WaterAid: Representing development through art and developing artists through representation

Abstract

WaterAid has fostered strong symbiotic relationships with artists for over ten years, gaining increased exposure to new audiences for the charity and artist alike. Focussing on WaterAid UK as a case study, this chapter explores various approaches for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charities to collaborate with artists within developing countries and/or the diaspora to represent and communicate global development issues.

Drawing on critical theory we explore the potential benefits and pitfalls of this relationship providing a model for other organisations and artists who want their work to impact on social causes. We examine ways that artists have challenged existing paradigms of poverty porn, deliberate positivism and post-humanitarian communication by incorporating approaches as diverse as dystopian fairy-tale landscapes, Afrofuturism and ecofeminism. Maybe through artists' collaborations we are witnessing the emergence of a fourth paradigm of humanitarian communication which seeks to minimise and counter the criticisms of previous campaigns.

Introduction

There are several roles for humanitarian communication including fundraising, education and advocating for policy change. Many campaigns have been criticised in the past for stereotyping, decontexualisation and oversimplifying complex issues, reinforcing an 'us' and 'them' relationship and prompting cries of 'white saviourism' (Pallister-Wilkins 2021). This chapter therefore contributes to a larger dialogue challenging the paradigms of imagery of the global South solely as impoverished victims.

What is missing from the current literature is an understanding of how charities and NGOs have worked with artists to raise awareness of issues around the world. Is this form of humanitarian communication successful? How is success measured, and who benefits most from these initiatives: the artists, the charity, the donor or indeed the recipients of fundraising activities? How can corporate donors get involved and how is this work collectively expanding the audiences for art by engaging alternative methods for art's dissemination?

The material for this chapter was taken from semi-structured interviews with staff at WaterAid, artists, a curator and a corporate sponsor representative who have worked on art and development initiatives. Unless otherwise stated all quotes are taken directly from interviews with the authors.

The artworks under discussion are those that fall outside of a documentary focus, the artists adopting a more conceptual approach using symbolism and signification to create new thoughts about the issues that WaterAid are promoting. A shift is made from image as solely communication tool to an appeal to the imagination and intellect of viewers. Roland Barthes refers to the difference between denotative and connotative content, the former being more descriptive, the second employing signs that are implied or suggested, that are layered with other potential meanings (Barthes 1977: 37).

A brief overview of humanitarian communication and representation

There has been much critical literature pertaining to the use of images in humanitarian communication. Scott (2014) provides an excellent and nuanced analysis of the complexities of humanitarian communication and how it can be used to aid, and at times undermine, development aims. He directs attention to three dominant modes of communication adopted by NGOs arguing against/cautioning the use of potentially misleading, patronising images that over-simplify and potentially even exacerbate issues of poverty and inequality, arguing that 'Humanitarian

communications should always seek to maximise the potential for dignity, understanding, proximity and effective action' (2014: 138).

'Shock effect' appeals, (Benthall 2010; Cameron and Haanstra 2008; Dogra 2013; Chouliaraki 2011), were the dominant mode of representation up to the 1980s and are still sometimes used in contemporary campaigns, depicting individuals facing stark and harrowing levels of deprivation such as starvation, in images designed to provoke pity and guilt. These images have been described as fetishizing the body, leading to the term 'poverty porn', alluding to the way in which they visually 'invade' the privacy and privations of the bodies of suffering people (Lissner 1981). This type of image is argued to expose the most vulnerable individuals as entirely victims (Plewes and Stuart 2007), decontextualised in the sense that they are represented without any indication of the structural causes of their suffering (Chouliaraki 2006). Additionally, Chouliaraki (and Lamers 2005), argue that such representations reinforce and naturalize colonial perceptions that the global South depends upon the assistance provided by the global North, glossing over the role that colonial nations have played in the unequal distribution of resources in the South (Lissner 1997; Pieterse 1995).

A second use of images, described by Lidchi (1999) as 'deliberate positivism', feature smiling recipients of aid providing evidence of the positive effects of NGO interventions. These give the people in the images a much greater degree of dignity and to some extent afford a sense of agency. Like the shock effect images they appeal to a sense of shared humanity (Chouliaraki 2013). However, they still reinforce a perception of donor-recipient imbalance of relations, if more subtly constructed. Dogra argues that these are reductive representations of the work and lifestyle of these individuals, depicting, for example, an idyllic agrarian lifestyle (Dogra 2013: 64).

> The importance of INGOs' [international non-governmental organisations] messages cannot be emphasised enough. As media institutions and opinion-makers, INGOs should be creating the space for an understanding of global poverty within a historicised and connected perspective and not using their messages as burial grounds. Their messages should stimulate new thinking and a sense of justice and responsibility, not provide a narcissistic escape from it. (Dogra 2013: 193)

Mark Sealy is also eloquent in his discussion of the colonisation of photography, the far-reaching psychological damage of dehumanizing images, and an exploration of how photography is made and by whom (Sealy 2019).

The failure of both types of campaign to tackle structural causes of inequality and poverty have led to what has been described as a 'realist impasse' (Lidchi 1999: 101), a sense that using realism to reveal the conditions of others is flawed. This has resulted in a third paradigm where the public is called upon to act through images or events that may not contain a high-level emotional charge at all. Loosely defined as post-humanitarian communication, here the method is to focus on the giver, to their status as consumer, and to engage them through a set of behaviours and comparisons that don't always rely on images of the recipients of aid at all. The responses required of them are low-intensity, undemanding, even entertaining: immediate actions rather than long-term commitment, such as 'click here', 'share your favourite photograph of….', etc. Chouliaraki describes these strategies as refracting grand emotions by creating lower intensity images, 'de-emotionalising the cause' (Chouliaraki 2010: 15). Criticisms of such approaches are that they fail to result in sustained and long-term change and that the removal of images of distance others altogether 'dehumanises them to the point of nonexistence' (Scott 2014: 157).

This chapter examines the extent to which art can present a new avenue for charities that might avoid some of the shortcomings described above. It is true to say that the approaches described here are

still relatively new and the overall successes still unclear. However, the data that WaterAid has accumulated on media coverage and engagement on social media channels would suggest that it is reaching a wider range of viewers that might not otherwise encounter WaterAid's work. Similarly, through the collaboration with this large charity, often with funding from corporations, artists are also being enabled to reach new, varied audiences. Could it be possible that a fourth paradigm of communication is emerging through artist/NGO collaborations?

Art For (a) Change: WaterAid

WaterAid is an international charity with the aim to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. They were established in 1981 and work in 27 countries across the world. Since 1981 they have reached 28 million people with clean water, 28 million with decent toilets, and 26 million with improved hygiene. However, they also work with international partners to influence policy makers, change attitudes and behaviours around water, sanitation and health and ultimately to encourage government to change laws (https://www.wateraid.org/uk/our-history).

Steered by their Creative Content Lead, Neil Wissink, WaterAid have invited artists to work with them in a number of exciting and creative ways, many of the artists extending the range of images and objects generally associated with charity imagery. According to Wissink the key is to find artists that live in or are diaspora of the countries they work with, and to find synergies between the artist's practice and the charity's aims. WaterAid have previously adopted a documentary, or reportage approach to their imagery, commissioning photographers to record the activities of WaterAid and the recipients of their interventions, but in the examples we have chosen here, the artist has been able to adopt a freer approach, using their own specific aesthetic and often relying on a more conceptual bias.

Take for example the case of Aïda Muluneh. Wissink made contact with the Ethiopian artist after spotting her images in publications such as The Guardian and on the Autograph website. What impressed him was Muluneh's different approach to time - how her images can represent both past and future timelines in a single image, which is very different from the eternal present-tense of NGO communications. Wissink explicitly wanted to commission from her art practice rather than the documentary work she had produced for other NGOS and during initial conversations it was clear they shared similar intentions. Thus, they arrived at a working project brief together. Keen to make work in Ethiopia, Muluneh's initial sketches included detailed awareness of WaterAid's work there. Originally Wissink thought she would choose to shoot in a WaterAid project area, possibly involving people from that community, but Muluneh pushed away from the dependency on that level of literalness which felt like a step change from the current conventions at that time. Muluneh's approach became a test case for WaterAid, a 'special commission', appraising the potential for non-documentary style artworks to raise awareness.

Collectively titled 'Water Life' Muluneh produced fourteen fictional scenes shot in Dallol, Northern Ethiopia (Figure 1). The photographs work aesthetically through their use of saturated colour (given even more emphasis in this severe landscape), formal and often symmetrical composition, intriguing props and engaging protagonists. She attributes signifiers within the images to her childhood in Ethiopia, from the primary colours of the Ethiopian Church to the yellow jerry can as a universal symbol of water transportation, carried almost exclusively by women. "In terms of costume, I'm inspired by the clothing styles you see in archival Ethiopian portraits from the '30s and '40s: perfect afros and flowing capes – the subjects look incredibly regal" (Hamilton n.d.).

Figure 1: Aïda Muluneh, *The Shackles of Limitations,* digital photograph. NB IMAGE PERMISSION TO BE OBTAINED.

Commissioning Muluneh fits with WaterAid's ongoing approach to ethical representation and decolonisation. Wissink acknowledges the importance and advantages of working with an Ethiopian woman who had lived in the West but could remember growing up in Ethiopia. He argues that this background, along with her creative approach potentially offers

> a much greater understanding of the circumstances as well as the culture of the country. And part of the value of an 'art thing' instead of a straight 'documentary thing' is that it is cultural expression, and the kinds of people who are interested in art and culture will then, I think, be more interested in discovering a new artist from that country who is making amazing work, and understand something cultural about the country as well as just receiving information about water and sanitation.

He goes on to say "we were really pushing past the usual boundaries of what we would do. I could understand the value [of a] conceptual and artistic project in reaching people in a different way and getting past some of the barriers that people have around imagery and representation".

Wissink cites other reasons for working with artists, including communicating to policymakers. Muluneh had meetings at the Ethiopian Embassy, presenting 'Water Life' to the Ethiopian Prime Minister and high-level officials in government, the art itself providing a focal point that led to further discussion. Not only was the work seen by people of influence, but the striking nature of the photography prompted both new and perennial donors. As Muluneh herself says she gave WaterAid access to "a population globally that normally would not engage in really imagining the water security issues in Africa".

Laura Summerton, Photography Manager at WaterAid, argues that the experience with Muluneh has opened the gates for other artists and "non-representational" approaches to be adopted by WaterAid at a time when the organisation was steeped in conversations about geography. "How do we show people from the countries in which we are working, and what is the right way of doing it, especially a country like Ethiopia, where there is such a damaging history of photography in relation to famine and international aid in the country?" Whilst artists like Muluneh already enjoy success as exhibiting artists and have a voice in the world through their art, Summerton argues that what they do is use this platform to elevate the marginalised voices of others.

Collaboration through Competitions and Commissions

Although at times an artist will approach them, it is more likely that WaterAid will seek out their collaborators. In commissioning artists WaterAid adopts an agile approach keeping alert to artists they see on social media (especially Instagram, and particularly from countries they work with) in the art press and in physical or online exhibitions, for example London's African Art fairs.

An alternative approach to recruiting artists can be seen in the 'Art of Change' project (2020), an open competition calling for artists to submit work to be shown to world leaders (e.g. the UK's Foreign Secretary) during the Covid-19 crisis to coincide with Global Handwashing Day. 12 pieces were selected from 285 submissions from 44 countries and judged by a panel led by Grayson Perry. Via a public vote the winning artist Holly Thomas was given a cash reward of 2000 euros (donated anonymously to WA) and a mentoring session with Aïda Muluneh.

In WaterAid's '10 x 10' project, ten visual artists were invited to create responses to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the UN's official declaration of the human right to water and sanitation, each offered £400 - £700 licensing fee depending on the costs of the execution. For a relatively low cost to the organisation WaterAid commissioned some highly renowned artists including Spanish photographer Christina de Middel and Nigerian filmmaker Dafe Oboro.

Nigerian multimedia artist Joseph Obanubi was one of the artists in the '10 x 10' competition, with his Afro-futurist photographs *A Lopsided Tale I* and *VI* (2020) (Figure 2). He claims the commission prompted him to take his work in a new direction. "The topics and the dialogue round WaterAid and their interventions were not regular topics I would take on", creating a "new trajectory for my work that was super important."

Figure 2: Joseph Obanubi, A Lopsided Tale 1, digital photograph. NB HIGHER QUALITY RES AND IMAGE PERMISSION TO BE OBTAINED.

Challenging the Paradigms of Charity Imagery

Ngadi Smart, an artist with Sierra Leone heritage, emphasises the importance of her connection to the country when referring to her series of photographs and collages 'Wata Na Life' (Water is Life) made in collaboration with WaterAid and the British Journal of Photography.

> The project is a marked rejection of the "dehumanising" way developing African nations have historically been portrayed by Western media — countering tropes of "poverty porn" with vibrant collage; celebrating the essence and identities of the people and places of Sierra Leone, blending each location's scenery, portraits, and objects I photographed, to form a more authentic representation than I felt any single photo could convey. I want Sierra Leoneans to look at this work and feel proud. (ngadsmart.com)

What is striking about these images are the multi-layered representations (multi-layered literally, conceptually and visually) of people and place, so whilst the photographs are representational, they are loaded with ambient details of the textures and colours of the spaces in which these people live. They feel more celebratory and allow multiplicity in the way the images are interpreted.

Smart considers that the photos she produced are also useful for WaterAid in highlighting specific issues around quality and availability of water in very particular locations. She describes the photocollages as "organising data in an aesthetically pleasing way", positing that artists are "able to break down certain projects" and make them "digestible".

Along with three other photographers commissioned by WaterAid, Smart was invited to exhibit her Wata Na Life series at the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool in 2022 as part of Open Eye's 'climate lab'.

Mariama Attah, then Curator and now Head of Exhibitions at the gallery describes the show as exploring the theme of climate change and catastrophe, and how visual culture can "be used to understand or explore what climate change looks like". Attah posits that an art gallery can offer an alternative venue to an organisation such as WaterAid allowing the charity access to new audiences where they can experience the educational side of their work.

One of the aims shared with WaterAid and articulated by Attah is the desire to question the 'look' of charity images – the 'visual aesthetic'. "When we think of climate change, it's really easy to think of those very particular images of disenfranchised people or people who don't have power over their own stories, and while those images are truthful in a sense, they're not wholly accurate, it's not the entire story." Attah states what is at the heart of this debate: "What other images can we add into the imagination bank? What other stories do we have a social responsibility to share?".

Attah states that when organisations work with a gallery they might see "a different way to the way [they] work. You might market it differently. You might use different words. You might edit a series of images differently." Also "The audience might be more arts driven" and therefore it speaks to people in a way that other (a)venues might not reach.

Discussion: Who Benefits from NGO/Art Collaborations?

The NGO?

One of the most difficult things for NGOs wanting to engage in art and development initiatives is justifying the cost, and measuring impact is by no means straightforward. Although important, measuring success should not always be about finance and fundraising, Wissink arguing that increasing the "level and depth of emotional engagement with NGO content" is also crucial. Advocacy and awareness raising is also key, where a return on investment might be intangible compared to purely counting donations. One obvious value of employing artists is the potential for reaching different audiences, appealing to the cultural capital of those who see the art, and the trickle-down effect of donations being made because someone has experienced the artwork and the memory of it has stayed with them. Of potential interest here are links to conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1899), consumer behaviour (Hoyer et al 2021) and more specifically charity advertising models that include the concept of self and the implication of cultural capital (see Hyde and Mitchell 2022: 5-11). As Wissink points out "The cultural capital of the artists and the cultural institutions also helps legitimise these creative approaches. When selling in 'art' projects to people who believe art is niche or elitist, I often remind them that Tate Modern is the most visited attraction in Britain".

Qualitative and quantitative metrics were used by WaterAid to gauge the exposure experienced by the 'Water Life' campaign by Aïda Muluneh. In the first seven months alone Muluneh's work was seen by 182 million readers, generating a total of almost £260k in equivalent advertising space. Social media statistics from that period include 1,390,361 for 'organic influencer reach'.

Regarding the traction that Muluneh's work has generated, Summerton describes how Muluneh's work "continues to garner interest from across the board (broadsheets, art publications art fairs, events). There has been a snowball effect as people see the work and ask us if they can display it". Although initially intended for a 2019 exhibition at Somerset House 'Water Life' has subsequently been shown in numerous galleries (including the Pompidou-Metz and 'African Cosmologies at Houston Fotofest curated by Mark Sealy), published and reviewed in specialist photographic and art journals including Frieze and the British Journal of Photography, the British national press and radio, various African media outlets, and periodicals such as Elle magazine. The work received far more

exposure and, just as significantly, *different* exposure, to audiences usually encountering WaterAid's images and messaging.

Through this increased breadth of coverage, WaterAid itself has arguably achieved a widening and deepening level of brand awareness and expectations, and Muluneh's pieces are still experiencing extensive media pick-up (see Fisher in the Guardian June 2022, for example. In relation to key political players the initial Somerset House exhibition was seen by the Ethiopian Ambassador and when the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed won the Nobel Peace Prize Muluneh was commissioned to produce a new photo essay for an exhibition at the Nobel Peace Center in 2020. Building on her own success she used this opportunity as a platform to display and promote other Ethiopian art at the Nobel Peace Center, another unexpected consequence to be celebrated.

The Artist?

All of the artists we interviewed felt they were paid appropriately for their work, whether responding to a commission or competition. In each of the commissions a contract and fee was arrived at through mutual discussion, usually an amount that would cover an exhibition or collection of works. These artists also received subsistence and travel expenses as well as production costs. All rights to the artworks are shared by WaterAid and the artists, and the artists receive full acknowledgement whenever WaterAid use their images.

Each of the artists agreed that their engagement with WaterAid had raised their profile and exposed their work to a broader audience. Ngadi Smart, for example, describes one of the benefits of working with WaterAid as increasing her confidence in her own abilities. Her involvement exposed her work to new audiences including other NGOs, as well as the Open Eye Gallery and the British Journal of Photography.

For all of the artists it was the ability to engage with projects they cared about that was of huge importance, whilst also being able to maximise the aesthetic approach of their own work without compromise. To do this with the ethical and financial backing of an organisation such as WaterAid enables the artist to extend and further their own artistic expression. In Muluneh's words "WaterAid was the first to [offer] the challenge of creating artwork that has messaging and statements in it but at the same time to retain the aesthetic or artistic elements of what is beauty in a work".

Many of the artists described their own deepening understanding of issues the more time they spend with WaterAid in the countries they represented. All the artists received ethical training prior to a project: for her work in Sierra Leone, Smart received a practical workshop and extensive written guidelines. Artists have safeguarding training when working directly with people in the communities that WaterAid work with, all of this in line with WaterAid's 'Representation Policy'. (WaterAid also employed a psychologist from University of Lilongwe on artist Laura El-Tantawy's shoot to help with interview questions and to avoid triggering difficult emotions for the women.)

The Audience?

WaterAid staff, the artists and the curator Attah all attest to the capacity for art in the context of development to reach new audiences. On the one hand the work could appeal to potential donors looking for a philanthropic cause that are positively receptive to art-led initiatives. On the other hand, the art itself is seen by viewers who would never venture into an art gallery but will encounter it in one of WaterAid's many outdoor displays.

For artists like Muluneh and Obanubi it was also important to make art more accessible to new audiences to prevent it from being the property of élite circles. "To me it's a success when a public that normally does not have access to art or doesn't come to exhibitions or isn't part of elitist circles,

when you have the everyday person that has seen the image somewhere or remembers part of the image: that's my ultimate goal…." (Muluneh).

If looking for qualitative evidence of the depth of engagement of 'Water Life' it is signalled through numerous articles and individual responses including this Artsy piece 'This Artwork Changed My Life':

> Why did this particular piece and artist catch my attention? Growing up as an Africa-based art enthusiast, I learned that representation in the art industry really matters. During a time of racial polarization and tensions, this piece and this artist gave me hope. Muluneh represents a new generation of well-known artists of African descent who are using their work to challenge stereotypical narratives about Africa through Afrofuturist tableaux. In this particular body of work, she chose to explore the theme of water scarcity, without the clichés we see in mainstream media. I see myself and my belief system in Muluneh's work. (Wabwire 2020)

It is difficult to predict which campaigns will engage with the public, and one of the challenges charity communications personnel have to deal with is defining which are most important. When commissioning conceptual artists there is a risk that their traditional or existing followers will misinterpret and misunderstand their work. One possible example is Poulomi Basu's work photographed in Iceland which has little to do with the 27 countries where WaterAid work. The everyday observer might not understand the link between the imagery provided and water, sanitation and health due to its relative obscurity.

Corporate Partners?

For many of these initiatives significant funding has been offered through corporate partnership. Using corporate and social responsibility (CSR) revenue rather than funds generated through individual donations means that WaterAid are able to experiment with and fund alternative approaches to generating imagery.

Matching the right kind of partner to a project is important to ensuring a good fit between the corporation's brand perception and the artist being paired with it. Mid-career British and Egyptian artist Laura El-Tantawy was commissioned by WaterAid to create a picture of "people's lives without detracting from her creative vision" (Wissink). In the meantime, the Wimbledon Foundation had seen the Muluneh exhibition at Somerset House and ventured their interest in sponsoring a single artist in a similar way. Working with WaterAid and the Wimbledon Foundation, El-Tantawy focussed on the emotional wellbeing of mothers in Malawi who may have to give birth and take care of children without access to water. Summerton describes El-Tantawy's work as 'lyrical and emotive', being able to evoke a feeling beyond a documentary approach.

Sue Alexander, former Senior Manager of Environmental Programmes at HSBC Group, now retired, worked in partnership with WaterAid for eight years. HSBC would provide resources so that the charity could "shout about the good work they're doing … to be a bit louder and prouder" about their achievements. Corporate funding allowed WaterAid to undertake more unusual projects and the more conservative HSBC could flex its philanthropic side whilst having confidence in WaterAid's insight and access to artists, knowledge of potential audiences, and ambitious art installations. HSBC's collaboration with WaterAid allowed Mustafah Abdulaziz's work 'Water Stories', for example, to travel from Sweden, to London, New York, Vancouver, Hong Kong, Sydney and Brisbane, being seen by over 960,000 people. Alexander commended WaterAid for collating information and metrics regarding readership of publications, in-person visits, media coverage and social media hits,

By backing WaterAid Alexander says that HSBC were offering their endorsement and confidence in the organisation. HSBC were looking for projects that would last for a number of years with

substantial and well-established businesses, but her advice for smaller NGOs is to look for businesses that have schemes where smaller amounts of money can be applied for to help something locally. In other words, to find organisations that fit with the charity's aims and possibly an organisation that is local to their own where there may be geographical or other relevance.

Mitigating potential risk

There is no doubt that 'Water Life' is the shining light in WaterAid's story, bringing together a perfect storm of discerning scoping and selection by Wissink, Muluneh's striking photography and the financial backing of the H&M foundation. There is also little question that this relationship has been mutually beneficial: WaterAid is trading off the kudos of an already successful and prominent artist, whilst Muluneh has benefitted from WaterAid's contacts and alternative reach.

Although WaterAid are not the only organisation using artists they do appear to be leading the way in this regard. However, is there a danger that the engagement of artists itself will become over-used? This seems unlikely as most artists are trained to think outside traditional and accepted forms of representation as part of their practice, therefore appealing to alternative audiences. They also open a world of other channels for communication, for example the gallery, journal articles, auctions and so on, and are regularly reinventing and re-visualising ideas. When asked about the future Wissink suggested there are always new factors to consider, including emerging technologies, NFTs (non-fungible tokens), and the engagement of more non-legacy spaces and institutions. New technologies offer NGOs increased opportunities to communicate: virtual reality (VR) headsets have been used in various WaterAid projects, and augmented reality elements were added to the images at the Open Eye gallery.

Adopting this new approach to humanitarian communication also attracts a risk that the work becomes too obscure to convey the key messages required for the charity, that the conceptual element eclipses the contextualisation that NGOs are sometimes criticised for. Art needs to appeal to the viewer's intelligence and visual sensibility, offering to engage their attention for longer, whilst not being so opaque that it alienates people. Summerton and Wissink describe the complexities of getting this balance right. Summerton: "Sometimes I think we do need to do a bit more work in explaining […] images. I think that gives people more of an 'in', and more access, and it stops being this arty thing that some people think isn't for them."

> "I think we also try and mitigate this through the videos that we create to accompany these projects where we allow the artist to talk about their work to audiences with varied levels of understanding or exposure to experimental art practices" (Wissink).

Let's return to Dogra's quote and her plea for communications to reside 'within a historicised and connected perspective and [to] stimulate new thinking and a sense of justice and responsibility' (Dogra 2013: 193). To what extent are these artists' images building a space of audience understandings, and a 'stimulation of new thinking alongside a sense of justice'? The argument presented here is that introducing alternative-looking content produces outcomes that "may not have the same level of reach [but] the quality of engagement with the people who do [engage] is often really significant and that does a lot in terms of people's perceptions of WaterAid" (Wissink). The artists employed by WaterAid, through sensitive training, through their artistic interpretation, and by being more connected to the cultures they represent, offer new ways of telling stories about complex issues. There are shared understandings, a space of creativity, cultural acknowledgment, and aesthetic enjoyment. Additionally, artists from the global south are given agency, which seems preferable to the 'helicoptered-in' photographer with no connection to the country. When asked about risk Muluneh urges that NGOs are encouraged to use the creative sector because "we are the witnesses of what's happening in our society, and we are the ones that are discussing it". She also

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argued that this is needed because an "80's style of advocacy does not work on the current generation". Complex issues around the intersections between race, climate and gender are openly explored in images such as Muluneh's where the history of these countries is suggested through a layering of contemporary visual language, present-day culture and an informed interpretation of the issues of groups represented.

Some of the strongest criticisms of humanitarian communication is that it fails to contextualise the structural issues surrounding the cultures they're presenting. many of the art works cited here only go part of the way to ameliorate this criticism. Also, as Attah articulated "…. if the people whose life stories are being used to inspire or to motivate the projects aren't seeing some kind of change to their own life situations, then the way that we're working isn't working." This is the ultimate test and how that can be measured has been demonstrated to some extent in the metrics surrounding the 'Water Life' campaign. A longer-term perspective on returns will be needed to truly understand this, and as Wissink states these measurements will always be speculative when there are so many projects in the public domain and therefore numerous points at which the public might engage with an NGO as extensive as WaterAid.

However, what WaterAid appear to strive for is a reciprocity, such that the charity, the artist and the recipients of aid are all mutual beneficiaries. Through constant discussion and support cultural sensitivities are respected, power is reduced and the fourth paradigm of humanitarian communication might just quell some of the previous criticisms of this sector's work.

Key Recommendations

1. Organisations benefit from staff with a passion for art and its potential for social change. (Both Wissink and Summerton have degrees in art-related subjects which seems relevant here.)
2. Find synergies between the artists' work and what the charity is doing, if possible visiting artists in their studios. Initial conversations are crucial: decisions should not be based on the look of the art alone but on the shared understanding of the project/cause.
3. Similarly, ensure there is a good fit between the charity, the artist and the corporate donor (if used).
4. For smaller charities/NGOs, explore partnerships with organisations of a similar size and with shared empathies.
5. Pay artists commensurately. If paid appropriately it ensures the artist will be able to commit the time needed for the project. It is also more likely to lead to further engagement with the artist.
6. Create a feedback loop between the NGO and the artist. "You have to be genuinely willing to listen to what they [artists] are telling you and to give them scope to represent in the ways that they want." (Wissink)
7. Working in a way that is culturally sensitive - by commissioning artists from either developing countries or their diaspora - can reduce the risk of cultural appropriation and stereotypes.
8. Agree the ownership of the artwork/s. At WaterAid the intellectual property is retained by the artist but WaterAid have the right to use images of it in perpetuity (though in practice after five years they would confer and confirm this arrangement with the artist).
9. Provide the artist with ethical guidelines and training, and appropriate support when working on location.
10. Build an "asset" bank: start small with artists and nurture your relationship with them until larger opportunities may arise.
11. Be prepared to explore new technologies and markets.

Conclusions

The longevity of using artists and non-documentary approaches to campaigning in the complex terrain of post-humanitarian projects is still to be determined. It is clear however that the charity sector benefits from an agile approach and that collaboration with artists has extended the reach of the charity WaterAid. It is also evident that curators and galleries can provide a 'lynchpin' between different organisations, whilst CSR initiatives give financial security to support new work.

One thing that may be difficult to alter is the power dynamic that exists in the selection of artists, the editing process, choices of images and dissemination. There is no doubt that there is a shift in the sector for more responsible storytelling and to reduce power imbalances by encouraging more discussion with the artist, but this is only part of a continuing dialogue around who gets to decide where money is spent, and where agency resides. There is certainly scope for further debate of the ethics of financial/business sponsorship; the extent to which conceptual approaches to visual representation is able to dispel the dehistoricisation and decontextualization that campaigns are sometimes charged with; of the potential for new technologies; and of the effectiveness, both in terms of reach and impact, of art-led campaigns.

Perhaps the final word should go to Neil Wissink, however, arguing that the sector should avoid remaining content within its existing content, and instead try things out that are different, to take calculated and informed risks, learning through the process in order to "create projects that are engaging intellectually and culturally on different levels […] especially in this climate that we're entering that feels like people are starting to want to pull back and be safe. Actually, it's even more important to be a bit louder and a bit braver right now."

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Dr Sarah Horton is a Senior Lecturer at the Norwich University of the Arts, UK, where she is Research Champion for the Pattern and Chaos research group. She has published in various journals and publications and is an editorial board member for the Intellect Journal *Drawing: Research, Theory and Practice*. Sarah is interested in a diverse range of media including sculpture, drawing and painting and much of her practice is site-related. She has exhibited work in both gallery and non-gallery contexts in the UK and overseas. She has been on various committees such as Outpost, an artist-led gallery, and the Visual Arts Committee for the Norwich Fringe Festival. Sarah was also the Learning Co-ordinator for the Norwich leg of the British Art Show 8.