

# MANIFESTO



## ACTION AGAINST HUNGER GRANT FOR A NEW HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

2<sup>nd</sup> edition

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

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

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

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

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

## CAN WE APPROACH HUMANITARIAN IMAGERY IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

**We at Action Against Hunger want to redefine the codes of humanitarian imagery, so that it can evolve.**

As proposed by historian Bruno Cabanes, we must “use photography not only as an instrument to objectify, document and inform, but as a promise for the future, a form of genesis, showing men, women and children with the power to propel themselves into the future.”<sup>2</sup>

**That is precisely the aim of this grant: to encourage reflection on the future of humanitarian imagery, with the participation of those involved, in order to imagine its future development together.** In doing so, we hope to create a new perspective. A perspective that goes beyond the usual reproductions; that is fairer and more ethical; and that allows for a more balanced exchange with the people represented.

**This grant is intended as an opportunity to explore new narrative, iconographic, videographic and even sound procedures.** It aims to reward projects that cut loose from assimilated conventions, that prioritise creativity and boldness in order to feed our collective reflections around the development of multimedia language. We invite anyone looking to participate to imagine new, inventive, ambitious projects.

**Our hope is that this grant will be a chance to challenge the meaning of the image, thus prompting reflections on its educational role, as well as its support of people’s dignity and emancipation.**

*Action Against Hunger’s Grant for a New Humanitarian Perspective* will not be awarded to an already completed project: submissions must be **projects that are yet to be developed or currently being developed** on a humanitarian theme linked to our fields of expertise, in a country where Action Against Hunger operates.

## THE PROJECTS SUBMITTED WILL BE ASSESSED ACCORDING TO VARIOUS CRITERIA:

- Innovation in how the proposal is written and the final project
- Multimedia approach in image capture and the final project
- Contribution to reflections on the role of images and on renewing our perspective
- Relevance of the project’s subject to the activities carried out by Action Against Hunger
- Alignment with Action Against Hunger values in terms of content that:
  - Is inclusive
  - Respects people’s dignity
  - Bears witness to observed realities
- Quality and credibility of the candidate’s previous work

***We encourage participants to be as innovative and ambitious as possible and to create work that measures up to the challenges we face every day.***

Action  
Against  
Hunger  
**Grant**  
for a New  
Humanitarian  
Perspective



<sup>1</sup> *La photographie, prisme de lecture et enjeu révélateur du système de l’aide internationale*, Virginie Troit, De Boeck Supérieur, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Bruno Cabanes in *Alternatives Humanitaires*, N° 15 – November 2020.