How can UNICEF Australia strengthen the use of images in fundraising and media campaigns to advance children’s rights?

Introduction

This paper seeks to understand and analyse the key considerations for non-government organisations (NGOs) in using images effectively in fundraising and media campaigns. It will explore the power of imagery in crisis coverage, delving deeper into the use of images as instruments to make distant western or northern audiences “feel” for the victims of humanitarian crises in the south or the ‘Third World’. It will question why and how particular photos are used by NGOs, exploring the specific use of vulnerable subjects - i.e. children – and subsequent interlinked issues of the ‘ideal victim’ and ‘compassion fatigue’. It will argue that heavy reliance on child images by NGOs has contradictory or counter-productive effects as they reproduce colonial visions of a superior north and inferior south, which characterise the people in the photo as passive and helpless victims, and as such, undermine the NGOs own image guidelines. Special attention will be devolved to the evolving use of photographs, particularly of children, by NGOs. It will be argued that this is due to two concurrent events; one, a shift from the traditional famine imagery used by humanitarian agencies – best epitomised by the stereotypical images such as the ‘Ethiopian child’ of the 1990s (see image 1.3) – to more contextualised images; and two, the move from a purely fundraising objective to a very strong educational and advocacy role. It will then discuss UNICEF Australia’s participation in this debate on the depiction and representation of the child, analysing its internal image guidelines and ultimately evaluating its use of images in its 2011 East Africa Crisis campaign.

Power of Images

As the old adage goes “a picture is worth a thousand words”. The saying refers to the idea that a complex thought can be conveyed with just a single still image. Even in our image-saturated society, with the emergence of new media, the still photograph has never lost its power. It can take just one photo to spur the international community into action. The infamous photo of nine year old Vietnamese girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, running naked down a South Vietnamese road, screaming in pain from her napalm wounds, was enough to move the American people ‘dulled by an unending remote war’ into pressuring the US government to withdraw from Vietnam (Leekley & Leekley, 1982, p. 88). The photograph became a visual document that could easily trigger a range of personal,
ideological and political feelings within its viewers ... it became a visual experience for human suffering ... during any time of war (Newtown, 1998, pp. 160). The 1993 photo of the Sudanese toddler (see image 6.1), collapsed on the way to a feeding centre and threatened by a vulture, taken by photographer Kevin Carter, became an icon for famine. Newspapers around the world reprinted the image of the starving little girl and the patient black and hooded vulture. The image became part of the humanitarian effort to prevent apathy (Moeller, 1999, pp. 40).

With distant events there is a need to make an audience “feel” the situation (Moeller, 1999, pp. 38, Hoijer, 2004, pp. 520). Images are the key to enabling this. They tap into our emotions. They make the incorporeal, corporeal (Moeller, 1999, p.38). We respond better to flesh-and-blood people rather than to momentary concepts. Moeller (1999) asserts that for individuals to take in news of the developing world, it needs to be related to the individual’s experience. Images allow that more easily – partly because common ground can more readily be discovered in a photograph than in paragraphs of text: That is a picture of a child; I, too, have a child (Moeller, 1999, pp. 38). The same thought or theory can be applied to NGO fundraising humanitarian crisis campaigns.

The use of imagery in crisis coverage is of critical importance. Crisis coverage demands pictures. If a story doesn’t have a visual hook, an audience will often ignore it (Moeller, 1999, pp. 37).
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It substantiates written reports of a crisis by presenting it in more tangible - and often more human - graphic terms (UNICEF image guidelines, Covering Emergencies). Images of suffering and disaster are used to appeal emotionally to people. They have the ability to distil a plain and unmistakeable message that can drill into the minds and hearts of their audiences, making them bearers of human suffering (Moeller, 1999, pp. 36, Hoijer, 2004, pp. 520). Hoijer argues the impact of photographic images is largely due to the ‘truth-claim’ connected with them (Hoijer, 2004, pp. 520). That is, they are perceived as truthful eyewitness reports of reality. For example, an audience very rarely questions the reality status of documentary pictures. Instead the pictures are experienced as if they ‘give direct access to reality and they therefore insist upon being taken seriously’ (Hoijer, 2004, pp. 521). After all, it is hard to deny the emaciated body of an Ethiopian child.

NGOs spend millions on communication strategies, with the majority of these investments going into fundraising campaigns. As Smillie (1995) states, fundraising has become big business over the last decades. Emails, newsletters, letters, brochures and posters all containing images and information about people in developing countries go out to audiences in the first world trying to convince them that something has to be done, that they are the best NGO to do something about it, and money is needed in order to do so (Lamers 2005, pp. 38). Their fundraising departments ‘say the starving baby pictures tug at the heartstrings and bring in cash’ (Gidley, 2005, pp.2).

A result from the use of images used in fundraising campaigns by NGOs is what Moeller (1999) calls ‘compassion fatigue’. Images can overload the senses. Put simply, ‘a single child at risk commands our attention and prompts our action. But one child, and then another, and another and another and on and on is too much … All those starving brown babies over the year blur together’ (Moeller, 1999, pp.36). In that sense, images of suffering and disaster become ‘infotainment’ – just another commodity, another moment of pain. Our understanding of a crisis is ‘weakened, diluted and distorted’ (Moeller, 1999, pp. 35). Just as the photograph of a starving baby has the power to stimulate an emotive response, Moeller (1999) argues it is also controlled, because we have the power to turn the page or look away. (Moeller, 1999, pp. 40).

Images, such as the aforementioned Kevin Carter photograph of the starving Sudanese baby girl can be enough to spur the public to demand action from their respective governments. And in times of famine there is no greater icon than the starving child (Moeller 1999 pp. 98, Manzo 2008, Lamers 2005). Stanley Cohen describes such images as the ‘universal icon of human suffering’ (Cohen, 2001, pp. 178). Benthall (1993), labels them the ‘Biafra child’ of the 1960s (see image 1.2) or...
the ‘Ethiopian child’ of the 1990s (see image 1.3) ... the stereotypical ‘starving baby’ image once used by Oxfam as a design on a Christmas tree ornament (Benthall, 1993, pp. 175). If images of Lincoln, Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Ghandi represent the martyred deaths of foreign leaders the coverage of famine is distilled down into the iconic image of a starving infant (Moeller, 1999, pp. 98). Moeller (1999) argues the image of an emaciated child bring clarity to the complex story of famine. ‘Skeletal children personify innocence abused ... their images cut through the social, economic and political context to create an imperative statement’ (Moeller, 1999, pp. 98).

So if the iconic image a starving infant is so effective in creating a statement or spurring demand for action, why do we see an emergence of compassion fatigue towards even the most vulnerable of subjects? For Moeller (1999) the answer is simple – while such images work in capturing the public’s attention, they are just the first and easiest step to take. The harder job is to retain the public’s interest long enough to educate. The repeating of the iconic starving children image is just a short-term strategy, and if continued teaches little and ultimately contributes to an audience’s decline into compassion fatigue (Moeller, 1999, pp. 99). So while pictures from famines clearly demonstrate the power of images, they also clearly demonstrate their limitations.
While compassion fatigue is evident in the visual coverage of famine it is also arguable that it is kept at bay longer than if it were adults that were being represented. According to Nussbaum (2001) compassion is a ‘painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person’s undeserved misfortune’. She regards compassion as complex emotion, including such cognitive beliefs as that the suffering of the other is serious, and that the suffering person does not deserve the pain (Nussbaum, 2001, pp. 306). This in turn, makes the suffering person innocent. Hoijer (2011) calls this the emergence of the ideal victim. That due to the cognitive cultural construction of our society, the discourse of global compassion designates some victims as “better” victims than others (Hoijer, 2011, pp. 516). As such, women, children and the elderly are thought to be more suitable to this idea of the ideal victims than males in their prime. This may be due, in some part, to the fact that men are often associated with violent political factions or as the causes of conflict, where as women are often more easily associated as being apolitical and children, as innocent and vulnerable bystanders.

This concept of the inherent innocence and vulnerability children bore out of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which children were believed to have a “natural goodness” (Johnny, 2006, pp 24). In the 1880s the Declaration of Dependence by the Children of America in Mines and Factories Workshops Assembled, children stated that not only is ‘childhood endowed with inherent and inalienable rights’, but went even further to declare themselves ‘helpless and dependent’. While childhood as a social construct has evolved over time – especially given the evolution of succeeding rights documents, such as the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child which moved from the traditional approaches of protective rights to also including the more empowering participatory rights – children are still often viewed as vulnerable objects in need of guidance and protection (Pupavac, 2009, pp. 222). As Hoijer (2011) states; ‘When a child stares into the photographer’s camera she or he may be perceived as looking directly at you as an audience, reminding you of her or his vulnerability and innocence’ (Hoijer, 2011, pp. 522). Therefore, it can be established, that only when victims have been identified as “bona fide” are they candidates for compassion (Moeller, 1999, pp. 107). And given underlying prevalent cultural belief that children are more vulnerable and innocent it is certainly understandable why NGOs would continue to predominately use images of children in their campaigns.
Pornography of Poverty

So given the establishment of why images of children are used in NGO campaigns, the question must now be asked of how children are represented in these images. In the context of UNICEF’s use of images in its East Africa crisis campaign, this literature will be specifically in regards to NGO use of child famine images.

The role and importance of humanitarian agencies is hugely important. NGOs, such as UNICEF, have the power to inform, educate and persuade public opinion. And all this can be done with just one single image. As Shaw (1996) states; humanitarian agencies, social movements and community organisations are the ‘new institutions of representation’. Their representations – including visual imagery – can influence policies, practices and discourses (Dogra, 2007, pp. 161).

Traditional famine imagery used by NGOs is best epitomised stereotypical images such as the Kevin Carter photograph of the starving Sudanese baby girl (see image 6.1) or by Benthall’s (1993) ‘Biafra child’ (see image 6.2). The bloated bellies, matchstick limbs, desperate eyes and the foetal position are all signifiers of the stereotypical starving child. Some of the more infamous exemplars, as Benthall (1993) and Lamers point out; have reduced children to just body parts. The helpless hand of a dying African child clasped by in a fat, healthy adult white hand (see image 6.3) (Benthall, 1993, pp. 175).
Studies suggest that all fundraising appeals by NGOs and INGOs until the 1980s showed this ‘negative imagery’. In these images, countries in the third world are characterised as a fragile, passive, helpless child or victim, unable to survive without the help of us parents, i.e., the Western world, portrayed as the hero or saviour (Lamers, 2005, pp. 49, Burman, 1994, pp. 238, Manzo, 2006, pp.9, Benthall, 1993). Charity images objectified and dehumanised people in the ‘Third World’ (Wilson, 2011, pp. 321). This use of starving babies and other emotive imagery to coax, cajole and bludgeon donations from a guilt-ridden Northern public is what Smillie (1995) calls ‘the pornography of poverty’ (Smillie, 1995, pp. 136). It trivialises the complex issue of famine by only equating it only with money and food, while at the same time reinforcing Africa’s image as the ‘dark continent’ (Dogra, 2007, pp.162). Dodd (2005) goes so far as to label such images of the ‘abject and passive victims’ and extension of 19th century colonialism, with ‘Africa as inferior, feminised, infatalised’ and the object of our charity (Dodd, 2005, pp. 26). Furthermore, Lamers (2005) argues it also allows NGO’s to raise funds for politically loaded topics in a relatively neutral way (Lamers, 2005, pp. 48).

However, since the 1980s, and as early as the 1970s, there has been a shift of the role of NGOs to do more than just raise funds. NGOs began to move towards a very strong education and advocacy role, which many now accord a high importance to (Dogra, 2007, pp. 162). For instance UNICEF states on its website that it ‘works closely with children, women and communities as well as governments, other UN agencies, faith-based groups, NGOs and the private sector on behalf of all children’ and ‘has the global authority to influence and produce change in local polices and attitudes’. Wilson (2011) argues further that the incorporation of NGOs into the structures of and emerging system of transnational governmentality also informed the new types of representations produced by them (Wilson, 2011, pp.321). At the same time as this move towards a more educationalist and transnational government role, NGOs also began to understand the consequences to using ‘negative imagery’, sparking significant debate on famine imagery. Cohen (2001) notes this denunciation of ‘negative imagery’ was well underway by the mid 1970s. Traditional ‘starving child’ appeals were being denounced as an allegory of colonialism as well as ‘an analogy with pornography’ (Cohen, 2001, pp. 178).

The turning point in this debate over the impact of traditional famine appeal imagery and the call for image reform from ‘development educationalists’ came with the image coverage of the 1984-1985 Ethiopian famine (Manzo, 2006, pp. 9, Wilson, 2011, pp.321). With passive images of helpless, starving children continuing to dominate the famine coverage, critics called for positive guidelines and codes of practice. By the 1990s, NGOs such as UNICEF began to develop internal
guidelines on their own use of images. Broader international guidelines were also draw up, most notably the Code of Conduct: Images and Messages relating to the Third World, which was adopted by the General Assembly of European NGOs in 1989 (Since updated to ‘Code of Conduct on Images and Messages). The code stated in its guiding principles that choices of images and messages will be made based on: ‘Respect for the dignity of the people concerned; Belief in the equality of all people; and acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice. Further more, it strives to ‘truthfully represent any image ... both in its immediate and in its wider context so as to improve public understanding of the realities and complexities of development’ and to avoid images that ‘potentially stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places’.

The 2004 guide to the use of the code by DOCHAS, the Irish NGDOs platform, further explained these principles. The most important of these is what is meant by the term solidarity; ‘It is essential to communicate that we work in solidarity with the people in the developing world and that we are not simply giving a hand out. Images and messages should not perpetuate an ‘us and them’ attitude but instead, foster a sense of our inter-connected common humanity.’ Additionally in the truthful representation of an image and context, the guidelines say it is important to outline the background of each image as much as possible so that public perceptions are informed properly of the situation portrayed in them.

However, since the incorporation of the Code and the emergence of NGO internal image guidelines, critics have continued to cite the use of ‘negative imagery’ by the Western media and NGOs. Some have argued that the use of such ‘negative imagery’ is done so for a particular purpose – the fundraising campaign (Lamers, 2005, pp. 68). Lamers (2005), argues such images are designed to raise funds not ‘tell the truth’ about the actual complexities of the humanitarian situation, and as such, de-contextualise the image (Lamers, 2005, pp. 68). He states NGOs find themselves in a difficult split between sensitizing public opinion or simply raising money and as a result contributing to the ‘pre-existing dominant discourse of famine that feeds structuring dichotomies and maintains boundaries between the West and the Rest’ (Lamers, 2005, pp. 68). Other arguments towards the logical continued use of the ‘starving child’ image by NGOs derive from ‘the spectre of death that hangs over it’ (Manzo, 2008, pp. 639). In this instance, the connotation of death is logically consistent with the humanitarian imperative to save lives – enabled by its monetary donations (Manzo, 2008, pp. 639).
The next sections will analyse UNICEF Australia’s participation in this discussion and debate on the depiction and representation of the child and its use of images in its 2011 East Africa Crisis campaign. In the context of UNICEF’s internal image guidelines, it will explore UNICEF Australia’s strategy and campaign, its own child imagery guidelines and its subsequent use of images for the campaign. It will then evaluate whether UNICEF Australia upholds these principles and guidelines in its depiction and representation of the child, or whether, it regresses to the ‘starving child’ image in order to secure donations.

Methodology

Firstly, it important to talk about what the East Africa crisis is. The ongoing crisis currently unfolding for millions of people in East Africa is the result of years of drought, impact of climate change, the high price of food and fuel and is compounded by exclusion, poverty and conflict. According to UNICEF, across Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti 13.3 million people are affected by the crisis. This includes 4.14 million children. Famine has officially been declared in six areas of the South of Somalia, which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of people moving both across the border and within the country. In Somalia 750,000 people are at risk of death with nearly one million living as refugees the four neighbouring countries. In Kenya, 3.5 million people – 1.7 million of whom are children – are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. In Ethiopia, an estimated 4.5 million people will be in need of food relief till the end of the year, including an estimated 652,500 children. But this is more than a food crisis. In addition to lack of food and water, malnourished children are extremely susceptible to killer diseases, including measles, malaria, diarrhoea and pneumonia. And with one of the lowest immunisation rates in the world, malaria and measles epidemics are expected when the rains come.

In order to research this rather large topic, I will be looking at a total of four months of the campaign, from the start of July 2011 – end of October 2011, looking specifically at UNICEF Australia’s use of child images in the context of its internal photo guidelines. The image material that function as primary data in this research was collected on the global UNICEF website, the UNICEF Australia website and the UNICEF Australia facebook page, all of which can be accessed on the internet. In total the image database used in the investigation into UNICEF Australia’s East Africa campaign add up to 10 images. Another five images are used in the context of previous famine coverage by UNICEF, other NGOs and humanitarian agencies and media agencies. These include
images include those used strictly for donations, those for educational purposes, those selected for the UNICEF Australia ‘photo of the week’ and ‘children of the world’ weekly photo and those in the specific East Africa image galleries. A comprehensive overview of the image material can be found in the appendix.

I would like to note that because of the large number of images UNICEF Australia has used in the campaign, this paper will only contain a broad overview of 10 selected images from five different links on either the UNICEF Australia webpage or its facebook page. It is not my aim to provide a thorough analysis of every single image used by UNICEF Australia in the campaign. Instead, in the limited scope of this paper I want to argue that this specific dataset of images evidence the difficulties of NGOs in the split between sensitizing public opinion or simply raising money and as a result contributing to the ‘pre-existing dominant discourse of famine’, as was described in the introduction. It should also be noted here that images 1.0-1.4 are simply used to exemplify the stereotypical ‘starving child’ image, as explored in the theory, and as such it can not be ascertained whether these images were actually used by NGOs as images in previous campaigns.

Also, I would like to note that during the period of May 2011 – September 2011 I was working at UNICEF Australia as a Communications intern. As part of my duties as an intern I was responsible for choosing the UNICEF Australia ‘photo of the week’ and ‘children of the world’ photos. At least one of the selected images I myself chose and as such it can be argued that this creates bias. However, in combating this potential bias, I would add that in my duty of image selection, I was never shown a copy of the UNICEF image guidelines, nor was I informed by UNICEF Australia staff on the ‘types’ of images UNICEF Australia likes to use. Additionally, I was also not engaged with any of the academic literature on images used by NGOs during humanitarian crises.

**UNICEF’s Image Guidelines**

Following on from the *Code of Conduct: Images and Messages relating to the Third World* – and the emergence of other NGO guidelines – UNICEF joined the discussion and debate on the depiction of the child and produced its own set of global image guidelines.

In its guidelines UNICEF states: ‘In promoting global support for children’s rights, UNICEF must advocate for a more rigorous examination of how children are represented in all media’ and
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‘refine its understanding of the role of images in all messages about children and women that it projects in the media.’ It states this awareness of the importance of visual images must be internalised across all three avenues of UNICEF communication: general advocacy, fund-raising, and programme communication. UNICEF added it was vital for coordination amongst these sectors in the formulation of its visual messages or it would risk undercutting their effectiveness, undermine each others sector’s needs and contributions, as well as send ‘mixed or directly contradictory messages that would confuse, rather than convince, public audiences.’

UNICEF uses the articles of the CRC– which is the foundation of all its work – to examine the links between child rights and how they are depicted visually. It lists 15 articles from the CRC which are of relevance to the visual depiction of children, including; Article 3: ‘In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be primary consideration …’; Article 5: ‘…shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or legal guardianship in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child…’; and Article 8: ‘…the rights of the child to preserve his or her own identity, including nationality, name and family relations…” (CRC, 1989).

As a global NGO, UNICEF acknowledged that it has a responsibility to ensure that all its images of children are ‘used appropriately’. For UNICEF, this is to ‘move beyond powerful clichés’. Here UNICEF engages with the academic literature to list these clichés as the use of the negative or ‘starving child’ images that have been widely disseminated by humanitarian agencies, as well as the opposite extreme of the very happy or very ‘cute’ child image.

While stating that the situation of children in despairing situations should be documented and denounced, UNICEF engages with Moeller’s (1999) ‘compassion fatigue’ literature, stating that on ‘a constant diet’ of emotional turmoil’ audiences are often left feeling numb and as such reject the images or the images lose all meaning (UNICEF image guidelines, Negative Imagery). Further, the guidelines also engage with the literature of ‘pornography of poverty’, warning of the exploitative nature of such use of ‘negative’ images. If such images are continually circulated and viewed, UNICEF states the image can then become sensationalist, and thus, exploitative rather than helpful. In both these instances, UNICEF states the child can get lost, replaced by an object – which is what the photograph literally is. As such, this process of objectification also weakens our sense of shared responsibility for the conditions that have created stress.
On the extreme opposite to the suffering child image is that of the very happy or very ‘cute’ child image. UNICEF states such images are frequently offered as an antidote to the ‘starving child’ cliché. However, UNICEF also warns of the exploitative potential in the repeated use of such images (UNICEF image guidelines, Positive Imagery). While it states that positive images of smiling or laughing children can be ‘wonderfully expressive of the uniqueness of childhood’, it is also true, that if overused, ‘tend to objectify children into an idealised and sentimentalised happiness that negates the complexity of their reality.’ This simplified image can also imply that solutions for achieving happiness for children are equally simple. UNICEF states this ‘quick fix’ approach, while effective for short-term advocacy or fundraising, negates the complexity of development which leads to disappointment when the fix fails, and to short attention spans when the long-term correctives are presented.

So it is clear that UNICEF is an active participant in the image debate. It has acknowledged the traditional focus of humanitarian agencies on opposites in their use of images of children, while also stating the problems associated with such image use and reliance. But what does it offer as a solution? The answers are quite ambiguous. UNICEF states this traditional focus needs to be broadened to better address the specifics of complex issues and to ‘shift photographic depictions of children to the vast middle ground where most children actually live’ (UNICEF image guidelines, Beyond Powerful Clichés). This middle ground, it states, is centred in child rights, where the best interests of the child and that child’s right to dignity, respect, protection and participation are the guiding criteria that determines which images should be used and how they should be used. In helping to achieve this middle ground UNICEF states is useful to ask the question, “If he/she were my child, how would I want her/him portrayed?” Asking this helps eliminates the tendency to treat child subjects in photographs as objects, there to accommodate temporary advocacy or fund-raising needs, rather than as subjects who are in our care and deserve to be represented fairly.

However, despite engaging with all the relevant literature on the reformation of image use by humanitarian agencies, UNICEF’s guidelines contain some unanswered and contradictory material. For example, in analysing the ‘starving child’ image, UNICEF acknowledges that such images continue to be widely used today. While it denotes that this is partly due because many children suffer, UNICEF fails to give any other further explanations. Additionally, while it acknowledges and guides against treating child subjects in photographs as objects to accommodate temporary fund-raising needs, it also notes the critical importance of images for fundraising efforts, stating; ‘any appeal for emergency funds is significantly enhanced by the graphic testimony of a photograph.
Fundraisers know that there is a limited, time-bound “window of opportunity” in the first weeks of an emergency, when public donations peak, both in total volume and in the amount of each contribution’ (UNICEF photo guidelines, Covering Emergencies).

**UNICEF Australia’s East Africa Campaign**

Looking at UNICEF Australia’s use of images in its 2011 East Africa crisis campaign, it becomes evident that UNICEF seems to have difficulties in the split between strictly applying all its principle photo guidelines into its choice of images – thus adhering to the child’s rights to dignity, respect and protection – and that of raising funds. However, this only becomes clear when looking at a selection of images across a wide range of purposes. These include images used strictly for donations, those for educational purposes, those selected for the UNICEF Australia ‘photo of the week’ and ‘children of the world’ weekly photo and those in the specific East Africa image galleries.

When looking at the aforementioned categories – asides from those photos selected purely for donations – UNICEF Australia appears to generally adhere to its guiding principles. Images 2.1 and 2.2 were both used in educational field stories. Image 2.1 in a field story on feeding centres in drought-affected Djibouti and Image 2.2 on Somali refugee children going back to a UNICEF supported school. Image 2.1 could be criticised for being an example of a simplified positive image. The kids are engaged directly with the photographer and their smiling faces could imply that a solution to the humanitarian crisis is simple. However, the accompanying caption provides further context to the image, stating; that the young boy in the front is a Somali refugee who has been living in a refugee camp in Djibouti for three years. Also the photo was not in danger of being overused, as photos of smiling children in UNICEF campaign on the East Africa were not the predominant images. Meanwhile, Image 2.2 is a documentary image, that is, it documents people in real situations. Documentary images are encouraged to be used by UNICEF. The photo is showing specific UNICEF action – the children going back to a UNICEF supported school – which UNICEF states are very useful for advocacy and fundraising.
Image 3.1 and 3.2 are examples of UNICEF Australia’s ‘photo of the week’, which are images which represent a poignant and topical issue of that week. The photos are uploaded each week onto the UNICEF Australia face book page, with a small caption describing the photo. During the months of the East Africa humanitarian crisis, East Africa was quite often depicted in these photo albums. Image 3.1 shows children and women at a nutritional UNICEF assisted feeding centre in Kenya. The accompanying caption provides further information on the wider context of the photo and the complexities of the situation, stating as predominantly pastoralist region, many families in Kenya are having to selling their livestock to by increasingly extensive food. Image 3.2 shows a young boy being vaccinated during the UNICEF-supported measles and polio immunisation campaign near the Kenyan/Somali border. In both photos, the people – with the exception on the women second from the left in image 3.1 – have no interaction with the camera. As such the images seem to be
documenting real life situations within East Africa, with the accompanying captions providing further information and thus a wider context.

Image 3.1

Image 3.2

Image 4.1 and 4.2 are examples of UNICEF Australia’s ‘children of the world’ photos which, like the UNICEF ‘photo of the week’, are images that represent a poignant and topical issue of that week and also uploaded once a week onto the UNICEF Australia facebook page. However, the ‘children of the world’ photos are more personalised, as the accompanying captions tells the story of one individual child. Image 4.1 tells the story of Seyanae, who in drought affected Kenya, tends to his families few surviving goats which are their main source of food and money. The caption continues; ‘Seyanae used to look after 200 goats, but now he only 10 left after the rest died from disease and
hunger due to the drought. Two people in Seyanae’s family have already died because of lack of food. At night he goes to bed hungry’. Image 4.2 tells the story 10-month old Firdoze who is feed ready-to-eat-therapeutic food by her mother, outside their home in Ethiopia. The caption continues; ‘Firdoze is severely malnourished and enrolled in a UNICEF-supported Government outpatient therapeutic feeding programme. Firdoze weighed 5.7 kilograms when admitted to the outpatient programme two weeks ago, now she weighs 6.4 kilograms and continues to recover.’ In such captions, it is clear the photos support the UNICEF guideline to providing a wide context of the humanitarian crisis, while also personalising the photos at the same time. Again, neither subject in the both photos is actively engaged with the camera.
Image 5.1 and 5.2 are from the ‘East Africa Crisis’ photo album on the UNICEF Australia facebook page. Image 5.1 is of a boy being immunised against polio and worms as part a house-to-house programme run by UNICEF in north-eastern Kenya. The accompanying caption provides a link on to UNICEF’s immunisation programs in East Africa. Image 5.2, is perhaps the most graphic of all of the images used in the entire UNICEF Australia East Africa campaign. It shows a boy in Kenya, who has acute malnutrition, having his arm measured by a mid-upper arm circumference armband to assess his nutrition status. The “red” section means that he is acutely malnourished and in need of urgent care. The caption then goes on to explain on how UNICEF is treating children suffering from malnutrition across Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. It could be argued that image 5.2 falls into the ‘negative image’ criteria, in that it is showing a suffering ‘starving child’ in need of Western help. However, I would argue this is not the case given that UNICEF Australia has used very few graphic photos depicting severely malnourished children. Instead, given its accompanying caption – informing the viewer malnutrition and the methods used to measure and treat it – it is positioned in a wider context. Additionally, the hands of those treating the child are not white, thus removing it – at least to some extent – from the debate of the image as an extension of 19th-century colonialism.
From the above examples it can be argued that UNICEF Australia use of images in its 2011 East Africa crisis campaign more or less hit that ‘middle ground’ it strives for. All the images are documentary and with the use of the captions place the image in a wider context. However, there is one clear exception to this conclusion; and that is in UNICEF Australia use of images for the clear and specific purpose of garnering donations. These images are usually the main image on the first page of the UNICEF website; however, they can be embedded in general site pages related to the East Africa campaign. They all have text over the photo, usually with a startling fact, and most have direct links to donate or at least call for support in the form of donations. But most importantly they all identify with the ‘persistent iconography of third world images’, that are, the tight-shot close-up photograph of a single child – usually in pre-adolescence years – looking wide-eyed, directly into the camera (Ruddick, 2003, pp. 341).

Image 6.1

Image 2.1 is a clear example of UNICEF’s seemingly regressive use imagery. While the image is no where near as shocking and dehumanised as the iconic ‘starving child’ image – Benthall’s (1993), ‘Biafra child’ of the 1960s (see image 1.2) or the ‘Ethiopian child’ of the 1990s (see image 1.3) – it can be argued that it does not completely adhere to the UNICEF photo guidelines. The image is cropped to just the child’s face, with the big sad eyes looking directly at the photographer. All other context of the photo is lost, such as who the child is, where the child is, who the child is with and what is the humanitarian situation at that particular moment in time. As such, the child is abstracted from its historical, cultural and political location. With all the wider context of the photo lost, the child is essentially dehumanised, along with its family and culture, rendering it as a passive object (Burman, 1994, pp. 238). The same evaluation can be applied to image 6.2.
UNICEF states in its guidelines that all its photographs must show children affected by the crisis and images of destroyed buildings or landscapes without people, and especially without children - unless accompanied by other images including children - are not useful for emergency advocacy or fundraising. However, while advocating for the image of the individual or lone child, the UNICEF photo guidelines also states that this should include both close-up images and those in wider contexts. Additionally, the UNICEF photo guidelines state photographs must be accompanied by basic caption information, identifying the date, location, subject and (if relevant) UNICEF activity. And most importantly that ‘photographs without accurate captions cannot be used because this contextual information is vital to the credibility of UNICEF’s use of the image’ (UNICEF photo guidelines, Other Emergencies Issues). However, despite these clear guidelines neither image 6.1 or 6.2 have any of the above mentioned captions, thus, removing them of their context. Although is must be added, that image 6.1 and other image used in the same manner and position on the UNICEF Australia website, provide a link to the East Africa Humanitarian page which, while containing no caption for the image, does contain further information about the crisis.

Conclusion

The struggle UNICEF Australia now faces – as do all other humanitarian agencies - is the internal organisational battle of raising funds while at the same time making a conscious decision to steer away from those images that only depict extreme opposites of the suffering child or the very
happy or very ‘cute’ child. From the evaluation of its East Africa campaign it appears UNICEF Australia has been quite successful in that in all areas expect those images used specifically to garner donations. Here, it becomes apparent that while UNICEF Australia has largely moved away from having to resort to ‘pornography’ in famine appeals, it still has some reliance on images of de-contextualised children, that is, the lone child photographed in a close up. While there is nothing inherently wrong with moving people to demand change, and there is certainly nothing wrong with charitable giving that results in lives saved, NGOs worldwide and UNICEF Australia must be mindful that they don’t become blind to the indirect and often unintended consequence of negative image use in fundraising. Such images promote emotion without understanding and charity without structural change. And as McGee (2005) argues, at a time when NGOs in the global north typically speak the language of partnership rather than charity there is a very real danger that the dominance of such neo-colonial images minimise rather than maximise the impact of NGO work in general and diminish rather than improve its quality (McGee, 2005, pp. 10 and 21).

Granted there are no hard or fast answers into how UNICEF can overcome this issue. It has already taken the right step in producing a set of internal guidelines which specify in great detail the organisations view and stance on how child images should be used. It has engaged with all the relevant discussion and debate. And while there is never going to be a perfect child image for NGO use and while UNICEF Australia cannot change the dominant discourse of famine images and how the third world is represented, it can take small steps to ensure progress within its own organisation. This could include steps to ensure its image guidelines are circulated to all its staff – including interns – so as to ensure all facets of its organisation are on the same page when it comes to the use of child images. Furthermore, better collusion amongst its advocacy, fundraising and communications departments will help ensure the guidelines are upheld across the entire organisation.
Appendix

Image 1.0
http://www.photos.unicef.org
Small child in front of a hut in southern Sudan, with signs of malnutrition and health problems, protruding belly, and dry skin big head.
© UNICEF/SUDA00691/. UNICEF Photographer/Sudan

Image 1.1
http://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/tag/famine
In March 1993, photographer Kevin Carter made a trip to southern Sudan, where he took now iconic photo of a vulture preying upon an emaciated Sudanese toddler near the village of Ayod. Carter said he waited about 20 minutes, hoping that the vulture would spread its wings. It didn’t. Carter snapped the haunting photograph and chased the vulture away. (The parents of the girl were busy taking food from the same UN plane Carter took to
The photograph was sold to The New York Times where it appeared for the first time on March 26, 1993 as ‘metaphor for Africa’s despair’. Practically overnight hundreds of people contacted the newspaper to ask whether the child had survived, leading the newspaper to run an unusual special editor’s note saying the girl had enough strength to walk away from the vulture, but that her ultimate fate was unknown. Journalists in the Sudan were told not to touch the famine victims, because of the risk of transmitting disease, but Carter came under criticism for not helping the girl. “The man adjusting his lens to take just the right frame of her suffering might just as well be a predator, another vulture on the scene,” read one editorial. Carter eventually won the Pulitzer Prize for this photo, but he couldn’t enjoy it. “I’m really, really sorry I didn’t pick the child up,” he confided in a friend. Consumed with the violence he’d witnessed, and haunted by the questions as to the little girl’s fate, he committed suicide three months later.

Image 1.2
http://www.photos.unicef.org
In 1968, a Biafran baby eats her first bite of bread in months, at a refugee hospital near the front line. The child’s distended stomach is a symptom of severe malnutrition, a result of widespread food shortages due to the ongoing civil war between the Federal Government and forces from the breakaway Biafran region. Hospitalized children can be brought back to health in a few days with massive feeding and medication. UNICEF is providing food, medicine and other emergency supplies in support of humanitarian aid efforts led by church relief agencies and the ICRC.
UNICEF aid to the children of Nigeria began in January 1968 in cooperation with the International Red Cross (ICRC) and church relief agencies. Its first shipment of food and medicine went by air from UNICEF’s Copenhagen warehouse, to be followed soon after by chartered ships from North America. In September, its helicopter airlift to thousands of refugee families in the Valabar region was initiated, following delivery of two helicopters from the United States of America to the city of Lagos. The small aircraft, carrying 12 tonnes of food each, made 10 trips daily to the interior. In December, the token fleet was increased by two large helicopters able to carry double the load of the smaller craft. Deliveries at year’s end totalled 1,300 tonnes. The latest addition to basic supplies in December were smallpox and measles vaccines and 1,000 tonnes of stockfish (a favourite food of Nigerians) contributed by Norway.
UNICEF supplies and water to the region, part of UNICEF’s 1991 emergency appeal for US$17.75 million for Ethiopia. UNICEF supports supplementary feeding programmes and the provision of essential medical supplies and water to the region, part of UNICEF’s 1991 emergency appeal for US$17.75 million for Ethiopia.


Image 1.2

In 1968, a Biafran baby eats her first bite of bread in months, at a refugee hospital near the front line. The child’s distended stomach is a symptom of severe malnutrition, a result of widespread food shortages due to the ongoing civil war between the Federal Government and forces from the breakaway Biafran region. Hospitalized children can be brought back to health in a few days with massive feeding and medication. UNICEF is providing food, medicine and other emergency supplies in support of humanitarian aid efforts led by church relief agencies and the ICRC.

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Image 1.3

A malnourished child in the southern Ogaden. Some 90,000 returnees whose health and nutritional status is extremely poor inhabit huge camps near the towns of Kelafo and Gode in this region. By May they had received limited relief shipments of grain due to damaged roads and the civil conflict. In Ethiopia's arid south-east embracing the Eastern Hararghe, Ogaden and Dire Dawa regions, more than 700,000 residents are experiencing their second straight year of severe drought. By mid-year they were joined by 600,000 refugees from Somalia, including 200,000 "returnees" - former Ogaden residents who fled to Somalia in 1977 when the two countries fought a war over possession of the region. UNICEF supports supplementary feeding programmes and the provision of essential medical supplies and water to the region, part of UNICEF’s 1991 emergency appeal for US$17.75 million for Ethiopia.

UNICEF Australia’s use of images in media campaigns

Image 1.4
http://iconicphotos.worldpress.com/tag/famine
Taken in Karamoja district, Uganda in April 1980, the contrasting hands of a starving boy and a missionary spoke louder than any world leader and any news story about the famine in Uganda. Karamoja region has the driest climate in Uganda and was prone to droughts. The 1980 famine in there where 21% of the population (and 60% of the infants) died was one of the worst in history. The worst recorded famine was the great Finn famine (1696), which killed a third of the population. The photographer Mike Wells, who would later win the World Press Photo Award for this photo, admitted that he was ashamed to take the photo. The same publication that sat on his picture for five months without publishing it entered it into a competition. He was embarrassed to win as he never entered the competition himself, and was against winning prizes with pictures of people starving to death.

Image 2.1
Mohamed Dhaher Hussein (above), 8, is a Somali refugee who has been living in Ali Addeh refugee camp in Djibouti for three years. He is a grade one student in the camp's school and wants to go back to Somalia and work as a teacher when he grows up.

Image 2.2
Somali refugee children focus on their lessons in a UNICEF-supported school in Dagahaley camp in Dadaab, north-eastern Kenya. UNICEF has supported accelerated learning courses with its partner CARE International during the summer vacation to help students prepare for the new school term in September.
©UNICEF/Kenya/2011/Moreno

Image 3.1
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFEAustralia?sk=photos
Children and women attend a nutrition session at a UNICEF-assisted health centre in Longelop Village, Kenya. In this predominantly pastoralist region, many families are selling their livestock to buy increasingly expensive food.
©UNICEF/NYHQ2011-1111/Kate Holt

Image 3.2
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFEAustralia?sk=photos
A boy cries while being vaccinated during the UNICEF-supported measles and polio immunization campaign under way in the town of Liboi, near the border with Somalia.
©UNICEF/Kenya/2011/Siegfried Modola

Image 4.1
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFEAustralia?sk=photos
In drought-affected Kenya, Seyanae tends his family’s few surviving goats which are their main source of food and money. Seyanae used to look after 200 goats, but now has only 10 left after they rest died from disease and hunger due the drought. Two people in Seyanae’s family have already died because of lack of food. At night he goes to bed hungry.
© UNICEF/NYHQ2011-1035/Kate Holt
UNICEF Australia’s use of images in media campaigns

Image 4.2
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFAustralia?sk=photos
10-month-old Firdoze, is feed a ready-to-eat therapeutic food by her mum, outside their home in Meleb Village, Ethiopia. Firdoze is severely malnourished and enrolled in a UNICEF-supported Government outpatient therapeutic feeding programme. Firdoze weighed 5.7 kilograms when admitted to the outpatient programme two weeks ago; now she weighs 6.4 kilograms and continues to recover. ©UNICEF/NYHQ2011-1334/Tibebu Lemma For more on UNICEF’s work in East Africa visit www.unicef.org.au/eastafrica

Image 5.1
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFAustralia?sk=photos
A little boy gets immunised against polio, measles and worms on a house-to-house programme run by UNICEF in the town of Dadaab in northeastern Kenya. For more on our immunisation programs in East Africa check out this video
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5saAignIkss&feature=channel_video_title
©UNICEF Kenya/2011/Siegfried Modola

Image 5.2
http://www.facebook.com/UNICEFAustralia?sk=photos
Acute malnutrition is a threat for over 2.3 million children under the age of five across Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. When we met this boy in Kenya, we used a mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) armband to assess his nutrition status. It’s in the “red” section, which means that he’s acutely malnourished and in need of urgent care. We’re treating children suffering from malnutrition with ready-to-use-therapeutic food in communities, or at therapeutic feeding centres for children with medical complications. Protecting against disease and providing safe drinking water are equally as important. You can help by making a donation here: bit.ly/qOcdwd
Thanks in advance!
Bibliography


Declaration of Dependence by the Children of America in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled (1880s), available at: http://www.toolswapusa.com/ArticeArchives/DeclarationofDependence.htm


