



HAL
open science

The image of the child in Unicef's communication strategy

Olfa Sifaoui, Sébastien Rouquette

► **To cite this version:**

Olfa Sifaoui, Sébastien Rouquette. The image of the child in Unicef's communication strategy. *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, 2017, 11. hal-01653098

HAL Id: hal-01653098

<https://hal.science/hal-01653098v1>

Submitted on 18 Jun 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

The image of the child in Unicef's communication strategy

Olfa Sifaoui and Sébastien Rouquette, *RFSIC*, 2017, 60000 signes.

<https://journals.openedition.org/rfsic/3090>

Olfa Sifaoui, PhD in Information and Communication Sciences, laboratory *Communication et sociétés* (EA 46 47), UCA, Clermont-Ferrand.

Sébastien Rouquette is a university professor in Information and Communication Sciences and director of the laboratory *Communication et sociétés* (EA 46 47).

Abstract :

The image of childhood is a fundamental element of Unicef communication. The purpose of the article is to examine whether Unicef is adopting a differentiated representation of childhood in its campaigns for poor children over time and across countries. Several results stand out. Certainly, this representation evolves over time. In fact, the professionalization of Unicef communication has resulted in a greater emphasis on the emotional dimension of the communications being deployed. Admittedly, Unicef has also decided to concentrate its communication efforts more strongly in the northern countries than in the Southern countries. However, the comparison between countries shows that the arguments used by the organization does not depending on the countries. Contrary to the original hypothesis, the empirical study has shown that, with respect to the arguments used (hope versus guilt, mobilization versus compassion), Unicef does not change its visual argumentation according to the target audience. Thus, and it is a contribution of this study to researchs on humanitarian communication, the new emphasis on the emotional dimension of humanitarian communications does not imply - in the case of Unicef - to search different reactions on the part of the publics (encouraging or guilty). And this, despite the different situations and living standards of the target populations.

Key Words : Visual communication - Childhood representation- Communication - Strategy - Unicef - humanitarian - Hope - Mobilization - Compassion - Guilt – northern country – southern country

The image of the child in Unicef's communication strategy

Olfa Sifaoui and Sébastien Rouquette, *RFSIC*, 2017, 60000 signes.

The purpose of this article is to study the representation of childhood in Unicef's communication. More specifically, it seeks to assess whether this organisation favours positive (hope, education) or negative (unhappiness, guilt) discourses and representations of childhood. It also aims to see whether this strategy has evolved, both over time and across countries, in order to assess its strengths.

Indeed, communication strategies are becoming increasingly important in the operations of humanitarian agencies. These organizations have, of course, a duty to justify their actions to beneficiaries, tutors, donors, journalists, public authorities and opinion leaders. Communicating allows them to benefit from the donations needed to implement their actions and reimburse their operating costs (Dauvin, 2010, p. 8). These non-governmental organizations also seek to raise awareness of the existence of societal problems. They have yet to "assert themselves in a media landscape teeming with information" (Batazzi and Parizot, 2015).

In this sector, Unicef (United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund, founded in 1946), develops more specifically communication to defend children's rights and improve their conditions in the world through vaccination campaigns or food distribution for poor children.

Although Unicef was created at the end of the Second World War, an initial observation of the evolution of its communication campaigns shows that it has gradually become aware of the importance of its brand image; that is, of the importance of promoting "its actions, its ideological positioning, its world of operation" (Dauvin, 2010, p. 8). An image translated, among other things, by its logo and slogan: "For every child, Health, Education, Equality, Protection, let us advance humanity".

Above all, you only have to look at urban posters, open the pages of magazines or watch television to see that Unicef's communication is centred on the image of the child. This image is omnipresent in the organization's communication. However, as Florence Carion has shown, humanitarian organisations that adopt a strategic approach to their communication decide on their discourse based on three objectives: establishing a diagnosis (conducting a communication campaign on the origin of the dramatic situations denounced, assigning responsibility), proposing solutions (possible actions), and giving reasons for action (Carion, 2010).

In this context, how does Unicef choose to represent the world of children? Does it favour "negative" images (children in a situation of great economic fragility or health distress) to convince the public to make a donation? Or does it prefer to promote "positive" images of childhood, based on hope and possible solutions?

In order to measure the interest of this issue, it is necessary to take into account the fact that usually the image of the child portrayed in advertisements is positive. That is how much a difficult or negative portrayal of a young boy or girl would break with the stereotypes usually used in advertising. As Luc Dupont points out, the majority of commercials are indeed about a world of innocence and purity. The children are surrounded by loving parents and cheerful friends, reassuring tenderness and daily happiness. "The image of the constructed childhood [...] is that of a paradise

that one would always want to be clean, free from conflict and physical or sexual aggression" (Dupont, 2013). Recklessness prevails. Difficult work is absent, including in social advertising, which nevertheless seeks to "sensitize opinion, inform, educate, change attitudes, strengthen or abolish habits, and convince people of the legitimacy of an opinion" (Sevigny, 1981, p. 12).

Does UNICEF respond to this traditional advertising stereotype of the world of children with the opposite stereotype, that of children in situations of great fragility or extreme poverty who urgently need help? Do the children portrayed in these communication campaigns always portray a figure of misfortune that is both hyperrealistic in its details of suffering and under-qualified (Ménard, 2002, p. 190)?

To answer this question, this research chose to engage in a twofold comparative process. Indeed, the comparative method "allows us to classify countries and phenomena on the basis of a certain number of variables and then to deduce constants, invariants" (Ghorra-Gobin, 1998).

The first compares Unicef communications by country. While the emotional dimension of communication by humanitarian organisations has been taken into account in the scientific literature on humanitarian communication (Batazzi and Parizot, 2015), the specific contribution of this work lies in the introduction of the following variable: not only studying the importance given to arguments such as hope or guilt, but also observing whether the first type of argument (hope) is preferentially chosen for countries in the South and the second (guilt) for countries in the North. Choosing this comparative variable means trying to measure whether there is a link between the communication strategy chosen by Unicef in the field of children and the cultural context, insofar as "culture, in advertising communication, plays a quadruple role: it provides most of the themes of advertising, it sets the standards of communication, it also sets the social models and standards of social practices" (Gai, 2007). Moreover, Lian Xiang Gai finds in the comparative study he conducted in his thesis on advertising between China and France that there are "differences and similarities that are only understandable through historical and political differences at the time of the emergence and development of advertising on the one hand, and, on the other hand, through two traditional visions of the world and of man, of man's place in the world and the social relations that men maintain between them" (Gai, 2007, p. 16). In this way, making this comparison makes it possible to check here whether the type of argument chosen by Unicef depends on the place occupied by the child, the social models, the standards of the countries in which the communication campaigns are disseminated and the target audiences.

In view of the problems chosen, several criteria for selecting countries could be envisaged, such as the distinction between countries open or not to the rights of the child, or between countries where children suffer from malnutrition and have a high rate of non-enrolment of others. However, the division chosen between countries of the North and the South has the advantage of overlapping the other two, since the developed countries are most often the countries of the North and the countries most open to the rights of the child. On the other hand, the North / South division offers a much wider comparative field of study that covers most of UNICEF's thematic areas (health, security, malnutrition, literacy).

This breakdown makes it possible to verify the hypothesis that in the communication campaigns disseminated in the countries of the South, the images of the child used would carry positive signs that propel a sense of hope with the aim of making the populations of these countries aware of the problems of the most deprived children. These images would give reason to hope for an improvement in the situation. The aim is to check whether Unicef's communication strategy would

be based in the North on negative arguments that emanate a feeling of guilt and compassion. If this hypothesis proves to be correct, Unicef is striving in this case to sensitize, mobilize and challenge the public by using overwhelming and stereotyped images as a means of appealing in order to raise the maximum amount of funds.

The second comparative process focuses, in a complementary way, on temporal variations. It is interesting to compare Unicef's campaigns of the 1950s and the 1990s because of the changes that humanitarian organizations experienced in the 1980s: at that time, "the development of humanitarian missions and the increasing search for performance increased [...] the financial needs of these organizations" (Carion and Cultiaux, 2006, p. 117). Accompanying this evolution, the communication of humanitarian associations has become more professional since the end of the 1980s (op. cit.), with the recruitment of communication professionals who "master their know-how to impose 'the brand' in a competitive context" (Dauvin, 2010, p. 14). To the extent that the goal of these professionals is to turn "an interest in a cause" into "sympathy for an organization"... (Carion and Cultiaux, 2006, p. 125), does the growing need to generate donations translate into the choice of images that increasingly play on a strong emotional dimension? A question that will be answered by this historical comparison.

In order to respond to the problem of this research, this work is then based on visual analyses. Understanding the specificity of Unicef's communication based on the image of the child makes it possible to uncover the system of standards indirectly defended by the organisation (Appel and Boulanger, 2011; Bonneville, Grosjean and Lagacé, 2007, p. 155) through the ages, states of mind and origins of the children represented. Focusing on the symbolic, affective and emotional dimensions of Unicef's visual communication, on what they represent and what they choose - selectively - to show, this research is part of a visual semiology. This type of analysis "aims to capture the underlying meaning of data from written, audio or visual productions using decomposition and framing techniques" (Bonneville, Grosjean and Lagacé, 2007, p. 155). In addition to this information drawn from image analyses, we will evoke, in our reflection work, the discursive dimension illustrated in Unicef campaigns. We thus look at the different types of texts and statements to try to identify, in particular, the speech and language stereotypes (Krieg-Planque, 2012) used to convince people to act in favour of children.

Indeed, in order to propose to a public to adhere to an opinion or to mobilize in favour of disadvantaged children, arguments are one of the most used means in a communication situation (Adam and Bonhomme, 2012), even if "argumentation is only an optional tool, among others, that advertising can use to exert an influence on a target audience" (Desilets, Gauthier, 2014). What are the types of arguments used primarily by this humanitarian organisation? Above all, how to study the arguments explicitly or implicitly defended during Unicef communication campaigns? This is not a simple exercise because campaigns use several arguments at the same time and include multiple messages. In order to initiate this comparative work, these arguments have been methodologically classified into two broad categories: those with positive connotations and those that suggest a negative meaning. Several clues were simultaneously taken into account (Gervereau, 2004): the context (is the environment beautiful, pleasant or dilapidated?), the child's emotions (does he seem happy? Is he crying?), the activity he carries out (does he play or does he do difficult manual work?), his clothing (is he well dressed or dressed in damaged clothing?), the framing used, the theme detailed by the text and the image.

In order to respond to the problems of this research, this work is finally based on the constitution of a corpus spread over some sixty years. What's more, these images are associated with multiple and varied media: posters, press inserts, derivative products, stamps, etc... Indeed, since its creation, Unicef has never ceased to communicate throughout the world. "How to establish a set of criteria for describing communication media adapted to the problem at hand?" (Lahine, 2007, pp. 60-65).

To do this, we made several choices in order to identify repetitive phenomena.

The first choice consisted in taking a corpus that varied according to the sources, periods and elements to be analyzed "that includes different types of sampled productions" (Bilger, 2008, p. 279). This choice makes it possible to take into account a multiplicity of Unicef communication campaigns and more precisely a diversity of arguments used (positive or negative), type of communication (institutional or promotional), type of country of distribution (North or South), type of media (posters, animations, publications, website, derivative products...) ..etc.), type of actions (ambassadors, events, partnerships), type of messages (health, equality, protection, education), type of representations of the child (age, state of mind, origin), type of graphic style (photography, manual drawing, illustration) and also type of ideological discourse (implicit or explicit). The first interest of this corpus lies, therefore, in its diversity, based on the principle that "the richness and multiplicity of the empirical work carried out constitutes one of the criteria of scientific validity of the theories put forward" (Rouquette, 2010, p. 9).

In addition to the diversity of the media, there are two selection factors in line with the comparative approach chosen: the time and the type of country where Unicef disseminates its campaigns.

We have selected communication campaigns from 1946, the year Unicef was created, to 2009. This corpus ends in 2009, for two reasons. According to the organization's Executive Director Anthony Lake, from 2010 onwards Unicef has tried to reconsider its actions towards the most deprived children (Unicef, 2010). Finally, our analysis is based on a large corpus that is scientifically treatable because it extends over a little more than sixty years. It constitutes in itself a representative sample that addresses the various aspects of the use of the image of the child in Unicef's communication strategy.

We have also selected communication campaigns that have been disseminated in countries of the North and the South. Although Unicef has classified the world into 8 regions in which it operates, we have chosen to divide the world into only 2 groups which are the countries of the North (economically rich) and the countries of the South (economically less developed). The classification between countries can be made on the basis of indicators such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or HDI (Human Development Index). The countries of the North are characterized by the higher standard of living of their populations, which manage to satisfy all their main and vital needs, namely health, education and food. The ranking we have considered is based on data from several global bodies such as the UN, UNDP and OECD . These countries - for the 2000-2009 period of our corpus we find, as an example, the United States, France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Turkey and Sweden - directly finance the majority of humanitarian organisations. Conversely, the countries of the South - such as El Salvador, Senegal, Tunisia, Morocco, the Philippines or South Africa, where Unicef carried out a communication campaign during the period 1990-1999 - are the target countries for the majority of Unicef's actions on the ground.

In total, the corpus studied is made up of more than 100 different advertising elements published over 60 years. These supports are composed of 41 posters, 23 derivative products, 10 ambassadors, 7 events, 16 partnerships, 3 original advertising devices.

An explanation of the empirical results obtained from these comparative analyses is the subject of the following sections.

1 - An evolution of the campaigns marked by a greater emphasis on emotions and UNICEF mediation

One of the principles of communication is to "provide an audience with good reasons to support an opinion" (Breton, 2001, p. 3). Are the arguments put forward by the organization increasingly based on human feelings such as sadness or joy? The first conclusive result is obtained by the temporal analysis of the Unicef communication. To realize this, it is possible to rely on the collection of several data.

The former focus on the type of plans that are predominantly used in the organization's communication campaigns. Do these campaigns favour wide shots (the wide shots) or close-ups of human faces and their feelings (the close-ups)? If we carry out this study on the 5 periods of the corpus (period 1 goes from 1956 to 1951, period 2 from 1960 to 1979, period 3 from 1980 to 1989, period 4 from 1990 to 1999 and period 5 from 2000 to 2009), we notice that three phases differ (tables 1 and 2).

PERIOD	SCOPING				
	GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN	MEDIUM	CLOSE-UP	WAIST CLOSE-UP	CHEST BIG PLAN
TOTAL P1	4	0	1	0	0
TOTAL P2	7	3	0	2	2
TOTAL P3	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL P4	4	0	3	0	0
TOTAL P5	4	4	1	3	8
OVERALL TOTAL	20	7	5	5	11

Table n°1 " Framing of communication campaigns in Northern countries ".

PERIOD	MASTER PLAN	PLAN MEDIUM	CLOSE-UP PLAN	CLOSE-UP
TOTAL P1	1	0	1	0
TOTAL P2	1	0	3	0

TOTAL P3	0	1	1	0
TOTAL P4	2	0	0	2
TOTAL P5	3	1	1	1
OVERALL TOTAL	7	2	6	3

Table n°2 " Framing of communication campaigns in the South ".

In the early years, the master plan is the most widely used. Thus, between 1946 and 1959 (P1), the master plan was used in 4 out of 5 communication campaigns in Northern countries (table 1). The aim of the organisation is to describe the situations of children in need. Conversely, the last period (2000-2009) is characterised by a more regular use of close-ups to emphasise the personal and psychological dimensions of victims, particularly in northern countries. Thus, in period 5, out of the 20 campaigns disseminated by UNICEF in the Northern countries, 8 focused on close-ups and only 4 on the overall plan (table 1). As if, the further ahead we go, the more precise and focused Unicef's objectives to be achieved.

The second data focuses on the composition of the images disseminated by the organization. In fact, composition played an important role in the graphic representation of the child's images in the various communication campaigns. Indeed, from symmetry to asymmetry, the way of dividing the space has been elaborated by the organization according to the messages it wanted to promote (table n°3).

PERIOD	Northern countries		Southern countries	
	SYMMETRICAL	ASYMMETRICAL	SYMMETRICAL	ASYMMETRICAL
TOTAL P1	4	1	2	0
TOTAL P2	6	8	1	4
TOTAL P3	2	0	0	2
TOTAL P4	3	4	1	3
TOTAL P5	7	13	3	3
OVERALL TOTAL	22	26	7	12

Table n°3 " Compositions of communication campaigns in Northern countries ".

We can see that the composition of the first years was characterized by the adoption of symmetry, to emphasize the quality of an organization that wants to present itself as stable and balanced in order to convince people of the seriousness of Unicef, which had been unknown until then. Then, the organization wanted to show its willingness to be on the move, as much by its action as by its communication, using the asymmetry and dynamic nature of the elements that make up the support. In the end, this aspect dominated his communication, in both the North and the South.

Even before measuring whether positive and negative emotions are used unevenly in communication campaigns depending on the countries targeted (this will be the subject of the third part), it must be noted that the professionalization of humanitarian communication has resulted in an increased emphasis on close-ups, dynamic and off-centre compositions and the importance of the emotions expressed by the faces of the children represented.

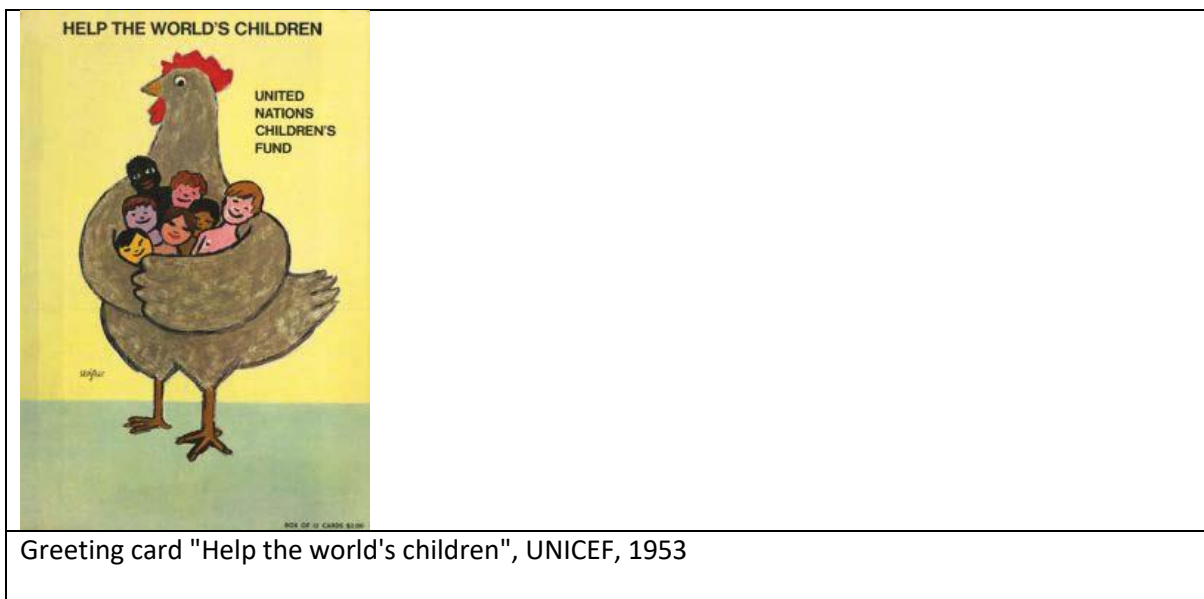
It would be possible to see in this observation only a general evolution, going beyond the framework of humanitarian communication, according to which "emotion is a lever for convincing and has become an indispensable vector of communication" (Wolton, 2012, p. 87). Whether it is a feeling of joy or sorrow, enthusiasm or suffering, communication does not hesitate to weave its purpose around several social and human situations.

However, the impact specifically brought about by the professionalization of communication in the humanitarian field should not be underestimated. The results of this research echo the question raised by Claude Cossette and Pénélope Daignault, for whom advertising appeals to the values of recipients by seeking an emotional complicity with them (Cossette and Daignault, 2011, p. 47). These results are even more clearly in line with Philippe Juhem's observation that communication by non-governmental organizations now favours the personalization of stories or "the listing of inexpensive supplies that can alleviate the plight of the populations concerned" (Juhem, 2004, p. 231). This insistence on the personalization of stories is reflected in the case of Unicef both in the gradual reduction of communication campaigns showing groups of children in favour of images centred on a single one of them and in the progressive choice of photographs instead of drawings (Table 4).

PERIOD	TECHNICAL OF REPRESENTATION	
	DRAWING	PHOTOGRAPHIC
TOTAL P1	4	1
TOTAL P2	12	3
TOTAL P3	1	1
TOTAL P4	4	3
TOTAL P5	6	15
TOTAL GLOBAL	27	23

Table n°4 - Ranking of Unicef communication campaigns according to the representation techniques used

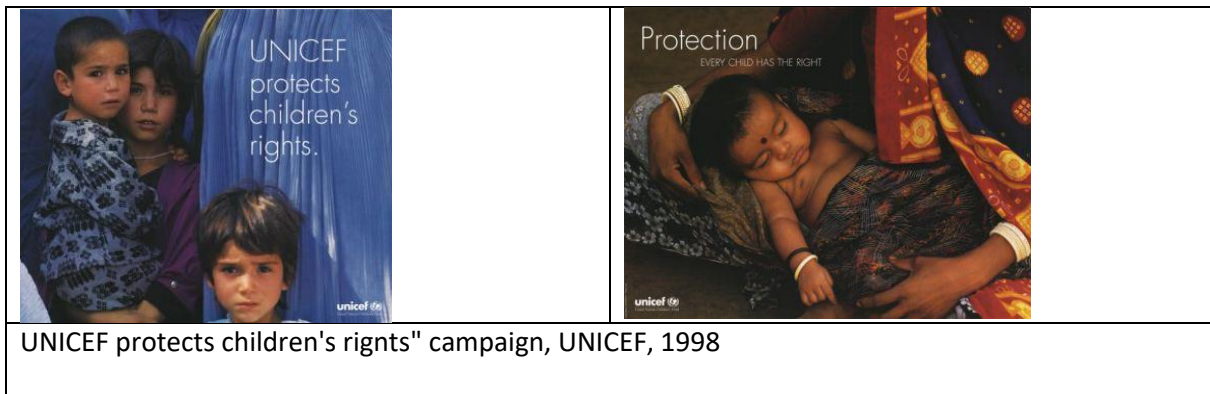
The use of hand drawing, fairly simplified and without superfluous artifice, was put forward in the development of most of the campaigns carried out during the first decades (thus between 1960 and 1979 - P2 - drawings account for 12 of the 15 communication campaigns carried out by Unicef). Gestural, naive and minimalist drawing is the technique most adopted in order to keep a visual link between these campaigns and the magical world of children by expressing themselves with light and simple lines, shapes and colours reminiscent of typical children's drawings. We can cite the example of the "Help the world's children" campaign, broadcast in 1953.



Greeting card "Help the world's children", UNICEF, 1953

It is one of the first campaigns to promote the sale of Unicef greeting cards. In this support, the notion of protection is symbolised by a grey hen, standing upright and placed in the centre of the card, holding seven children, drawn naked and smiling, of different origins and colours: black, dark brown, yellow, pink, light brown, mauve and finally light pink, under its two wings. Moreover, the whole picture is drawn in a naive style, as if the drawing was the work of a child who wanted to address the audience directly.

Since the 1990s, the use of photography has developed considerably, providing a concrete testimony of children's daily situations. Thus, between 2000 and 2009 (P5), 15 of the 21 communication campaigns listed were based on photographs (Table 4). Indeed, since photography has become an important part of poster advertising, UNICEF has carried out campaigns highlighting photos of children showing their feelings and opinions about their situation and future. Moreover, with photography, the organization has realized a new concept of campaign development, which consists of a series of visuals that all emanate from the same campaign project. This is what we are seeing in the "UNICEF protects children's rights" campaign.



This campaign exposes children in need. This is a series of photos that attempt to send an alarming message. This technique facilitated the real and authentic dissemination of the critical situations of the affected children. The second poster, for example, shows a Hindu baby sleeping in its mother's arms. The shot used is the close-up shot. This shot frames the characters by giving them an important place and drawing attention to their expression. Indeed, it makes it possible to read the psychological reactions of children who are frozen. The viewer is challenged by the victim while emphasizing the primary needs and rights of each child. As if photography, by its realistic dimension stronger than drawing, allowed Unicef to increase the emotional response of the targeted readers. Especially if the images shown decontextualize the political or military situations in which these dramas take place and no explanation or indication is given to readers about the broader political causes of the condemned massacres and famines denounced (Batazzi and Parizot, 2015, p. 117). Gaps that do not allow for the possibility of taking distance through reflection and contextualization of the event; the child being himself or herself assigned to the position of "humanitarian victim" (Mesnard, 2004, p. 201). In doing so, UNICEF tries to persuade people to take action. As Ferenczy stated, "the shock image of humanitarianism leaves no room for judgment, but imposes a sense of pity in a very subtle way on the aesthetic with real effect" (Ferenczy, 2005, p. 73).

What does this strategic choice by Unicef imply?

First, it shows that communication managers in the different countries in which the organisation communicates believe that it is more effective to use speeches based on the miserable conditions of children and emotional incentives rather than on figures and arguments to raise donations. From the point of view of an NGO communication manager, this preference is fully justified by the results of past campaigns: "it is on the urgency that people give the most", says Philippe Lévêque, deputy director and former marketing director of Médecin du Monde. "The rate of return on cases like these [in 1999: Kosovo, Turkey] can be as high as 15-10%, which is enormous" (Lévêque, Philippe interviewed by Juhem, 2004, p. 221). Such a strategy is implicitly based on the idea that the stronger the emotion aroused in the reader, the more he or she will want to act: whether it is a negative emotion such as shame that the reader would seek to remove from his or her mind by giving to "regain psychological peace" (Cossette and Daignault, 2011, p. 53); or a positive emotion that could bring him or her the satisfaction of the person who acted.

However, it should not be inferred from these convictions of professional humanitarian communicators that emotional arguments are necessarily effective in making the reader feel and act, as the scientific literature on the impact of advertising reception has shown that the impact of the affect contained in a message depends largely on parameters external to the message. In particular,

the interest that the receiver takes in this subject and the degree of attention that he or she is willing to pay to the treatment of advertisements that speak to these issues (Dridi and Makhlouf, 2014), but also in relation to his or her entourage. All these variables explain why, far from being uniform, the emotion felt by people subjected to the same messages may differ, whether for personal or cultural reasons.

While several variables relating to the personality of the receivers or their cultural environment will moderate the reception of these affect-based communications, the emotional dimension of Unicef's humanitarian communication is becoming increasingly important today compared to the campaigns carried out in the early days of the organization. A strategy that clearly shows that in the debates going on throughout humanitarian organizations (Carion, 2010) about whether communication based on informative content should prevail or whether it should play primarily on the emotional string (Ferré, 1995, p. 30 cited by Carion and Cultiaux, 2006), the second option now predominates. To take up - with Philippe Juhem - Max Weber's formula, it is as if Unicef's communication managers were to give priority to the ethics of responsibility, in other words to the priority given to the consequences of their actions [increasing donations] rather than to the ethics of conviction by giving the greatest importance to the convictions they consider to be right, using communication campaigns as tools to convince people of the legitimacy of the NGOs' actions (Juhem, 2004, p. 229). To put it another way, this evolution is only possible, it should be noted, on condition that Unicef, whose action is initiated by strong ethical convictions, places at the centre of its communicational functioning the need to assume the foreseeable consequences of its actions, in the name of reality and taking into account - as Max Weber explains - the human imperfection of the target audiences.

This strategic choice implies, above all, that the spectator is placed in a relationship of distance with the child. UNICEF takes on the role of an intermediary who knows the state of the situation by putting the public in a staggered position and placing it far away from the victim. The reports and publications published by Unicef illustrate this perfectly: the organization has been able to put its brand image forward in its media, while sometimes using stereotypes of images of children showing the misery that affects them. These decontextualized images have been put forward to both show the situation experienced by the children and show people the solution. This arrangement emphasizes the intent of the organization claiming to be best able to solve the problem. The potential donor is in a situation where he has to place his trust in Unicef to manage the dramatic situations of deprived children. By delegating the task of implementing and coordinating actions in this way, this donor is offered a way to be relieved, since it is the organization that will be responsible for identifying and ensuring adequate solutions on the ground. Thus the public first takes on the role of an observer whose sole task is to witness what the organization transmits to him or her, even if it means finding oneself in an uncomfortable situation that gradually turns into great guilt. This position far from the audience places the latter in a situation of pure spectator "since it is perfectly independent of the scene it is contemplating" (Boltanski, 2007, p. 63), and that it has, a priori, "no prior commitment" (op. cit., p. 65). Thus, the commitment expected by the organization can only take shape if the public finally takes action.

On the other hand, this strategy consists of making information available to the public by describing the situation, without "directly" pushing the public to act. The public will therefore have the choice to decide whether or not they wish to make a donation. The call for commitment and participation in Unicef's actions challenges the subjectivity of the public.

2 - More communication campaigns in Northern countries

The first result is provided by the temporal comparison of the post-war campaigns with those of the 2000s. The second comes from the comparison between the countries of the North and the South. This result is quantitative. As can be seen in Table 5, communication campaigns are more present in Northern countries than in Southern countries. Indeed, the dissemination of these campaigns in Northern countries is about three times more frequent than in Southern countries.

PERIOD	NORTHERN COUNTRY	SOUTHERN COUNTRY
1946 – 1959	7	2
1960 – 1979	15	5
1980 -1989	6	2
1990 – 1999	15	5
2000 – 2009	31	12
TOTAL	74	26

Table n°5 " Number of communication campaigns disseminated in the countries of the North and the South ".

This result can be explained firstly by the fact that Northern countries are the leaders in new advertising products; consequently, the choice and originality of the media are very attractive. However, in the case of countries in the South, Unicef's communication is adapted to what it finds on the local advertising market. Secondly, this gap is due to the fundraising strategy that the organisation has sought to develop in these rich countries.

As far as media support is concerned, we note in table n°6 that Unicef chooses much more often to communicate through poster campaigns in Northern countries than in Southern countries.

PERIOD	POSTER CAMPAIGN	
	NORTH COUNTRY	SOUTH COUNTRY
1946 – 1959	5	0
1960 – 1979	11	1
1980 – 1989	1	0
1990 – 1999	3	1

2000 – 2009	14	5
TOTAL	34	7

Table n°6 - " Use of poster campaigns in Northern and Southern countries ".

This difference in involvement in the world could be seen as paradoxical in view of the values defended by Unicef to work for all children. However, this result can be understood on the assumption that the organisation wanted to reach the general public in the countries with the most favourable economic situation in order to succeed in raising as much money as possible through poster communication. The organisation's communication is also weaker in some countries of the South, particularly in countries with authoritarian regimes where the political power controls the media operations of humanitarian organisations. Moreover, in several countries in the South of the corpus, certain messages - more difficult, more risky - were the subject of fewer campaigns, in particular fewer communication campaigns on violence against children. Indeed, Unicef, by virtue of its mission, finds it easier to work with countries and regimes that are more advanced on children's rights than with countries and regimes that are lagging behind on human rights. Communicating on these topics seems to be more complicated whenever there is no law prohibiting parental brutality against their own children.

The unequal number of communications depending on the country (North/South) observed for poster campaigns is found for the same reasons in the other forms of communication used (Table 7).

PERIOD	NON-MEDIA					
	Derivative products	Ambassadors	Events Partnerships	point-of-purchase	Original advertising (POS)	
TOTAL Southern countries	12	2	2	2	1	19
TOTAL Northern countries	10	8	5	15	2	40
TOTAL	22	10	7	17	3	59
OVERALL TOTAL	59					

Table n°7 " Non-media communication campaigns in the two types of countries ".

For similar reasons, Unicef has focused its non-media communication more in the countries of the North than in the South (see Table 7: of the 50 communication campaigns of this type identified, 40 were deployed in the countries of the North). Thus, the partnership has been used much more in the North than in the South. Indeed, we can note a clear difference, with 15 uses in the Northern countries out of only 2 in the Southern countries (table n°7). This is because Unicef chooses its partners on the basis of their ability to provide aid and assistance, particularly financial assistance. In

this way, the organisation links up with private sector companies or multinationals that generally have significant capital and strong economic activity. One example is a partnership between Unicef and Volvic, a brand of mineral water. This association was first set up in Germany in 2005, then in France and in Europe from 2006 onwards with the aim of helping children in African countries by providing them with drinking water (Document No. 8).



Paper No. 8 - Partnership with Volvic, 2005

By purchasing a partner product, Unicef succeeds in translating the simple act of buying from the consumer into a generous and humanitarian gesture. As a result, this partnership has a double positive effect. On the one hand, it provides the company with free advertising, and on the other hand, it enables the company to collect money for Unicef, which manages to reach households with these products without any expenditure on advertising space. Similarly, for ambassadors, their choice is generally made according to their reputation in the world. Whether they are film stars or top sports athletes, these star ambassadors most often come from the countries of the North (Hollywood, for example). Hence the discrepancy between the two types of countries.

Among these forms of communication, one exception is derivative products. They were used with comparable frequency in both types of countries. Thus, out of 19 campaigns of this type recorded in the southern countries of our corpus, 12 are conducted using derivatives (Table 7). If we account for its exploitation in both types of countries, this number represents almost a third of all non-media supports of Unicef (22 out of 59: table n°7).

Why have derivatives been deemed suitable for the situation of countries in the South? Why are stamps and greeting cards the main products for sale in the South? This is due to the relative simplicity of their production on the one hand, and on the other hand, to their relatively low price, accessible to the standard of living of the populations of the South. Furthermore, we note that while these by-products were the first non-media supports used by the organization, they were then followed by other types of supports in order to better stimulate and raise public awareness to support disadvantaged children. Indeed, these products, which were initially restricted to greeting cards and stamps only, have seen a significant production of various items bearing the Unicef name. Moreover, the use in some countries of the South of local craft production to sell them later boosts the economy of the country in question. That is why this approach has been followed, mainly in the countries of the South.

One last point is worth noting. The reason why UNICEF has varied so much the media on which it has communicated its action using images of children is because these forms of communication are compatible with both institutional and promotional communication. The first highlights its values and its presentation to the public. The second raises awareness of children's rights, particularly health, education, equality and protection. Logotypes are affixed to all media used: posters, products sold in partnership, publications or websites. Moreover, it should be noted that the organization has worked with the same logotype in both types of countries, whether in French, Arabic or Chinese. Unicef has positioned itself with the same brand image in order to unify its action throughout the world.

At this stage of the study, two results emerge. The first: the professionalization of Unicef's communication has in fact led to a change in strategy with greater emphasis on the emotional dimension of the communications deployed. The second: Unicef has just as visibly chosen to focus its communication efforts more strongly on audiences in the North than in the South. Does the clarity of the results obtained by this twofold comparative study imply, then, that not only does Unicef give more space to emotional arguments in its campaigns but, above all, that it does so in a differentiated manner according to the country? This question is the subject of the last part of this research.

3 - The visual arguments differ little between the countries of the North and the South.

To answer this question, this research chose to compare communication campaigns on targeted topics. Yet health was the most exploited axis in the organization's communication, in both types of countries, in accordance with the objective indicated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "every child has the right to an adequate standard of living and to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health" (Unicef, 2009, p. 14). In order to be able to enjoy this "vital" right, the organization tries to improve the health-related conditions of children to help them, first, to survive and then to grow up in a healthy environment. In terms of health, what arguments did Unicef insist on? Has it oriented its strategy differently from one country to another? Campaigns promoting positive values associated with a health approach (caring about children's health will make them happier), those stressing the direct benefits of the policies pursued (acting to make water safe to drink in villages, for example) have been integrated into the campaigns with arguments and a positive tone. Those invoking health or epidemic risks ("Hunger kills Iraqi children": campaign broadcast in France in 2003), those based on a discourse of compassion towards children shown to be ill (such as the "Contaminated water kills more children than war" campaign, broadcast in Sweden in 2008) are grouped together among the campaigns with a negative tone (document n°9).

	POSITIVE ARGUMENTS		NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS	
	Northern countries	Southern countries	Northern countries	Southern countries
1946 - 1959	7	2	0	0
1960 - 1979	15	5	0	0

1980 - 1989	6	2	0	0
1990 - 1999	14	5	1	0
2000 - 2009	20	8	11	4
TOTAL	62	22	12	4
TOTAL	84		16	

Table n°9 - " Positive and negative arguments used in Northern and Southern countries ".

Hope and mobilization have been the most overwhelmingly positive arguments used in the organization's various campaigns. The mobilization argument in particular has been the most exploited through ideas of commitment, adoption of values and direct public participation. On the other hand, negative arguments are finally less used, both in Northern and Southern countries (out of the 100 communication campaigns studied in the two countries, only 16 emphasise a negative tone such as guilt or compassion: see table n°10).

	Northern countries		Southern countries	
	HOPE	MOBILIZATION	HOPE	MOBILIZATION
1946 - 1959	2	5	0	2
1960 - 1979	3	12	2	3
1980 - 1989	2	4	0	2
1990 - 1999	3	11	3	2
2000 - 2009	4	16	1	7
TOTAL	14	48	6	16
TOTAL GLOBAL	62		22	

Table n°10 " Positive arguments in Northern and Southern countries ".

Among the positive arguments, hope has been used by the organisation as much in countries of the South as in countries of the North, notably through images of smiling and joyful children (Document 10). In addition, the organization has used celebrities to ensure that the public follows them, with confidence, in their actions.

On the other hand, the emergency commitment was only used in Northern countries, with the aim of collecting money to provide emergency support to the affected populations. Similarly, while mobilization through direct public participation has been frequently used in the organization's communication strategy, it has been used more in the North than in the South. In this respect, we have noted that Unicef has used three relational forms in its interpellation of the public. First, the complicity that links the public to the organization in a common alliance to make it accountable and pushes it to act. Second, the utility argument exploited to engage the public through acts of purchasing items and derivatives, which will make the public feel the value of their participation. We observe that both forms are used in both types of countries. On the other hand, the third relational form, which is the concretization of the result, is only found in the countries of the North. Indeed, as already explained, this approach consists of a form of exchange that allows the value of the donation to coincide in a material, not symbolic, equivalence, which facilitates this communication strategy.

Among the negative arguments, the finding is similar: these arguments are as little used in the countries of the North as in the countries of the South; even if their use is increasing - in both types of countries - in the last period (Table n°11).

	Northern countries		Southern countries	
PERIODS	GUILT	COMPASSION	GUILT	COMPASSION
1946 - 1959	0	0	0	0
1960 - 1979	0	0	0	0
1980 - 1989	0	0	0	0
1990 - 1999	0	1	0	0
2000 - 2009	6	5	3	1
	6	6	3	1
TOTAL	12		4	

Table n°11 " Negative arguments in Northern and Southern countries ".

Indeed, from the 2000s onwards, Unicef has changed the tone of its campaigns in both types of countries with the aim of mobilizing people even more to the problems faced by deprived children by sometimes making them feel guilty or compassionate, or both. Thus, compassion and guilt were used by the organization through images of sad and unhappy children in order to shake up the public's habits.

How can these results be explained? In the literature on the professionalization of humanitarian communication, the emphasis in campaigns in France on emergency relief, on showing the suffering of civilians or children and on "visual presentation of the effectiveness of NGOs" (Juhem, 2004, p. 251) can be explained by the concern for the increasing effectiveness of the communication services of these organizations. The increasing financial needs of these organizations are reflected in a growing concern for the dissemination of a structured discourse that can reach the widest possible audience and, above all, generate sufficient financial income (op. cit., p. 224). This evolution would explain both the progressive marginalisation of organisations basing their actions on different logics and the rationalisation of communication campaigns decided on the basis of the results of past campaigns (op. cit., p. 224).

To include this type of explanation implies in our case that if Unicef does not vary the tone of its campaigns depending on the country, it is because the communication teams have not found it of significant interest. Either this segmentation is deemed to be inefficient, or - a hypothesis that subsequent research may invalidate or confirm - that this organisation is not yet at such a level of rationalisation of its communication strategy that it cannot carry out a more refined targeting strategy for its communication. Nevertheless, far from confirming the initial hypothesis of a variation in discourse according to the audience, this research shows that, as it stands, this hypothesis proves to be false.

This result is in itself a real research lesson. For, contrary to what one might have thought at the outset, Unicef does not play on negative arguments such as arguments of guilt in the countries of the North. Nor does it encourage action with (positive) arguments of hope in the countries of the South; despite cultural and political differences between countries. For example, Unicef is not hesitating to form a partnership in France with the Volvic brand - water being a basic product consumed by children - to communicate positively on the importance of water quality to guarantee children's health.

But this result then raises another question: does this imply a standardization of humanitarian narratives on the part of the major global organizations, with the priority given to the emotional dimension of the messages uniformly constituting the core of the global strategy of these organizations? An idea that would in any case be fully in line with the statement by a humanitarian communications manager that "the determinants of donation action are the same all over the world [...] and donors everywhere are the same: ours [those of Médecins du Monde] have a very conservative, Catholic profile, they are often over 70 years old. From Stockholm to Johannesburg and from Vancouver to Tokyo via Paris it is the same" (Lévêque, Philippe interviewed by Juhem, 2004, p. 221 ff.). It is in any case a new working hypothesis to initiate research that would make it possible to validate - or not - the empirical relevance of relatively undifferentiated emotional communication, despite the political, cultural and standard of living differences in the countries concerned.

Conclusion

At the end of this work, what results emerge from this research?

The first conclusion to be drawn is that the image of the child represented by Unicef's communication campaigns has evolved. If, after the war, various communication campaigns represented five children each belonging to one of the five continents; today, these campaigns

usually show us only one child in relation to a single event and a single region. From now on, Unicef favours communication focused on victims presented outside a broader context of understanding.

The second conclusion is that there is indeed a difference in the communications carried out by the organization between the countries of the North and the South. This difference is quantitative: UNICEF invests more resources and uses a greater number of communication tools (posters, partnerships, ambassadors, etc.) to reach donor audiences than populations in the South, even though its objective is to give "priority [...] to the most disadvantaged children and the poorest countries".

The third conclusion is, however, to show that with regard to the arguments used (hope versus guilt, mobilization versus compassion), Unicef does not modify its arguments according to the target audiences. Although the cultures and political conditions are different between North and South, the positive argument has been the one most used in the organization's communication in both types of countries in the first decades. Thus, while Unicef's communication has developed by opening up to new persuasive methods through the sharing of emotions that can create a sense of guilt or compassion in the target audience, it does not do so in a targeted manner.

From the latter point of view, the contribution of this research to the literature on humanitarian communication is significant. While it had already been measured in the scientific literature that the professionalization of communication by non-governmental organizations had resulted in a greater emphasis on portraying the figures of victims and disseminating messages laden with emotional arguments, this work has shown two things. Firstly that, over the long term, positive messages had been used more by Unicef than negative arguments. Secondly, and most importantly - that the greatest importance attached to the emotional dimension of humanitarian communications concerns all countries and not just donor countries. As if, basically, Unicef considered it more relevant to play on the same emotional springs, regardless of the target audience. A strategy that may surprise and whose appropriateness could be the subject of further inbound research bringing additional results to this work.

Bibliographie

ADAM Jean-Michel, BONHOMME Marc, *L'argumentation publicitaire*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2012, 368 p.

APPEL Violaine et BOULANGER Hélène, « La légitimation de l'organisation : les enjeux du dispositif communicationnel », *Communication* [En ligne], 2011, Vol. 28/2

BATAZZI Claudine et PARIZOT Anne, « L'affiche, une forme signifiante au prisme des médiations symboliques : le cas des affiches WWF », *Essachess* [En ligne], 2015 [consulté le 20.04.2017].

BILGER Mireille, « De l'intérêt des corpus diversifiés pour les descriptions en (Morpho) syntaxe. Réflexions et illustration avec le pronom relatif lequel », *Verbum*, 2008, p. 275-286.

BOLTANSKI Luc, *La souffrance à distance*, Paris, Folio essais, 2007, 528 p.

BONNEVILLE Luc, GROSJEAN Sylvie, LAGACE Martine, *Introduction aux méthodes de recherche en communication*, Montréal, Chenelière éducation, 2007, 238 p.

BRETON Philippe, *L'argumentation dans la communication*, Paris, La Découverte, 2001, 128 p.

CARION Florence et CULTIAUX John, « Le communicateur dans le mouvement de professionnalisation de l'action humanitaire », *Recherches en communication*, n°25, 2006, p. 111-128.

CARION Florence, « La communication associative », *Communication*, Vol. 28/1, 2010, p. 193-20.

COSSETTE Claude et DAIGNAULT Pénélope, *La Publicité sociale : définitions, particularités, usage*, Paris, Télémaque, 2011, 146 p.

DAIGNAULT Pénélope et PAQUETTE Guy, « Quelle efficacité de la menace dans les campagnes de sécurité routière ? Une évaluation tridimensionnelle », *Communiquer*, 2010, p. 1-18.

DAUVIN Pascal, « Professionnalisation de la communication humanitaire et logiques démocratiques », *La communication des ONG humanitaires*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010, 194 p.

DELISETS Christian et GAUTHIER Gilles, « L'usage de l'argumentation en publicité », *Communication* [En ligne], Vol. 32/2 | 2013, consulté le 2.10.2015.

DUPONT Luc, « Esquisse d'une sémiologie de l'image au service des grandes causes en publicité sociale », *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication* [En ligne], 2013[consulté le 19.04.2017].

DRIDI Monia et MAKHLOUF Mouna « Affect, émotion et surprise dans la persuasion publicitaire. Une revue de la littérature », *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, n°3, 2014, p. 68-89.

FERENCZY Anna, « Les ONG humanitaires, leur financement et les médias », Mémoire, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, Centre International de Formation Européenne, Nice, 2005, 128 p.

GAI Lian Xiang, « Publicité, culture, pratiques sociales. Analyse comparative de la publicité en Chine et en France », Thèse de doctorat de Sciences de l'information et de la communication, Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2007, 400 p.

GERVEREAU Laurent, *Voir, comprendre, analyser les images*, Paris, La découverte, 2004, 204 p.

[GHORRA-GOBIN](#) Cynthia, « La démarche comparative en sciences sociales, Esquisse pour un débat sur la méthode et les objectifs à partir de trois projets MOST menés au sein d'un réseau international de chercheurs », Paris, Unesco, 23 p.

JUHEM Philippe, « Parler ici des malheurs lointains. Les nécessités des énoncés humanitaires et leurs effets sur la constitution des angles journalistiques », dans Dauvin Pascal et Siméant Johanna (sous la dir. de), *O.N.G. et humanitaire*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004, p. 213-253.

KRIEG-PLANQUE Alice, *Analyser les discours institutionnels*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2012, 238 p.

MESNARD Philippe, *La victime écran. La représentation humanitaire en question*, Paris, Textuel, 2002, 176 p.

NUGIER Armelle, « Histoire et grands courants de recherche sur les émotions », *Revue électronique de Psychologie Sociale*, n°4, 2009, p. 8-14.

ROUQUETTE Sébastien, *L'hypermédia internet*, Paris, Ina, 2010, 280 p.

UNICEF, *Rapport annuel 2010*, 2011, 56 p.

UNICEF, *Les droits de l'enfant - Le Parlement des enfants*, UNICEF, 2009, 29 p.

WOLTON Dominique, « Les contradictions du nouvel espace public médiatisé », dans Stenger Thomas (sous la dir. de), *Le marketing politique*, CNRS éditions, 2012, p. 141-157.