate the impact of aid on African societies in its positive and negative aspects both in the short and long term; in particular to examine its impact on the way of thinking of affected groups and other social sectors;
2. to present African initiatives taken to face the recent food crisis (either spontaneous village-level reactions or NGO promoted projects), thus trying to present a realistic image of Africa with its problems and dynamism;
3. to examine how African media and African NGOs presented the recent food crisis and to make recommendations for an information strategy of African NGOs."(4)

Oxfam was chosen as the facilitating NGO in the U.K., and decided to concentrate on research which would take a mainly qualitative approach, and which could be of use to development educationalists and to NGO staff carrying out internal evaluations. The research had three separate parts, focussing in turn on 1) the public's perceptions of Africa, 2) media images of Africa, 3) NGOs' images of Africa.

The project would be carried out in the light of current development education practice, which aims to improve and extend educational debate on development and developing countries, and therefore to present the peoples of such countries as active participants in development rather than as passive recipients of aid.

4. from the first African meeting, Accra, 19th-21st January 1987

I. THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICA

Research into public perceptions of and images of Africa inevitably dealt with memories, impressions, and subjective reactions, affected by cultural attitudes and values which have their roots in the history of Africa's relationship with Europe.

It was recognised at the preliminary meetings in Rome that at the time of the research (1986) it was no longer possible to make a comparative study of public perceptions of Africa before and after the 1984/5 emergency campaign. It was possible, however, to establish the extent of factual knowledge of Africa's geography and history, and to gather opinions of the causes of the famine and reveal the most commonly held stereotypes.

1. AIMS

The main concern of this section of the report was to investigate the public's perceptions of Africa, and to assess how these had been affected by the media and by information put out by NGOs.

Development education principles were an important consideration when formulating the objectives. It was felt that any face to face research should be wary of merely revealing stereotypes and should therefore use a research technique that would take people through a learning process. This would seek not only to establish current perceptions of Africa but to encourage people to question those perceptions and to examine other views of Africa, including those of Africans themselves.

These objectives reflected the qualitative approach common to all research for this project, and necessitated a somewhat time-consuming, in-depth process of investigation.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the European component of the research was established during planning meetings in Rome in June and November 1986. It was subsequently adapted to suit the U.K. context.

The process would begin by exploring images of Africa held by the public, and then look at the sources of such images. It would assess the factual knowledge of the continent; consider whose viewpoints were presented and why, and explore possible alternatives.

2.1 Target groups

The indepth nature of the research in the U.K. meant that a specific target group of manageable proportions had to be identified. This target group had to fit the criteria established in Rome, i.e. to contain elements of the other suggested target groups: black people, the unemployed, and NGO donors. It was decided to concentrate mainly on young people aged 13-18. This was partly because they responded more actively to the Ethiopian famine appeal than had traditionally been the case, and partly because they were the main target group for Band Aid and Live Aid. They had the additional advantage of being readily accessible in groups.

2.2 The research procedure

The Rome meetings suggested a brainstorming session and the subsequent showing of various photographs of Africa reflecting different aspects of African reality. These were: Africa starving, Africa developing, Africa adventure, Africa - Europe, and Africa underdeveloped. In the U.K., categories or photographs which reflected very obvious stereotypes were not included for the reasons given above. The six photographs which were chosen can be seen in Appendix E.

The process was carried out with 75 young people from three different schools. To give as wide a spread as possible, the schools were chosen for their ethnic make-up; for a rural/urban spread; to involve a number of different age-groups, and to choose some young people who had considered the question of the famine in Africa, and some who had not.

In different sessions, they were asked (in groups) to carry out a number of exercises which incorporated the agreed research procedure:

a) Mental maps. The initial exercise aimed to establish overall impressions of Africa, including both factual knowledge and the predominant images. All groups involved had been asked to put down what they saw as Africa - maps, poems, drawings - anything that came to mind. In all, twelve groups of approximately

six people were tested. The work was carried out on large sheets of paper; one for each group.

b) to brainstorm - that is, randomly list - the origins of these images.

c) Newspaper exercise. This exercise enabled participants to make their own assessment of the tone of language and image in a selection of 1984 newspaper articles on Ethiopia.

In groups, participants were given copies of the newspaper reports from 1984. They were asked to distinguish between fact, opinion and emotive language, marking each with a different colour. They were also asked to assess the purpose of the picture and its relevance to the text. The reportback and discussion revealed the extent to which young people were able to critically analyse journalistic reporting.

d) Photographs exercise. The main purpose of this exercise was to engender discussion, and to establish what an image could say of itself.

The same small groups of participants were each given three photographs of Africa (see Appendix E) which related to one of the following themes: Tourism, (Africa adventure); trade and aid (Europe-Africa); Life in Africa (Africa developing); Famine (Africa starving). They were then asked to give the three photographs a general name, and also to caption each photograph separately. They then had to ask themselves what was happening in the photograph, where it was; who took it and why, and suggest where it might be used and what point it might illustrate.

Participants worked in groups of no more than six and feedback from each group was elicited at each stage.(5) The group sessions were observed by visiting

5. It is interesting to note that some of the groups had the opportunity for a follow-up session the following week in which they were asked to do the same mental maps exercise again, followed by a discussion about what they had learnt. It emerged that they had picked up a considerable amount during the initial research sessions about the causes of the famine and about life in Africa.

African teachers. The sessions were followed by videos showing some of the history and culture of Africa, and group discussions with the Africans present.

The direct research using this methodology formed the core of the assessment of public perceptions of Africa.

2.3 Back-up research

Other research using similar methods with young people was also studied, and where appropriate the results were used to compare and contrast with the core research findings. The main research documents and articles were as follows:

Band Aid: Help or Hindrance? dissertation by Ross Grant, as part of a B.A. in Development Studies. University of East Anglia 1986

"Ethiopia: that's the name of a pop record, innit, Miss" - What does it mean to you? article by Valerie Davis in Multi-Ethnic Education Review, Summer/Autumn 1985.

The Media in Britain Jeremy Tunstall, (Constable 1983), quoted in Len Masterman Teaching the Media (Comedia 1985)

Popular TV and schoolchildren: the Report of a Group of Teachers (D.E.S. 1983)

Professor J D Halloran and Virginia Nightingale, Young TV viewers and their Images of Foreigners. A Summary and Interpretation of a Four Nation Study, Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester (undated)

Part of an unpublished M.Ed dissertation An evaluation of a secondary schools' Media project by Jean Moore for the University of Manchester. 1987.

Young people's perceptions of other countries by Tara Jungkunz and Og Thomas. 1986.

Exercise conducted by Oxfam Education staff with a first-year class in an Islington Primary School, 1986.

3. WHERE DO THE PUBLIC GET THEIR INFORMATION FROM?

Consuming information is a part of all our daily lives. It happens at many different levels and from a variety of sources, although given that it has been estimated that the average British adult spends 75 hours every week with television, radio, newspapers and magazines,(6) the media are inevitably the prime source. About one in five young people at all age levels, regularly watch an early evening news programme, and about one in ten between the ages of eight and fifteen watch 'World in Action', a weekly documentary programme.(7)

The media was at the top of the list of sources of images of Africa in the direct research carried out with young people for this project and this is reaffirmed by other research, in particular a four nation study of "Young TV viewers and their Images of Foreigners"(8) which shows that the media provide the most potent source of views about other peoples. It is worth noting, though, that there was 'strong evidence in all the reports of the importance of parental mediation of news and documentaries'!

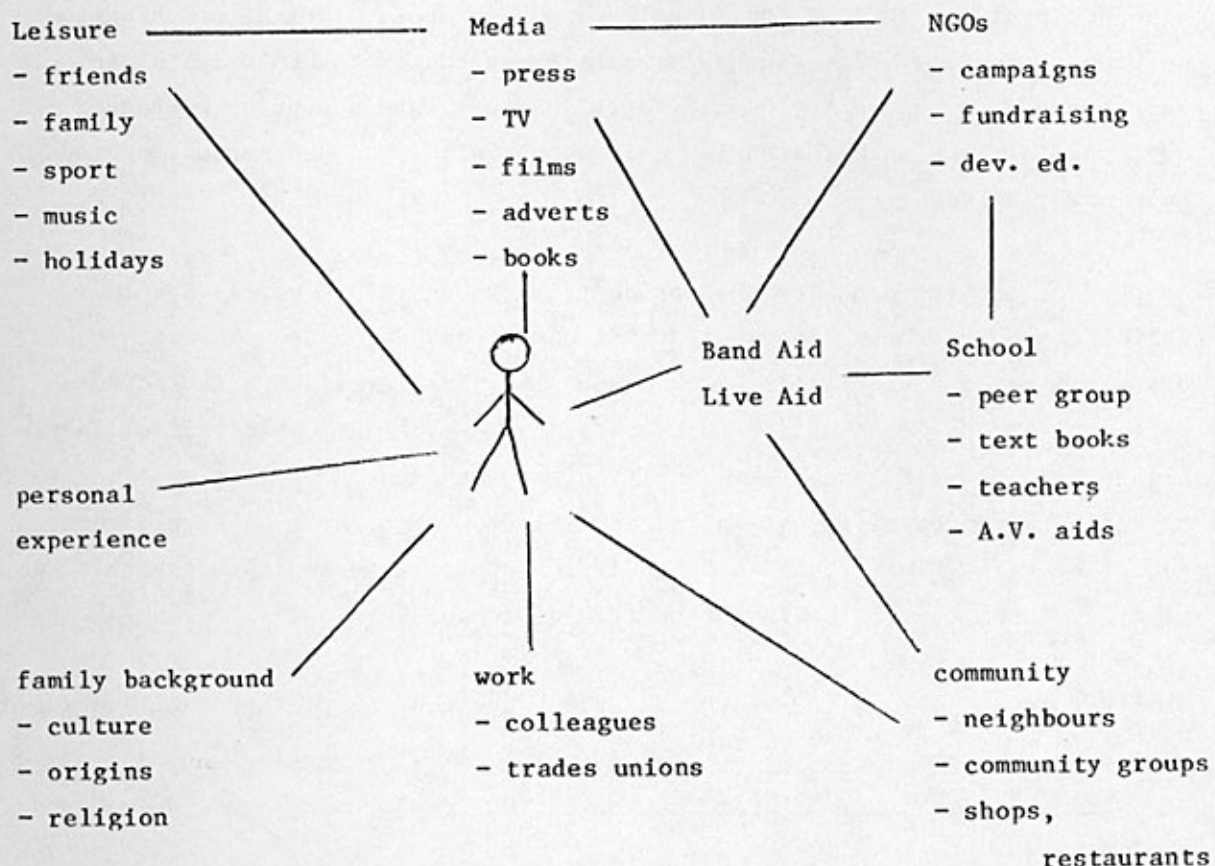
Other people - family, friends, teachers, colleagues - are obviously a source of information in every setting, whether work, school or leisure, but this

6. The Media in Britain Jeremy Tunstall, (Constable 1983), quoted in Len Masterman Teaching the Media (Comedia 1985)

7. Popular TV and schoolchildren: the Report of a Group of Teachers (D.E.S. 1983)

8. Professor J D Halloran and Virginia Nightingale, Young TV viewers and their Images of Foreigners. A Summary and Interpretation of a Four Nation Study, Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester (undated)

source and others all interact with the media, and can be summarised by the following diagram.



Personal experience was found by Virginia Nightingale and her colleagues(8) to make a significant difference to young people's attitudes towards foreigners but for most of the young people in this country Africa remains a distant land. On the other hand, schooling is a common experience and it is disturbing to note that a recent study of 'Third World' images in British text-books(9) finds them to be generally racist, ethnocentric and perpetuating stereotypes. It is a complex mix of these historically rooted images with those culled from our interaction with people, events and the surroundings of our daily lives that are challenged or (more probably) re-affirmed by the representations communicated by the media.

8. Op.cit

9. D. Hicks, Images of the World: An Introduction to Bias in Teaching Materials, Occasional Paper No. 2, Centre for Multi-Cultural Education, Institute of Education, London University, London 1980.

This may explain the particular part that Band Aid/Live Aid played in contributing to the public's perceptions of Africa. Band Aid/ Live Aid occupied a unique position in that they developed a high media profile, reaching every section of society. Live Aid was a media event that set the humanitarian response people needed to identify with squarely into a popular western context. This was both reassuring and entertaining, and had appeal for young people worldwide.

As part of the research for this project the young people were asked to brainstorm where their Images of Africa came from. Second to the media came books, in particular 'Little Black Sambo' and 'Born Free' were mentioned as well as geography and English text books. Films such as 'Out of Africa' were also quoted. 'Oxfam' and other charities were mentioned but this was in relation to fundraising posters and advertisements rather than development education work. Finally, 'friends in Africa' were suggested although this was a significant source for a tiny proportion of those questioned.

This sample would seem therefore to reflect the general picture outlined above.

4. WHAT WERE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICA?

The results of the research into public perceptions of Africa fell into the six categories roughly defined by the European NGOs during their meetings in Rome in 1986, and were supported by the direct research and the back-up research in the U.K. They were therefore very much along the lines of what might have been expected, although one category - South Africa - had to be added.

The knee-jerk response was either 'We must help them/have helped them', or emotions ranging from indifference to outright racism. This negativity was clearly summed up in a piece of research(10) which asked pupils or their teachers to fill in a questionnaire. This included a question on the child's response to the world 'Africa'. 278 replies were received from schools across England. Their findings were as follows:

"The only positive response to the world Africa came from a 14 year old boy who had lived in Kenya and spoke of 'feeling a sense of loss' at having left there.

10. Young people's perceptions of other countries by Tara Jungkunz and Og Thomas. 1986

Otherwise, 'starvation', 'black people', 'charities', and 'fighting over apartheid' were the most common answers.

More traditional associations such as jungle, wild animals and tribes were also often stated, but the whole perception was exceptionally negative and there were many comments such as 'it's a bad place', 'It's horrible', and 'I would hate to live there'".

The predominant images were overwhelmingly of 'Africa starving' or 'Africa primitive'. For instance, in the 'mental maps' exercise undertaken for this research, the idea of 'primitive' peoples, of shields and spears and slavery, competed for space with images of poverty and famine splashed in big letters or drawn large across the whole of Africa. Wild animals were another important feature.

These concepts were also found in other research, for example, one group(11) of primary school children were asked for the images that came to mind when the word 'Africa' was mentioned. They came up with:

- deserts
- trees
- foodsacks
- sand
- Band Aid
- Ethiopians
- poverty
- hungry
- no houses
- sun
- heat
- suffering
- crying
- hospitals
- food
- fields
- insects
- vultures.

11. Exercise conducted by Oxfam Education staff with a first-year class in an Islington Primary School, January 1986.

While 'Africa starving' and 'Africa primitive' were the most obvious categories, there were four other subjects which reflected the original categorisation of photos in Rome, as well as corresponding to similar research.

The events in South Africa - especially the mines, the wealth and the violence were a significant aspect of the public perceptions of Africa as a whole, and should therefore be mentioned although they were not part of the brief of this project.

The links between Africa and Europe - both colonial and current - play a part in public perceptions, with the most significant aspect of this being the influence of aid and trade. And finally, the social, economic, political and cultural issues which were largely ignored needed to be examined.

The categories selected were therefore:

- a) Africa starving
- b) Africa primitive
- c) Africa - Europe (aid and trade)
- d) Africa - geography
- e) Africa - economic, social, cultural and political aspects of Africa
- f) South Africa.

a) Africa starving

i) Images of the begging bowl

These competed with images which reflected the idea of the 'primitive', but were much more consistent throughout. In the 'mental maps' exercise, hunger and starvation were almost uniformly shown by a person holding out a bowl. Poverty and/or famine featured in 92% of cases, and occupied up to one-third of the paper. In one drawing 'poverty' was written next to 'Morocco' in the north of the continent, while 'famine' was splashed in big letters right across the centre.

Similarly, in the photographs exercise, although photographs had been chosen which were slightly different from the 'starving baby' stereotype, the groups who were given these photographs all identified them immediately with the

famine and labelled them as such. This contextualisation was also borne out by random interviews conducted during the course of the research. Even when people were shown photographs which were not necessarily of people looking hungry or in distress, the reaction was one of pity. The context of Africa equalling famine had been so firmly set that no other scenarios were possible. This pattern was repeated elsewhere. One brainstorm exercise with 11-13 year olds in London schools, this time about Ethiopia, produced the following comments (12)

'It's full of hungry children', 'People are starving', 'It is dirty ... lots of flies ... they smell', 'They don't wear many clothes', 'The kids are thin, they can't walk', 'Some die from hunger, some die from disease', 'Their bodies are weak, legs and arms like matchsticks', 'There is not enough food to go round'.

11) The causes of the famine

The exercise quoted above also gave an indication of what the children perceived were the causes of the famine: 'There is little food because there is hardly any rain', 'There is not enough food to go round', 'There is so many children, they should not have so many', 'The Ethiopian government doesn't care about the people', 'The government brought drinks for some celebration'.

The links with the media here were particularly obvious; some of the phrases reflected the news stories headlined in the newspapers at the time.

Another piece of research(13) undertaken by Ross Grant in July 1986 with three groups of young people, received only slightly more wide-ranging answers to

12. "Ethiopia: that's the name of a pop record, innit, Miss Ethiopia - what does it means to you?" article by Valerie Davis in Multi-Ethnic Education Review, Summer/Autumn 1985.

13. Band Aid: Help or Hindrance? a dissertation by Ross Grant which formed part of a B.A. in Development Studies at the University of East Anglia. 1986.

questions about the causes of the famine. 'Drought' was a common answer, while 15.4% of the sample said 'Too many babies'. some went further and suggested 'soil erosion' and 'deforestation', and still fewer said 'transport' and 'civil war'.

While the exercises outlined in the methodology for this project did not deal directly with the causes of the famine, the discussions threw up many of the same assumptions as those above, with perhaps less correlation with the media because the events had receded in both time and memory. The images of famine stuck; and yet the simplest of the causes of the famine were not remembered - yet another illustration of the power of the visual image, and of the media.

b) Africa primitive

The idea of Africa as 'primitive' also predominated. In the 'mental maps' exercise, 92% had drawn a man with a shield and spear. Sometimes this stood alone; in other cases it was accompanied by the words 'primitive', or 'tribe/s', or 'slavery'. In one drawing the 'tribe' was playing a drum; in another paddling a canoe.

Wild animals - elephants, and then lions were also popular. These were drawn in 67% of cases. Camels were drawn in 16% of the pictures, always linked with pyramids. The desert, or a large yellow sun were a major feature in 67% of cases. 'Jungle' or 'forest' appeared in 33% of the drawings.

Mud huts were drawn in 58% of cases; sometimes taking up one-fifth of the page. In one instance 'nomadic settlement' was written across western Africa.

c) Africa - geography

In the mental maps exercise, 33% of drawings had included some kind of map. While it is possible that some groups in the first exercise deliberately chose not to draw any kind of geographical map of the continent, the fact remains that only 25% showed that they had any idea of the shape of Africa. Only one map indicated the names of countries apart from South Africa, which featured in some way (sometimes visually) in the majority of cases.

In the photographs exercise, when they were asked where each photograph might have been taken, nearly all groups gave generic answers, e.g. 'a main city', 'a tribal village', 'a famine area', 'modern area - airport'. Where they did name a country, it was often because it was mentioned in small print somewhere on the photograph. On the occasions where they guessed, they usually gave the answer as either 'Ethiopia' or 'Sudan'.

This bears out the results of isolated individual interviews undertaken by the researchers in June 1986. Respondents could name very few African countries, and when asked about Ethiopia, were generally very unclear as to where it was. Answers varied from 'somewhere in Africa', to 'near Bangladesh'. (Is there perhaps some link here with countries which have featured as having had 'disasters'?) There was also very little awareness of the size of some of the African countries - for example, Ethiopia was seen to be 'smaller than Britain'.

Ross Grant's research also looked at factual knowledge of Africa, and found that while 96% of respondents were able to name a country in Africa affected by famine, they had more trouble naming any countries bordering Ethiopia. Most people were able to give at least one correct answer, usually Sudan, but other responses included 'India' and 'Asia'.

In an exercise carried out in 1987 with 84 14 and 15 year olds in the North of England (14) they were asked to mark Ethiopia on a world map. Although the majority located it somewhere in Africa, only 27 were able to place it accurately; others put it in such diverse locations as Borneo, Greenland and Rumania.

d) Africa - Economic, social, political and cultural life

These aspects of African life were rarely mentioned. The only spontaneous references in the mental maps exercise to anything historical was 'English colonials' in one drawing, and 'Mecca' marked (erroneously) in another. In the photographs exercise, reactions rarely went beyond the actual image to underlying implications or connections.

14. Part of an unpublished M.Ed dissertation An evaluation of a secondary schools' media project by Jean Moore for the University of Manchester. 1987.

This omission was also reflected in the other research surveyed. In Valerie Davis' paper (op.cit.) for example, the only comment was 'Half the country is wealthy and spends most of their money on bombs and missiles to defend themselves from attack'.

Ross Grant's thesis concluded that "major gaps in knowledge lie in the political and economic sphere". He went on to say that "the only relationship with Ethiopia that the young people seem to be aware of is via aid". he also noted that there was a "total lack of knowledge as to the ideology of the Ethiopian Government", and "very little awareness of the country's civil war".

It is interesting to note the difference between the responses of the British young people, and those of three observers from Mali and Botswana who were present at some of the sessions, and were also asked to do a mental maps exercise. They drew two segmented circles. In the first were the words 'Governments', 'Education', 'Health' and 'Food'; in the second, 'People', 'Music', 'Forests', 'Wildlife', 'Land', 'Rivers', and 'Minerals'. Thus, while they covered aspects like 'wildlife', their main preoccupations were with precisely those aspects of their continent which the British participants had omitted.

e) Aid and Trade

In the photographs exercise, the groups with the 'Aid and Trade' images were often confused about which was being depicted. One group thought that it looked as though 'food is not given out'; while another said that the photos could be used to show that 'a large amount of food is reaching the famine areas'. One other comment was that the photos could shown that 'Africa is actively producing food on a large scale'.

And again in the initial mental maps exercise, the only exports which were depicted were 'oranges, lemons, and bananas'.

This is another example of the strength of the images prevalent in the media in 1984 and particularly in 1985 once the Band Aid operation had begun to publicise its success in getting food to people in Ethiopia. Apart from a few 'novelty' stories such as 'Ethiopian beans on sale in local (U.K.) market', there was little in the media about Ethiopia's cash crops or trading

activities. Thus, piles of sacks or large stores of a particular product (whether food or not) became almost exclusively associated with aid.

A selection from Valerie Davis' paper also showed that the children made a clear link between famine and aid: 'We must send them money to make them feel better', 'Our government's trying to help by chucking food out of aeroplanes to them', 'Bob Geldof raised money for the children', 'Blue Peter raised money'.

In the case of Africa, the historical relationship between Europe and Africa puts images in a particular context that has its roots in colonialism. Thus a photograph of a scene in Addis Ababa with cars and high-rise buildings was labelled 'western influence in the streets'. The perception of Africa as an economic and social entity on its own was almost entirely lacking. The famine grafted a new set of preconceptions onto the old ones.

Ross Grant in his research found that respondents were often unable to go beyond these preconceptions. When pushed, they would simply make their original statement into a negative one, i.e. Africans were either 'starving' or 'not starving'. It was rare that African people were classified even by their actions. This was not necessarily due to ignorance, but rather to an inability on the part of the British viewer to take her or himself into the actuality of the situation beyond the 'famine' context.

Similarly, when asked in the photographs exercise why the photograph was taken, the groups with the 'Famine' images answered purely in that context: 'to get sympathy', 'to show their condition', 'to show we still care', 'to demonstrate aid in use'. They rarely extended this even as far as 'to show they carry on despite the suffering'.

Ross Grant's thesis also provided the most striking example of such narrow contextualisation. In one exercise, the majority of responses to a photograph of a smiling woman and her child in Burkina Faso were that if they looked contented 'we must have helped them'. All Africans had become 'aided Africans'. In other words, if Africa is not starving, it is only because the West has 'helped'. Such ethnocentricity was widespread.

f) South Africa

Although South Africa was not part of the remit of this research, it featured in 67% of the mental maps and should therefore be mentioned. Awareness of the situation of South Africa was indicated by the words 'violence', 'fighting', 'war' or pictures of tanks, ambulances, and police hitting people. In one case there was a picture of a burning car, and in another the word 'apartheid' appeared. In 33% of cases mines (gold/diamond) were also linked to South Africa. In another South Africa was symbolised by a Mercedes and a factory chimney.

High-rise buildings were clearly identified with South Africa - either positioned in South Africa, or labelled 'South' or 'Johannesburg'. In one case they were marked with a 'whites only' sign.

5. Conclusions

The public's perceptions, though they were influenced by other factors like family, friends and school, were ultimately formed by the media. This influence was apparent in all research into the public's perceptions of Africa. The visual images were dominant, and the images were remembered when even significant facts and figures had been forgotten.

A visual image has an unlimited number of interpretations. The context of the imagery lends it significance. Most people see and describe the content of an image rather than making any comment about its context, which is often absorbed subliminally. In the photographs exercise undertaken for this research, groups of young people were asked to give a name to their set of photographs and they all came up with titles which were basically descriptive and situation dependent.

The power of the media, and television in particular, also accounted in part for the importance of the Band Aid/Live Aid phenomenon, which was above all a media event. It must also have been of relevance in terms of the images to which the public responded with donations.

The research served to highlight the gaps in information and understanding about Africa and to document the nature of the images of Africa remaining in

the public's consciousness. The predominant images were of starvation, followed closely with ideas of the 'primitive'. There were very few respondents with geographical or factual knowledge, or with awareness of such factors as the causes of the famine. In fact, many respondents seemed to see Africa only in the light of how the West had 'helped'. This image of Africa as a whole continent in need of assistance, and of all Africans as victims, put Africa in a very negative light.

The media, and to a certain extent, the NGOs, clearly helped to create the context in which Africa is not 'Africa developed' but simply 'Africa assisted'. While the Ethiopian famine brought the continent to the British public's attention, it also added its own particular distortions to those which already existed. Given that an interest had been generated, might it have been possible to develop this further, to enable people to take a deeper look at the economic, social and political background to the continent? The evidence of this research is that it might. Time does not seem to be proving that it has. It is for the NGOs and the media to ask themselves why.