

# The South through the Northern Eye

Understanding how images of the  
South influence public opinion



When asked “when I say to you developing or third world, what comes to mind?”

80% responded with words such as war, famine, disaster, starvation and corruption

*- VSO Study: “The Live Aid Legacy: The Developing World through British Eyes – a research Report”*



**Pictures of famine victims are often presented without context and without the subjects' names**



**“Picture editors would usually think at least three times before publishing photographs of naked children, unless they were African famine victims.”**

*- Pete Davis  
Oxfam*

**“You have to think: ‘Would I like my picture, or my child’s picture, taken like this?’”**

*- Nikki van der Gaag  
freelance writer and editor*



Disaster images rarely portray local people helping each other



“Ninety percent of the people saved are saved by their neighbours and family and about 10 percent by people rush in from round and about, and about 0.01 percent by people who come in from the other side of the world”

-Tony Vaux  
Author of “The Selfish Altruist”



**“Part of the Live Aid legacy has been the equation of famine with Africa and Africa with famine, reducing a continent of 57 countries, nearly 900 million people and numerous disparate cultures to a single, impoverished place.”**

*-Imaging Famine Conference  
2004*





**“The idea that pervades is that Africa is a broken, dusty place without food or hope. Many children in the UK simply don’t believe there are cars, cities or mobile phones in Africa.”**

*- Pete Davis  
Oxfam*



## Canadian perceptions of international development:

- Hopeless
- No aid can make a difference
- Problems are *unsolvable*, and solutions are not apparent

- Nathanson, 2005





# Which leads to...

- **Us and Them:** reinforcing separateness between the two worlds with no interconnectedness and no common experience
- **Superiority of the North** as the experts of Southern development issues
- **The South as a charity case**
- **Poverty as a hopeless situation**
- **The South as victims** rather than agents of their own empowerment/development



- *Nathanson, 2005*

# CCIC CODE of ETHICS:

## 3.5 Communications to the Public

**3.5.3** Any and all communications to the public by the Organization shall respect the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people supported by its programs. In particular the Organization shall avoid the following:

- Images/messages that generalize and mask the diversity of situations;
- Images/messages that fuel prejudice;
- Images/messages that foster a sense of Northern superiority; and
- Images/messages that show people as hopeless objects for our pity, rather than as equal partners in action and development.

*- Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)  
Code of Ethics, ratified by members in May 2004*

# The South through the Northern Eye...

ACIC will collaborate with member organizations, media and community groups to develop long-term strategies for increasing public awareness of international cooperation and poverty issues.

This will lead to increased awareness about issues of stereotypes, objectification and the dichotomy between the North and South and will create a better understanding of why we should avoid using images that do not respect the dignity of people within them.

Ultimately, this will lead to increased awareness about some of the issues impacting citizens in developing countries, and stronger support for increasing development aid.

# Project Format

- Workshops for members, non-member, students, and the general public
- Photography Competition
- Travelling Photography Exhibit



# Goals of the Project

1. To build knowledge of partnerships between Canadians and Southern partners around issues related to poverty alleviation, making sure to focus on positive examples of imagery and ethical images;
2. To engage stakeholders in the Atlantic Canadian media industry, to understand issues surrounding poverty and ethical images and to present alternatives to the current portrayal of the 'south' in the news;
3. To continue developing new models of collaboration on public engagement: ACIC with members/public, and multi-sectored partnerships at the local and regional level;

# Goals Continued...

4. To build the knowledge and capacity of ACIC members and other groups to stimulate public engagement on issues of poverty and ethical images;
5. To build awareness of poverty issues, making sure to create linkages between local and global; and
6. To increase awareness of Atlantic Canadians of international development issues.



# Global Citizenship

- A way of understanding (how the world works; understanding of links between our own lives and those of people throughout the world)
- A way of seeing (attitudes & values – social justice & equity; sense of empathy, respect for diversity; interconnectedness; a belief that people can make a difference)
- A way of acting ( behaviours – exercising political rights; set of skills – critical thinking, challenging injustice etc.)

