

10

International development NGOs, representations in fundraising appeals and public attitudes in UK–Africa relations

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It is widely recognised that public attitudes and perceptions can play an important role in shaping countries' foreign policies (Holsti, 1992; Risse-Kappen, 1991), and UK–Africa relations are no exception. In this chapter, we consider the UK public's perceptions of Africa and Africans, and how these have been informed by charity fundraising appeals. The British public has long been interested in Africa, and in particular British engagement in Africa. Prior (2007: 1), for example, notes that 'tales of Britons striding purposefully through the jungles and across the arid deserts of Africa captivated the metropolitan reading public throughout the nineteenth century'. Over time, public perceptions of Africa have changed, although they remain significantly influenced by the colonial narrative of Britain as a global power following a missionary purpose to 'civilise' Africa.

In the contemporary era, one of the biggest influences on the UK public's perceptions of Africa has come from development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), particularly through the medium of their fundraising appeals. Such appeals have frequently made widespread use of shocking images of African children, devoid of any broader context, which many argue have negatively impacted UK public perceptions of Africans. We consider why such representations continue despite growing criticism. Through an analysis of a 2017 Oxfam campaign and reporting on new research using survey experiments, we demonstrate that an alternative approach to NGO fundraising is possible. Such a shift would contribute to, and be influenced by, broader changes in UK–Africa relations since 2010.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section considers the problematic representations of Africans in NGO fundraising appeals, and how they

have helped produce a narrative around UK–Africa relations in which the UK public is cast as the ‘powerful giver’ and Africans are portrayed as ‘grateful receivers’. In the second section, we explain how, despite efforts to move away from this approach, NGO appeals continue to use negative representations, and their usage has been particularly noticeable since the 2008 financial crisis when organisations feared a drop in funding and donations. The chapter highlights a tension that NGOs face: on the one hand, negative representations allow organisations to raise funds that enable them to support vulnerable people in Africa and around the world. On the other hand, however, these representations also negatively influence and shape attitudes of the British public towards poverty in Africa more generally. We also discuss the growing criticism of this portrayal of UK–African representations, arguing that NGOs continue to use negative representations based on the belief that appealing to the emotions of pity and guilt is the only way to raise significant amounts of money. In the third section, we challenge this view, through an analysis of a 2017 Oxfam campaign and reporting on new research using survey experiments. We conclude by discussing how this potential to change the narrative fits within the broader shifts in UK–Africa relations since 2010.

NGO appeals and UK public perceptions of Africa

UK-based NGOs working in the international development sector have for many years worked across the developing world, seeking to improve the lives of those living in poverty in these countries. These NGOs have often turned to the British public to raise the funds required to carry out this hugely important work. This has, typically, been done by using fundraising appeals that appear in the media and in public spaces, which provide information about the contexts in which they work and images of those they seek to assist, then ask the public to make a charitable donation.

The images and representations of those living in developing countries and regions, particularly in Africa, have been the subject of recent criticism from academics, the media, civil society organisations and the broader public (Darnton and Kirk, 2011; Hilary, 2014; Hudson *et al.*, 2017b). Yet, the issue of the representations of the poor in NGOs’ campaigns has a much longer history. Lissner (1977) questioned representations of the poor in NGOs’ fundraising campaigns over three decades ago, highlighting the ‘negative’ images used by international NGOs, generally in the form of shocking depictions of malnourished starving young – and typically African – children with no broader context provided. The manner in which these images objectified those living in the Global South,

Lissner argued, was demeaning, lacking in dignity and inaccurate. Such images – referred to as ‘the pornography of poverty’ (Plewes and Stuart, 2007: 23) – are used, as Cameron and Haanstra (2008: 1476) explain, ‘to induce emotions of pity and guilt on the part of potential donors through images and descriptions of material poverty and images of helpless “others” in the global South..’

These types of representation can frequently be seen in fundraising appeals that appear on television, billboards and public transportation, along with other public spaces. They are frequently associated with large fundraising campaigns, for example the Live Aid campaign, which raised around £150 million to tackle the Ethiopian famine, and Comic Relief, which raised more than £70 million in 2017 alone. The effectiveness of these appeals (an issue we shall return to below) has enabled NGOs to raise billions of pounds over the years, which has helped alleviate the suffering of the poorest in the world. However, these representations have also had negative, unintended consequences in terms of their influence on the UK public’s perceptions of those living in developing countries – and in particular of Africans. These negative images, based on stereotypes, can foster negative and inaccurate views among the UK public of those living in African countries. They may also, as we shall see, lead to reduced public engagement and decreasing efficacy of such appeals over time.

A question that arises is how have these representations come to influence UK public perceptions of Africa, specifically, if these NGOs work across the developing world? This is in large part because the overwhelming focus in NGO campaigns has been on Africans as the recipients of the British public’s donations. Harrison (2010) describes this in relation to the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign as the ‘Africanization of poverty’. Harrison (*ibid.*: 395) notes that with MPH there was initially an explicit decision not to focus on Africa in the campaign precisely because campaigners felt that ‘Africa had been subjected to a long history of pejorative and negative imagery’. However, this left a void in terms of the campaign’s imagery, which led to concerns over the ability to motivate the public to engage with the campaign. This eventually led to ‘Africanization’ of the campaign ‘to “re-fill” the hollowness of poverty imagery and mobilise people to engage with campaigns on behalf of distant others’ (*ibid.*: 397). It is worth noting that the prominence of Africa in MPH was also related to New Labour directing its international development efforts on Africa at the time – Tony Blair famously describing the continent as ‘the scar on the conscience of the world’ (*ibid.*: 401).

This emphasis on Africa in international development NGOs’ campaigns is not just limited to major campaigns like MPH. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the UK public views ‘developing countries’ as synonymous with ‘Africa’. A study in 2000 by the Department for International Development (DFID),

entitled *Viewing the World*, analysed UK television coverage of developing countries and its impact on shaping public attitudes (Department for International Development, 2000), and found that the UK public thinks of Africa as synonymous with ‘developing world’.¹ Respondents also associated Africa with ‘poverty’, ‘famine’, ‘drought’, ‘war’ and ‘disaster’ (*ibid.*: 11). Elsewhere Darnton (2009) and Darnton and Kirk (2011) have shown that the British public tends to associate Africa with poverty and misery, which reflects the representations used in NGO appeals. The use of these representations in campaigns over several decades has promoted the view among members of the British public that there has been virtually no progress in Africa since the 1980s, and that in terms of charity and aid Africa is a ‘bottomless pit’ (*ibid.*: 22–3).

Such attitudes towards Africa are not restricted to older people, who have been exposed to negative representations in NGO fundraising appeals for many years. What is perhaps particularly worrying is that these attitudes are also found in young people. A 2009 study of primary school students’ perceptions of Africa by the Leeds University Centre for African Studies, as part of its ‘African Voices’ programme, found that: ‘African poverty and underdevelopment were also prominent in the choices pupils made about what Africa looked like. Over seventy-three per cent of all pupils selected a picture of hungry children holding out an empty plate as one of their three images and fifty-three per cent of all pupils selected an image of straw huts in a rural setting’ (Borowski, 2014).²

A second consequence of the pervasive use of negative representations of Africans in NGO appeals has been to portray Africans as impoverished and helpless, and in need of being saved by the UK. This narrative has been referred to as the ‘Live Aid legacy’, as Darnton and Kirk (2011: 23) explain: ‘The resulting paradigm for relations between the UK public and those in the developing world is encapsulated in the concept of the “Live Aid legacy”, which casts the UK public in the role of “powerful giver”, and the African public as “grateful receiver”. This dynamic still prevails.’ Africans are reduced to isolated individuals, lacking in agency and divorced from context. States and state structures are often also absent from these depictions, separating the images from wider context and locating them outside of, or perhaps above, politics. This is by no means only found in NGO campaigning. Gallagher (2011) and Taylor (2012), among others, documented the portrayal of Africa under the Labour Governments of Blair (1997–2007) and Brown (2007–10) in a similar light. Africa was depicted as an arena empty of politics and agendas, full of suffering, and a place where the UK could unambiguously ‘do good’.

There are a number of unintended consequences resulting from this portrayal. One issue is that it perpetuates negative stereotypes about Africans among the British public. Secondly, it also prevents more meaningful public engagement

with the complexity of poverty and development in Africa, and more broadly. For example, it downplays the role of richer nations, such as the UK, in creating and perpetuating the (structural) problems faced in many poorer countries (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). Continually presenting an image of Africa as a place full of suffering fails to reflect the diversity across the African continent and the positive developments that have taken place. It also undermines efforts to create new narratives about Africa seeking to promote increased trade and investment, such as 'Africa rising', which seeks to present the continent as a place of growing economic opportunity (see, for example, Mahajan, 2011). Given the influence of NGO appeals on the perceptions of the British public towards Africa, it is important to consider more closely how the representations used in these appeals impact public attitudes.

Emotions and the fundraising dilemma

There has been much criticism of the use of such images in NGO fundraising appeals (Hilary, 2014; Seu and Orgad, 2017), although it is important to note that this criticism is not new (Lissner, 1977; Plewes and Stuart, 2007). Specific aspects of these traditional, pity-based representations have been problematised by scholars and practitioners in recent years (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2012), and has gained new impetus following the large campaigns focused on development, debt and the desire to 'make poverty history' during the 1990s and 2000s.

Scholars have paid specific attention to the effect of race (Burman, 1994; Harrison, 2010; Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004), the use of children (Dogra, 2012; Lissner, 1977; Manzo, 2008) and the 'othering' of those depicted (Harrison, 2010; Lidchi, 1999; Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004). Dogra (2012: 22) has argued that there is 'a dual logic of "difference" and "oneness" in NGO and charity appeals. Negative appeals tend to reproduce a shallow sense of cosmopolitanism because they focus on the differences rather than the similarities between people in the developed and developing world.' However, despite the criticism of negative campaign images, few studies have empirically examined the impact of such imagery, and even fewer have used experiments as a way to test effects of such images on potential donors.

This debate about the effects of negative representations is particularly important for international development NGOs because a parallel literature has highlighted declining levels of public engagement with global poverty, linking the decline to the way development organisations have appealed to the public (Darnton, 2009; Darnton and Kirk, 2011; Smillie, 1999). Here, research has

shown that development NGOs' campaign strategies – particularly their pity-based fundraising appeals – act as a catalyst in the decline in public interest in, and engagement with, issues of global poverty (Darnton and Kirk, 2011; Dogra, 2012; Plewes and Stuart, 2007; Sireau, 2009). The issue here is that this stands in direct tension with the conventional wisdom that such fundraising appeals are most effective in eliciting donations from the public.

Criticism of traditional appeals has, since 2010, come from within the NGO community and outside of it. The pervasive use of these negative representations in development appeals has been the subject of growing media focus (e.g. Hilary, 2014; Meade, 2014), as well as being satirised in the popular US comedy sketch show, *Saturday Night Live* (see Grenoble, 2014). The Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) also produced a spoof charity song and video in 2013, calling for Africans to help freezing cold Norwegians by sending them radiators.³ The video, which went viral on the internet, aimed to highlight the problem of the pervasive use of negative stereotypes about Africans in charity appeals, which, SAIH argued, prevented more meaningful engagement by the public in Western countries with issues in Africa, as well as with international development more broadly.

Since 2013, SAIH has also awarded annual 'Radi-Aid Awards', which celebrate 'the best – and the worst – of development charity fundraising videos'.⁴ The award for the worst videos ('the rusty radiator award') has tended to receive most attention, serving to highlight problematic representations in NGO appeals. For example, in 2017 the winner of the 'rusty radiator award' was a Comic Relief appeal to alleviate poverty in Liberia featuring the British musician Ed Sheeran, with a Disasters Emergencies Committee advert to raise funds for the East Africa famine featuring British actor Eddie Redmayne also in contention (see Shepherd, 2017). The appeals, as well as the celebrities involved, received significant media criticism for perpetuating 'poverty porn' (e.g. BBC News, 2017; Hirsch, 2017; Reilly, 2017).⁵ This growing criticism of traditional NGO appeals in the mainstream media indicates a greater willingness to challenge the crude stereotypes of Africans used in such appeals, and suggests that NGOs may have to move away from negative representations in their appeals if they are to avoid a public backlash.

Indeed, there have been efforts by the NGO sector to regulate its own members on the use of dehumanising negative representations of Africans, and the global poor more generally. The 1987 report *Images of Africa* started the debate on what imagery was appropriate to use in NGO appeals (van der Gaag and Nash, 1987). It was followed by a series of codes of conduct.⁶ Yet, despite these efforts, development NGOs have continued to use shocking images of African children. This was particularly evident following the 2008 global financial crisis,

which led to widespread concerns from NGOs about the future of development funding (IRIN, 2008).

One of the clearest examples of the continued use of pity-based appeals by leading NGOs is a televised appeal by Save the Children, entitled 'One Child', which appeared on UK television in 2013.⁷ The advert begins with the shocking image of a malnourished and sick African child named Fidosi with a mainline access needle protruding from her head, covered in bandages. Much of her hair appears to have fallen out due to malnutrition and her mouth is covered in ulcers. She is alone, crying and in clear distress as she looks towards the camera. The narrator is a British man who informs the viewer that 'she's just a child; only nineteen months old, and in agony ... a girl who knows nothing but pain'. The narrator goes on to ask the viewer to help save the life of a child like Fidosi. This Save the Children advert is a clear example of a development NGO using negative representations of Africans to induce emotions of guilt and pity among the British public in order to garner donations. It is not only Save the Children that has continued to use negative representations in its appeals, other NGOs, such as CARE International, have also used shocking images of African children – with little wider context provided – in their televised appeals.⁸

An important question, then, is given the well-documented criticism and the negative effects on UK public perceptions of Africans, why do we continue to see the use of shocking and dehumanising images of African children in the fundraising campaigns of development NGOs like Save the Children and CARE International? The answer is that such representations are viewed by many in the NGO sector as the most effective means of raising money for their development work. The fear is that by moving away from these traditional, emotive, pity-based appeals, NGOs risk losing out on much needed public donations. As Burman (1994: 29) noted over twenty years ago, 'the poor starving black child is so central to the idiom of charity appeals that aid campaigns depart from this convention only at the risk of prejudicing their income'.

While NGOs have been subjected to criticism, it is important to recognise that the use of negative appeals allows organisations to raise funds to support some of the most vulnerable people in Africa and around the world. However, what works with respect to fundraising – that is, demonstrating urgent need – and the complex task of portraying the context of global poverty are not easy to reconcile. This is a fundamental issue. NGOs have many objectives which may overlap and compete: challenging the structural inequalities in the global system that adversely impact poorer states and people; increasing public awareness about the lives of people living in developing countries; responding to emerging and chronic crises that threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people;

and raising money. These objectives do not necessarily go hand in hand, and NGOs have to prioritise between competing demands. Indeed, this is a point that musician and activist Bob Geldof – a leading figure behind the 1984 Live Aid events and several subsequent development campaigns that have focused on Africa – has made about the tension between the need to save the lives of those who are at risk of dying, and at the same time trying to engage in changing the rules and institutions that foster global inequalities:

we raised money through Live Aid, through Make Poverty History we raised the issues. And so that's the key difference. Live Aid we needed to get money instantly and to draw attention to the potential death of 30 million people. Now dude even now, if you ask me, Bob, number one, should we immediately start stripping down the institutions or should we instantly try and stop 30 million. Well the first thing is to stop the 30 million.⁹

The urgent need to save lives is seen as a justification for the use of shocking images. The immediacy of the need, with campaigns often citing the numbers of preventable deaths occurring every minute, or hour, alongside shocking images, trumps longer-term aims of public education and challenging unequal global structures. It is important to note that while many African countries have experienced significant economic growth and poverty reduction since the 1980s, there are still crises, linked to conflict, disease and drought occurring across the continent that can have a devastating impact on the lives of many. Development NGOs, supported by the UK public, play a crucial role in responding to such crises and supporting the people affected. For example, since 2011s East Africa has experienced its worst drought in sixty years, which has impacted the lives of approximately twelve million people and led to famine in parts of Somalia. In response, the British public donated £45 million, and, as discussed by Beswick in Chapter 6, the Conservative Party devoted its allocated broadcasting time to making an appeal for the UK public to support East Africa, saying 'some things are bigger than politics'.

As such, development NGOs are faced with a fundamental dilemma which has implications for UK public perceptions of Africans: on the one hand, traditional appeals are highly effective at raising funds through public donations, which enables these NGOs to assist highly vulnerable communities; on the other hand, traditional appeals have a negative impact on the British public's perceptions of Africans, which can also hinder broader development efforts such as pushing the UK Government to improve its policies towards Africa and its advocacy at a global level through, for example, the United Nations European Union, and other international organisations and institutions.

To address this dilemma, it is necessary to focus on the link between representation, emotion and public response – a shift in the way NGOs frame their campaigns and represent those who benefit from them. A key question is whether tapping into more positive emotions in representations and appeals addresses the trade-off NGOs face: that they are able to raise sufficient money to continue to help people in the world's poorest places *and* engender a positive change in public perceptions of poverty, particularly in Africa. Doing so could have powerful implications: allowing more complex and contextualised images of Africa and development could in turn help to support better informed, and more complex and contextualised, public debate on aid and on UK–Africa relations.

Towards alternative representations and positive emotions

There are two important questions that need to be answered to address the dilemma that development NGOs face in their fundraising appeals in using negative representations of Africans. First, what kinds of representation might help to trigger more positive emotional responses from the UK public, which can help to shift the current perceptions of Africans? Secondly, can triggering positive emotions, such as empathy and hope, ensure both that NGOs raise sufficient funds from public donations to continue their work and transform the British public's perceptions of Africans? Answering these questions will require significant work by researchers and NGOs themselves. In the following sections, we provide some examples and evidence of how this shift might take place, and the potential for NGOs to move towards an alternative approach to fundraising that may help to reshape UK public perceptions of people living in African countries.

One recent NGO appeal, Oxfam's 'See for Yourself' campaign, can be considered as overcoming many of the problematic features of traditional, pity-based appeals – but still shares the same aim – trying to get the public to donate. The appeal provides a clear example of how some international development NGOs have tried to move away from the simplistic representations of Africans that are associated with more traditional NGO appeals. We briefly describe the appeal and consider the important ways in which it differs from the apolitical and agency-free images discussed previously. We then present findings from recent research into whether alternative representations can tap into more positive emotional responses, and explore what effect these emotional responses have on donations and public attitudes.

As with many traditional fundraising appeals, the object of Oxfam's 'See for Yourself' appeal is to encourage the viewer to provide a regular monthly dona-

tion.¹⁰ The advertisement is based on the story of an ‘everyday’ British mother and Oxfam donor, Jodie Sandford, being invited by Oxfam to visit Zimbabwe. While there, she is to observe the organisation’s work in the country. The video is centred on Jodie visiting, and spending time with, a Zimbabwean mother, Esther Mananzva, and her family. While we do not claim that the appeal manages to overcome all of the problems associated with NGO fundraising appeals, it certainly represents a significant improvement on the traditional appeals we have so far discussed in this chapter in a number of ways.

First, it moves from a static representation to one based on motion: the individuals featured have agency in their own lives and can be regarded as active subjects, rather than simply objects of pity. Secondly, in sending an ordinary member of the UK public to an African country the campaign makes a clear attempt to physically link the giver and receiver. This helps to break down the ‘us and them’ division, which occurs in many development appeals. Thirdly, the choice of Zimbabwe as the location for this encounter is also significant. Zimbabwe occupies a particular place in British imagination, strongly linked to colonial legacy. This persistent link has led the Director of the Chatham House Africa Programme, Alex Vines, to describe Zimbabwe in 2017 as having an ongoing ‘psychological importance’ for the UK (Telegraph, 2017). Moreover, government and media interest in Zimbabwe has remained, even as Africa faded from the global agenda. (This interest grew during 2017 with the removal of Robert Mugabe from power.) Taylor and Williams (2002), for example, have traced the evolution of Zimbabwe policy in the early years of New Labour, demonstrating ways in which policy rhetoric and action on Zimbabwe have been used by UK actors to reflect particular ideas about the power, role and responsibilities of the UK in relation to Zimbabwe in particular and Africa more broadly.¹¹ Choosing Zimbabwe as a location for the campaign therefore helps Oxfam to tap into an existing level of public awareness of Zimbabwe as a country with a complex history and set of current challenges.

Fourthly, the portrayal of a family, rather than simply an individual, in this campaign is also important: Esther is named, which contrasts sharply with campaigns that do not identify the individuals shown. Even more significantly, it is not just a first name, as is often the case in many charity adverts featuring children, but her full name and the area in which she lives are provided. By providing the viewer with Esther’s full name, the appeal works to humanise Esther and her family. It also locates Esther within a family and a community so that she is situated, rather than disconnected and disempowered. This context is important – Esther is not simply another member of the global or African poor – we know that she is embedded, she is from the specific district of Gutu in Zimbabwe.

A number of additional features of the Oxfam advertisement further serve to humanise those living in developing countries. For example, there are several scenes in the video showing the daily life of those living in developing countries, which is in sharp contrast to traditional campaign images. The film shows Esther at home feeding her children. The viewer also sees adults in the community of Gutu working in the fields. The displays of daily life and work are essential in demonstrating human characteristics. Rather than the shocking images of children alone, and showing signs of physical and emotional distress, Jodie and Esther are holding the children and caressing them. This humanisation is also emphasised through the language used throughout the film. Jodie describes Esther's twin baby boys as 'beautiful', which, again, is a departure from the more common portrayal of young children in development appeals as dirty, malnourished and diseased.

While Jodie highlights the problems that Esther and her family face in Gutu, she also describes herself as being 'really, really excited' when she is told she will have the opportunity to travel to Zimbabwe. Again, this moves away from the more typical approach of presenting African countries as places of squalor and daily horrors, places to be avoided. It also avoids the single, 'transactional' nature of most engagement with global poverty. By highlighting everyday human and often mundane activities which link people across the world – caring for children, washing clothes, preparing meals and engaging with others – the campaign emphasises connections and proximity, rather than isolation and distance.

More generally, the Oxfam video differs from typical NGO appeals in the manner in which it emphasises the shared identity between people in the UK and African countries, rather than highlighting differences, which has typically been the case. This emphasis on shared identity is largely demonstrated by the relationship between Jodie and Esther, portrayed as two ordinary mothers with much in common. Unlike traditional appeals, which are narrated from the perspective of the omniscient NGO, often via a celebrity voiceover, the narrator in this case is Jodie, a member of the public who donates to Oxfam. This removes the typical mediation by the NGO, and in doing so brings the UK public closer to the African public, through an individual to whom they can relate.

The decision to focus on a woman as the donor may also be seen as an attempt to connect with other potential donors. A recent study (Gunstone and Ellison, 2017) found that women were more likely to donate to charity than men. In their YouGov survey, 54 per cent of women indicated that they had donated in the past year, compared with 40 per cent of men. Women were also significantly more likely to follow up donations with actions, such as talking to friends about their donations.¹²

As such, the Oxfam appeal demonstrates how the representations used in NGO appeals can avoid some of the problematic features of traditional NGO appeals. While we do not have data on how successful the appeal was in terms of public donations, it is worth noting that the appeal's primary focus remained fundraising. However, by avoiding the portrayal of the relationship between the UK and African publics as based on the 'powerful giver' and 'grateful receiver' relationship, the appeal demonstrates how NGO fundraising appeals might begin to reframe the UK–Africa relationship. As such, it marks a shift from the narratives associated with traditional NGO appeals and campaigns, such as MPH.

While the above example demonstrates how NGOs might move towards alternative appeals, it is important to consider whether such appeals are able to ensure that NGOs both raise funds and promote better engagement with the development agenda among the UK public. Two recent studies have employed experimental research designs to test whether alternative appeals can tap into positive emotions, such as empathy and hope, rather than negative emotions, such as pity and guilt – and what the effects of such positive emotional responses are on public donations and public attitudes. The first study was a lab experiment conducted with university students (see Hudson *et al.*, 2017a), and the second was a survey experiment based on a nationally representative sample (see Hudson *et al.*, 2017b).

Both studies were based on randomly assigning different appeals to respondents. They each tested a traditional, pity-based appeal with negative representations against an alternative appeal that sought to produce a positive emotional response. The traditional appeal in both studies used the image of a suffering African child devoid of any broader context. The language used in the traditional appeal emphasised the suffering of those living in developing countries, their helplessness, and the separation between the viewing public and those living in African countries. In doing so, the traditional appeal also focused on how the UK public could save the lives of those living in developing countries.

In contrast, the alternative appeal looked to add greater context and to avoid the negative representations associated with traditional development NGO appeals. In the lab experiment, the alternative treatment showed the image of a group of people using a water pump. In the survey experiment, the image showed children with a teacher in class, with one of the children holding a sign saying 'future doctor'. The language used in both of the alternative appeals sought to avoid emphasising the helplessness of those depicted – for example, the use of the image of the child holding up the sign aimed to give voice to those depicted in the campaign. The alternative appeals also sought to use a language highlighting the commonalities of the viewing UK public and the Africans

represented, rather than using a language of separation, as tends to be the case in traditional appeals.

It is important to note that neither study directly tested the impact of the different appeals on respondents' attitudes towards the African public. However, both studies examined the effects of the different types of appeal on public attitudes towards global development more broadly, which at least allows us to see whether there is some attitudinal difference between respondents receiving different appeals. Given the prevalence of images of Africans in these campaigns, as already established, the findings can be considered useful in understanding this particular subset of relations.

Two key findings emerge from these two studies. The first is that the traditional appeals tend to trigger negative emotions (e.g. pity, guilt, repulsion) in respondents, and alternative appeals produce positive emotions (e.g. hope and solidarity), and these emotions are significant factors in mediating the relationship between the NGO appeals and public engagement. In both experiments, the traditional appeal triggered (the negative emotion) pity and suppressed (the positive emotion) hope. The analysis also demonstrates that these emotions are significant factors in mediating the relationship between NGO appeals and public engagement. For example, in the survey experiment the mediation analysis demonstrates that these negative emotional responses do not have uniform effects: while guilt and anger increase the likelihood of people donating to the charity, repulsion decreases donations. This suggests that these traditional appeals may have unintended consequences, in that while they may trigger emotions that lead to donations, they may also prime other emotions that drive away potential donors.

The second key finding relates to the effects of the appeals on personal efficacy (in the survey experiment) and sense of cosmopolitanism (in the lab experiment). The results of the survey experiment suggest that traditional appeals lower respondents' sense of efficacy in addressing problems of global poverty, which may serve as a barrier to deeper forms of engagement with global poverty. The lab experiment finds that the traditional appeals lower respondents' feelings of cosmopolitanism by suppressing respondents' feelings of hope.

These findings speak directly to the trade-off that has caused such tension and anxiety for development campaigners. They also illustrate another unintended consequence of the sector's use of traditional appeals: messages that generate revenue via donations may serve to reduce other forms of engagement, by generating feelings that there is little that can be done to address problems of global poverty. However, the news is not all bad: by activating the emotion of hope, alternative appeals increase the likelihood of donation and increase respondents' sense of personal efficacy. Alternative appeals may therefore help bridge the trade-off between fundraising and engagement.

Finally, the analysis in both the survey experiment and the lab experiment suggested there was no overall difference between the two appeals on likelihood of making a donation, or donation amount. This null finding is less surprising in light of the countervailing effects of the appeals, mediated by emotion, discussed above, but suggests that moving away from traditional negative appeals is far less risky than NGOs assume in terms of fundraising. The findings of the two studies suggest that NGOs have more scope for experimenting with appeals that seek to trigger positive emotional responses than is commonly believed, which may in the long term help to promote more positive public attitudes in the UK towards those living in Africa and other developing regions.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered how the representations used in NGO fundraising campaigns influence the UK public's perceptions of Africans. It has outlined how NGOs have undergone a shift in their thinking on the use of images of Africans in fundraising campaigns. It has been suggested that this parallels a wider process in reframing UK relations with Africa which has taken place at the level of the UK Government since 1997. Under Blair and Brown, Africa's profile was raised but Africa was depicted in a relatively simplistic way. Under the Coalition and Conservative Governments, relations with Africa have become more nuanced and, as Brown (Chapter 7) and Beswick (Chapter 6) argue, there is now greater scope for African agency and complexity in depicting the relationships with specific African organisations and states. Indeed, the growing criticism of the representations of Africans in NGO appeals in the mainstream media discussed above suggests that the public has also become less accepting of simplistic depictions of Africa.

Fundraising campaigners have similarly recognised the potential damage to public engagement caused by the use of stereotypical/traditional pity-based images of Africa and Africans in their appeals. Campaigns that challenge these traditional images and seek to elicit donations based on a more nuanced depiction of development challenges are emerging, as seen in the Oxfam example. The experimental data presented here suggest that such campaigns, based on provoking more positive emotional responses, have the potential to raise funds in a sustainable way, avoiding damaging donor engagement with future campaigns.

The chapter also highlights the need for further research on understanding how NGO appeals influence public attitudes towards those living in Africa and other developing regions. In particular, this includes exploring alternative

approaches to NGO fundraising that focus on trying to elicit more positive emotional responses from the public, as well as prompting donations. Additional experimental work, particularly field research, validating the mediating role of emotions would provide further insights into how appeals affect attitudes and perceptions. Such alternatives are important if UK public perceptions of Africans are to be transformed.

Notes

- 1 DFID's 2000 report, *Viewing the World*, was based on three studies conducted over a three-month period in 1999. The analysis of audience perceptions was based on twenty-six focus groups each consisting of six–eight people. The focus groups were convened in England and Scotland and they were undertaken by the Glasgow Media Group.
- 2 The overall number of primary students included in the survey is not reported.
- 3 See 'Africa for Norway', www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyxm96k [accessed 12 December 2017].
- 4 See www.rusty radiator.com/about/ [accessed 15 December 2017].
- 5 It is worth pointing out that some in the media questioned the negative coverage that Ed Sheeran had received due to the Comic Relief video. See, for example, Mitchell (2017).
- 6 For example the 1989 General Assembly of the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the European Communities, *Code of Conduct: Images and Messages relating to the Third World*; the 1994 *Code of Conduct of British Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*; and the 2006 CONCORD: the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development, *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*.
- 7 Save the Children, 'One Child' advertisement, 13 January 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=99pQ0KJfdoE [accessed 22 November 2017].
- 8 See CARE International, 'Who Cares?' advertisement, 17 September 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFHORE4sChI [accessed 22 November 2017].
- 9 This is taken from an interview with Bob Geldof conducted by Owen Barder for the *Development Drums* podcast in 2013, <http://developmentdrums.org/wp-content/uploads/DD38-and-39-transcript.pdf> [accessed 8 August 2017].
- 10 The Oxfam 'See for Yourself' advert is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UE-ex7peAfw [accessed 17 August 2017].
- 11 This is reflected in Chapter 6 by Beswick, showing that Zimbabwe was a point of focus for Conservative politicians in opposition and government.
- 12 The decision to focus on women in the campaign, specifically Jodie and Esther, may therefore also make sense from a fundraising point of view, allowing an easy point of identification for the group most likely to donate and to advocate for the cause (see also Charities Aid Foundation, 2017).

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