

# Images of Africa: An African Viewpoint

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## Editor's Note

The Famine of 1984-85 which affected 21 African countries received enormous media attention in Europe. The response of the European public to appeals for aid was generous, nowhere more so than in Ireland. Many were dissatisfied however, with the pictures and impressions of Africa projected to the European public.

Consequently, in 1985 a group of six African and nine European non-governmental organisations including Trocaire came together in "The Image of Africa Project". The project was coordinated by a consortium of three Italian NGOs (CRIC, Crocevia and Terra Nouva) with the assistance of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development of the Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome.

Seven European and four African case studies were produced. The African studies were from Ethiopia (by Eshetu Chole, Institute of Development Studies); Zimbabwe (by Ms. Sithembiso Nyoni, Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress); Senegal (by E. S. Ndione, D. Thieba and P. Jacolin of Relais Enda-Thies); and Burkina Faso (by Justin Ratoussia Savadoc of Naam/Association de "Six-S"). A synthesis of these four African studies was prepared by Nora McKeon of FFHC/Action for Development for the "International Exchange on Communication and Development between Africa and Europe" held in Rome in February 1988 which marked the conclusion of the Image of Africa project.

An edited version of that synthesis is presented below. The African perspective which it contains complements the findings of the Irish case-study of media coverage of the African Famine which were described in John Horgan's article on "Africa and Ireland: Aspects of a Media Agenda" in *Trocaire Development Review 1987*.

The Image of Africa project was co-financed by the Commission of the European Communities and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Publication in several languages of the documentation prepared during the course of the project is envisaged. For information on the English language version contact FFHC/Action for Development, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Roma, Italy.

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## The African case-studies

The African NGOs were invited to evaluate the impact of the influx of foreign aid generated by the information and fundraising campaign in Europe in 1984-85 and to describe the African solidarity

and survival strategies that operated during the famine but were largely ignored in Europe.

The African studies focussed on four topics:

- the nature and extent of the food crisis from an African point of view;
- the internal responses to the crisis, by the local population, governments, and national NGOs;
- the impact of aid, particularly on the self-image and self-help initiatives of affected groups;
- coverage of the food crisis by the national media of Senegal and Zimbabwe.

### Nature and causes of the crisis

The European public perceived the food crisis in Africa as a dramatic and catastrophic event. The African reports on the other hand emphasise that from their perspective, the crisis was an extended process. The perceived peak of the crisis — 1984-85 — was not considered thus by the rural people interviewed for the studies, who had been coping with droughts and food shortages for as long as they could remember.

A crisis, the African reports point out, need not have an undesirable outcome. The Zimbabwe paper, in fact, describes a case in which the crisis was not allowed to become a catastrophe. The outcome depends on various responses. To view it as an event precludes finding long-term solutions.

The food crisis was only the visible part of a deeper phenomenon. Its roots are to be traced to the dependence of Africa on the North, which began in the colonial period and continues today, in political, economic and cultural structures which promote models unsuited to endogenous development. This deeper crisis has various facets. There is a *political and cultural dimension* of dependence on foreign models born from the colonial experience, and the apparent supremacy of Northern civilisation and imported techniques. This cultural dependency, diffused by schools and the media, is concretized in political institutions, government, the dominant concept of development and of relations between citizens and the State. The *economic dimension* originated with export crops, which disrupted traditionally self-centred economies, and is represented today in the debt of African states and the dictates of the I.M.F.

There is crisis, too, in the *relationship between people and the environment*. Pressure on land has increased, due not only to population growth but also the use of large areas for “the white man’s crops”, particularly in Zimbabwe where 80% of the

population was confined to unproductive regions under the colonial regime. The Europeans brought 'mining agriculture' and a pre-occupation with what can be extracted from the soil rather than what should be restored to it and were contemptuous of indigenous crops and agricultural practices developed over years in a difficult climate.

Finally, the crisis manifests itself in a *loss of power by the peasantry*, in all senses usurped by the city, the State, foreign interests. The peasant farmer no longer controls the environment, land, or the price of produce. The State imposes its concept of development and a planning process. This is mirrored in the attitude of government towards the peasants. Cooperatives and parastatal societies in Senegal began as instruments of government policy but they practically annihilated the peasants' margin of reflection and organisation.

In some cases, political changes have mitigated the crisis. The Burkina Faso report describes positively the new philosophy of development introduced with the revolution of August 1983. In Zimbabwe land reform, access to credit, price incentives, changes in extension approaches have led to dramatic increases in productivity, demonstrating that, with the right incentives and assistance communal farmers can produce even more than the commercial sector.

By the time the media highlighted the food crisis the process had so affected the people that their dynamism was exhausted and the image projected was that of poor, helpless people.

But why was the crisis allowed to reach this peak? Why were the warning signs ignored? The African reports offer some possible replies. Political considerations loom large, particularly in Ethiopia where Northern reluctance to cooperate with the military regime thwarted plans to set up a Food Security Reserve, which could have minimised loss of life during the famine. Economic interests are also apparent. As a peasant animator in Burkina Faso put it, "the donors want to keep us in a state of dependence up until the resurrection. By dealing in emergency aid the developed countries act in their own interests, encouraging their production, consolidating their relations with the so-called poor countries, discouraging production in the developing countries".

The interests involved may be psychological as well as economic. Emergency relief for starving Africans serves to reinforce the European self-image as saviours and heroes. The media also play a role. As the Ethiopian report comments, "After all, what can beat in terms of spectacle the scene of thousands of people holding to their lives by a very precarious margin, obviously doomed to extinction, only to be saved miraculously by plane-loads of food brought by generous donors only too eager to be filmed among the starving

multitudes, thereby driving home the point that, were it not for their benevolent intervention, those thousands would have perished?"

Once again, the African reports show that famine is not considered within the issues of political and economic structures and international linkages. Global power, control of production, unequal resources are split artificially into a distorted image of Africa as an isolated hungry continent and an equally distorted image of Europe as a generous benefactor.

### **Internal responses to the crisis**

The missing perspective in the European view of the food crisis was the efforts made by the Africans themselves. Rural people developed new systems to combat hunger, based on traditional methods. New productive activities, efforts to restore environmental equilibrium, the growth of peasant organisations were some of the positive reactions to the crisis.

### **Observing the build-up of the crisis**

The fact that ordinary people can detect an impending food crisis contradicts their media image as helpless people surprised by a drastic food shortage. Their 'early warning systems' are based on natural phenomena, agriculture and human behaviour. Peasants in the Zimbabwe study enumerated as many as 20 signs, ranging from changes in the stars' position or shining pattern, to erratic rainy seasons, to increased numbers looking for work. Once detected drought becomes the object of discussion particularly, the Ethiopian report points out, among women. Emergency talk then serves as a springboard for action.

All of the African reports cite traditional defence mechanisms used. Rural families build up crop reserves and sell stock to buy food despite their attachment to their animals. Careful management of food rations is another strategy in which women play a crucial role. Migration to urban areas occurs when all else fails, but it is no longer much of an option given the scarcity of jobs in African cities and the barriers to immigration imposed by European countries.

### **Internal solidarity and self help**

In a food crisis, the impression is given that most, if not all, the food comes from outside. This, often, is not the case. The Zimbabwe report shows that after total crop failure only 10-30% of food aid came from abroad. According to peasants interviewed in Senegal, "If we had to count only on the aid given by the Government and NGOs we wouldn't be here today. Too much notice is often made about official aid. In fact it's thanks to ourselves and to our relatives

in the city that we manage to survive". The mass media magnified international solidarity in response to the crisis, but ignored strong internal solidarity.

All of the African reports emphasise solidarity *within villages*, not only as a pragmatic reaction but as a deep social value. In Burkina Faso "solidarity is the rule in the village. Those who had sufficient stocks offered them spontaneously to those who suffered." There are also a variety of self help institutions. In Ethiopia the *idir* shares whatever is available among its members. The Senegal report describes various systems of mutual support, involving collective fields and stocks and supplementary crops.

Solidarity also operates *between the villages and cities* through extended families. This includes cash, food, or hospitality as cited in all the reports.

Above all African peasants adopt *alternative development strategies* which are more suitable than the models proposed by national and foreign 'developers'. This involves learning, applying and building on lessons from past droughts, and in some cases of de-learning lessons taught by outside officials.

The elements vary but common to all are better use of local resources and knowledge, re-establishing the disrupted equilibrium with the environment, developing new capacities, and awareness of the need to work and plan together.

In the Sahelian countries, Senegal and Burkina Faso, a major innovation is the valorisation of the dry season. Horticulture is practised wherever water can be found, above all by young people who, in the past, would have deserted the countryside in times of difficulty. Intensive irrigated agriculture is being developed, along with improved agronomic practices and new food habits. Marketing capacity deals with new products and limits traders' profits. Savings, productive reinvestment, and credit are being stimulated.

The scarcity of water in itself produced creative reactions in rural areas. Well digging has improved, as have manual pumps built and maintained by the peasants. People recognise the need to fertilise the earth and to protect it from erosion. Without fallow periods and herds, new methods exploit traditional plants and trees which have been ignored. Women are the most vigorous advocates of reforestation and creation of village woods. Forage crops are grown and stored, and intensive cattle production is replacing extensive herding.

The Zimbabwe paper reports that rural people realise that hunger is a symptom of powerlessness and poverty. They aim to eliminate not only hunger but underdevelopment and dependency. Farmers understand their soils and use each type appropriately. Land is prepared well in advance, and trees, leaves and grasses are used to

retain soil moisture and to fertilise the soil, against the advice of colonial extension agents. Many farmers are turning to intensive animal production as a supplement or alternative to crops. Most have gone back to growing indigenous drought-resistant crops, abandoning hybrid seeds which require chemical fertiliser and reliable rainfall or irrigation. Methods of growing these grains have been perfected locally. Families use indigenous, non-toxic methods to preserve vegetables and grain. Improved granaries built of traditional materials are being developed. Wells have multiplied and groups work together to build rain water tanks.

### **The growth of peasant associations**

The African reports note the link between alternative development and growth of peasant associations. Community groups can react to environmental, political and socio-economic changes. The crisis itself and the initiatives described have led to stronger peasant associations.

#### *Zimbabwe*

Although Zimbabwe does not have a tradition of village organisations based on age groups, community-based associations can be found in every rural area. These rural groups discuss underdevelopment, poverty and hunger and try to find solutions. Elaborating alternative development strategies heightens their consciousness and strengthens their organisations.

#### *Senegal*

In Senegal, for many years community groups have promoted food security and also savings, as well as meeting social and cultural needs. A new type of village group has developed stimulated by the food crisis and by young people who have returned to the villages with new ideas and a broadened vision of development. Women often organise collective production, marketing, savings and credit. The groups are concerned not only with production but with all the related operations, from buying inputs to processing and marketing.

Many activities require exchange among villages and a federated approach at district and regional levels, to organise training, study visits, triangular aid, seed exchanges and artisanal products. These organisations show the members they can take charge of their own development. Tentative negotiations with the State and technical services have begun and led to more successful negotiations with Northern partners.

The future of these peasant organisations is still uncertain, but they are able to identify their needs, define priorities and decide on initiatives. Above all, they have stimulated reflection on the *causes* of

the food crisis and responses to it. Study and action groups have examined the causes of agrarian imbalance, the impoverishment of the soil, the disappearance of plant cover and have identified remedial action.

### ***Burkina Faso***

In Burkina Faso too the crisis provided a stimulus for organisation. The Naam groups, precooperative associations, sprang up first at village level and then began to federate at department level. The declared philosophy of the Naam is to “develop without spoiling” and its methodology is to “take off from what the peasant *is*, what he *lives*, what he *knows*, what he *knows how to do* and what he *wants*” with a view to “making each man or community responsible for its own problems”. They aim to help rural people remain on the land. They organise to improve the village by for example, constructing earth dams, wells, undertaking reforestation and anti-erosion measures and cultivating collective fields. Other activities include functional literacy, theatre, improved stoves, and training village pharmacists. Finally, the Naam promote economic activities such as cereal banks, mills, dry season agriculture, improved animal husbandry and artisanal production.

### ***Ethiopia***

Ethiopia presents a different situation. There the people's organisations (including peasants' and women's associations and service cooperatives in rural areas) are organised by the party and operate under close supervision. Their formation is not the result of grassroots initiative and their functioning is not independent of official policy.

### **Responses by Governments**

The Western media underplayed not only the self-help efforts of the people affected by the crisis, but also those of African governments. The reports describe a series of measures implemented with greater or lesser success. *Early warning systems* exist in both Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, to plan for an impending crisis. During harvest in Zimbabwe the government unit, Agritex, discusses with farmers measures they could undertake to cope with drought. In Ethiopia, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission's (RRC) plan to establish a Food Security Reserve was thwarted by the reluctance of many donors to collaborate for political reasons.

*National solidarity appeals* were launched and well supported in all countries. *National coordination* of relief was also provided by all governments, either through existing organisations like the RRC in

Ethiopia or special structures like the National Commission to Fight against the Effects of the Drought in Burkina Faso.

Another Government responsibility was to organise the *distribution of food aid*. In Senegal part of the food aid was sold to raise funds for development projects, and the rest was distributed free of charge. The report criticises this policy which, in the absence of an effective mechanism for identifying the needy, "transformed the entire population into beggars". Constructive government policies are essential but it is clear that their autonomy is severely limited by dependence on Northern economic and political interests.

Two of the African reports consider this issue. The Zimbabwe report assesses positively government policy towards small farmers. The Senegal report analyses the government's New Agricultural Policy (NPA), whose official aim is to reduce government intervention and increase peasant responsibility. Its instruments however, are determined by international financial institutions rather than an attempt to strengthen peasant production and autonomy. Formed under the false hypothesis that the rural world is an homogeneous unity, the cooperatives are controlled by local power structures, which hinder their development. The supply of production factors is uncertain while food crop marketing policy ignores the real relationships of the marketing process and is thwarted by massive cereal imports which compete with local production. The report concludes that while the aim of the NPA is to reinforce peasant initiative, the effect is to strengthen the hand of commercial capital and local power structures.

### **Responses by NGOs**

Despite the differences in the four countries, certain conclusions regarding endogenous NGOs can be drawn. Firstly, it would seem that the crisis has helped the formation and good functioning of NGOs and provoked reflection on its structural causes.

Secondly, it emerges clearly from the reports that the most important role of NGOs is to move from alleviating hunger and promoting piece-meal projects to helping rural people apply alternative development strategies. The NGOs which are most successful are accountable to base-level peasant associations.

For example the FONGS (Fédération des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales du Sénégal) created in Senegal in 1970 now cover 7000 villages with over 180,000 members. The FONGS provides training in village animation, accounting, development planning, project formulation, food exchanges in zones of surplus and deficit cereals, project monitoring and self-evaluation.

In Zimbabwe during the crisis national and regional coordinating

mechanisms among NGOs and between NGOs and government were established. The Joint NGO Committee formed in Matebeleland in 1983 continues. The NGO response included both immediate aid, aimed at the most vulnerable, and long-term aid. The biggest lesson learned during the famine was that hunger cannot be solved by food aid alone. People need to control water, land, seed and other agricultural assets.

The Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe is an example of an endogenous NGO which supports the alternative development evolved by rural people themselves. ORAP assists in developing an integrated food production/security programme in their groups and at a development centre where farmers can share local knowledge and skills in areas like animal husbandry, gardening, indigenous crops and seeds and building grain banks. ORAP has also assisted local farmers in mobilising food distribution. Surplus producers had been selling food to the cities while other rural families went hungry. Once aware of this most farmers worked through ORAP to sell their surplus grain to other villagers. The Union of Federations of Naam Groups in Burkina Faso is a forum for exchange and cooperation and supports many of the activities begun by Naam groups.

In Ethiopia NGOs are restricted by the nature of the political system. In fact there are only two NGOs in the country. The Integrated Family Life Education project (IFLE) which is sponsored by the Ministry of Labour, runs programmes in health, nutrition, agriculture, family planning, community development and income generating activities. Agri-Service Ethiopia provides training in agriculture, home sciences and health.

NGOs function better in societies which recognise their role and leave them space to operate. The degree to which endogenous NGOs can negotiate with government does not emerge clearly from the national reports.

### **The impact of aid**

The reports are unanimous in welcoming and accepting the legitimacy of emergency aid in that it saves human lives and alleviates suffering. But they raise a number of problems with a view to improving the impact of such aid in future crises.

Although the humanitarian feelings which motivated the massive response of the European public are appreciated, the African reports criticise the fact that many Northern donors used this to further their own interests. The Ethiopian report denounces the political considerations which clearly influenced the delay in providing emergency relief, the fact that the bulk of the assistance was for relief

rather than development, and the small amount of food aid in relation to needs, pointing out that Ethiopia receives less per capita than Egypt or Morocco.

More generally, food aid is seen as a means to perpetuate dependency. A Naam group in Burkina Faso refused an offer of aid which challenged local structures commenting that "such aid is a conscious attempt to perpetuate dependency". Other voices from the Burkina Faso interviews point out that "donors often give what they have too much of", not what people need, and criticise the quality of the food provided from the overflowing stockpiles of the North.

Nor are the motivations of NGO donors free from criticism. Many Northern NGOs used the suffering in Africa to build up their organisations and to open up interventionist programmes in Africa. As the Ethiopian report puts it, "perhaps one of the most visible consequences of the 1984 famine was the proliferation of foreign NGOs that made Ethiopia a base of operations".

The Zimbabwe report points out that, since emergency aid alleviates hardship, this can make rural people insufficiently critical of its long-term impact. Despite this, there is high awareness of the negative impact of food aid on the self-image and initiatives of the recipients. Emergency assistance had the effect of diverting support from longer-term self-help initiatives. "The beneficiaries feel that it is always necessary to wait for external aid to resolve their problems and that makes them lazy and demobilises them."

The Burkina Faso interviews invited respondents to state how they see the attitudes of donors and beneficiaries. Words commonly associated with donors were: superiority complex, pride, charity, pity, domination. Words associated with beneficiaries were: submission, assisted, resignation, subordination, demobilisation.

Two of the reports, from Burkina Faso and Senegal, note that food aid has continued to arrive after the emergency came to an end, discouraging local production. The way in which food aid was distributed is also criticised. Finally, the reports criticise the failure to link emergency aid with food production and development aid. Even Food for Work programmes can make only a small contribution without key factors such as inputs, credit, extension and other incentives.

### **NGO development aid**

Development assistance is also criticised for failing to support, and sometimes hindering alternative development strategies.

While 'partnership' is the universal key-word, donor preferences continue to distort the *content* of projects. The Ethiopian report documents cases in which NGOs pressurised acceptance of

questionable projects with up to 50% of the budget dedicated to expatriate volunteers and vehicles. Peasants in Zimbabwe criticised aid which introduced foreign agricultural methods, hindering the development of rural people's knowledge of their ecosystems. The Senegal report notes a general tendency to present projects which meet the donors' desires rather than locally perceived needs.

In Zimbabwe, local groups are pushed into taking decisions quickly to meet funding schedules and deadlines. In Senegal a similar phenomenon is recorded. It is the NGOs or, in some cases, peasant leaders who plan, manage and evaluate the projects. The Ethiopian report draws attention to the problems created by donor pressure to spend money within a specified time, and the short planning horizon imposed by insecurity regarding continuity of funding.

Deeper still, however, it is the very *concept* of project aid that is questioned. African peasants grouped together to reflect on their problems and evolve alternative solutions. The Senegal report argues that, although project aid provides initial stimulus to this process peasants soon group together to receive aid, as an end in itself rather than a means to attain self-determined objectives. Nascent peasant organisations cast themselves into the project mould. Projects are devised without examining their viability, since there is a tendency to shrug off responsibility for the management of gifts. The net result is to reinforce the idea that salvation comes from outside, and to block the reflection on causes which originated the associations. Inherent in project aid is a concept of development as a process of technological change aimed at increasing production. The project presupposes that underdevelopment is caused by the producers' ignorance and lack of money, and ignores necessary socio-political transformations. This negative impact is echoed in interviews in Burkina Faso: "The beneficiaries believe that they can't live off their own work. They feel inadequate and they can't manage to create, to invent". Project aid rarely involves the beneficiaries in formulation and management, and accords a predominant role to the 'expert'.

Zimbabwe is somewhat different since NGO support for local associations under the colonial regime and the high community mobilisation during the war of liberation have enabled local NGOs to adapt international aid to suit their conditions. Yet even here some donors will sing the tune of participation and self-reliance but are often unwilling to fund people's participatory movements and large employment and economically self-reliant projects.

## Media in Africa

In Senegal and Zimbabwe, studies examined how the national media presented the food crisis.

## Senegal

The Senegal study examined coverage in the major national daily, *Le Soleil*. The study notes that the 'food crisis' is seldom discussed. Rather, drought and desertification are the focus. The martial language tended to personify the drought as a monster bent on annihilating the human race. Hunger and malnutrition are also presented as the logical corollaries of drought, creating the illusion that economic policies play no role, thus absolving the State. Finally, the drought is described as the cause of the macro-economic imbalance of the country, thus ignoring the mechanisms which regulate production in the South and North/South relations. Most of the few exceptions to this failure to analyse the causes of the crisis are contributions by the newspaper's readers.

The study notes that, while extensive publicity was given to the arrival of aid, there was little critical examination of how it was distributed. Coverage of international aid and the national appeal encouraged competition among donors.

Much space was given to government conferences and seminars, reinforcing the idea that the crisis was due to natural causes and that the solution lay in better control of water resources through the large dams being erected on the Senegal river and in the Government's New Agricultural Policy. Initiatives undertaken by the peasants received very little coverage. The study suggests that the unconscious motivation of the journalists was to magnify the despair of the peasants in order to motivate the donors.

The study concludes by noting that NGOs and journalists have a particular role to play in discussing the causes of the crisis. Although freedom of expression is limited in most African countries, this freedom was not sufficiently exploited.

## Zimbabwe

Despite the circulation of foreign newspapers in Zimbabwe, the two major national papers and their Sunday editions have a press monopoly. Newspapers are subject to government control through the Mass Media Trust and the Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency. All media are censored, and all journalists, foreign and local, have to be accredited to the Ministry of Information. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation is wholly owned by the Government.

The report notes that the local press gave little coverage to the crisis, to the point that it is difficult to say there was a crisis.

News reports were influenced by the need to promote Zimbabwe to avoid being dubbed reactionary. Local journalists lacked the analytical skills to educate people about the food problem. Politics plays a major role in food shortages. The food crisis happened at the same time as the dissident problem in Matebeleland, which diverted

attention and allowed a false connection to be made between the two events

Local papers tend to be urban-biased, and the food crisis was not featured unless the specific items were 'newsworthy'. Local media appear to view the rural poor as a source of news, not as part of national development. They are responsible for creating a bad image abroad, and are best shut out — until they improve.

Finally, the local press is used by political figures, the rich and the famous for personal gratification and as a vehicle for individual goals.

The difficulties are compounded by the competition of foreign newspapers. The British papers are believed and trusted. Taking advantage of the local media's preoccupation with political concerns (national unity, security, law and order, cultivating Government leaders, building an image conducive to international acceptance, etc.) the foreign media capitalise on the local media's failure to cover the rural crisis and creates an unassailable position of concern and compassion by the North for the South. By default, the North thus becomes the image-maker and sets the parameters for response to the emergency.

Yet the overseas media have done little to educate their public about the real 'Africa'. One manifestation of bad reporting is the "Africa as one country" syndrome. The other extreme portrays Africa as made up of two types of people: a small educated rich ruling class, which exploits the rest of their jungle-people. 'Success stories' from Africa are said not to sell. But, the report comments, this profit motive is not the most important. Western media coverage of Africa is also influenced by national self-interest, preservation of cultural dominance, the persistence of neo-colonialism and outright racism as well as — particularly among the NGOs — those who hold that negative and sensational media coverage in the North is the only guarantee of successful fund-raising.

The study concludes that Southern media must wake up if Africans are to be their own image-makers and saviours; it must become analytical as well as informative, active rather than reactive. A postscript points out, however, that the study was completed in August 1987 against the background of another cycle of drought and food shortages. This time the Government is giving priority attention to the emergency and local press and media have taken the initiative of focussing on the real issues.

### **The future**

The African case studies suggest ways in which the performance of African NGOs, European NGOs, Governments and the media can be improved in the future.

The most important role of endogenous NGOs in Africa is to help rural people evolve, articulate and apply alternative development strategies, overcoming the constraints which hinder their participation in bringing about favourable conditions for development. African NGOs should direct aid to support these strategies, opposing assistance which runs counter to them.

African NGOs should develop their capacity to analyse linkages between local, national and international situations and power structures, overcoming the barrier between African intellectuals and the rural milieu. African NGOs should have a more active presence vis-a-vis the local media.

European NGOs concerned about partnership should review the form and modalities of their assistance and inhibit the tendency of donors to superimpose their preferences and organisational interests, with a view to providing the kind of support required by people's movements.

More exchange should take place between African and European NGOs on images in Europe and initiatives in Africa, in order to build links between development education in Europe and the emergence of alternatives in Africa.

Governments should ensure accurate and timely systems to forecast impending food shortages and should organise distribution of food aid in an equitable and productive way. In the longer term, courageous and coherent government policy and political democracy are required to resolve the agrarian crisis. Since rural women constitute a key instrument for solving food crises in Africa, provisions should be made to upgrade their status not only in rhetoric but also in committed action.

African media should play a leading role in using the food crisis in an opportune moment to launch debate on its causes. To do so, it must overcome its urban bias and take greater initiative in focussing on issues of concern to the people. The media should avoid giving exaggerated publicity to aid and, on the contrary, report in detail on efforts made and initiatives taken by the people in response to the crisis.