



MANIFESTO



ACTION AGAINST HUNGER GRANT FOR A NEW HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Humanitarian photography came to be right at the end of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the emergence of growing empathy for other people's suffering. At the time, it consisted of documenting the horrors of war and the acts of violence committed against civilians. NGOs have a duty to demonstrate their founding principles, making the most of the access they have – thanks to their activities and their particular status – to areas that are inaccessible to others. This way, they can report on situations that would otherwise remain invisible and unknown to the general public. This process affirms the common humanity between peoples who are the victims of crimes and those who witness this ill-treatment from a distance, via images. These photographs are essential in order to condemn the shameful situations organisations are trying to combat. Images have become a key pillar of aid development and its growth and now occupy a crucial position in humanitarian discourse, everywhere from its construction to its representation.

This dominant role has regularly put them at the centre of reflections and (often justified) criticism. Humanitarian imagery has been accused of being

voyeuristic and guilt-inducing; of instrumentalising its subjects' victimhood; of forcing the viewer into compassion; of wearing down people's empathy through the sheer volume of pictures; and even of effectively validating the Western world's domination over so-called developing countries. For these reasons, this field must engage in constant self-reflection and reinvention, lest it fail to deal with current issues and become a victim of its own stagnation.

Today, there is little question that the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector – especially its communication services – has led to a standardisation across the work presented by different organisations. Action Against Hunger is no exception.

It is therefore time for a different approach to our photographic and videographic practices: an approach that constantly adapts to the new issues and problems we encounter. As summarised by our colleague Virginie Troit, *"Images must urgently participate in reflections on the aid system, whether that be on the way it works, its mutations or its perspectives."*¹