The representation of famine in Southern Madagascar: An exploration into the campaigns of Malagasy diaspora organisations

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"Show a people as one thing, only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become".

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009, 9:20)

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This contribution critically examines digital representations of famine in Southern Madagascar of three Malagasy diaspora organizations: Madagascar Will Rise, Hype Mada, and Fizafato Europe. Using critical discourse analysis, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and drawing on Postcolonial studies, this research reveals that these diaspora organizations reproduce stereotypical representations commonly found in international organizations' campaigns. These representations tend to infantilize, feminize, and dehistoricize famine in Madagascar, projecting a negative perception of the country and reflecting hegemonic ways of seeing influenced by colonial discourses that portray African communities as lacking agency, perpetually suffering, and powerless.

Despite these problematic aspects, only a small proportion of participants recognized that this type of imagery justifies external interventions and perpetuates unequal power dynamics between donors and aid recipients. Moreover, surprisingly, the findings suggest that these images can be advantageous for the government, which may exploit them to advance its policies or profit-making ventures. Based on these insights, the paper concludes by advocating for an urgent debate on the ethical dimensions of famine and poverty representation in the Malagasy context and emphasizes the need to raise critical literacy awareness among the Malagasy public.

Key Words: *Representation of Africa, humanitarian campaign, Diaspora, Madagascar*

Résumé

Cette contribution examine de manière critique les représentations de la famine dans le sud de Madagascar de trois organisations de la diaspora malgache : Madagascar Will Rise, Hype Mada, et Fizafato Europe. En utilisant l'analyse critique de discours, des entretiens de groupe, des interviews semi-structurées et en s'inspirant des études postcoloniales, cette recherche révèle que ces organisations de la diaspora reproduisent des représentations stéréotypées de la pauvreté présentent dans la communication humanitaire, en utilisant des tropes répandus dans les campagnes des organisations internationales, tels que: des enfants au ventre gonflé, des figures de femmes réduites au statut de mères passives et traditionnelles, et le thème de la sécheresse comme cause première de la famine. Ce faisant, les organisations de la diaspora malgache ont tendance à infantiliser, féminiser et déshistoriciser la famine à Madagascar.

Ces représentations sont problématiques dans la mesure où elles fournissent une perception négative du pays auprès de l'audience internationale et font écho à des discours coloniaux à travers lesquels les communautés africaines sont dépeintes comme manquant d'agencéité, caractérisées par une souffrance continue et l'impuissance. Comme l'ont souligné une minorité de participants aux groupes de discussion, ces images incitent les interventions extérieures, jetant les bases de relations de pouvoir inégales entre les donateurs, d'une part, et les bénéficiaires de l'aide, d'autre part. Cependant, cette recherche tend à montrer qu'étonnamment, ces images peuvent être avantageuses pour le gouvernement, qui peut les exploiter pour promouvoir ses politiques ou ses projets de développement d'usines de transformation à fort potentiel de rentabilité.

À partir de ces résultats, la conclusion de ce mémoire est double: premièrement, il affirme qu'un débat sur les dimensions éthiques de la représentation de la famine et de la pauvreté est nécessaire dans le contexte malgache. Deuxièmement, qu'il serait essentiel de sensibiliser le public malgache aux approches critiques afin de susciter un questionnement plus approfondi vis-à-vis des campagnes auxquelles il est exposé.

Mots clés: *Représentation de l'Afrique, campagne humanitaire, Diaspora, Madagascar*

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFP: Agence France-Presse
CDA: Critical discourse analysis
CPI: Corruption Perceptions Index
CUA: Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo (Urban Municipality of Antananarivo)
EDBM: Economic Development Board of Madagascar
FG: Focus group
GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
H: Hypothesis
IMF: International Monetary Fund
INGO: International non-governmental organization
IR: International Relations
KOCOMA: Korean Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar
MOFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
MWR: Madagascar Will Rise
NGO: Non-governmental organization
OFG: Online focus group
ONN: Office National de Nutrition (National Office of Nutrition)
RQ: Research question
SSI: Semi-structured interview
UK: United Kingdom
UN: United Nations
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
USA: United States of America
WFP: World Food Programme
WWF: World Wildlife Fund

Introduction

Problem statement

Madagascar is the world's fifth-largest island located in the Indian Ocean off the African coast. Since gaining independence in 1960 after a period of French colonial rule, Madagascar's political history has been characterized by instability and frequent changes in government. The country has transitioned between different political systems, including one-party socialism and a multi-party structure with intermittent periods of military rule (Presidency of the Republic of Madagascar., n.d.). However, since the election of the current president in 2018, Andry Rajoelina, there has been a period of relative political stability.

The island experiences a tropical climate, with a hot and rainy summer season from November to March, followed by a dry winter season from May to October. However, climate variations are evident across Madagascar. The eastern region enjoys consistent rainfall throughout the year, with average temperatures ranging between 23°C and 27°C. In contrast, the extreme Southern and Southwestern parts face arid and semi-desert conditions, with a minimal annual rainfall of around 300mm. The month of March experiences particularly high temperatures, reaching up to 34°C (Rice, 2020).

The extraordinary biodiversity of Madagascar stems from this diverse climatic landscape, with around 90% of the island's flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth, making it a "biodiversity hotspot". However, this unique ecosystem is threatened by deforestation, development policies, and mineral extraction. Consequently, conservation efforts focused on preserving Madagascar's precious natural heritage have gained prominence (Corson, 2020).

In addition to environmental challenges, Madagascar grapples with significant economic difficulties. Despite its abundance of natural resources and recent growth in mining activities, the country has one of the highest poverty rates globally. Approximately 81% of the population, equivalent to around 22 million people, live below the international poverty line, surviving on less than $1.90 per day (World Bank, 2017). Widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal income distribution hinder the agricultural sector, which plays a crucial role in the economy and employs a significant portion of the population.

Moreover, social conditions in Madagascar are challenging for the majority of its people, exacerbated by the series of political crises the country has faced since gaining independence in 1960, as mentioned above. The island has the world's fourth-highest rate of chronic malnutrition, with 40% of children under the age of five experiencing stunted growth. As a result, since 2021, Madagascar has been designated a "hunger hotspot" by the World Food Programme (WFP hereafter, 2021), indicating acute food insecurity and the risk of famine that requires immediate assistance.

Furthermore, Madagascar encounters further environmental and humanitarian challenges due to its pronounced vulnerability to natural catastrophes including cyclones, floods, locust infestations, and public health emergencies. Particularly, the Southern region, known as the "Deep South" or the "Grand Sud" in French, has been severely affected by historic droughts. These droughts, intensified by climate change and compounded by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, governance challenges, and the lasting impact of French colonial policies, have caused widespread crop failure, internal migration, food insecurity, and even famine, locally referred to as "kere" or "mosare" (Ralaingita et al, 2022). Thus, humanitarian efforts have been directed towards addressing the challenges faced by this region, but they have triggered intense debates within the country due to the communication practices employed.

One notable case involves Gaelle Borgia's publication, extracted from the video she made for Agence France-Presse (AFP), which depicted individuals presented as climate refugees resorting to eating leather scraps (AFP, 2021; Borgia, 2021). The post sparked controversy as some State officials questioned the accuracy of the information (see Appendix 1). Other groups, including international press correspondents in Madagascar, made a counter-statement supporting Borgia, affirming that the images are real and that the State's reaction constitutes a form of "cyber-harassment" (Appendix 2).

One additional case encompasses Dylan Thiry, a reality TV contestant from Luxembourg, who organized a humanitarian trip to Senegal, Morocco, and Madagascar in collaboration with his association *Pour Nos Enfants*. During this trip, Thiry posted several photos on social media where he is seen with children, which divided the public opinion in Madagascar. Critics, including Malagasy advocate Audrey Randriamandrato (2022), who expressed her concerns in an *Instagram* post titled "Why Dylan Thiry's presence in Madagascar bothers me," contend that these visuals objectify and commodify the individuals depicted. These, they assert, reinforce unfavourable generalizations and sustain a distorted depiction of destitution that fails to tackle its underlying origins or advocate for lasting remedies. However, within the comments section of the aforementioned post, some voices emerged in defence of employing such imagery, asserting that it served a broader objective.

These cases contribute to the ongoing debates surrounding the ethical dilemma of whether the ends justify the means in humanitarian communication. Scholarly discussions on this topic have been taking place since the 1970s. Criticism of using poverty-focused visuals to attract attention and financial support has been a recurring theme in the literature, particularly in response to campaigns like Live Aid *(*Clissold, 2010). In an effort to address these concerns, guidelines and codes of conduct have been established, such as the *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages* released by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and European NGOs in 1989 (with amendments in 2006). These guidelines aim to discourage exaggeration, dehumanization, and decontextualization in humanitarian appeals (Concord 2006). While progress has been made in organizations prioritizing the dignity of those affected, challenges persist, and negative images continue to be pervasive, especially with the widespread use of the Internet (Dolinar and Sitar, 2013; Dharamsi et al., 2013; Campbell, 2003; Plewes and Stuart, 2006; Da Silva Gama et al., 2013).

As a result, practitioners have highlighted the importance of integrating more African voices into the creation of humanitarian campaigns, in order to challenge the perpetuation of negative images and encourage the promotion of authentic, alternative narratives rooted in local knowledge (Ethical Storytelling, 2018). Localization initiatives, such as recruiting African staff into established international organizations or setting up African-led structures, can facilitate this process. However, it's important to ask whether this expectation holds true, particularly in relation to African diasporas - communities living outside their home countries while retaining close links with their ancestral lands (Haig-Brown, 2012), whose contributions have been overlooked in the literature on humanitarian communication.

Purpose of the study

This paper seeks to assess the validity of the assumption that localization processes result in distinct and more ethical communication practices. In doing so, it examines famine-related campaigns launched between 2020 and early 2022 by three France-based Malagasy diaspora-led organizations. Despite being recent and chaired by young people under 35, these organizations have proven to be influential. One organization of interest is Madagascar Will Rise (MWR), founded in 2018 by Miako Rasolondraibe. MWR has a strong online presence with nearly 33,000 *Facebook* followers, making it one of the most followed Malagasy-led nonprofit organizations on social media. Another organization is Hype Mada, a cultural association founded in 2018 by young Paris-based diaspora members. While Hype Mada has a smaller audience compared to MWR, it still maintains a firm online presence with approximately 5,000 *Facebook* subscribers. Additionally, Fizafato Europe, established in 2020, comprises Malagasy individuals from Southern Madagascar and has around 5,800 subscribers. This organization aims to strengthen cohesion, integration, and mutual aid among the natives of the province in the diaspora while also addressing development challenges in the Toliara province. These organizations provide valuable case studies to explore the impact of localization processes on communication practices within the humanitarian context, considering their notoriety and reach.

During the design and development of the study, I posed these research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Do Malagasy diaspora-led campaigns on famine in Southern Madagascar replicate stereotypical tropes of the development/humanitarian sector?
a.Are the usual tropes and narratives that form depictions of famine found within the selected corpus?
b.What are the Malagasy and Non-Malagasy audiences' perspectives on these representations?

RQ2: What were these organizations' motivations for creating such campaigns?

RQ3: How do State agents think campaigns shape Madagascar's image?

Then, these hypotheses (H) were identified:

H1: African actors (Malagasy diasporic organizations in this case) do not alter representations of poverty and famine.

H2: African actors (Malagasy diasporic organizations in this case) do alter representations of poverty and famine.

To address these, a mixed-methods approach was adopted to gain a critical understanding of the issues and complexities of the topic. The first step involved conducting critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the dataset obtained from a *Facebook* search using the keywords "Kere Madagascar". The analysis focused on exploring the interdiscursivity and intertextuality of the dataset in relation to social practice, drawing on tropes that are prevalent in the existing literature.

To complement the CDA findings and address potential biases, online focus groups (OFG) were conducted with 15 French-speaking individuals over the age of 18. The participants were recruited through a snowballing approach and included Malagasy nationals residing in Madagascar and the diaspora, as well as non-Malagasy citizens. This allowed for a deeper exploration of the audience's perspectives. However, it is worth noting that the unavailability of many experts resulted in the transformation of the final online focus group into a semi-structured interview (SSI). This unexpected adaptation allowed for a more thorough exploration of the perceptions of professional humanitarian photographers regarding the campaigns.

Additionally, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the production phase, the research initially planned to conduct semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to explore RQ2, which focused on examining the perspectives of leaders from the organizations involved in the campaigns. However, as a result of the unresponsiveness of these organizations, it was not possible to carry out this phase as originally thought. As an alternative, I approached State agents to gain insights into their perspectives on humanitarian and development campaigns in relation to nation branding. Using a snowballing approach once again, I successfully conducted interviews with six high-ranking individuals from the Malagasy Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Urban Municipality of Antananarivo (*Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo*, CUA hereafter) and the Economic Development Board of Madagascar (EDBM), a government institution responsible for promoting economic development and attracting foreign investments in Madagascar.

Personal reasons for undertaking this study

Until the age of 14, I did not critically consider the representation and perception of Madagascar on the international stage. This contemplation only began to emerge upon my relocation to France in 2012. Frequently, upon being asked the ubiquitous question, "Where are you from?", I noticed a recurring tendency for individuals to discuss poverty and inequality in Madagascar as if these issues were exclusive to the country and not prevalent in other contexts as well. Some of my classmates even jestingly inquired (although one cannot always discern jest from sincerity) about the presence of electricity in Madagascar, whether I had journeyed to France in a pirogue (a traditional canoe), and if my compatriots navigated through their daily lives using tree-hung lianas.

It was only after completing my Bachelor's degree in International Relations at the University of Birmingham that I delved into Postcolonial theories, particularly the contributions of Edward Said. This academic exposure allowed me to recognize that the inquiries and comments posed by my peers were reflective of the persistent portrayal of Madagascar (as impoverished, rural, sparsely inhabited, or even predominantly populated by wildlife) by media, cinema, and the development and humanitarian sectors for these specific audiences. This realization prompted me to adopt a critical and discerning perspective when encountering visual or textual representations of the country (and the Global South in a broader context).

Subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for more extensive reading, during which I stumbled upon the *Instagram* account of the Ugandan non-governmental organization No White Saviors. Within this context, I encountered various concepts, among them "poverty porn," through the organization's posts that offered critical responses to numerous campaigns, notably those conducted by the WFP in addressing the famine situation in Southern Madagascar.

From there, my interest in the analysis of humanitarian/development communication developed and I nurtured it during my Master's degree in African Studies at the University of Geneva by conducting research projects on the representation of famine as part of the following courses:
"Law and Legal Practices in Africa"
"Africa, Crossed Perspectives. Inventions and reinventions of the image of a continent (19th - 21st centuries)".
"History, Societies and Environment in Africa"

In particular, I conducted research papers analyzing a WFP campaign and explored the juridical grounds for the perpetuation of poverty porn in the Malagasy context. These different works allowed me to familiarize myself with the current literature which I further consolidated by enrolling in the courses entitled "Development Cooperation and Media" and "NGOs and International Cooperation" during a six-month mobility program at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

Owing to this experience, I have naturally addressed the topic of famine representation in Africa, particularly in Madagascar, in this thesis. Moreover, since none of my prior academic papers has yet taken local organizations as an analytical object, this further substantiates the choice of centring this contribution on the campaigns orchestrated by the Malagasy diaspora in France.

Research outline

Following this introduction there will be five subsequent chapters. Drawing on Postcolonial approaches, Chapter 1 situates this paper within the field of International Relations and outlines the existing literature on representation and development/humanitarian communication practices. Chapter 2 presents the historical background of the Malagasy diasporas and famine in the "Deep South". Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research methods employed in the study, including critical discourse analysis (CDA), online focus groups (OFG), and semi-structured interviews (SSI). This section also gives an account of the selected data set. Chapter 4 unveils the findings, indicating that Malagasy diaspora organizations tend to generate stereotypical depictions akin to those observed in international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). The campaigns exhibit the recurrent motifs identified in the existing literature. While the majority of OFG participants perceived these images as fostering a negative view of Madagascar as a "victim" nation dependent on external aid, only groups predominantly consisting of non-Malagasy individuals expressed reservations about these portrayals. Nonetheless, as per insights from State agents, these images could still serve a beneficial purpose for the government. Drawing on these findings, the final chapter explores solutions to address stereotypical representations and empower Malagasy audiences through Critical approaches. It emphasizes the importance of education, media literacy, and community engagement in challenging prevailing narratives and fostering a more accurate portrayal of Malagasy communities.

Chapter 1
Representation Matters

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework anchored in the field of International Relations (IR), emphasizing the central role of representation from a Postcolonial lens. Delving into Orientalism and Africanism, it uncovers how historical discourses surrounding the Orient and Africa have historically been used to validate systems of domination. It then outlines communication practices by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), revealing enduring problematic dynamics in both their "negative" and "positive" strategies. The chapter concludes by exploring solutions recommended by practitioners, which are then assessed in this study.

1.1 Through Postcolonial Lenses

This research is situated within the field of International Relations (IR), which was first established in 1919 at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (UK) (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). In its early days, IR focused on explaining wars and inter-state rivalries following World War I, with realism dominating the discipline. Notable realist scholars include Morgenthau and Carr, who argued that sovereign States are the primary actors shaping the anarchic world order and act in their own interests (Morgenthau, 1948; Carr, 1939). Realism emphasizes the importance of military power and a balance of power mechanism to prevent dominance and achieve peace (Waltz, 1979).

Liberalism is another early theory in IR that emphasizes the role of ideas, human perfectibility, and democracy in shaping world politics (Doyle, 1986). Liberals view supranational actors, including multinational corporations, transnational actors, and international organizations, as key players in international relations (Keohane & Nye, 1977). They argue that world order emerges through interactions, agreements, international norms, and institutional rules established by and between States (Moravcsik, 1997).

However, these theories have faced criticism for their limited explanatory power in understanding important world events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the decolonization wars. This has led to the development of Critical theories that reject the universalism and State-centric perspectives of realism and liberalism while emphasizing the roles of intra-state actors like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Cox, 1981). One such critical theory is Postcolonialism, which recognizes the historical influence of colonial relations on the development of the international order. It seeks to provide a bottom-up perspective, particularly from marginalized voices and encourages the use of alternative sources of information, such as local memories and the arts (Sylvester, 2014; Said, 1993).

Postcolonial scholarship makes another significant contribution by recognizing the intricate relationship between representation and power dynamics. Influenced by Cultural Studies and Michel Foucault's theories (Verschuur, 2010), Postcolonialism asserts that representation is far from being a neutral process; instead, it is moulded and influenced by powerful entities seeking to dictate how the represented object should be perceived (O'Hagan, 2002). In this manner, representations become potent labels that curtail the agency of the object being represented and limit its ability to express its needs on its own terms, thereby perpetuating control and domination.

Edward Said, a prominent figure in Postcolonial theory, extensively explored these matters in his seminal work on Orientalism. He argued that Europe constructed the Orient, which includes the Middle East and Asia, as a region characterized by notions of backwardness, a blend of femininity and cruelty, and a fascination with "exotic" traditions (O'Hagan, 2002; Said, 1978). These simplifying and stigmatizing projections played a crucial role in establishing differentiation and reinforcing the perception of European (and Western) superiority over the Orient, thus justifying colonial endeavours (Grovogui, 2013; Staszak, 2022). While Said's theory has significantly influenced the field of Postcolonial studies, it has also faced criticism. One concern is that it solely represents the Orient through the eyes of Western men, reifying problematic Western-centric views. This exclusion of other perspectives, particularly the voices of women

in Middle Eastern and Asian countries, perpetuates Western images of passivity and sexual availability (Sylvester, 2014: p.189).

In addition to Said's work, Africanist scholars like Mengara have addressed issues of representation and power concerning Africa. Similarly to Orientalism, they aim to deconstruct colonial narratives about the continent, which often portray Africa through the lens of the "African Heart of Darkness" or the "Afro-pessimist" narrative. These discourses rely on tropes of barbarism, primitiveness, war, famine, ignorance, and poverty to "otherize" and "inferiorize" the entire region, erasing its rich cultural diversity. Such representations also serve to distinguish the "superior European self" and legitimize the colonial agenda over the supposedly "backwards" African people (Mengara, 2001).

Research that employs post-colonial materials typically concentrates on analyzing Western media and the findings consistently reveal the persistence of the negative tropes cited above over time. For instance, a longitudinal study conducted by Schnaeder and Endless (1998 cited in Oguh, 2015) examined articles published by the *New York Times* between 1955 and 1995, and it found that a staggering 73% of these articles presented negative images of African politics and society. These portrayals primarily focused on civil wars, which were framed as outcomes of tribal rivalries rather than being depicted as a political confrontation as it would be portrayed in a developed country (Franks, 2010). More recent studies reach similar conclusions (Mahadeo, 2007; Bunce et al., 2017; Blakley et al., 2019).

The implications drawn from these papers suggest that the continuous presence of Afro-pessimistic discourse jeopardizes African nation branding. Nation branding is defined as a strategic effort made by countries to shape their international image and reputation (Anholt, 2010). It is critical for facilitating access to global markets and promoting cultural and political influence. However, these negative representations portray the region as unstable, impoverished, and reliant on external intervention, leading to significant consequences on Africa's attractiveness. This, in turn, affects financial flows, trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges (Schorr, 2011), hindering Africa's progress and perpetuating unequal power dynamics between the continent and the global community.

From 2010 onward, media coverage of the continent became more positive in tone and more diverse in subject matter (Nothias 2014; Bunce et al. 2017), as illustrated by the image of a child flying a rainbow-coloured kite shaped like Africa that appeared on the cover of *The Economist*. The latter popularized the mantra "Africa Rising" or "Emerging Africa" in reference to the economic growth of certain countries (such as Ghana, Angola, and Ethiopia). Nonetheless, this narrative has raised concern among commentators who suggest that such attempts to shift the representation of the continent reinforce negativity as they "imply that it has been stagnant all that long; it is just waking up from a slumber" (Poncian, 2015: p.74). Furthermore, the changes in question are more associated with structural adjustment policies advised by Western actors rather than African efforts, which upholds the idea that Africa cannot survive without Western expertise. Furthermore, clichés and stereotypes about Africa have not necessarily changed, they are still conveyed, particularly through the humanitarian and development communications of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose contribution is discussed below.

1.2 NGOs communication practices

A commonly accepted definition of "non-government organizations" (NGOs) characterizes them as entities operating independently from the State and the private sector. These organizations are primarily focused on promoting social, political, and economic change. Their contributions are significant, especially in regions with unstable political environments or where human rights are being violated. Although organizations like the Red Cross have existed since the 19th century, the term "NGO" was officially coined in 1945, to describe those organizations that received international funding and gained consultative status in the activities of the UN (Lewis et al., 2021).

Over time, NGOs have transformed their focus and objectives. While their early mission was primarily centred on disaster response in post-war contexts in the North, they later shifted their efforts towards supporting development initiatives in the Global South, aiming to combat poverty. This evolution coincided with the emergence of the neo-liberal project advocated by political leaders in the Global North, leading to

the implementation of austerity measures and structural adjustment programs in the Global South, resulting in reduced State budgets and limited access to essential public services. In response to these challenges, NGOs stepped in, positioning themselves as vital channels for providing aid to the most vulnerable communities (Dogra, 2012).

It is essential to recognize that NGOs are not a monolithic entity; rather, they display a wide range of variations in size, scope, and agendas, operating at various levels from local to international scales (referred to as INGOs hereafter). Each organization follows its unique modus operandi, with some requiring proselytization as a condition for project benefits, others focusing on specific themes or geographical areas, and some engaging in high-profile international advocacy or grassroots work. Additionally, NGOs differ in terms of funding sources, with some being large and government-funded, while others rely on internal revenues. Moreover, certain NGOs may face credibility issues, while others have gained legitimacy through their active contributions to fighting against dictatorship or colonialism. This diversity highlights the dynamic nature of NGOs and their multifaceted roles in addressing societal challenges and driving positive change (Lewis et al, 2021; Pearce & Eade, 2006).

NGOs have encountered criticism and faced challenges in their operations. One significant concern is their reliance on unspecialized volunteers, potentially affecting the quality and sustainability of their interventions (Chang, 2005, cited in Pearce & Eade, 2006). Additionally, issues related to transparency and accountability have been raised, questioning how these organizations manage and allocate their resources (Ismail & Kamat, 2018). Another critique pertains to the alleged promotion of neoliberal policies within NGO organizations (Lewis et al., 2021). Moreover, there are reservations that NGOs, especially those dependent on external funding, might prioritize projects that align with the interests of their donors, rather than addressing the genuine needs and priorities of the communities they aim to assist. This raises questions about the extent to which NGOs genuinely empower local communities and contribute to sustainable development. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data on the performance and effectiveness of NGO interventions complicates the assessment of their impact (Sorce, 2022). Without rigorous evaluation and data on outcomes, it becomes challenging to determine the effectiveness and value of NGO initiatives, resulting in an ambivalent legacy of their interventions.

Despite these challenges, NGOs continue to play a crucial role in addressing social and developmental issues in the Global South, including Madagascar, where they have focused on sectors such as healthcare, education, and environmental conservation, among others. Their contributions have been instrumental in complementing the efforts of the government and other stakeholders in delivering essential services and implementing development programs within the socio-economic context described in Chapter 2 (Cveteck, 2009; Droy, 1998; Andrianiaina, 2009).

Through their work, NGOs frequently engage in the transfer of resources from societies with more abundance to those with fewer resources. Media and communication are crucial in facilitating this process (Pearce & Eade, 2006). By utilizing media tools, NGOs can mobilize resources, reach key audiences, engage stakeholders, and communicate with political actors. In response to the competitive environment and reduced subsidies, NGOs globally are expanding their media strategies, including leveraging social media platforms, instant messaging campaigns, and alternative blogs on the internet. Media exposure also becomes essential for gaining legitimacy among donors and the communities they advocate for (Pearce & Eade, 2006).

Research examining the role of media and communication in NGOs has explored various aspects, including public relations campaigns, internal journalism, and social media communication (Pearce & Eade, 2006). One prominent topic that emerged in the literature is the "imagery debate," shedding light on how these organizations, through their communication practices labelled as either "negative" or "positive," have played a significant role in perpetuating unfavourable stereotypes about Africa during the post-colonial era, thereby reinforcing unequal power dynamics. Nevertheless, it is crucial to approach the simplistic negative/positive dichotomy with caution, as it may overlook the intricate nuances present in images and their accompanying captions (Radi Aid, 2018). Despite this acknowledgement, the typology remains valuable for tracing the evolution of communication practices in NGOs, as discussed further below.

During the 1970s, development and humanitarian communication in relation to the Global South, and Africa specifically, depicted these regions in a negative light (Benthall, 1993; Franks, 2013). The Live Aid fundraising campaign, aimed at supporting communities affected by Biafra (1967-1970) and Ethiopian famines, is a notable example (Clissold, 2010). However, these campaigns often neglected to represent the local efforts to cope with these situations (Calvert and Calvert, 2001).

These campaigns utilized repetitive images of vulnerable Black African children with "flies in the eyes" and "extended" or "bloated bellies" to elicit sadness and urgency for aid. Referred to as 'shock effect' appeals, they adopted a documentary style to portray suffering in its unfiltered reality (Chouliaraki, 2010). This approach has been criticized and termed "development pornography" or "poverty porn" (Van Schagen, 2015; Campbell, 2003). Critics contend that these images are problematic as they intrude on personal boundaries and may incite voyeuristic impulses (Cohen, 2001; Bruckner, 1986). Moreover, by focusing on the children's suffering, these images contribute to their objectification and fetishization. The depiction of children in isolation against desolate landscapes creates a decontextualized and politically neutral portrayal that deprives them of individuality and dehumanizes them (Franks, 2013; Sinervo and Cheney, 2019). Caouette and Price (2018: p.66) succinctly summarized the issue by stating, "In poverty porn, persons suffering and in need are depicted solely as persons in need. Often, a single individual is portrayed. Such persons are shown as destitute, perhaps ill, or near death. Whole groups may be negatively stereotyped as lacking agency and initiative. Furthermore, the context in which their condition arises is not conveyed. What is not shown is not any ingenuity, grit, resourcefulness or determination those persons might have".

Furthermore, this recurring portrayal of the child evokes a sense of fragility, helplessness, and innocent victimhood, turning it into a metaphor for the entire continent (Keim, 2014). Appadurai (1988 cited in Thompson and Weaver, 2014) and De Laat et al. (2016) refer to this process as "metonymic freezing" and "iconographication," respectively. This representation reduces Africans to an amorphous, voiceless, childish mass, suppressing their agency to enact positive change in their own lives while reinforcing the Western audience's sense of potency and adult capacities. This implied child/parent relationship replicates colonial paternalism and infantilization of Africans as dependent on Western interventionism (Holland, 1992 cited in Burman, 1994: p.148; Campbell, 2003).

The figure of the mother is another prevalent trope in humanitarian imagery, drawing historical parallels with iconic photographs like Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" (Figure 1, 1936). This powerful image depicts Florence Owens Thompson and her children during the Great Depression, serving as a poignant symbol of impoverished farmers devastated by the pea crop failure. The portrayal of the mother with her children invokes the Christian iconography of the "Madonna and Child" (c. 1650), a motif deeply embedded in Western pictorial representation throughout history, including within the nonprofit sector (Dogra, 2012; Figure 2).

The portrayal of the mother–child relationship in humanitarian photography evokes compassion, vulnerability, and the universality of motherhood, prompting viewers to respond empathetically and provide support. However, this representation can be problematic as it reduces women to the role of helpless mothers and overlooks their diverse roles and agency during crises, such as famine. Women often take on crucial decision-making and food-producing roles within their households during famines, challenging traditional gender norms. For example, some women in India travelled long distances daily to feed their families, while others worked in exchange for food during the Bihar famine of 1967. In the 1974-5 Bengali famine, women even sold their jewellery to manage household budgets (Mehtabunisa, 1984). By failing to mention this, campaigns relying on this imagery assume that maternal care is essential for family survival, but that mothers alone are not sufficient to sustain a stable family. It disregards diverse family structures and promotes heteronormative and paternalistic values (Vasavada, 2016).

Additionally, these mother–child images also reflect colonial discourses that depict women from the Global South, particularly Africa, as excessively fertile, characterized as having a "tendency to breed like rabbits" (Parmar, 2003 cited in Dogra and Cohen, 2012: p.41). This representation perpetuates harmful stereotypes that further marginalize and vilify women in these regions, reinforcing Malthusian racist theories that

historically attributed certain populations' conditions to their reproductive capacity rather than considering structural or political factors (Moore, 2019).
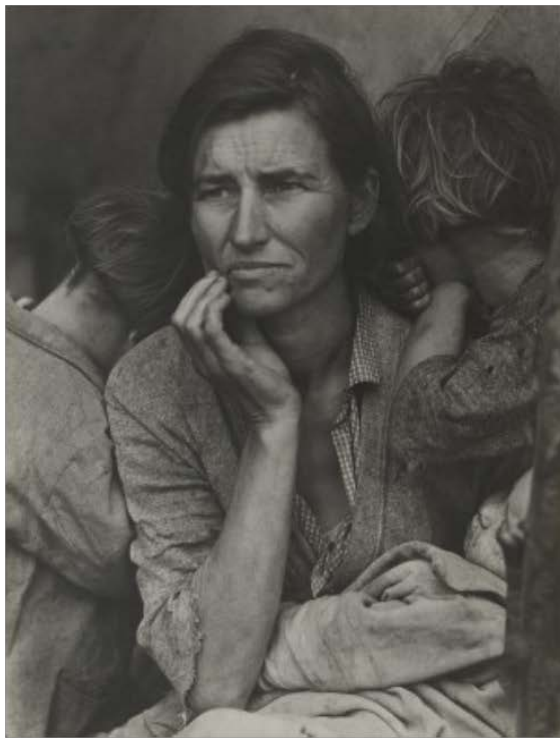
Figure 1 (left): Migrant Mother
LANGE, 1936. *Migrant Mother* [Photograph]. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2017762891/

Figure 2 (right): Sassoferrato's famous painting of Madonna and Child
SASSOFERRATO, 1650. *Madonna and Child* [Painting] Vatican Museums.
https://m.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani-mobile/en/collezioni/musei/la-pinacoteca/sala-xiv---secolo-xvii/sassoferrato--madonna-col-bambino.html

Such narratives sparked significant debate within and beyond NGO circles due to the ethical paradox they presented. Despite their good intentions, these narratives often had unintended negative consequences on the communities they sought to help. Chouliaraki (2010: p.7) captures this dilemma eloquently, explaining that while the West portrayed itself as a benevolent benefactor of the world, its communication practices symbolically annihilated the very world it aimed to assist. These discussions were further fueled by various reports revealing Westerners' pessimistic views of Africa as impoverished, primitive, disaster-prone, and dependent on Western aid (Voluntary Service Overseas, 2001).

In response to these concerns, various codes of conduct and guidelines have been established to improve NGO campaigns and ensure the preservation of human dignity for those being represented. One notable example is the *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages* released in 1989, and later amended in 2006, by the UN General Assembly of European NGOs (Radi-Aid, 2018; Concord, 2006). This code recommends that organizations avoid exaggerations in their appeals, provide truthful information, include background context, and transparently communicate their missions.

However, critics argue that these codes may not fully address the complexities of ethics in practice, particularly in the context of photography and filming. They point out that the codes assume universal applicability to all filming contexts, overlooking the dynamic relationship that develops between the photographer and their subjects on-site, which can influence ethical considerations and decision-making.

As Nissinen (2015: p.316) argues, "Even if the practice is guided by regulation of photographic ethics, it is the human capacity that constructs the interactions of filming".

Another main argument pointed out is that these guidelines are non-binding, meaning that they do not carry legal or enforceable obligations. While NGOs may adopt these guidelines voluntarily, they are not legally required to comply with them. Therefore, critics argue that the lack of enforceability may limit the effectiveness of these guidelines in promoting ethical practices and preventing harmful representations in NGO campaigns (Jones, 2017). Despite the non-binding nature of these guidelines, they have prompted NGOs to consider adopting a 'deliberate positivism' approach, but has it been less harmful?

1.2 b. Deliberate positivism

From the 1990s' onwards, NGOs have started to shift towards more "positive" portrayals of Africa by using images of smiling children who are increasingly photographed individually and referred to by their names. However, such "positive" narratives are still questionable as the core of long-held negative perceptions is left unchallenged (Bond, 2015; Manzo, 2008). First, although represented subjects are increasingly personified, the figure of the child itself remains a contentious issue (Honoroz, 2001 cited in Bordeleau, 2009; Kennedy, 2009). Indeed, the emphasis on children still evokes the above-mentioned colonial paternalism.

Another issue lies in the fact that images of "happy smiling children" suggest that NGOs' projects are successful. This is a way to convince the audience that their participation bears fruit and it encourages them to engage more while failing to acknowledge the limits of interventionist projects, as well as to address the root causes of existing complex issues. These images are often accompanied by text expressing the aid beneficiaries' gratitude which further strengthens unequal power dynamics between the latter and the donors.

Alongside smiling children, appeals have also included images "showing self-reliant and active people of the South" (Dogra, 2007, cited in Thompson and Weaver, 2014: p.163). On one hand, this is positive because it highlights the resourcefulness of commitment of people from "developing" States, particularly in Africa, to improve their situation which counters the notion of passivity. On the other hand, the images depicting "people... taking responsibility for their own lives" (Wateraid, 1992, in Burman, 1994) imply that aid should only be directed towards those who demonstrate self-reliance or show they are "taking responsibility." This conditionality raises questions about the criteria used to define "being responsible."

This said new types of appeals have attempted to shift their rhetoric from "otherness" to "oneness". The Belgian NGO named the National Center for Development Cooperation (NCOS) is one good example. In the 1990s, the posters it produced often held Western governments and institutions responsible for the issues in the Global South. They pointed out how these powers maintain inequality and injustice in the world by imposing a high burden of debt, not spending much on development cooperation and unequally distributing food. As such, by releasing these less "neutral" appeals that try to influence Belgian voters to engage politically, the NCOS indirectly distanced itself from these "bad forms of power" and claimed to be "on the people's side" (Lamers, 2005).

However, it is questionable whether this organization is genuinely separate from the 'oppressive' entities that still fund its activities. Furthermore, despite the emergence of these more "positive" narratives, the persistence of "negative" images remains significant due to financial constraints faced by the development sector, akin to challenges encountered in the media industry. Indeed, cutbacks on public subsidies (Dolinar and Sitar, 2013; Dharamsi et al., 2013; Campbell, 2003; Plewes and Stuart, 2006) have intensified competition for donations, leading NGOs to resort to replicating "old" negative and simplistic representations of Africa to secure funding for their activities (Da Silva Gama et al., 2013). Adopting various tactics to maximize fundraising effectiveness, NGOs emphasize branding to differentiate themselves from others. This includes prominently displaying their logos alongside images of suffering individuals to assert their role as "helpers." Additionally, NGOs rely on media visibility and often engage celebrities as "ambassadors" for their cause. Collaborating with advertising agencies, fundraising campaigns have

increasingly taken on a marketized approach (Bordeleau, 2009), raising concerns about the compatibility of marketization with the altruistic and human values that NGOs aim to uphold.

In conclusion, this section discussed the significance of representation within the realm of International Relations, particularly when examined through the lens of Postcolonial theory, which underscores its entwinement with power dynamics. As discussed, the manner in which countries and regions are portrayed cannot be underestimated as they profoundly shape public perceptions and attitudes, and negative representations can wield tangible consequences, hindering a nation's efforts in branding itself positively. Regrettably, even well-intentioned actors, including development and humanitarian organizations, have inadvertently perpetuated these detrimental representations of the Global South, particularly the African continent. This begs the question: what is the solution?

To foster transformative practices, numerous practitioners contend that greater inclusion of African voices is essential. This perspective advocates for embracing the process of localization (Ethical Storytelling, 2018). As articulated by Wall and Hedlund (2016: p.3): "Localisation' is used across the sector to refer to everything from the practice of increasing numbers of local staff in international organizations, to the outsourcing of aid delivery to local partners, to the development of locally-specific response models. The term often also encompasses work that originates with local groups or is in support of local initiatives".

In other words, localization entails the hiring of local personnel within mainstream organizations or the emergence of African-led organizations. This process is not entirely new, as it has seen significant growth since 1945, with an increasing Africanization of non-governmental organizations operating on the continent. An illustrative example is the case of *Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique,* initiated in 1929 by Abbé Jacques Charles of the Diocese of Nancy-Toul, which by the 1960s had become entirely Africanized with a claimed 5,000 local employees in Madagascar (Cullen et al., 2021).

Then, the promotion of localization gained momentum in the 1980s with the adoption of the Washington Consensus by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This paradigm advocated structural adjustment programs and privatization in response to the perceived mismanagement of African States. Consequently, it called for the disengagement of States from public service provision, encouraging the rise of local NGOs as recipients of funds to facilitate grassroots development and democratization (Cullen et al., 2021).

The process of localization further accelerated from the 1990s onwards, driven by the democratization of new technologies, media, and funding opportunities. Additionally, the majority of operations taking place in risk-prone environments, such as Somalia, encouraged international organizations to involve local actors (Wall and Hedlund, 2016). This shift towards localization presents an opportunity for greater empowerment and representation of local communities, potentially leading to more effective and sustainable development initiatives across the continent.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on localization within a broader decolonial agenda, particularly in response to events like the murder of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. This agenda seeks to transform various institutions, including universities and heritage structures, as exemplified by the student-led Rhodes Must Fall campaign in South Africa and ongoing discussions surrounding the repatriation of artefacts from Western museums back to Africa (Maldonado-Torres, 2016 cited in Von Prondzinski, 2020; Sarr and Savoy, 2018).

The underlying argument driving the promotion of localization is that individuals with an intimate understanding of the local economic, cultural, political, and historical context are better positioned to provide nuanced discourses about the African continent. Considering the prevalence of biased views perpetuated by conventional portrayals of Africa, it is reasonable to expect that locals can offer counter-discourses through their own initiatives, providing a more authentic representation of the continent.

However, it is crucial to critically examine whether this assumption holds true, particularly within the domain of humanitarian communications. While research extensively explores the impact of localization in the media industry (Bunce et al., 2017; Africa No Filter, 2021), its implications in humanitarian

communication practices have not received adequate attention except in a handful of studies, such as one concentrating on analyzing the perspectives of INGOs' local staff in West Africa as a case study. It found that local voices may not always bring about significant changes (Muhanguzi Isharaza, 2022). This result was echoed by other researchers and testimonials (Clark, 2009; Gallagher, 2015; Postema, 2020; No White Saviors, 2021). Alam (2007: p.123) has for instance investigated whether Bangladeshi photographers challenge traditional images. He maintains that in fact, they make: "No difference whatsoever because they are often aspiring to be placed in the same media or to be seen by the same audience as the non-indigenous photographer. Therefore, of course, they are copying the codes and they are copying the formats. [...] The critiques should equally apply to Majority World photographers".

Furthermore, although diasporic media content has been analyzed (Bunce et al., 2017), the impact of diaspora-led humanitarian efforts remains a largely overlooked area, despite the recognition of their contributions in other contexts. For instance, their remittances, which refer to cash inflows from foreign countries resulting from foreign workers remitting or transferring money to their home countries (Dilshad, 2013), play a significant role in supporting local economies and livelihoods. Additionally, diaspora communities also contribute to brain gain, defined as the positive impact of skilled migrants returning to their home countries, bringing back valuable knowledge, expertise, and resources (Gibson and McKenzie, 2011). However, the potential influence of diaspora-led humanitarian campaigns on shaping perceptions and narratives, especially in the African context has not been thoroughly explored.

To bridge this research gap, this paper aims to investigate how localization, as manifested through diaspora-led initiatives, can challenge prevailing narratives, with a specific focus on the campaigns of Malagasy diaspora organizations. The specific focus will be on the campaigns by France-based Malagasy diaspora organizations, namely Madagascar Will Rise, Hype Mada, and Fizafato Europe. Before delving into the methods and datasets employed, the following chapter will provide contextual information about Madagascar, its diaspora in France, and the famine in the Southern region.

Chapter 2
The Malagasy famine and diasporas

This second chapter seeks to offer contextual insights into Madagascar. It begins by providing a general overview of its historical, climatic and socio-political context. This is followed by an inquiry into the historical roots of famine in Southern Madagascar, juxtaposing the impact of colonial policies. Lastly, the chapter navigates the Malagasy diaspora, elucidating its migration patterns, characteristics, and engagement mechanisms.

2.1 Setting the general context

Madagascar, an island located in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa, has a rich historical and cultural background shaped by its strategic position. Settlers from Indonesia, the Middle East, and Africa have contributed to the diverse ethnic makeup of the Malagasy population, which now comprises 18 distinct groups, the largest being the Merina, Betsileo, Betsimisaraka, and Sakalava. Additionally, there are the Antankarana, Bara, Bezanozano, Mahafaly, Masikoro, Mikea, Sihanaka, Tanala, Sakalava, Tsimihety, Vezo, Zafimaniry, Antambahoaka, Antaisaka, and Antemoro. Divided into highlanders (Merina, Betsileo, Tsimihety) and coastal people (Betsimisaraka, Sakalava, Antankarana), each group boasts its unique culture.

Following the prominence of the Merina Kingdom, Madagascar came under French colonial rule until it gained independence in 1960 (CIA, 2021). Then, the country's post-independence political history has been marked by instability and frequent changes in government, transitioning between different political systems ranging from one-party socialism to a multi-party structure with periods of military rule. Despite efforts to establish political stability, unrest and coups have continued to pose challenges. The First Republic, led by President Philibert Tsiranana, gave way to the Second Republic in 1975, with President Didier Ratsiraka instituting a socialist government. Subsequent changes led to the Third Republic in 1992, introducing a multi-party system. However, political turmoil persisted with the 2009 crisis, followed by the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 2014, led by President Andry Rajoelina who won the last elections of November 2018 (Presidency of the Republic of Madagascar, n.d.). Although his election has brought some stability, corruption remains a pressing issue, evident from Madagascar's low *Corruption Perceptions Index* (CPI) score of 26/100 in 2022, coupled with a lack of accountability in governance (Transparency International, n.d.). The country prepares for upcoming elections in November 2023.

The island's tropical climate is characterized by a hot and rainy summer season from November to March, followed by a dry winter season from May to October. However, there are significant variations in both temperature and rainfall throughout Madagascar. The Eastern region receives rainfall consistently throughout the year, with average temperatures ranging between 23°C and 27°C. In contrast, the extreme Southern and Southwestern parts of the country experience arid and semi-desert conditions, with a minimal annual rainfall of approximately 300 mm. March sees particularly high temperatures, reaching up to 34°C (Rice, 2020).

This diverse climatic landscape has contributed to Madagascar's exceptional biodiversity. With approximately 90% of its flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth, the island is considered a "biodiversity hotspot". However, this unique ecosystem is under threat due to various factors, including deforestation, development policies, and mineral extraction. Consequently, Madagascar has become a focal point for conservationists striving to preserve its precious natural heritage (Corson, 2020).

In addition to environmental challenges, Madagascar faces economic hardships. The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in the country's economy and employs a significant portion of the population. However, widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal income distribution pose significant obstacles to development. According to recent data, a staggering 80.7% of the Malagasy population lives below the extreme poverty line (World Bank, 2017), which has earned the country the status of a "hunger hotspot" since 2021. This designation by the World Food Programme signifies areas where acute food insecurity is prevalent, leading to the risk of famine and necessitating urgent assistance (2021).

In particular, the "Deep South" or "Grand Sud" in French, which covers the arid area and comprises the Androy, Anosy, and Atsimo-Andrefana regions (Figure 3), has a historical susceptibility to famine, locally known as "kere" or "mosare" (Ralaingita et al., 2022), dating back to at least the 1920, despite being endowed with watercourses (Figure 4). Historical discussions surrounding this phenomenon in this region have often attributed its causes to natural factors rather than political ones (Rice, 2020). Colonial scientists, for instance, cited severe drought, the lack of water infrastructure to support large-scale agriculture, and the perceived inability of the population to adopt technological advancements as explanations for starvation (Bâthie, 1934, as cited in Rice, 2020). Contemporary discourses, in turn, have predominantly focused on climate change as the primary explanation for the ongoing famine, while neglecting to address the long-term consequences of the wider political and economic structures. Furthermore, these narratives fail to hold the French government accountable for its former colonial policies, which transformed the local socio-ecological landscape, rendering communities more vulnerable to environmental challenges.

In light of this, it is important to examine the historical context of French colonial policies in Madagascar, as they have played a significant role in shaping the current socio-economic and ecological conditions.
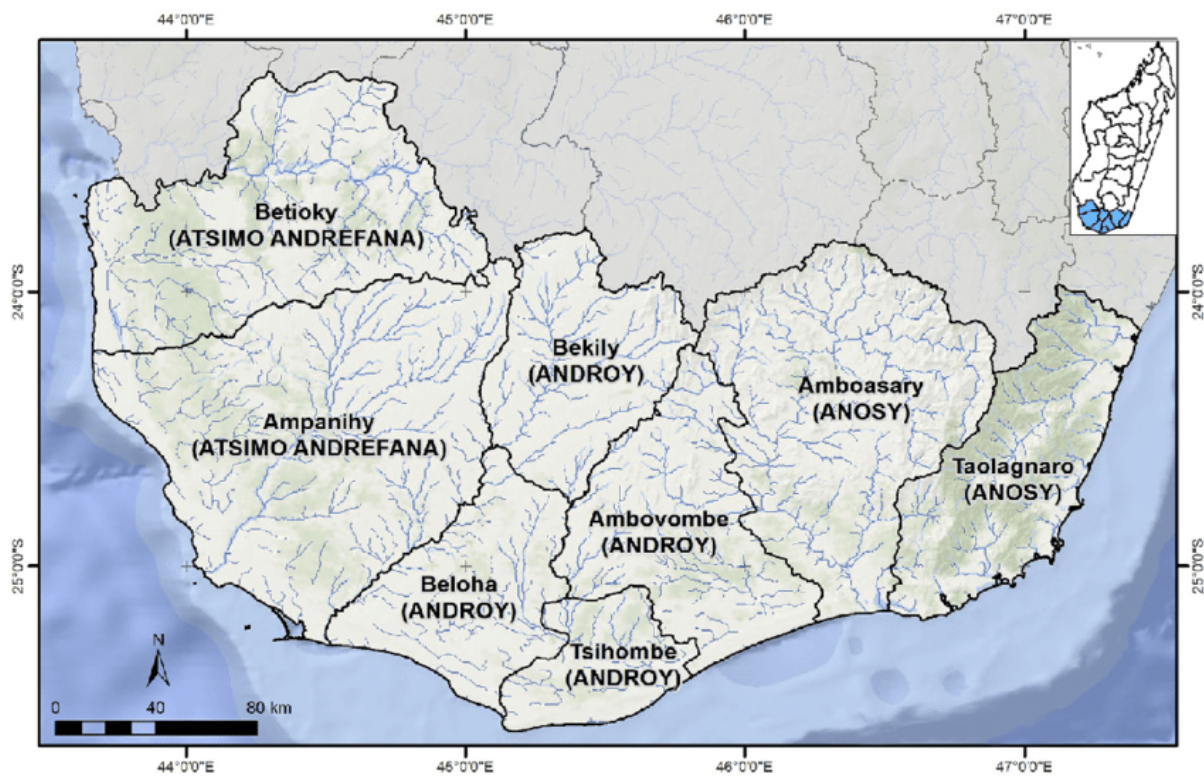
Figure 3: Map of the "Deep South".
SERELE, C. et al., 2020. *Localization map of the study area – Great South of Madagascar.* [Map] "Mapping of groundwater potential zones in the drought-prone areas of South Madagascar using geospatial techniques". *Geoscience Frontiers.* Volume 11(4), pp.1403-1413, DOI:10.1016/j.gsf.2019.11.012

Figure 4: Hydrography in the "Deep South".
FTM (2000) *Hydrographie de la Région Androy* [Map] in Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes et d'Appui à l'Analyse Economique à Madagascar (2013) *Monographie Région Androy.* [Monography] https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mg_mef_monographie-region-androy_2014.pdf

2.2 The famine in the Deep South

In the seventeenth century, French settlers founded a colony near the present-day town of Fort-Dauphin, which is now known as Tôlagnaro in Madagascar. As a defence against local population attacks, the settlers introduced Opuntia cacti to the region. Gradually, these cacti spread to the "Deep South" of Madagascar, and the local communities integrated them into various aspects of their lives due to their advantageous features (Kaufmann, 2001).

The Opuntia cacti had substantial dimensions, ranging from three to six meters in height and extending up to ten meters deep. The large oval cladodes of these plants were covered with spines. The villagers in the region used these cacti as fences and fortification systems (as shown in Figure 5) to protect their cattle from theft. Cattle ownership held significant importance for these populations, as it was a measure of wealth and status. Moreover, the cacti acted as barriers to deter French colonial troops and avoid paying colonial taxes, allowing the local communities to maintain their autonomy and independence (Kaufmann, 2001).

Figure 5: A woman near a hut surrounded by a high hedge of cactus (*raketa*), effectively hiding and protecting the occupants from outsiders.
GRANDIDIER (1901) *Cabin surrounded by cactus (Raiketa); in the vicinity of Beloha* [Photography] In Kaufmann, J.C. (2001). "La Question des Raketa: Colonial Struggles with Prickly Pear Cactus in Southern Madagascar, 1900-1923". *Ethnohistory* 48(1), 87-121. https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/11710

The Opuntia cacti had additional advantages as they possessed the ability to store water within their fleshy bodies, which they absorbed through their intricate root network. Furthermore, these cacti produced fruits that were not only pleasant tasting but also possessed high nutritional value (Middleton, 1999). Consequently, these plants became incorporated into the local diet of both humans and animals, leading to an impact on the division of labour within the community.

Women took on the responsibility of harvesting the fruits and removing the thorns by rolling them under their feet. This process was necessary to make the fruits suitable for consumption by their families, in addition to other food sources such as millet, maize, and vegetables. By consuming approximately six fruits per day, the local population could satisfy their water intake requirements, which meant they did not need to drink additional water. However, the drawback was that excessive fruit consumption could lead to constipation (Middleton, 1999).

In contrast, men were tasked with harvesting the cladodes (the flattened stems of the cacti) and burning them to remove the thorns. These prepared cladodes served as feed for the zebus during the dry season. The local term for this practice is "mandotse raketa" (Kaufmann, 2004). During times of food scarcity, when two consecutive years of drought prevented harvests, the cladodes were also consumed by humans. Although not as palatable as the cactus fruits, cladodes provided abundant carbohydrates and water, which led the Mahafaly people to refer to them as "sakafondrano." However, caution was necessary as improperly removed thorns could cause injury to the stomach or intestines.

Today, these practices prevail in some villages, albeit with alternative species replacing the original cacti (Kaufmann, 2011). The replacement occurred after colonial scientists eradicated 64,370 square kilometres of cacti in the "Deep South", an area equivalent to one-sixth the size of France. This was achieved with the assistance of cochineals, whitish wax-secreting insects that rapidly transformed the ecology of the region (Kaufmann, 2000; Rasolo, 2007). The rationale behind this operation was to protect the French colonial power from local resistance and to promote economic activities for the benefit of France. Additionally, it was claimed that the eradication aimed to preserve the endemic flora that had been devastated by the initially

introduced Opuntia cacti (Kaufmann, 2001). However, the aftermath of this eradication campaign proved catastrophic, as the absence of cacti resulted in the loss of fodder and vital resources. Some estimates suggest that 300,000 zebus and 30,000 humans perished, leading to the first modern famine in Malagasy history (Rice, 2020).

To restore the landscape, new species, such as Opuntia Stricta, known locally as "raketa mena," were introduced as replacements. However, according to the local elders, these species caused the drying up of groundwater and undermined agriculture. Moreover, these new species lack significant nutritional value and can lead to discomfort and even death due to their diarrheal properties when consumed. Although these plants currently serve as the main source of survival for the communities, they are less effective than the initial Opuntia cacti in enabling Malagasy communities to adapt to the arid environment (Rasolo, 2007).

In summary, French colonial policies have historically weakened the resilience of local communities by eradicating and replacing the initial Opuntia cacti introduced in the seventeenth century. In the post-independence period, the lack of a road network, attributed to the lack of commitment from the local elite, further exacerbated the vulnerability of communities in the "Deep South", isolating them from the rest of the country (World Bank, nd).

As a result, the "Deep South" has become a target for numerous humanitarian interventions, leading to multiple awareness and fundraising campaigns initiated by various actors, including journalists (such as Gaëlle Borgia, mentioned previously), international organizations like the WFP (Beasley, 2021), and non-governmental organizations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF, 2021). As stated already, this study focuses on analyzing the campaigns launched by Malagasy diaspora associations in France.

2.3 The Overlooked Malagasy Diaspora

2.3 a. An uninteresting research topic?

As of 2016, the Malagasy diaspora in France constituted a substantial community, estimated between 100,000 and 140,000 individuals, making it one of the largest African diasporic groups in the country, following Algerians and Moroccans (MOFA, 2019). Notably, these diasporic members send regular remittances to their families in Madagascar, with an average monthly amount of 155 euros, resulting in an annual total of approximately 65 million euros (FORIM, 2016).

Despite their significant contributions, scholarly attention towards Malagasy migrants and diasporas has been notably scarce. It wasn't until 2016 that research, catalyzed by political interest in incorporating Malagasy diasporas into discussions about national development, began to surface. Several factors contribute to the dearth of scholarly exploration into this specific diaspora. Firstly, Madagascar's status as a relatively minor "sending country" of migrants, with an emigration rate of approximately 1% of its population (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017), has led to the perception of a limited impact on international development.

Moreover, accessing comprehensive data related to the diaspora has proven challenging. Specific French legislation prohibiting the collection of ethnicity data, in contrast to practices in the United States of America (USA) or the UK, has presented impediments to rigorous diaspora studies. Additionally, issues related to statistical confidentiality (to safeguard anonymity) and the intricate nature of dual nationality, which may not invariably translate into self-identification as a diaspora member, have further complicated research initiatives (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Malagasy diasporas are widely recognized for their successful integration within their host countries, particularly in France, where they do not generate socio-economic challenges akin to those experienced by diasporas from certain countries associated with security concerns. Consequently, their relatively benign status has, at times, led to a perception of being "uninteresting" for academic investigation, as they are not considered a threat to French national security (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the Malagasy diaspora in France constitutes a substantial community that has made significant contributions through remittances and successful integration in France. Yet until recently, it has received relatively limited scholarly attention due to various obstacles such as data limitation as a result of French legislation, and the perception of their benign status. Nevertheless, with a growing interest from governmental entities, recent research initiatives have commenced to shed light on the intricate dynamics and potential of the Malagasy diaspora. The forthcoming section will outline the findings stemming from these scholarly endeavours.

2.3 b. What we know so far on the Malagasy diaspora

Although academic interest in Malagasy migrants and diasporas is constrained, a few qualitative anthropological and sociological studies have nonetheless focused on them. A striking characteristic of this existing literature is that it is France-centric. Indeed, the existing analysis excludes other main States that also host large Malagasy communities, namely the USA, Switzerland and Lebanon. This might be explained by the fact that France is the first country of destination for Malagasy emigrants. Furthermore, the historical ties between Madagascar and its former colonizer might have facilitated access to archives for the data-collection process. However, the politics based on such research could fail to consider the needs of Malagasy diasporas based outside France. Hence, it could create a divide and erode their trust in the government.

Furthermore, most existing papers raise another interesting point: to Malagasy migrants, the term "diaspora" has a negative connotation. To the groups interviewed, this concept is instrumentalized by institutions to satisfy hidden political agendas. As such, diasporas are usually referred to as "community" (FORIM, 2016). However, this term evokes the notion of "communitarianism" that fails to accentuate "local integration" and the sustained emigrant-homeland attachment. Hence, this notion is not helpful, thereby this paper still prefers the concept of "diaspora".

The existing body of literature also explores the history of Malagasy migration to France which is not a new phenomenon. Malagasy students from families that held close links with the colonial authorities were already emigrating in the 1880s to study medicine and theology. Then, between 1914 and 1918, many Malagasy men were sent to Europe to become "poilus," referring to French soldiers during World War I. However, the first main "wave" can be traced back to the Second World War as approximately 14,000 Malagasy were sent to fronts. A majority of them gained French nationality although they were anti-colonialists (FORIM, 2016).

From 1975 to 1990, many students from bourgeois families emigrated as a result of the perceived decline in the quality of education due to the failure of *malgachisation*, which was caused by a lack of trained educators. It was a policy implemented by the Second Republic of Madagascar to break with the colonial heritage through the replacement of the French language with Malagasy in public education (Claverie, 2011). Moreover, the intensifying impoverishment of the population and the local lack of job opportunities also motivated these students to permanently leave the homeland (FORIM, 2016).

Finally, since the 1990s, it has been noted that Malagasy migrants have become more heterogeneous. Indeed, while student migrations have decreased, a process of feminization has been observed (Cole, 2014). In addition, more emigrations have been motivated by family reunification. Thus, Malagasy emigration has become less elitist but overall, Malagasy migrants are still highly qualified compared to other diaspora groups (Randrianarisoa, 2022). In addition, existing studies uncover other specificities of Malagasy diasporas: they are more integrated than other groups and they manage to secure managerial jobs, although some still face unemployment (Randrianarisoa, 2022).

In addition to documenting the history of Malagasy emigration, existing papers have been dedicated to understanding Malagasy diaspora-led associations and organizations (Razafindrakoto et al, 2017). These studies have uncovered that Malagasy diaspora groups, like other diaspora communities, have established two types of structures: host-state-oriented and home-state-directed ones. However, there is a noticeable trend for these groups to be less engaged in the home-focused type due to a lack of trust in Malagasy authorities. As a result, Malagasy migrants in France tend to actively participate in associations that foster cultural identity and a sense of belonging within the host community, rather than focusing on development matters back in Madagascar.

Despite this differentiation, both types of organizations share common characteristics. Firstly, even though these structures are composed of groups that may have Malagasy nationality, they are not recognized as "local" entities under Malagasy law due to their headquarters being located outside of Madagascar (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017). As a result, it is difficult to determine the precise global number of diaspora-led associations, with rough estimates indicating around 244 as of 2019 (MOFA, 2019). Moreover, assessing the actual impact of these diaspora-led initiatives becomes challenging as they are legally indistinguishable from foreign entities.

Secondly, diaspora organizations often receive limited subsidies from the public sector, likely due to a lack of awareness regarding available funds and insufficient preparation time. Consequently, funding for these organizations primarily relies on their members or fundraising campaigns targeting non-Malagasy audiences (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017). Another commonality lies in that, in times of emergencies such as famine outbreaks, or during the pandemic, both types of organizations tend to initiate fundraising campaigns to provide immediate relief to affected groups, aligning with practices observed in other diaspora communities (Razafindrakoto et al., 2017).

Alongside the aforementioned studies that have made significant contributions to our understanding of various aspects of the Malagasy diaspora, such as its profile, historical migration patterns, and levels of engagement, recent work by Andrianimanana and Roca-Cuberes (2021) as well as Rakotoary (2018) has brought attention to the noteworthy role of *Facebook* as a platform fostering peer-to-peer and spontaneous solidarity among Malagasy migrants in France. Despite these valuable insights, a notable gap persists in our understanding of the broader impacts arising from the diaspora's engagement and the potential effects of their campaigns on narratives about Madagascar.

To address this limitation, the present paper delves into the campaigns related to the famine in Southern Madagascar, as disseminated by three France-based Malagasy diaspora organizations with a significant presence on *Facebook*. The next chapter will introduce these selected organizations, along with the methodology and materials utilized in this study.

Chapter 3
Methodology

Chapter 1 outlined that NGOs hold a central role in defining pejorative public perceptions of the Global South and Africa particularly. As a solution, some argue that it could be relevant to support the localization process, which should not only transform the structure of these institutions but also the campaigns they produce.

To add to the debate, this paper seeks to examine whether such processes of localization, resulting in the emergence of African-led structures, indeed lead to different (less stereotypical) communication practices. In doing so, three famine-related campaigns released by France-based Malagasy diaspora-led organizations were analyzed.

Throughout the research design and development process, two hypotheses emerged, questioning the influence of Malagasy diasporic organizations on prevailing representations. The first hypothesis posits that African actors do not alter representations of poverty and famine, and the second one asserts the opposite, that African actors do alter representations of poverty and famine. To investigate these hypotheses, a set of overarching research questions was formulated:

RQ1: Do Malagasy diaspora-led campaigns on famine in Southern Madagascar replicate stereotypical development and humanitarian tropes? What specific narratives shape these representations, and how do audiences perceive them?

RQ2: What motivations underlie the creation of these campaigns by Malagasy diasporic organizations?

RQ3: How do State agents perceive the impact of campaigns on Madagascar's global image?

In this chapter, I describe the methods of analysis that I used to both gather and interpret the data. I employed a mixed-methods approach not only to explore the different levels of meanings embedded in the visual images but also to fully explain and contextualize my findings. It involved: critical discourse analysis (CDA), online focus group (OFG) and semi-structured online interview (SSI).

3.1 Critical discourse analysis

The first chapter of this paper discussed the concept of representation from a Postcolonial perspective which postulates that the latter is entwined with power relations and might justify the subjugation of the represented object, as it was the case with the discourse on the Orient and Africa. Drawing on similar standpoints, critical discourse analysis (CDA) appears as an appropriate methodology in that it also acknowledges a connection between power and discourse, defined as "a group of statements, notions and ideas that provide the language for speaking about a particular subject", which not only includes texts but also visual materials (Lamers, 2005: p.43). More precisely, this methodology is relevant as it seeks to disarticulate narratives and shed light on hidden agendas that maintain subaltern positions in society, as such, it has an emancipatory power.

However, CDA presents disadvantages in that while it seeks to deconstruct stereotypes, it might also run the risk of replicating them and it has the tendency to politicize everything. A further limitation of CDA relates to its inherent subjectivity, stemming from its qualitative nature and the interpretive process involved in the analysis. Researchers engaged in CDA may inadvertently introduce biases during the analytical process. To address this potential bias and uphold objectivity, researchers must remain conscious of their subjectivity and make deliberate efforts to approach the analysis in an impartial manner. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, researchers can enhance the rigour and credibility of CDA studies (Bryman, 2012).

Despite these limitations, for the purposes of this study, I have downloaded fourteen materials from several campaigns addressing the famine in the South of Madagascar dating from 2020 to early 2022. The dataset was specifically chosen after typing "Kere Madagascar" into the *Facebook* search bar. Following this keyword search, only images that had been shared by diasporic associations with a large audience (at least 5000 followers) on this social network were chosen. These visuals were accompanied by complementary elements such as hashtags (including #WATERagainstDRYmadagascar, #RANOforKERE, #mifamonjysamymalagasy, #ENGAGEYOURMOVES, #climatechange, #TOOLN) and links to crowdfunding platforms like *HelloAsso.com*, *Leetchi.com* or *Okpal.com*. Consequently, it can be inferred that these campaigns were strategically designed with the dual objectives of enhancing awareness and mobilizing financial support. The following section serves as the presentation of the corpus. Due to copyright issues, not all selected images associated with these campaigns are included in this version; the full set can be viewed in the print version at the University of Geneva.

Six images were selected from 17 posts related to the famine and published by Madagascar Will Rise (MWR), depicting scenes of families with goats and posters evoking images of water, as well as a solitary child. Established in 2018 by Miako Rasolondraibe, MWR maintains a robust online presence, boasting approximately 33,000 *Facebook* followers. This notable following cements its position as one of the most widely followed Malagasy-led nonprofit organizations on social media platforms. The objective of this organization is to "bring together entities aspiring to the development of Madagascar, through the synergy of different poles of activity, under the aegis of "Love and unity" (MWR *LinkedIn* page, nd). Although its founder is now based in Antananarivo, in 2019, it was elected "best young diaspora association of the year" by Zama Paris (Rabemanantsoa, 2019), an association seeking to "highlight the initiatives and successes of the Malagasy diaspora" (Zama Paris, nd). As such, in the context of this study, MWR is considered an emblematic diasporic organization. Initially, its activities revolved around providing meals to homeless groups in the Malagasy capital city. Since then, it has expanded its missions and now offers humanitarian aid during crises related to natural disasters, such as following Cyclone Batsirai in early 2022. This association has also acted, with the #RanoForKere campaign, to bring support to populations facing famine in Southern Madagascar. The funding for these activities is derived from a dual source - a blend of crowdfunding initiatives and contributions from its members.

Then, the dataset includes three images, one depicting young men in an arid environment (with two of them being on a zebu-driven cart), another showing an oval shape evoking a planisphere with Madagascar at the centre, and a last one depicting a cloth-like item floating on a pattern suggestive of water. These visuals are sourced from Hype Mada, an association established in 2018 by young diaspora members based in Paris, functioning as a platform for promoting Malagasy artists and culture. With a firm online presence of over 5,000 followers, it released these images between October and December 2021 as part of the "Mada for Climate" event series organized both in Paris and in Madagascar, in a joint effort with Fizafato Europe (further details to follow).

Chosen from a pool of 63 posts related to the same event, these images garnered attention by prominently appearing at the forefront of search results for "Kere Madagascar" on *Facebook* and as they stood apart from other publications due to their distinct primary purpose: fundraising for the Voleo project, rather than solely focusing on depicting the event and the involvement of brands, celebrities, and guest participants. The Voleo project provides assistance and fosters agricultural sector growth in the region. It directly aids a minimum of 250 local farmers through training and specialized seeds suited for the local soil. Moreover, it indirectly supports those affected by regional challenges, including environmentally aware future adults, highlighting a commitment to responsible education beyond the event's boundaries. The project is funded through a dual approach: 60% crowdfunding participation and significant support from *Génération Climat*, reflecting a joint commitment to sustainable growth. (Karine, 2021).

Moreover, five images (Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), generally representing children, as well as an elderly person in front of a wooden house and a wall of cacti, were carefully selected from over 213 photos released by Fizafato Europe as part of their famine awareness and fundraising campaigns. Established in 2020 by Malagasy individuals from Southern Madagascar, this organization is currently led by Toky Razanadrakoto, an international trade student, to whom I extend my gratitude for granting me permission to use their images. Its funding approach includes digital and face-to-face crowdfunding, B2B interactions, and grants

from sources like *Génération Climat*. Fizafato Europe's mission encompasses promoting unity among diaspora members and addressing challenges in the Toliara province's economic, cultural, humanitarian, and social spheres (Arivoampielezana, nd).

The chosen images from their *Facebook* posts include diverse materials such as prompt posters, celebrity features, project operationalization, and representations of the donation process in the "Deep South" region. The selection process aimed for a comprehensive view of Fizafato Europe's posts while prioritizing initial "Kere Madagascar" search results.

Figure 6 (left): Images of an elderly woman in front of a wooden house and cacti wall as well as a blurred skinny child holding a cactus.
FIZAFATO EUROPE, 2020a. "Les victimes du Kere comptent près d'un demi-million de victimes d'après les derniers chiffres du BNGRC dans l'extrême Sud de Madagascar". [*Facebook*]. https://web.facebook.com/DiasporaToliara/photos/a.119601232904098/206497150881172/

Figure 7 (middle): Same image of a boy as above, with the logo of partners and texts.
FIZAFATO EUROPE, 2020d. "Le Réseau aussi décide de nous soutenir en mettant notre urne solidaire dans son restaurant, une collecte en faveur des victimes du Kere d'Amboasary Atsimo". [*Facebook*]. https://web.facebook.com/DiasporaToliara/photos/a.119601232904098/203494364514784/

Figure 8 (right): Faceless child with a big stomach, holding a bag with Fizafato Europe's logo.
FIZAFATO EUROPE, 2020b. Untitled. [*Facebook*].
https://web.facebook.com/DiasporaToliara/photos/pb.100063502663787.-
2207520000./202275464636674/?type=3

Figure 9 (left): Report on donations received in euros and ariary. On the left, a woman and a child are represented sitting among a crowd.
FIZAFATO EUROPE, 2020c. "La 5 ème journée de l'initiative solidaire en faveur des victimes du Kere d'Amboasary Atsimo, voici la situation actuelle de la cagnotte". [*Facebook*]. https://web.facebook.com/DiasporaToliara/photos/a.119601232904098/197645455099675/ p.38

Figure 10 (right): Extracted from a video of an elderly woman eating cactus.
FIZAFATO EUROPE, 2020e. "Tsihombe Androy" [*Facebook*].
https://web.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=366853874391926

The analysis of the sample involved systematic coding based on recurring themes in humanitarian advertisements addressing famine and poverty orchestrated by INGOs and international organizations to raise awareness and funds. These themes encompass impactful visual strategies, such as depictions of emaciated children, women, women and children together, close-ups (waist upwards or closer), individuals smiling and standing, and arid environments (Burman, 1994; Lamers, 2005; Dogra, 2012; Pereira et al., 2013; Currey and Graeme, 1984). These themes function as potent communication tools designed to evoke specific emotional responses and resonate with the audience, thereby influencing perceptions and reactions towards famine crises (Chouliaraki, 2012).

3.2 Online focus group

In the second phase of the research, online focus groups (OFG), defined as interviews conducted in a group context using virtual tools, were conducted to triangulate the results obtained from the CDA. As Bryman (2012: p.717) puts it, triangulation entails "the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked". Thus, put differently, through this method, the objective was to understand how the corpus was perceived by the audience and whether they corroborated the conclusions of the CDA.

While focus groups (FG) can serve as a stand-alone method because it can provide researchers with rich and spontaneous results derived from the interactions between different participants, for this very reason, its use is also relevant in a triangulation process. Particularly in the context of the present research topic, since FG "can contribute significantly to the study of social representations, since the method allows to answer both questions such as 'what' is a group thinking about? And 'how' and 'why' (i.e., the processes involved) does a group think that way?" (Barbour, 2007 cited in Caillaud & Flick, 2017: p.3).

However, one of the main challenges with this research method is that it often relies on non-probability sampling practices, which was also the case in this study. Initially, the aim was to recruit francophone individuals over 18 years old, both Malagasy nationals residing in Madagascar and the diaspora, as well as non-Malagasy citizens. Despite posting a call for participants on social media platforms like *Facebook* and

Instagram to reach the potential audience of organizations whose campaigns were being studied, only one person responded. Others may have ignored the announcement due to disinterest, lack of time, or feeling intimidated by the topic.

Consequently, the snowball technique was utilized to approach participants. Initially, eight individuals from my immediate social circle were directly contacted through *Instagram* and *Whatsapp* messaging to take part in the focus group sessions. However, there was a risk of potential bias since they knew me and my stance on the subject, which might have influenced their responses to align with my expectations. Nonetheless, these participants were asked to recommend others who were also willing to participate, leading to five more individuals joining the focus groups. In total, in an attempt to mirror the potential general audience of the campaigns, the focus groups comprised three Malagasy participants (one woman and two men) in Antananarivo, six diaspora women (residing in France or Germany), and four non-Malagasy individuals: two men (one Franco-Vietnamese, one Italian of Congolese origin), and two French women (see Appendix 3 for full details). Despite efforts to ensure diversity, the dataset's reach is confined to participants who were available and willing, which could impact the wider applicability of the outcomes.

Upon discussion with my research supervisor, it was advised to also include NGO staff in the study in order to obtain expert opinions on the issue. Convenience sampling, or a strategy based on a "sample that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility" (Bryman, 2012: p.201), was adopted to recruit the latter. Only Malagasy communication experts and photographers, who were credited on the websites of international organizations and NGOs such as MSF, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and WFP, and could be reached via *LinkedIn*, were invited to participate. Out of the eight invitations sent, three experts responded positively. However, during the scheduled focus group session, only one expert was able to attend. One did not provide any explanation for his absence and the other was involved in an emergency mission to assist people affected by Cyclone Cheneso in the provinces. As a result, the last focus group unexpectedly turned into a semi-structured interview, which will be further elaborated upon in the following section.

Although very useful, these non-probability sampling techniques are not without limitations. On the one hand, the problem with convenience sampling is that it is difficult to determine which population this sample is representative of, making the results ungeneralizable. On the other hand, snowballing can be considered "self-selection" and it implies "that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others" (Bryman, 2012: p.187). This holds especially true for Malagasy participants residing in Madagascar where internet penetration is low. According to some estimates, it only reaches 7 to 14% of the population (Chapoy, 2021), generally urban groups that are also the most educated. Thus, they were the most likely to participate in the study, yet their views might not necessarily reflect those of the rest of the Malagasy population.

An additional disadvantage of focus groups, whether online or not, relates to power hierarchies as one or two participants can dominate the discussion, making it intimidating for other persons (Hancock, 2017). This can be exacerbated by the fact that confidentiality is not necessarily protected when using this method, it might lead to embarrassment and adverse consequences. Furthermore, talking about sensitive topics can also distress participants (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Careful attention to these details was necessary in order to encourage everyone to give their input. Moreover, although this method allows asking follow-up questions to invite the participants to delve deeper into their answers, four additional problems emerge. First, the number of questions covered is limited as typically, about only ten major questions can be asked within an hour (Robson and McCartan, 2016) – consequently, some had to be skipped. Secondly, in group discussions, individuals may tend to express culturally expected views more than in one-on-one interviews (Bryman, 2012).

Furthermore, participants might be easily distracted because they usually engage in online focus groups in a convenient location such as their homes. This occurred in multiple focus groups for this study (as some respondents were looking for chargers, while some were disturbed by their toddlers) and hence, questions often had to be repeated, which was time-consuming. Fourthly, another notable drawback of this method involves technical issues. Even if all participants had access to a relatively fast internet connection (Greenspan et al., 2021), there were some cuts on several occasions, also causing repetitions. However,

there were mostly difficulties with webcams that frequently prevented the capture of nonverbal communication.

Nonetheless, this method offers several other advantages. The first lies in the ability to access persons who would otherwise be difficult to recruit because of geographic constraints. It also encourages dialogue between participants who might not have the opportunity to talk to each other (Greenspan et al., 2021). A third advantage of OFG that is often mentioned is the ability to reduce time and cost for researchers (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, unlike other methods such as online surveys, online focus groups also enable the researcher to observe non-verbal body language (including body posture and the participants' gaze) which might provide richer data, although as mentioned previously it was not always possible due to technical issues (Greenspan et al., 2021).

Zoom was used to conduct the OFG. Under the free version of this software, researchers can organize online meetings for up to 40 minutes with less than 100 people, share screens and record sessions that are uploaded to *Zoom*'s cloud storage. It is recognized by many as convenient, simple and user-friendly (Archibald et al., 2019). However, since it is Internet-based, among the disadvantages of *Zoom*, the literature often mentions that this platform can present security problems, as hackers can randomly connect to meeting rooms and cause disruptions. This phenomenon is known as "zoombombing" and to avoid it, it is recommended to password-protect discussions and use the waiting room feature as well as a "locked meeting" (Falter et al., 2022).

The OFG consisted of fifteen questions divided into four parts (Appendix 4). Demographic information, including age, gender, cultural background, nationality, place of residence, level of education and occupation, was collected in part 1. In part 2, participants were asked general questions about their knowledge of current events in Madagascar and the famine epidemic in particular. Part 3, asked questions about the selected charity images. More precisely, this section asked what participants see, their first impressions, their opinions on whether the documents reflected the realities of famine-affected communities in Southern Madagascar, their thoughts on the message these images convey on Africa and whether these campaigns encourage donation. The final part concluded by asking whether participants had questions.

In preparation for my online focus group (OFG) discussions, ethical considerations were taken into account. Each participant was asked for permission to record the sessions, and they were given the option to remain anonymous if they wished (see Appendix 5). The recordings were saved on *Google Drive* and removed from *Zoom*'s cloud storage system.

During the OFG sessions, I, along with an assistant who is a Bachelor student in International Relations at the Global Studies Institute (following the guidance of Professor Didier Péclard during the course on "Methodology and Field Research Preparation"), took notes on my laptop and in a notebook. These notes were compiled and saved on *Google Drive*.

Afterwards, the data collected were transcribed and translated from French to English. The transcriptions were done immediately after the discussions to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the interactions (Maxwell, 2012: p.104, cited in Bhati and Eikenberry, 2016). To protect participant anonymity, I replaced their names with initials in the transcripts.

Next, I proceeded with thematic analysis to thoroughly examine the transcripts, identifying recurring keywords, evaluating non-verbal communication cues when applicable, and gauging the intensity of vocal inflexion. This examination led to the identification of several thematic areas within the data, including:
a. Descriptions of prevalent stereotypical tropes in humanitarian campaigns.
b. Opinions regarding the implications of such tropes for Madagascar.
c. Discussions about the emotional responses elicited by the campaigns.
d. Explanations for the perceived distinctiveness of HypeMada's campaign.
e. Examples of alternative humanitarian campaigns.

3.3 Semi-structured interview

Initially, the last part of this study aimed to include interviews with the founders or current leaders of the diaspora-led associations whose campaigns were analyzed to address RQ2. Despite attempts made through email and *Facebook*, no response was received from them. However, these interviews would have provided insights into the factors influencing their decision during the production process of the campaigns. It would have also captured the organizations' views on the actual or expected effects of these materials on people's perceptions of Madagascar.

Following the unsuccessful attempts to secure interviews with the leaders of these diasporic associations, I consulted my supervisor to discuss the situation. Acting upon their advice, I decided to explore alternative perspectives by considering other groups. One option was to interview the beneficiaries in the Androy region. Initially, it seemed feasible since I was interning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Madagascar when drafting this thesis, and I had plans to attend the International Days of the Regions (*Journées Internationales des Régions* or JIR) in that region. The latter is an event where regional representatives from various countries gather to promote cooperation, exchange knowledge, and showcase regional development initiatives. Unfortunately, the visit to Androy was cancelled due to undisclosed reasons, but organizing an individual trip to this insecure area posed logistical and financial challenges.

In light of these circumstances, I made the decision to redirect my focus. Instead of pursuing interviews with the diaspora-led associations, through a snowballing approach, I conducted interviews with six high-ranking individuals (see Appendix 6), four of whom hold senior positions at the Malagasy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one at the *Commune Urbaine d'Antananarivo* (Urban Municipality of Antananarivo or CUA hereafter) and one at the Economic Development Board of Madagascar (EDBM), a government institution responsible for promoting economic development and attracting foreign investments in Madagascar. These interviews aimed to provide valuable insights into how State agents perceive the impact of these campaigns on the image branding of Madagascar to address RQ3. Importantly, this particular perspective had not been addressed in the existing literature, thus offering a fresh viewpoint and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Another unanticipated twist in the research process occurred when the lack of available experts led to the transformation of an online focus group into a semi-structured interview (SSI), as mentioned earlier. Despite this deviation from the original plan, the SSI yielded intriguing results, which are subsequently presented in Chapter 4 alongside the findings from the critical discourse analysis (CDA) and online focus group (OFG). Considering these multiple changes involving the SSI, it is worthwhile to acknowledge and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this method below.

SSIs rely on "an interview guide that serves as a checklist of topics to cover and a default wording and order for questions" (Robson & McCartan, 2016: p.285). Providing space for researchers to ask "additional unplanned questions…to follow up on what the interviewee is saying" (Robson & McCartan, 2016: p.285), this flexibility can yield rich and insightful responses. Hosting one of them on *Zoom* has not removed these qualities. This format even revealed the interviewee's body language. Thus, it was possible to discern elements such as discomfort, perplexity or confusion, as in face-to-face interviews. In addition, the responses obtained in this type of interview tend to be comparable in terms of quantity, nature and depth of responses. Moreover, it is more economical in terms of time and money, and the data can be collected very quickly (Bryman, 2012).

However, as with any qualitative research, there is potential for bias in its use. Therefore, care had to be taken in the wording of the questions so as not to influence the replies and to ensure that jargon was not used. Although this interview followed the various OFG that served as training, it was still difficult to probe the answers, as well as ask follow-up questions without straying from the topic and research questions. Additionally, although the online SSI is supposed to require less time, the analysis took a while due to my lack of experience in conducting this type of research.

Regarding the SSI conducted with the photographer (that was initially planned as an OFG), the session consisted of 13 questions divided into six parts, based on the guide prepared for the OFG with the experts

(see Appendix 7). In the first part, the photographer was asked general questions about their career path, current position, and notable projects. The second part addressed the same set of questions specifically regarding all the images that were selected for the focus groups. Finally, the third part provided an opportunity for the photographer to ask any questions they might have had.

As for the semi-structured interviews (SSI) conducted with State officials, a set of eight questions was utilized (see Appendix 8). The interviews began by gathering background information, including the participants' educational background, professional experiences, and areas of expertise. Subsequently, the participants were asked general questions regarding the specific image of the country that the government aims to promote internationally. This segment also explored the strategies and initiatives implemented to achieve these objectives, as well as an evaluation of their effectiveness and any perceived challenges encountered along the way. Then, the focus shifted towards the participants' perspectives on how humanitarian campaigns contribute to shaping the perception or reputation of Madagascar. The aim was to gauge whether these campaigns aligned with or contradicted the desired portrayal the government sought to convey. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to offer recommendations or additional remarks that they deemed pertinent to the subject matter at hand.

Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews (SSIs), ethical considerations were also thoroughly addressed. Each participant was requested to provide informed consent, as documented in Appendix 7. However, unlike the online focus group (OFG) sessions, I did not seek permission from State agents for audio recording due to two primary reasons. Firstly, some interviews occurred spontaneously, leading to impromptu conversations where I only had a pen and notebook with me. Secondly, recording was not pursued in certain instances due to potential discomfort, as some interviews took place in shared offices, public spaces or in the presence of individuals not involved in the study.

Similarly to the OFGs, comprehensive notes were taken during the SSIs, subsequently scanned and translated into English, and securely stored on *Google Drive*. To ensure the interviewees' anonymity, their names were replaced with numerical identifiers, arranged chronologically according to the organization of the interviews.

The subsequent phase of the research involved coding the data, and discerning patterns and connections aligned with the research questions. In the process, the following main thematic areas emerged from the data:
a. Absence of a clear policy on the national image.
b. Identification of weaknesses in the existing national image policy.
c. Mixed outcomes of the current nation branding strategies.
d. Humanitarian imagery complements the State's efforts in nation branding.
e. The significance of fostering a shared vision.

Chapter 4
Results

This chapter reveals the findings acquired using the mixed-method approach outlined earlier. It is organized into three distinct sections, starting with the outcomes derived from the critical discourse analysis that identifies the various tropes employed in constructing campaigns addressing the famine crisis in Southern Madagascar. Subsequently, the second section delves into the insights gleaned from online focus group discussions, capturing a diverse array of opinions and reactions from potential audiences towards the visual narratives presented in the selected campaigns. Lastly, the third section delves deep into the insights gathered from semi-structured interviews, providing an understanding of how state agents perceive the impact of these campaigns on Madagascar's international image.

4.1 How is the famine in Southern Madagascar portrayed? What tropes are used?

4.1 a. Children and women

From the set of fourteen materials under examination, the child emerges as the most recurrent subject within the dataset. Among these selected images, eight portray children either alone or in the company of adults assumed to be family members. While some children are seen fully clothed, others, such as the unidentifiable boy depicted in Figure 8, stand shirtless, their images unaccompanied by any explanatory text. This stark representation accentuates their distended stomachs, a telltale sign of kwashiorkor, an acute malnutrition syndrome. Furthermore, the photographic framing consistently revolves around the child, amplifying their prominence in the composition. This approach serves to both isolate and objectify the latter as the central point of focus.

These children generally have neutral or smiling facial expressions, with the exception of the boy portrayed in Figure 9, whose caption describes "the 5th day of a solidarity initiative for Kere victims in Amboasary Atsimo", expresses gratitude towards contributors and outlines a crowdfunding initiative with a €1500 starting goal on *Okpal.com*. The post has 53 likes, 7 supportive comments, and 26 shares. It shows a young boy seated with a woman who could possibly be his mother. His skeletal legs are pulled up to his chest as he frowns while looking to the left. One might wonder whether it is because of the sun or because it bothers him to sit for the photo. Either way, he looks vulnerable, helpless and passive.

In a similar vein, many images from the corpus, including Figures 6 and 7, depict a strikingly identical image of a young boy tilting his head downward while sorrowfully gazing at the cactus he holds in his hands. This observation prompts several questions, such as why two different organizations, MWR – which used it to encourage people to donate sealed water bottles, garnering 1400 likes, and Fizafato Europe – which utilized the image to prompt a call to action for an *Okpal* fundraising campaign, receiving 37 likes along with sad reactions and supportive comments – utilized the same image. Additionally, the absence of proper photographer attribution raises concerns about the ethical practices of these local organizations. Beyond these issues, the low-angle composition of the shot accentuates the child's fatalistic expression, emphasizing his emaciated appearance and the disproportionate size of the cactus, which appears larger than his face. Consequently, a sense of weakness also emerges from this material, with the plant serving as a symbol of the kid's despair, but we will return to this point later.

These portrayals tend to echo the old trope of the African child as one of the main 'beneficiaries' of international NGOs, an image that has been prominent since the Live Aid campaign in response to the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s. By reproducing the latter, these materials produced by Malagasy diaspora-led organizations seem to contribute to what Appadurai (1988 in Thompson & Weaver, 2014) and De Laat and Gorin (2016) call "metonymic freezing" or "iconographication." As discussed in Chapter 1, it refers to the process through which the recurring figure of the child becomes the symbol of the entire country and even continent in the collective unconscious. This infantilization of Africans silences local responsible efforts to cope with the situation and justifies a paternalistic viewpoint echoing colonial power relations (Dogra, 2012).

Besides children, the woman figure constitutes another predominant trope in the selected corpus of documents. In Figure 6 for instance, an elderly woman is shown in front of a wooden hut and a cactus wall, holding a red cactus fruit. Although she frontally looks at the camera, almost smiling, her old age and sitting posture convey a sense of fragility. This impression is also conveyed through Figure 10, which depicts an old lady in a hurry to eat a cactus with both hands in a childlike manner, connoting fragility and thus inviting the same paternalistic impulse as the child figure above.

Women also appear in other images, like in Figure 9, where a woman is seated behind a boy. As previously mentioned, the caption refers to "the 5th day of a solidarity initiative for Kere victims in Amboasary Atsimo," expressing thanks to contributors and outlining a crowdfunding campaign with a €1500 initial target on *Okpal.com*. While the caption doesn't explicitly state their familial connection, their proximity implies it. In fact, the woman's hand rests on the child's neck in a manner akin to a mother's gesture of affection or comfort. The problem is that by only implying a mother-child relationship, this material reduces this woman to motherhood. As such it omits the fact that, as outlined in the literature review, women are not just mothers. In times of famine, in particular, they tend to take on other roles. Second, this women's link to motherhood refers to the idea of fertility, which recalls the argument that tends to pathologize the local populations' fertility rather than historical and structural inequalities (Legwegoh & Fraser, 2015).

Moreover, three of MWR's posts portray women near children, men and their goats. These are the only pictures from the data set where the former are smiling, which insinuates that stability and happiness can only be reached with a masculine presence in a family. Hence, akin to mainstream humanitarian narratives, these images seem to endorse heteronormative values and perspectives, neglecting to acknowledge that issues and challenges can manifest within any household structure.

Moreover, the women represented in this corpus are generally adorned with *lambahoany*. This is a traditional Malagasy garment, described as a rectangular piece of patterned cotton fabric, generally 168 cm wide and 118 cm high. Used in everyday life and during rituals, it conveys messages and therefore plays an important role in education and awareness or political campaigns, as exemplified in Figure 11 (Razafindradama, 2015). It is worn by both genders, however, only females are dressed in it in the images. In contrast, men wear clothing such as t-shirts. One in particular, presumably MWR's correspondent mentioned in the caption, is wearing a pair of jean shorts, a cap, and a bag. As Dogra (2013: p.55) would have said: these objects evoke "development and modernity," they symbolize [his] proximity to the West and, therefore, [his] legitimacy to propagate development and progressive values to the recipients, with "backward" women wearing traditional clothing". It is reminiscent of the colonial discourse that used this pairing of Third World women with traditions to justify the "civilizing mission" (Verschuur, 2010).

Figure 11: An example of *lambahoany* used during the 2018 electoral campaign. One can see the inscription "Fa ny fitiavana no lehibe indrindra" which translates as "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love". As a Biblical verse (1 Corinthian 13:13) this is used to gain "some legitimacy with the population" (Andriamainty, 2016: p.55) who is deeply religious and regard the Church as a parent to be respected (Rajerison, 2013).
Source: *Lambahoany* (cotton fabric), 1m59 x 1m12, (2018), private collection, own image.

Such preponderance of women characters, either linked to motherhood, elderliness or tradition, demonstrates that Malagasy diaspora-led organizations tend to contribute to the feminization of famine, much like traditional "negative" campaigns. In doing so, it creates a monolithic portrayal of Malagasy (and extensively African) women as vulnerable and incapable thus also inviting an external intervention from the implied "responsible male". Therefore, these messages reinforce patriarchal norms (Dogra & Cohen, 2012).

4.1 b. Deliberate positivism

Several elements from the selected data set echo approaches of 'deliberate positivism'. As we saw in Chapter 1, the latter refers to the use of positive images that emphasize the dignity and agency of the people being photographed. For instance, three out of twelve images do not include human figures but rather images of ocean foam, an oval shape evoking a planisphere with Madagascar at the centre, as well as an artwork depicting a cloth-like item floating on a pattern suggestive of water. This implies that, unlike traditional organizations, for at least two Malagasy associations, MWR and Hype Mada, vulnerable faces and miserabilism are not inherently necessary when raising awareness.

Moreover, the hashtag #MifamonjySamyMalagasy accompanies some of the pictures published by Madagascar Will Rise. It literally translates as "We help each other as Malagasy people". By conveying the idea that Malagasy people can support each other and that they are therefore, in the words of Nadine Machikou (2022), "compassionately self-sufficient", MWR's discourse moves away from traditional narratives directed at the global North that deprive Africans of agency and portray them as helpless victims in urgent need of outside help.

Other telling examples of deliberate positivism might be MWR's images of families. As mentioned in a previous section, these images depict children near people who seem to belong to their families. They pose in front of sturdy houses and small herds of goats with their upright postures, as well as smiling expressions. It contrasts with the materials focusing on women and children in that it dignifies the subjects and conveys a lesser sense of lack.

The caption (below) attached to these documents seems to heighten these positive perceptions by conveying the idea that these families were empowered by the animal loans they received from the local MWR correspondent:
"Why this animal?
First of all because in this region it is the possession of livestock that is a sign of wealth, so it enhances the family in question.
The goats have a litter twice a year. And that allows the family the first year to 'give back' the first 2 rafters to our friend, to make them responsible, to make them aware of the economic value of what was brought to them, to teach them to manage.
The 'herds' of goats are difficult to steal for the Dahalo, they do not run fast enough.
They are not a loss but an investment in the long term because they reproduce.
After a certain time, the family is RESPONSIBLE (it takes care of breeding) it is ECONOMICALLY FREE (it can re-sell the meat, the milk, the product of its goats or even invest in something else) it SELF-SUFFICIENCY (it can eat what it produces or exchange it or buy food) and then it KNOWS ITS VALUE (morally, spiritually) and it is the most important to BUILD THE NEW GENERATIONS".

At first glance, this cutline appears to offer an alternative to the miserabilist approach of humanitarian communication. However, there is nothing innovative in its underlying discourse. Indeed, by using terms such as "making them responsible" or "teaching them to cope", MWR implies that without the intervention of the correspondent, these populations would be ignorant, irresponsible and incapable. MWR also specifically mentioned that its correspondent had studied outside of Androy, suggesting that it is this trip outside of the region that has made him somewhat of an "expert", a legitimate person to "teach" villagers. Had he stayed, would he have been as "ignorant" as the people he met? In any case, the idea that emerges from this statement is that foreigners are more knowledgeable than the residents, so it is up to them to come and "help" the locals, which perpetuates a patronizing viewpoint.

Moreover, this post from Madagascar Will Rise also states that the loans were intended to "make them [the beneficiaries] aware of the economic value of what is being provided." This sentence implies that the lack of knowledge and strategies to enter the capitalist system is part of the reason why these populations suffer. This assumption invisibilized the detrimental impacts of capitalism which affect the region. MWR's comments also hide the fact that communities in the "Deep South" have already partially entered the capitalist system. For example, since at least the seventeenth century, Antandroy women have sold cacti fruits in markets for extra income (Kaufmann, 2004). By silencing this, MWR's narratives seem to perpetuate the "uncontacted tribe myth" that has been used by European empires to justify the colonization of the African continent (Blanc, 2020).

What MWR also fails to emphasize is that if the villagers were to fully adopt capitalism, the way of life and the various skills associated with their existing mode of production (pastoralism) could be lost. Combined with religious terminology, the discourse carried by MWR also tends to suggest that the famine was caused by the Antandroy population's lack of "knowledge of its (moral, spiritual) value". This publication thus also encourages the abandonment of the local religion in favour of Christianism, which poses several problems. Through conversion, several elements of the local intangible heritage may be lost, including funeral rites and customs such as *aloalo* making, a wooden sculptural art linked to the belief that the deceased become intermediaries between God (Zanahary) and the living (Goedefroit and Lombard, 2007).

Thus, akin to mainstream strategies of deliberate positivism outlined in the literature, these campaigns appear to foster a contradiction. On one hand, it provides an empowering portrayal, moving away from the pessimistic and passive image to one that emphasizes people's agency, and hopefulness. However, on the other side, it first seems to impose a conditionality of who is deserving of aid (those accepting capitalism

and Christianity). It also implies, through the smiling faces, that the photographed people are grateful and happy due to the loan received. By focusing on the supposedly positive outcomes of diasporic aid, local circumstances are simplified and the underlying message is that withdrawing it would make the recipients miserable.

4.1 c. Drought and cacti

At first glance, the images published by Hype Mada can be related to deliberate positivism. Indeed, as mentioned above, two of its materials show no human figure, only a spherical shape with a representation of Madagascar in the centre and an extract of a visual work conducted by Tsiriniaina Irimboangy, a former Digital Art student at Ensaama – *École des Arts Appliqués* or Olivier de Serres. The latter in particular connotes a positive portrayal as it suggests that Madagascar not only has talented and creative minds but that these individuals care about their fellow countrymen.

Other images released by Hype Mada show male figures. This organisation differs from the rest of the corpus which mainly represents children and women. Hype Mada's images suggest that men can also be affected by famine and that they are not necessarily "'bad', [...] corrupt leaders or violent guerrilla fighters" as is maintained by traditional discourses (Pedersen, 2014: p.13). In addition, the footprints and positioning of the zebus in the foreground, one with one leg up as if it were moving forward at the time of this photograph, imply that there is movement. The presence of the plastic barrel suggests that the two men on the cart are going to fetch water. This contradicts the images of the children which convey the idea that local people are passive. We also observe that the man on the cart is standing upright. He thus appears to be the same height as the trees behind him. This detail gives the impression that he is serene and in control of his environment.

However, the very absence of female subjects perpetuates gender roles as we might assume that they are left with the village children while these men scramble to find water, ignoring the reality of famine explained in an earlier section. In addition, the landscape surrounding these men is desertic, which reinforces the perception of Madagascar as an isolated, unwelcoming place.

According to the photograph's captions, this arid environment is due to climate change, trade winds and desertification, which together lead to water and resource scarcity, and thus undernourishment and malnutrition: "Madagascar's "Deep South" is experiencing the first major climatic crisis in history. The drying out of the climate, the Southern trade winds and desertification are leading to the resurgence of a large-scale famine. Thousands of people are suffering from malnutrition and acute malnutrition. And the more the climate changes, the more water and resources become scarce".

By listing several factors as causes of famine, an attempt is made by Hype Mada to depart from simplistic explanations. However, as with conventional discourses, the cited elements naturalize famine, when many authors agree that the origins are complicated and often entangled with politics and colonial history (Currey and Graeme, 1984; Lamers, 2005). For instance, although the organization mentions the climate crisis, it does not attempt to point to the origin of this very phenomenon. Yet as Crist (2007: p.35) argues, the latter stems from an "industrial-consumer civilization that has entrenched a form of life that admits virtually no limits to its expansiveness within, and perceived entitlement to, the entire planet." By evading the impact of this civilisation, Hype Mada reproduces a seemingly apolitical discourse that reiterates the single-minded quest for a technocratic solution to global warming. The proposed solutions include: "the setting up of a training and awareness centre in agroecology and in the fight against slash-and-burn agriculture" and "the establishment of a seed bank relevant to the Grand Sud".

By stating that slash-and-burn agriculture – an ancestral agricultural technique involving the use of fire found in various parts of the world (known as *hatsake* in Eastern and Southern Madagascar) – should be combated, the publication implies that it is these local practices that are ultimately the root of the problem. Thus, locals who practice it are indirectly called ignorant. However, one should keep in mind that the use of this agricultural technique is not homogeneous. Indeed, the intensity of the flames and their frequency may differ from one community to another, as such, the impacts are not necessarily destructive. On the contrary, in essence, fire is a necessary tool for pastoralists who use it in a structured way (in space and time)

to ward off predators and protect their herds. It is also an effective technique for enriching pyrophilic biodiversity, maintaining open landscapes, and keeping rats and locusts out. For some groups, slash-and-burn farming may also have spiritual significance, mark a cultural identity or signal political resistance (Kull, 2000; Caillault et al, 2015; Corson, 2016).

By ignoring all these points, Hype Mada's discourse is reminiscent of the arguments put forward by colonial scientists such as Henri Perrier de la Bâthie, who justified the implementation of repressive policies. By banning fire, under the pretext of wanting to protect endemic biodiversity, the colonial discourse allowed French authorities to take control of the Malagasy people and their resources.

Moreover, the second solution on the establishment of a "seed bank relevant to the "Deep South" also echoes colonial experiments aimed at introducing "resilient" species to the region. In this scheme, plants deemed unsuitable were decimated, notably, the Opuntia cactus, which was discussed in Chapter 3. Meanwhile, Hype Mada's caption invites one to ask who is ultimately entitled to decide what is "relevant or not"? And if the population were to accept these seed banks, would they not be dependent on them? Who would benefit from this situation?

The Madagascar Will Rise campaign launched under the hashtag #RanoforKere also presents a controversial discourse. A publication postulates that the famine in Southern Madagascar is primarily driven by a lack of water and that solving the problem "simply requires WATER": "If we are just 1000 to give 1L of water it will be 1000L, if we are 10 000 then we will have 10 000L of water and several tanks. [...] The South is a fertile region but it just lacks water [emoji plant] People can become autonomous and self-sufficient through agriculture. In the short term we can bring in water tanks, in the medium term we can build wells and who knows one day in the long term if we find the means together to lay pipelines".

This simplistic argument is also reminiscent of colonial narratives arguing that the Androy region could be transformed into arable land. It was believed that this would be possible if they *simply* eliminated the causes of the water shortage, namely the Opuntia cactus and slash-and-burn practices which, as also mentioned previously, were thus suppressed by the French colonial authorities. While this solution was presented as a way to improve the living conditions of the populations, through economic development and thus well-being and health, it actually justified the imposition of the capitalist system on the local communities for the benefit of France and the owners of agricultural concessions.

The theme of drought is linked, and runs in parallel, to the cactus trope. As mentioned previously, some pictures, including Figures 6 and 7, show the same picture of a young emaciated boy who tilts his head forward while sadly staring down at the cactus in his hands. Cacti also appear in the background of one of these pictures, behind the elderly figure holding red cactus fruits in her hands.

By sharing these images, the cactus becomes a symbol of the desperation as well as the helplessness of the local people. It thus signals the need for urgent intervention. This view is also reflected in a video published by Fifazato Europe (Figure 10), in which an elderly woman quickly swallows a cactus leaf, suggesting she is starved. The video is accompanied by the following caption: "During our visit to Anjapaly last Saturday, we saw the population eating cactus leaves. During the forum co-organized by Fifazato Europe and Nofy I Androy in Anjapaly [another organization], it was reported that the cactus leaf is the basic food of the majority of the population of the Androy region [sad emoji]".

Through these lines, the introduction of the cactus into the diet of these populations is perceived as an anomaly. However, as presented in Chapter 2, communities in the "Deep South" have incorporated cacti into their lifestyles since at least the seventeenth century. It helped them become more resilient to their environment, although French colonial policies subsequently made them vulnerable. By omitting these historical details, these plants become a mere symbol of suffering and lack of adaptability. As such, similarly to the trope on drought elaborated earlier, this discourse on cacti justifies external intervention and diasporic organizations are depicted as having the right expertise to end this situation. This equally echoes what Jesse C. Ribot (1999) calls "technocratic paternalism", a process inherited from the colonial era, which consists of denigrating indigenous practices in the name of scientific expertise, in order to pass off the colonial

administration as a benevolent saviour when in fact, the latter is pursuing harmful economic and political agendas (cited in Ballouche and Taïbi, 2013).

In sum, this section confirmed H1 as it revealed that although Hype Mada, Fizafato Europe and MWR are led by Malagasy diasporas, the campaign they produced on famine in Southern Madagascar tend to portray stereotypical tropes, revolving around the figures of children and women, traditional gender roles and the predominance of the theme of drought. The campaigns also appear to indirectly impose neoliberal norms on local communities and provide a simplistic ahistorical and apolitical narrative, especially regarding the place of cacti in the "Deep South". Such findings echo what has been largely noted in the literature regarding the lack of difference brought by the process of localization within the development and humanitarian fields (Clark, 2009; Alam, 2007). Drawing on online focus groups, the following section explores whether these campaigns elicit similar conclusions among Malagasy (based in Madagascar and the diaspora), as well as non-Malagasy audiences.

4.2 The audience's perceptions of the corpus

4.2 a. Negative stereotypical portrayal

Most responses drawn from the focus group discussions found that children and elderly women constitute the core themes of the corpus. Indeed, when asked what caught their attention first in the images, one participant for instance stated: "What I see first is that the children are very, very thin, very hungry" (Female participant focus group 3). Another person added: "The first things, the children, the children and then the old lady... the ladies…" (Female participant focus group 5). In addition, a respondent specifically addressed the feminization of the representation of famine in Southern Madagascar by questioning: "Are there really fewer men than women among these local populations?" (Female participant, focus group 1).

To a lesser extent, rurality, drought and cacti were also mentioned by multiple respondents, in particular, an entrepreneur based in Antananarivo said: "Based on that [corpus] alone it's sad really, it's like Madagascar is a village, and there's nothing but a village lost in the middle of nowhere with drought, where you have to fend for yourself, eat... I don't know... cactus, whatever you see growing" (Male participant, focus group 2).

Only two visuals were said to vary from the rest of the corpus. First, Hype Mada's picture showing men on a cart, given its different "aesthetic" with the green font (female participant, focus group 1), the absence of a "close-up on a person" (female participant, focus group 1) and because it is the sole picture "that is in context" - as the Southern wind and the zebus are recognizable (male participant, focus group 6). Second, one of MWR's photographs of individuals standing in front of their homes and goats. One participant was surprised to see these photographs in the corpus since, in his opinion, "they don't really depict the need for support," given how drastically they differ from the other images by evoking a lessened sense of deprivation (focus group 5).

These responses corroborate the initial CDA findings that revealed that the tropes in the campaigns produced by Malagasy diaspora organizations are not inherently different from mainstream campaigns. They also provide an insight into another observation: it was generally agreed that such tropes create a negative impression of Madagascar and the Malagasy people as poor, deficient in basic necessities, and in need of outside assistance to ensure their existence. For instance, one participant noted "When I see that, I tell myself that Madagascar is already a very poor country that has not evolved, a country that has remained, I don't know, 80 years backwards (Male participant, focus group 2). Someone else said "I would say poverty and I would also say the need for help and that's it" (Female participant, focus group 4). Another person reiterated the view: "For me, it's a poor country, a poor country that is still in primary need and... The first impression is that life is very simple, you have to eat, you have to drink, it stops there" (Male participant, focus group 6).

The result is the perpetuation of a homogenizing view of the country. Challenging this, one participant said: "Even if the situation is precarious in a certain place, I am pretty sure the whole country does not live in these conditions. And even in a situation of poverty, it's not black and white, there are still different

situations and there are people who even in poverty manage as best they can." (Male participant, focus group 1).

Adding to this, other respondents said such essentialisation could taint the country's attractiveness, and thus it could harm the economy: "We can't say that it's a poor country, it's a country that is suffering, it's a country that needs help, it's a country that is struggling, that... in fact, I find that it doesn't necessarily make tourists want to come. To the "benefactors" yes, yes they want to come but someone who is going on vacation will not want to go to Madagascar when they see these images. That's it, but if someone wants to help countries, they'll want to come, but someone who wants to travel will not" (Female participant, focus group 3).

It is consistent with the findings in the literature regarding dominant representations of Africa, which acknowledge that negative representations of Africa from humanitarian advertisements hinder business investment worldwide, beyond the tourism sector itself (Oguh, 2015). However, this point was not unanimous, one male participant working in the hospitality sector disagreed, he noted: "I'm in the hotel/tourism industry, we can marry this image with a more humanitarian trip in that sense... I mean, there are two schools, really. Yes, maybe it can bore others, but in another sense, we can attract more tourism to humanitarianism like that" (Female participant, focus group 4).

The participant's perspective underscores the potential synergy between the tourism industry and humanitarian efforts, particularly within the realm of ecotourism or voluntourism. By intertwining the positive image of Madagascar with a more humanitarian-oriented approach, the participant suggests a strategy that could leverage the country's ecological diversity and cultural heritage to attract tourists with a philanthropic inclination. This approach suggests a convergence of interests, where visitors can engage in activities that contribute to both tourism and local development. However, the participant acknowledges that this approach might not resonate universally, underscoring the ongoing debate between these approaches and the complexities of shaping Madagascar's image to cater to different audiences.

Looking beyond this disagreement, as mentioned earlier, these results confirm that Malagasy diaspora-led organizations seem to use similar images to those of large Western NGOs. However, while acknowledging that such tropes fuel essentializing negative perceptions of the country emphasizing lack that may prove detrimental to the country's attractiveness, as will be discussed next, participants admitted that the visuals nonetheless offered an accurate representation of the situation in Southern Madagascar.

4.2 b. Partly accurate representations

Despite the aforementioned comments on the corpus, most participants thought that the visuals were nonetheless accurate. For instance, a professional humanitarian photographer who has been commissioned by several international organizations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) to work in the region said: "It really reflects what is happening there, I recognize the textures, the colours, the bags, here are the bags…it is really used there. Directly we see that over there it's really hot, the children don't wear clothes, they are bare-chested like that [...]" (Male participant, focus group 6).

Another respondent who was raised in the area added that "the pictures give an idea [of the reality], it's true...it's not a lie" (participant, focus group 3). Nevertheless, she added "But you have to see the story behind it, it's much more complicated than hunger, more complicated than people struggling".

In the above, the additional comment implies that the corpus provides a simplistic discourse. Her argument was echoed by other participants who also felt that while these images represented real-life situations, many elements were missing. Indeed, when respondents were asked to suggest alternative representations of famine most replied that the systematic use of videos and image series was desirable in order to portray a more complete picture of reality and to provide more information about the multiple causes of famine (political, cultural, environmental), suggesting that the corpus fails to expose these. For example, a founder of a France-based association stated: "I think that it is really necessary to go on the spot and to make... a documentary [reportage] a little more detailed [emphasis on this word] [...] So really… to make a documentary where we ask the real questions, the good questions and without taboo, to really say the

realities of the thing and to avoid being also censored because it would have more than one truth that would not leave at ease the government or other parties" (Focus group 3).

Another respondent reinforced these views: "If I were to do a personal report in the South, I would look at why the organizations are not able to get back on their feet, why there are so many projects there, but every year we never manage to find a solution [...] There are many approaches to do the work but to say to yourself that you have to do a 20-day report to explain the South, no, no, it's not possible, you have to take the time, there are many aspects, the cultural aspect, the economic aspect, there are many funds to dig up and it's after that we'll see 'ah it was like that, ah why is there that, there is that and all that' " (Male participant, focus group 6).

Some participants also emphasized the need to include more positive images highlighting the agency of famine-affected communities in Southern Madagascar and their daily lives to improve our understanding of local initiatives and effective survival strategies: "There are two aspects in the South of Madagascar that you need to know: despite the fact that you see pictures, of clichés that are poor and all that, there are also stories that are really beautiful there, like someone who was able to save other people and all that. But there are stories, you have to have a story to really capture the situations in the South. [...] We still need work, we need to see other aspects, we need positive stories too, we need to balance the two" (Male participant, focus group 6).

Other participants, added "For example, to have a positive perception of Madagascar we should have seen people in action, doing things to get out of it, you know? Whereas here we see them as passive, as victims, and as a result, what we see is necessarily negative" (Female participant, focus group 1) and "I would also suggest that young people with creative ideas, especially those who have studied or are interested in this matter, should raise awareness and focus on the positive aspects. I have observed that my colleagues often view these images as sad and portraying poverty, which leads to a sense of hopelessness. I believe that the Malagasy people should stand up and promote positive ideas to improve lives and refrain from sharing such sad images that may lead to the state constantly seeking financial aid" (Female participant, focus group 3).

Two Malagasy residents have however disagreed with this idea of showing more positive features and suggested publishing more "shocking" images. They maintained that these are useful in bringing visibility to those who are usually marginalized in the media: "We really don't pay attention when it comes to Madagascar and there is a difference in Madagascar because there are people who are really in difficulty and we don't see them. We focus more on what is happening in the highlands and we don't pay attention to what is happening elsewhere" (Female participant, focus group 4).

The statement underscores that certain segments of the population face significant challenges yet remain largely invisible. This highlights a significant imbalance in the distribution of attention within the nation. Moreover, it prompts reflection on the media's focus, potentially indicating a bias towards certain regions, particularly the highlands, while sidelining others. This disparity in media coverage could arise from several factors, including a preference for sensational stories and regions with more immediate news events. Moreover, challenges such as limited infrastructure and historical biases might hinder media representation in particular regions, collectively contributing to the media's marginalization of the Southern areas.

Another participant gave an example of what would make up these more "shocking" images while questioning their relevance: "For instance, I have encountered photos of extremely malnourished children lying on the ground, seemingly dying due to thirst and hunger. However, I hesitate to support showing even more shocking images, as I am aware that there are even worse realities out there. I am unsure whether it is beneficial to expose people who are not familiar with such harsh realities to such images. Regarding the effectiveness of campaigns to aid these people, I am uncertain about what truly makes an impact. Some individuals might be unable to bear looking at these distressing images and might choose to avoid them altogether" (Female participant, focus group 3).

In other words, the participant raised concerns about the effectiveness of using shocking images, as repeated exposure to such visuals might lead the audience to become desensitized and normalized to the suffering portrayed. This point recalls the concept of compassion fatigue, which refers to the numbing effect when

audiences become passive and desensitized to the repeated presentation of suffering and disasters (Ong, 2008, as cited in Tsoutsoumpi, 2013).

However, when respondents were questioned about why the most commonly suggested alternatives, such as providing more context and positive imagery, were not implemented, many acknowledged that organizations preferred to use a simple narrative focusing on children and elderly women to evoke compassion and pity, thereby facilitating donations. One participant explained, "Yeah, those are the images we see all the time, I feel like at the NGO campaign level, it's about raising as much donation as possible" (Female participant, focus group 3). Another participant expressed, "I think they use these images to reach more people because humans are more sensitive to seeing a skinny child with a bloated belly and a thin elderly woman without food; these vulnerable individuals naturally evoke stronger emotions in people" (Female participant, focus group 5).

The same participant also recognized that the concern arises from the necessity to be accountable to donors: "There are organizations that request money for specific causes, but there is doubt about whether the funds actually reach the intended recipients in Africa who need assistance. Many individuals are aware of this and hesitate to donate unless they have evidence of where their money is being utilized. Being involved in an association that supports a school in Senegal, I understand the challenges in fundraising. When we apply for grants, people often demand proof, reports, pictures, or any evidence showing that the money was genuinely used to help the people and communities, rather than being misappropriated. So, if people are asking for pictures as a condition for giving money, it is more about establishing trust and ensuring transparency in how their donations are used" (Female participant, focus group 4).

In the above the participant highlights how mistrust and transparency issues deter potential donors from giving. Personal experience with fundraising underscores the importance of evidence like pictures to build trust and ensure donations are effective. This emphasizes transparency's role in gaining donor confidence and support.

Furthermore, the issue of censorship was raised by another respondent: "Having some knowledge about Madagascar, if, for example, as the president of [name of an association], we expose the entire reality, we could encounter problems with the government. On the other hand, if it were international organizations like the WFP or others such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund), they would likely have more credibility. We, as an association in France, registered in France, and operating in Madagascar but raising funds in France, can be discredited, and they can fabricate something to undermine us. Consequently, we may face difficulties even though we work in good faith. Personally, I was very discreet, and we waited until everything was completed before doing any communication" (Female participant, focus group 3).

Above, she addresses the issue of inconsistent freedom of expression, particularly the perceived bias against Malagasy organizations and individuals who speak about political matters. Through these, the participant may have been alluding to the case of journalist Gaëlle Borgia's video (2021), mentioned previously, which showed people eating leather scraps and triggered criticism from certain State authorities. Interestingly, David Beasley's post (2021) on a similar topic received less intense and personal reactions. This contrast raises concerns about the unfair application of freedom of expression in such situations. In this context, another participant stated that simplistic narratives are used to prevent similar incidents: "Perhaps we tend to shy away from depicting this [more nuanced] reality too extensively and opt for what can be considered "politically correct" to avoid potential censorship and protect the reputation of the association or NGO displaying these disturbing photos. As L. [the participant who made the above statement] suggested, presenting their reality differently through a reportage is possible, but the challenge lies in selecting appropriate channels that won't lead to censorship, loss of credibility, or encountering the disapproval of government officials. This dilemma leads us to ultimately choose images that won't be too alarming. I hope you grasp what I'm trying to convey" (Focus group 3).

The above quote highlights how organizations navigate a complex reality, often favouring a "politically correct" approach due to concerns about censorship and reputation. This strategy aims to avoid backlash and maintain positive relations with stakeholders, particularly state officials. It showcases the challenge of balancing transparency with potential consequences in a sensitive socio-political context.

In conclusion, this section has shown that representations of the famine in Southern Madagascar by Malagasy diaspora associations have similar limitations to those of traditional international organizations: while they are partly considered accurate, by using certain tropes, they emphasize negative stereotypes. In this way, they contribute to an overly simplistic narrative that lacks information, positive stories, and an emphasis on the actions of local people. It has been argued that these omissions occur because they are effective in generating emotions and donations and also prevent any politicization which may offend the authorities and compromise the associations' existence. These observations are consistent with critiques of traditional representations of Africa in INGO advertisements (Franks, 2013). Thus, like the CDA findings, the OFGs demonstrate that Malagasy diaspora organizations do not provide a different discourse and, as such, as assumed by the first hypothesis, African voices are not necessarily key to changing the narrative.

4.2 c. Sadness and anger

The preponderance of negative images made participants feel angered, saddened and even shocked. That said, their discussions focused on different points. Some respondents strongly denounced the emphasis on women and children as a means to victimize Malagasy communities, implying a unidirectional victim/hero relationship while denying their agency: "We don't see the Malagasy people as actors. They are only seen as victims, as people who need to be helped and who are not able to do it themselves, and the fact that there are only children, women... Well, children and old people fuel this vision" (Male participant, focus group 1).

Agreeing with the previous opinion, someone added: "Yes, I was saying that we could see that the Malagasy populations were positioned as subjects and as beneficiaries, even as victims who need outside help [...] I would even add that in fact one would say by looking at these photos that they are not able to find solutions by themselves and that they are waiting for an answer, a solution. Yet, we know that in reality there are many locals that can organize themselves but it is absent from this kind of image" (Female participant, focus group 1).

Furthermore, one interviewee expressed concern that these visuals fuel the trend of using non-White people as the faces of humanitarian/development aid recipients. This is problematic given that not all people experiencing famine are racialized and to assume otherwise is to convey a racist message that naturalizes the suffering of people of colour, particularly Africans who are thus 'otherised' in the sense: "What shocked me more was that it seemed to show a person just for their skin colour and it seemed that they were a bit dirty [in the photo] from above. [...] It seems to reduce [the country] to that, it is as if famine is equal to this person who is dirty and that... [hesitation] I mean, I have the impression that they have emphasized the idea of skin colour, well, that is what strikes me more" (Female participant, focus group 2).

In addition, several respondents noted that their discomfort stemmed from the dehumanizing nature of the images that violate the privacy of the people depicted, as explained by one respondent below: "You have the impression of always having the same images and what also shocks me at this time is that we are in 2023 and you have people who are not blurred. You show their face while now on social networks, the influencers and all that when they put the photos of their baby and all and they blur that. So it's very shocking" (Male participant, focus group 2). Also, a participant pointed out "It just came back to me (a little late) but I find it weird that faces are shown in photos for local associations when it can very well be someone's family. And no one wants to see their family suffer publicly" (Male participant, focus group 5).

As such, these comments imply that the corpus encourages voyeuristic attitudes and that as such they are unethical. Notwithstanding, as two participants in other groups recalled, ethics are subjective, thus echoing the debate in the literature about the universality of codes of conduct (Nissinen, 2015): "It's hard to say 'that's really ethical', what is ethical for me might not be ethical for you. [...] Sometimes the pictures are shocking but when we [photographers] were in the field we talked with the person [to be photographed], we ate with them, and all that but when the pictures are going to be published "ah it's shocking and all that" but the story behind these pictures, we never discuss that" (Male participant focus group 6). In the same vein, another male respondent claimed: "You don't know in fact what is said behind [the pictures], if they come they will say "yes I'm coming I'll give you this, I can take your picture and everything" and these people are also people from the countryside, they are people who... who don't know anything about the

law, about image rights if there are laws about that they don't know anything" (Male participant focus group 2).

These findings indicate that some participants went beyond the simple observation that the images in the corpus convey a pejorative image of the country. Indeed, in the manner of Postcolonial criticism, they problematize these very representations, accusing them of being unethical, embedded with racism and of indirectly legitimizing unequal relations between the victims (local populations) and the heroes (external actors - the diaspora). Put differently, these respondents were aware of the power dynamics at play in aid communication practices. Thus, they rejected the subsequent call to action to avoid becoming complicit in perpetuating them. This is why when asked if these visuals would make them donate money, many replied no. The most telling answer comes from a Paris-based digital art student: "Well, for my part, sincerely, no, because, as we said, the images are already too stereotypical, and when you see them like that, well... well, if I donated, it would be as if I were endorsing the photographers who are making these people look bad, so I would say to myself. ... well, my psyche would tell me that I'm giving out of pity, even if that's their intended goal, actually, I... Well, it would just be to validate the discourse of superiority and inferiority, so I don't think they would encourage me to donate any further" (Participant, Focus Group 2).

Other groups composed exclusively of Malagasy respondents, on the other hand, spoke of sadness triggered by the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the situations described, which, they emphasized multiple times, have been going on for several years now. As one person explained: "In terms of emotion, well, I find it sad, it's as if I couldn't do anything but then if I could have done something good, I would have" (participant, focus group 3). In these terms, it appears that the participant's frustration stems from her inability to help communities as she is called upon to do in these images. Thus, it seems that she has fallen into the trap that previous groups have been wary of: that of embracing the us/them divide and saviour/victim dichotomy, and within that, of accepting to play the former role.

One participant then sounded upset as he asked, "From the moment you give your money, who knows if it will go to that person...if it will really go to that little boy you took a dirty picture of?" (Focus group 2). In doing so, he problematizes the lack of transparency in the management of donations, which might be attributable to the organizations' low level of professionalism related to their limited skills or means to hire competent staff. He then implies that in order to encourage the restoration of trust, to ensure that the money is benefiting local communities, the legislation on associations/NGOs should be rigidified: "I won't give my money because I don't know where my money is going first of all [...] So no, I won't give my money for that, because there must be rules [...] Rules in the sense that there must be a real organization that is there, that is legit so that if I give 1,000€ today they tell me "here we did it with your 1,000€, we bought it with your 1,000€" and that they show me the invoice and that they show me what we did. That it is in fact transparent, without corruption, without trickery" (Male participant, focus group 2).

The quoted statement reflects a common sentiment among potential donors who express hesitation in contributing funds due to uncertainties surrounding the transparency and accountability of the recipient organization. The participant emphasizes the necessity for clear rules and a legitimate structure that ensures financial contributions are directed purposefully and without corruption. This underscores the crucial role of transparency and accountability in building donor confidence and encouraging meaningful financial support for causes.

In some groups, the conversation focused at length on denouncing the Malagasy government, pointing out that it seems to lack the political will to end the famine in the South in the long term, allegedly because it profits from the suffering of locals by misappropriating recurrent humanitarian funds: "I also find it sad that the government doesn't do much about it. They do little things just for the sake of publicity and in real life, they don't look for long-term solutions, so that also makes me angry at the same time, it's a mix of sad and angry" (Female participant, focus group 3). Someone added "In terms of feelings, it's the same thing: it's sad, but at the same time it's a bit annoying because we think, 'How can the government not react to this'" (Female participant, focus group 3).

These participant statements reflect a shared sentiment of disappointment towards the government's inadequate response. The participants express a blend of sadness and frustration at the government's

superficial efforts for publicity, without substantial long-term solutions. This emotional mix highlights the participants' perception of the government's shortcomings in addressing critical issues, evoking a sense of both sadness and irritation.

Another participant further articulated: "If we have associations that are trying to help, why don't we have support from the government or, I don't know, support for this type of association? And here I think that we do what we can, we give what we can but it's help - I wouldn't say it's one-shots and it stops there but in the long term the State must also get involved a little more I think to find solutions. Because as much as we hear 'projects, projects' and a month later there are other problems that arise, that are more controversial and we forget. And then it comes back every year, and finally, it doesn't get any better" (Female participant, focus group 3).

Building on previous comments, the above reflects the weariness and frustration of participants at being continually asked to fund short-lived initiatives that are not accompanied by solid development projects. Through these terms, they seem to imply that the Malagasy government is bad and irresponsible. In doing so, they have internalized the dominant development discourse that demonizes African leaders and suggests that corruption is endemic among them, thereby silencing the various efforts provided by the authorities to fight malnutrition. Indeed, since 1960 successive governments have included this issue in national policies. While the initial focus of the projects was primarily on access to food, the scope of action has broadened by linking the issue of food to those of health, education and agriculture, and even to the point of including the fight against malnutrition in the more global agenda of the fight against poverty, as a result of the data made available by the various studies carried out by the technicians (Ravaozanany, 2010). The "Grand Sud" region has received special attention in the various national food policies – this is the region with the most funding in this context. Without mentioning it, the FG participants' comments obscure the factors (role confusion of the actors involved, competition, lack of internal continuity due to the political crises Madagascar has experienced repeatedly, donors' agendas) that influence their lack of long-term impacts (Rafamantanantsoa, 2019).

Having said that, the State's inaction is not a complete justification for inaction. Participants from these groups argue that while donations are an incomplete response, they would still consider making them, but meanwhile, they urge organizations to also incorporate some sort of incentive for action that goes beyond handing out money and that would engage the audience in other ways: "As I mentioned earlier, giving money could be effective, but the challenge lies in ensuring long-term solutions are in place. Making donations, while helpful, may not always lead to lasting impacts on their lives. It would be more beneficial to support projects with real, tangible impacts, such as those initiated by a Think Tank or similar initiatives, which can help these people in the long run. Though it can be complicated due to government restrictions, the overall response is yes, and these images encourage me to make a donation or participate in a project with a sustainable impact" (Female participant, focus group 3).

The participant's perspective reveals a nuanced approach to philanthropy, recognizing the need for lasting solutions beyond mere monetary donations. They advocate for support to projects with tangible, enduring impacts. This stance highlights a shift from short-term assistance to sustainable transformation, showcasing a desire for meaningful, impactful engagement despite potential complexities.

In sum, while all participants mentioned that the corpus conveys a pejorative stereotypical representation of Madagascar, not everyone questioned the controversial and unethical nature of these images, nor the victim/hero dichotomy they presented. Malagasy participants, in particular, appeared less preoccupied with the underlying power dynamics. They seemed more concerned with the lack of transparency of local organizations in managing donations, the absence of long-term projects as well as State involvement. The observed differences may be attributed to varying experiences and exposure to Critical Studies, with some Malagasy respondents having limited exposure while others encountered it through academic backgrounds or peer influence. This raises the question of why these differences exist and how to make Critical Studies more accessible to the Malagasy public.

4.3 What do State officials think?

The following section is informed by six semi-structured interviews carried out between May and July 2023. These interviews were pursued due to the unresponsiveness of diaspora-led organizations. The perspectives shared originate from State officials linked to bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Economic Development Board of Madagascar (EDBM), and the Urban Commune of Antananarivo (CUA). Through these interviews, we gain valuable insights that contribute to understanding the impact of humanitarian communication on Madagascar's image at the international level.

4.3 a. An experimental national image policy

When inquired about the image the Malagasy government seeks to portray to the international community, two interviewees, both directors at MOFA, explicitly indicated the absence of a coherent policy at present. According to their perspective, the government's approach is predominantly reactive rather than being guided by a proactive and strategic vision. To support this stance, they pointed to the government's response to journalist Gaëlle Borgia's reportage (that was mentioned previously) on the consumption of leather scraps by people in the Southern region of Madagascar. In this instance, the government's primary focus was on refuting the claims and emphasizing the adherence of journalists to existing legislation to ensure accuracy in their reporting (Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, Toliara Province, Androy Region, 2021). The interviewees considered this reactive approach insufficient to constitute a comprehensive national image policy.

Conversely, diverging from the views of the aforementioned participants, two other respondents, one from MOFA and the other from EDBM, asserted the existence of an image policy within the Malagasy government, delineated by specific objectives. These objectives include projecting Madagascar as actively combating poverty, showcasing pride in its culture and history, asserting sovereignty over disputed territories (referring to a group of islands in the Indian Ocean claimed by both Madagascar and France), and advocating the country's economic potential on the global stage. Moreover, the participants highlighted the government's particular emphasis on positioning Antananarivo, the nation's capital city, as a prominent cultural centre, with a primary focus on enhancing its overall livability and bolstering its cultural appeal.

To achieve these objectives, the interviewees emphasized the government's utilization of a diverse range of strategies, which encompass organizing international roadshows and presentations conducted both domestically and abroad. These efforts have a clear and explicit purpose: attracting foreign investment and showcasing economic opportunities. While the interviewees did not provide specific details, one illustrative instance was the Korea-Madagascar Business Forum, an event that I had the opportunity to attend. Jointly organized by the Korean Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar (KOCOMA) and the Economic Development Board of Madagascar (EDBM), the primary aim of the forum was to foster business engagements and cultivate partnerships between Korean companies and enterprises in Madagascar, with a particular focus on promoting the country's mining resources.

Furthermore, the Malagasy government has established showcases of Madagascar within its embassies, aimed at highlighting the nation's cultural heritage and economic prospects. Although the interviewees did not provide comprehensive insights, further investigation revealed the inauguration of this initiative with a "pilot showcase" at the Embassy of Madagascar in Mauritius, scheduled from July 25th to July 30th, 2019 (Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of Madagascar, 2019). The showcase featured a diverse array of elements, including a prominent display screen in the consular office reception area, a designated section displaying Malagasy products intended for export, a dedicated space for foreign direct investments, and a segment for hosting temporary exhibitions featuring the works of Malagasy artists (MOFA 2019).

In addition to the previously mentioned strategies, it has been noted that the Malagasy government is taking steps to assert its sovereignty over the disputed territories. This includes initiatives like the "Commission Mixte sur les Îles Eparses," a joint commission with France established in 2019 to address matters related to the Scattered Islands. However, the specific objectives of this commission are yet to be determined (Ricard and Robin, 2020). Furthermore, within the Urban Municipality of Antananarivo, various initiatives have been emphasized. These include the establishment of the Department of Culture and Community

Actions, providing support to artists and dedicated cultural spaces. Additionally, a digital program has been implemented, utilizing an *Instagram* account to catalogue the city's cultural life, thereby enhancing its visibility and accessibility to diverse cultural offerings.

Nevertheless, even though the two participants from MOFA and EDBM asserted the presence of a national image policy in Madagascar, they also acknowledged its shortcomings. Specifically, they expressed concerns about several aspects, including the lack of clarity in identifying responsible entities (one participant questioned whether the MOFA should take the lead), difficulties in coordinating various actors (one mentioned challenges in engaging with the Ministry of Culture and Communication), and the absence of a legal framework. To address these concerns, parallels were drawn with the Swiss model, which passed a federal law on the promotion of Switzerland's image abroad (RS 194.1 and RS 194.11). These laws establish specific measures and actions to enhance Switzerland's positive international image and outline the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved in promoting Switzerland's image.

The interviewees suggested that Madagascar could draw lessons from the Swiss model and develop its own national image policy. Furthermore, they emphasized that there is no fixed timeframe for implementing such a policy, citing the example of Luxembourg, which only initiated its national image policy in 2014. This observation raises the question of why Luxembourg delayed the implementation of its national image policy for such a prolonged period. It also prompts further investigation into the necessary conditions and requirements that facilitated the adoption of the policy in 2014, and whether Madagascar possesses similar prerequisites for effectively implementing its own national image policy.

Overall, this part revealed divergent perspectives on the national policy on image-building in Madagascar, with evidence of both its presence and absence. Notwithstanding these disagreements, the participants agreed that the national branding policy is currently ill-defined and uncoordinated. As the discussion unfolded, they sought to explain the reasons for this state of affairs and to present recommendations for its improvement. These will be outlined below.

4.3 b. Explanations and recommendations

As highlighted earlier, as the interviews progressed, participants reached a consensus that the current Malagasy national policy on image-building lacks clarity. This consensus was further reinforced when the interviewees were asked to assess the effectiveness of existing strategies and initiatives. In response, the majority of participants conveyed challenges in assessing the effectiveness of these measures. This was attributed, in part, to the lack of clearly defined success indicators, which should have been established if the policy direction had been comprehensively formulated.

Only one participant associated with EDBM provided mixed feedback. Potentially influenced by foreign investment data in Madagascar, on one hand, they acknowledged that the country is perceived to have potential in the textile and agribusiness sectors, although these sectors are still considered niche markets. However, it was further asserted by the interviewee that Madagascar continues to be regarded as an underdeveloped nation facing various challenges, particularly famine, in its Southern regions, on a global scale. The participant interpreted this conflicting perception as indicative of the vague nature of the national policy on image-building, which is yet crucial for shaping international reputation and influence (Anholt, 2010), and for facilitating access to global markets and bolstering cultural and political standing as discussed in Chapter 1.

Subsequently, the interviewees underscored several reasons contributing to the current ambiguous state of the national policy on image-building. Chief among these factors, as consistently mentioned by most participants, particularly an expert from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is the prevailing lack of awareness among State actors concerning the paramount importance of cultivating a well-defined and positive international image.

Another contributing factor identified is the limited academic interest among Malagasy intellectuals in exploring and promoting the concept of a national image. The dearth of research and discourse on this subject hampers the development of a collective understanding and consensus regarding the significance of

shaping a positive national image. The participants contend that intellectual engagement and rigorous academic research can play a crucial role in raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of the potential benefits derived from skillfully crafting a national image.

To tackle these challenges, the participants proposed several recommendations. First, they suggested the promotion of collective consultations, bringing together representatives from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector to collaboratively define a national image policy. This inclusive approach, incorporating diverse perspectives and stakeholders, aims to cultivate a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in shaping the country's image. It is regarded as indispensable in crafting a coherent and effective national image policy that resonates with the nation's aspirations and interests.

Additionally, the participants highlighted the need for establishing a dedicated entity responsible for coordinating the formulation and implementation of the national image policy. This central hub would facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders, ensuring coherence in messaging and actions, and monitoring the progress and impact of image-building initiatives. By bridging gaps and promoting synergy among different actors involved in shaping the country's image, this entity would foster a more coordinated and impactful approach.

Furthermore, the interviewees stressed the importance of implementing concrete measures to encourage firsthand experiences of Madagascar. They proposed organizing initiatives similar to the *Journées internationales des Régions* – a series of events where regional representatives from various countries gather to promote cooperation, exchange knowledge, and showcase regional development initiatives – but on a larger scale, inviting international visitors to explore different regions of Madagascar. These initiatives would showcase the country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic potential, dispelling misconceptions and promoting a more accurate and positive perception of the country.

In addition, some participants emphasized the potential of harnessing the diaspora, who are actively engaged in the digital realm and well-versed in communication channels required for promoting alternative narratives. They claimed that the diasporas can play a pivotal role in shaping Madagascar's national image, leveraging their understanding of host societies and effectively conveying the country's strengths. However, it was acknowledged that while the diaspora can be valuable assets, they should be guided or provided with a framework, as they may lack professional communication expertise.

These recommendations collectively aim to establish a cohesive and inclusive approach to shaping Madagascar's national image but the participants also acknowledged the presence of obstacles that could impede their implementation. Divergent agendas and priorities among stakeholders have the potential to hinder the consensus-building process and obstruct the formulation of a national image policy. Overcoming these differences and fostering a shared vision would require effective communication, negotiation, and a willingness to find common ground.

Furthermore, they claimed that the scarcity of resources presents a significant challenge in executing image-building initiatives. Developing and implementing a comprehensive national image policy often demands substantial financial investments, which can be constrained in contexts with limited resources. Furthermore, the situation is complicated by the conditions imposed by international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These institutions often advocate for structural adjustment programs that can limit a country's flexibility in allocating resources towards image-building efforts. As a result, the intersection of financial limitations and international financial obligations presents a complex environment for effective image-building strategies.

In conclusion, this section further solidifies the unanimous agreement among participants that the current Malagasy national image-building policy faces a clarity deficit. This deficiency can be attributed primarily, though not exclusively, to the absence of clearly defined success indicators. Several factors, such as limited awareness among State actors and inadequate academic attention, collectively contribute to this lack of clarity. Proposed recommendations involve collective consultations, a dedicated coordinating entity, showcasing the country's strengths through on-ground initiatives, and harnessing the diaspora's communication skills. Overcoming divergent agendas and limited resources remains a challenge, but

addressing these issues is vital for Madagascar's global influence and image-building success. The following segment explores the interviewees' perspectives on how humanitarian campaigns impact Madagascar's image.

4.3 c. Pejorative campaigns may benefit the State

When discussing the impact of humanitarian campaigns on Madagascar's image, only two participants, one director at MOFA and one at EDBM, acknowledged the presence of "positive" images that specifically highlight local specialists, showcasing the country's skilled human resources. Notably, one interviewee, who works at MOFA, owns a communications agency in Fort-Dauphin and frequently collaborates with renowned organizations such as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and the WFP, highlighted that certain images within the campaigns emphasize statistical data, revealing a discernible decline in donations over the years. According to their perspective, this decline is attributed to a gradual increase in people's autonomy in managing their land, ultimately presenting a meliorative portrayal of Madagascar.

However, alongside that, most respondents agree that humanitarian campaigns have a tendency to foster a negative perception of the country, largely due to their excessive focus on poverty and oversimplified portrayal of the realities on the ground. This sentiment was particularly emphasized by two participants with profound knowledge of the Androy region. One of them, hailing from the area and maintaining frequent visits, articulated that these campaigns often "depict people living in small huts as if it were an exceptional case, whereas, in reality, such living arrangements are common and representative of the genuine lifestyle there".

Additionally, one interviewee working at MOFA asserted that humanitarian campaigns frequently overlook the fact that the communities in the Androy region possess substantial wealth in the form of thousands of zebus. The participant also highlighted the absence of discussions regarding the region's geostrategic significance and its diverse array of resources, including minerals, fishery assets, and cacti. These omissions result in a skewed and incomplete perception of the region, contributing to pejorative views that may hinder a comprehensive understanding of its true potential and the valuable contributions it can make to Madagascar's overall development.

An individual with extensive experience in environmental development projects expressed concern about the lack of differentiation between "raising awareness" and potentially becoming a "nuisance" in campaigns. They emphasized the need for clarity in representing causes such as famine or deforestation, where the actual culprits are not explicitly identified. Instead of directly targeting specific politicians responsible for these issues, campaigns often criticize the entire State, leading to detrimental effects on its image and disregarding the efforts made by specific entities or technicians in resolving the problems. To illustrate this point, the interviewee cited the example of awareness campaigns on bushfires in Madagascar, arguing that the focus should be on denouncing the individuals responsible for the chaos of the bushfires rather than implicating the entire Ministry. Adopting such an approach weakens and undermines the credibility of the latter.

An additional aspect raised relates to the absence of anthropological analysis in the campaigns. This omission hinders the recognition that certain practices, like consuming limestone powder, are actually acts of resistance rather than mere expressions of extreme desperation for the population. As pointed out by one participant, the consumption of limestone powder serves the purpose of reducing acidity in the stomach. However, the campaigns overlook this crucial information, leading to the portrayal of locals as helpless and uninformed, which may be perceived as condescending.

As reported by the participants, the dissemination of these exaggerated and decontextualized images is driven by the intention to capture attention and elicit financial support or in-kind assistance, such as donations of rice. In other words, the interviewees acknowledged that the need for financial resources and support, without which their actions would be impossible, motivates the decision to propagate these campaigns.

Furthermore, the participants emphasized that the perpetuation of pejorative humanitarian campaigns in Madagascar can be explained by the country's democratic status, setting it apart from nations such as Korea, China, or Rwanda. In this democratic context, the introduction of restrictions on these campaigns poses significant challenges, given the imperative of preserving freedom of expression.

Despite the negative portrayals generated by these campaigns, the respondents argue that they may not necessarily be detrimental to the State. As underscored by a participant from MOFA with prior experience at the National Office of Nutrition (*Office National de Nutrition*, ONN), an entity established in 2004 under the Prime Minister's Office to coordinate activities pertaining to the National Nutrition Policy, this form of representation could potentially bolster contributions during "Flash Appeals." These initiatives are specifically crafted to elicit donations from diplomatic missions in Madagascar. The argument put forth is that donors would have already been exposed to the negative campaigns and, as a result, would be more convinced of the urgency to contribute when the government's donation appeals are launched. In other words, these negative campaigns can raise awareness and instil a sense of urgency among potential donors, leading them to respond favourably to the government's donation appeals.

Many respondents labelled this approach as a "diplomatie de mendicité" (or "begging diplomacy") and criticized its perceived undignified nature, which can have detrimental ramifications for the country's international relations and reputation. Nonetheless, they contend that this strategy proves beneficial for the State as it effectively mobilizes donors and promptly responds to pressing challenges, particularly during crises like natural disasters or economic downturns.

Another example illustrating the usefulness of pejorative campaigns for the State was briefly mentioned by an individual working at CUA with entrepreneurial experience and expertise in political communication. He explains that seeking to capitalize on humanitarian representations related to the issue of malnutrition, the government embarked on initiatives such as establishing Moringa and Spirulina processing plants (Presidency of the Republic of Madagascar, 2019; Presidency of the Republic of Madagascar, 2020) which received significant support from partners such as Moringa Waves and USAID (Moringa Wave, 2022). This allowed the government to bolster its legitimacy by projecting a proactive role in addressing national challenges, to the extent that it was designated as the "champion in the fight against malnutrition" during the 33rd African Union Summit in February 2020 (UNFPA, 2020).

Moreover, the government proved shrewd, as these products face high demand, resulting in substantial financial gains. For instance, in 2019, the global market for Moringa-based products was estimated at 5 billion US dollars, and it is projected to reach 8.4 billion US dollars by 2026, with an anticipated annual growth rate of 8% between 2020 and 2027 (Facts and Factors, 2020).

In conclusion, the perspectives on Madagascar's national policy for image-building are divergent, with evidence supporting both its presence and absence. However, there is a consensus among participants that the current national branding policy lacks definition and coordination. Various factors, such as limited awareness among State actors and minimal academic interest, contribute to this lack of clarity.

Proposed recommendations include engaging in collective consultations, establishing a dedicated coordinating entity, showcasing the country's strengths through on-ground initiatives, and leveraging the communication skills of the diaspora. Despite challenges arising from differing agendas and limited resources, they maintain that addressing these issues is crucial for Madagascar's global influence and success in image-building.

Regarding the campaigns' impact, the participants all agreed that the campaigns frequently depict Madagascar in a negative way, which aligns with previous findings in the literature on INGOs' communication practices (Bond, 2015; Manzo, 2008; Thompson and Weaver, 2014). Nonetheless, interestingly, participants acknowledged that the government can capitalize on these negative campaigns to its advantage. These images, it appears, serve as a means for attracting financial aid, gaining legitimacy, and even pursuing profit-making ventures. This unforeseen revelation adds a new dimension to the understanding of the dynamics behind the negative image campaigns in Madagascar.

Indeed, these findings suggest a compelling correlation between the absence of a national policy for image-building, the government's potential benefits, and the prevalence of negative portrayals in current campaigns. In other words, the weak policy on nation branding, combined with the government's ability to capitalize on the negative portrayals in humanitarian campaigns, are two additional factors that may favour their persistence. Therefore, to effectively address these negative portrayals, the State must play an active role as part of the solution, alongside the traditionally cited actors, such as NGO staff, videographers, photographers, audiences, and project beneficiaries. While establishing a more assertive national image policy is crucial, as one respondent pointed out, it requires a long-term effort. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 of this study outlines a concrete short-term measure that the State could implement as an interim solution while awaiting the establishment of a solid nation-branding policy.

Chapter 5
Concluding remarks

5.1 Conclusion

The focus of this study was to examine whether African non-profit organizations portray Africa in a stereotypical way to test the assumption suggested in the literature that African voices can bring a different discourse.

The critical discourse analysis showed that images of children with bloated bellies and figures of women associated either with elderliness, motherhood or traditions, were salient in the selected dataset. Additionally, although elements of deliberate positivism were found in some materials produced by Madagascar Will Rise and Hype Mada, accompanying legends were oversimplified and overall, the concept of drought as a root cause of famine was also frequently implied in the examined materials. The results validate the first hypothesis (that local actors do not change representations) insofar as they indicate that, like common humanitarian/development communication practices, the discourse of Malagasy diaspora organizations tends to infantilize, feminize, normalize and dehistoricize famine in Madagascar. This is problematic in that it reflects many hegemonic ways of seeing, rooted in colonial discourses through which African countries are "otherised", and constructed as places devoid of agency, of continued suffering and helplessness. Consequently, it further justifies external interventions, thereby laying the foundations of unequal power relations with donors on one hand and beneficiaries of aid on the other.

Interestingly, it is worth noting that merely a fraction of online focus group participants, specifically the Non-Malagasy ones, acknowledged these dimensions. On the other hand, Malagasy respondents voiced more pronounced apprehensions regarding local organizations' transparency in donation management, the absence of sustainable projects, and the government's commitment. While all respondents' concerns hold significance, a plausible rationale for this contrast might be that a substantial portion of Malagasy participants possess limited familiarity with Critical Studies. This prompts a query on how to disseminate these viewpoints more widely within the Malagasy population.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews yielded intriguing insights, revealing that this particular type of humanitarian campaign can benefit the government, particularly in the absence of a clearly defined national branding policy. This circumstance may inadvertently encourage the persistence of such negative portrayals. Given these observations, effectively countering these negative representations demands the active engagement of the State, in conjunction with the traditionally addressed actors, including NGO staff, videographers, photographers, audiences, and project beneficiaries.

In light of these findings, the paper strongly advocates for an urgent and thorough debate on the ethical dimensions of famine and poverty representation in the Malagasy context. It emphasizes the necessity to raise critical literacy awareness among the Malagasy public and urges the State to implement concrete measures to address problematic campaigns. Before outlining specific actions in this regard, the following section presents recommendations targeted towards organizations involved in image-building campaigns.

5.2 Recommendations

As suggested by the focus group participants, the following elements might constitute initial steps toward moving away from negative representations: firstly, there is a need for more comprehensive contextualization that includes historical and political explanations of situations. This practice can help prevent misinterpretations and provide a deeper understanding of the complexities at play. Secondly, focusing on positive imagery that highlights successful local initiatives can be a powerful way to recognize the agency of communities. This approach shifts the narrative towards empowerment and progress, showcasing the active role communities play in shaping their own destinies. Additionally, when addressing sensitive subjects like suffering children, employing blurred images can serve to protect their dignity. This

approach aims to convey the gravity of the situation without subjecting vulnerable individuals to further exploitation or harm. Lastly, it's essential to broaden the scope of representation beyond women and children. By doing so, messages can avoid perpetuating stereotypes and infantilization. This broader perspective can contribute to a more balanced and accurate portrayal of various aspects of society.

It is essential that each organization implements these principles in their internal codes of conduct. Nevertheless, in order for them to stand accountable, an initiative similar to the one adopted by DOCHAS for example is needed in the Malagasy context. The former is a "network of international development and humanitarian organizations who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world" (Dochas, nd) which has published one of the most cited ethical communication guidelines in addition to CONCORD mentioned in Chapter 2. In the Malagasy case, FACT Madagascar (n.d), a Paris-based federation of associations working for development in Madagascar, could take the lead and invite its members to agree on similar guidelines.

However, as non-binding laws, they would not provide sufficient incentive for change in practice. This is where the State can play a role while waiting for the establishment of a robust nation-branding policy. An advisable step would be to amend the relevant legislation, particularly Laws N°60-133 and N°96-030 that govern NGOs and associations, to make the submission of a code of conduct for communication mandatory for registering their existence. Failure to comply would result in their inability to operate in Madagascar. The challenge lies in obtaining the political will to implement these measures.

Nonetheless, even if these recommendations were enacted, they would not reduce the use of negative imagery to zero since, as explained throughout this thesis, the latter is what works, allowing organizations to collect donations. Thus, efforts should simultaneously be directed towards democratizing critical literacy among the Malagasy public to ensure that when confronted with negative images, they take a step back from the latter, as the non-Malagasy focus group participants did. What strategies could be employed to achieve this?

The literature often outlines the implications for education (Jones, 2017; Tallon, 2013). For example, Pappoe (2020) suggests including critical (visual) literacy, defined as "the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson and Irvine, 1993, cited in Shor, 1999: p.2) in undergraduate programs. However, on one hand, given that in our case the Malagasy diaspora resides in several countries, this would require influencing the curriculum in each location. This may prove difficult because countries can have varying predispositions. Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, for instance, were "at the forefront of this [*Tintin in the Congo*] controversy to incriminate the album" (Girard, 2012: p.85). This leads us to believe that they would be more prompt than France or Belgium to introduce critical visual literacy into their school systems, especially in the younger grades. On the other hand, for those living in Madagascar, where not all students have access to education let alone university, this school-centred solution may not be effective, as it would sideline a large part of the society.

In these circumstances, methods legible to non-academic audiences may be appropriate. In this sense, it might be useful to create a podcast and/or a series of webinars freely available to all, as Slow Factory does with its Open Edu program, which invites prominent individuals (authors, activists, journalists, political figures; full list of stakeholders in Appendix 10) to speak on various topics, including Critical Media Literacy. The topics covered in the sessions of this program are Restorative Media, Constructive and Creative Media Literacy, Critical Media Literacy, Culture of Cancellation, Deconstructing the Myths of Greenwashing, Greenwashing, Wokewashing, and Why We Should Avoid Both (Slow Factory, nd). A further strategy could involve organizing a Critical Literacy Film Festival once a year, in collaboration with actors such as Cinepax (the largest cinema in the country). As part of this, documentaries such as *Stop Filming Us* by Joris Postema (2020) could be screened, followed by debates/roundtables. The creation of short videos with popular influencers such as Kala Naps, Aaron en Parle, Tefi, and Bob Tobias could also be helpful. The tone and manner should be educational yet humorous - akin to the style of former Daily Show host Trevor Noah - to engage Malagasy youth and inspire them to enthusiastically discuss the content with their peers. These clips would be shared on social media in particular on *Facebook* with hashtags like #criticalliteracymadeeasy. In addition, they could be broadcast on popular television channels at prime time on weekends to attract larger audiences. In addition, famous singers such as Shyn and Denise could be asked to create a song with

a catchy melody and easy-to-remember lyrics so that people can easily grasp the message urging them to question the images they encounter, particularly in the media. This song could be played primarily on radio stations such as Radio Plus, RDJ, MaFM, and Viva Radio. To initiate a reflection on the colonial origins of poverty porn, while avoiding a guilt-inducing approach, with the potential support of Fondation H, a contemporary art foundation initiated by entrepreneur Hassanein Hiridjee (Fondation H, nd), with two gallery spaces in Paris and Antananarivo, an exhibition in both locations could be organized to reach both Malagasy residents and those in the diaspora. Activist photographers such as Malala Andrialavidrazana who questions the visual legacy of colonization (Gattère, 2019) or Tangalamamy, who has interrogated the Right to Image in his work (RFI, 2021) could be solicited for this event which could also be followed by a roundtable discussion.

The SWOT analysis of these recommendations (see Appendix 11) indicates that their strength lies in the fact that, as noted above, they are non-academic initiatives. Therefore, they can reach more people than just students. Moreover, they are playful, not taking the form of formal courses. As such, they can motivate people to learn about Critical approaches. However, at the same time, there are several limitations to these suggestions. First, some of them require large amounts of funding, especially for paying influencers and singers. Others demand specific skills. For instance, for podcast creation, it is necessary to master the material, networking and interpersonal skills, as well as effective interviewing techniques. Moreover, the television and internet-based proposals are likely to target mainly members of the diaspora or Malagasy residents belonging to the middle and upper classes, thus excluding the impoverished. Another problem is the idea of hosting the festival at Cinepax and the exhibition at the Fondation H, both located in Antananarivo. This would prevent people in the provinces and rural areas from following the events. In order to increase their exposure to critical literacy, other methods should be considered. For example, to reach these marginalized groups (socially and geographically), it may be appropriate to conduct face-to-face outreach activities, accompanied by visual posters to be placed in public spaces such as the waiting rooms of community health centres or public schools. Being the most vulnerable to poverty porn, the message addressed to them should focus on presenting Article 21 of Law No. 2016-029 on the Media Communication Code, which guarantees the right to image, dignity and privacy of each individual. With an educational approach, these groups will be able to better understand their rights and claim them by refusing to be photographed. Finally, since the principles of critical literacy are based on the work of some of the authors cited in Chapter 2, especially Edward Said, the main challenge would be not only to translate their thoughts from English to Malagasy but also to render them accessible and digestible.

5.3 Future research

This study has several limitations that restrict its generalizability. It exclusively examines campaigns from Malagasy diaspora organizations based in France, and therefore, the findings may not apply to other organizations operating exclusively in Madagascar or those led by different African diasporas. Moreover, the corpus analyzed only includes intermittent images dating from 2020 to early 2022, warranting the need for more rigorous longitudinal studies in the future.

Additionally, since campaign managers from the organizations under consideration did not provide responses, their perspectives were not included in the research. Instead, the study involved a limited number of State agents, potentially not fully representing the diverse opinions within the government. To enhance validity and broaden understanding, further research should encompass representatives from other key institutions, such as the Presidency, Prime Minister's Office, and Malagasy Embassies. This broader scope of research will yield a more comprehensive and representative understanding of the State's viewpoint on national image policy and the implementation of humanitarian and development campaigns.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that the perspectives of the people photographed in the campaigns were not explored in this study, deliberately due to time and resource constraints. To gain insights into how these individuals perceive such representations and the reasons behind their selection and participation in these images, in-depth studies involving interviews with them would be beneficial. Such investigations can shed light on the dynamics of representation and agency of those featured in the campaigns.

Appendix

Appendix 1

State officials' reaction to Gaelle Borgia's video. Source: Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, Toliara Province, Androy Region, 2021 https://www.koolsaina.com/gaelle-borgia-accusee-diffuser-fausses-informations-insulte-envers-la-culture-malgache/

MINISTERE DE L'INTERIEUR
ET DE LA DECENTRALISATION
PROVINCE DE TOLIARA
REGION ANDROY
N° 035 -2021/RA/GOV/DR

REPOBLIKAN'I MADAGASIKARA
Fitiavana - Tanindrazana - Fandrosoana

COMMUNIQUE

C'est avec une grande stupeur et beaucoup d'indignation que j'ai découvert la publication insultante en ligne de la correspondante de France 24 et de TV5 Monde Madame Gaëlle Borgia sur la situation du Sud de Madagascar. Elle relaie des photos de Malagasy et affirme que la population d'Androy est contrainte de manger des chaussures pour survivre.

Le kere et la malnutrition qui sévissent dans le Sud de Madagascar ne doivent pas être un prétexte pour colporter des fausses informations et insulter la culture Malagasy et surtout celle des Antandroy.

En sa qualité de journaliste professionnelle, Madame Borgia devrait savoir que la peau de zébu, le bœuf traditionnel Malagasy se cuisine comme les abats en France mais que les chaussures sont « Fady », c'est-à-dire qu'elles représentent un interdit alimentaire. Quotidiennement on ne peut même pas piétiner une natte sur laquelle on mange avec une chaussure (kapa holitse), de surcroit la manger.

Il est déplorable de constater que pour exister publiquement cette journaliste détourne la réalité jusqu'à insulter notre culture et s'appuyer sur notre malheur pour tenter de briller publiquement.

Fait Ambovombe, le 2 3 JUIN 2021

Pr.Dr. SOJA T. Lahimaro
Gouverneur de la Région d'Androy

Appendix 2

Journalists' response to the official communiqué on Gaelle Borgia's post. Source: International press correspondents in Madagascar, 2021,
https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2931251690478292&set=pcb.2931251727144955

Antananarivo, le 28 juin 2021

Déclaration commune

Nous, journalistes correspondants de la presse internationale à Madagascar, signataires ci-dessous, sommes consternés de voir l'acharnement que subit notre consœur Gaëlle Borgia, suite à la vidéo qu'elle a publiée sur sa page *Facebook*, alertant sur la situation désastreuse de réfugiés climatiques dans la ville d'Ambovombe Androy.
Contraints de manger des chutes de cuir de zébu ayant servi à faire des sandales, pour ne pas mourir de faim, plusieurs réfugiés climatiques ont témoigné de ce nouveau mode de consommation auquel ils sont réduits. Cette situation est réelle et peut être aisément vérifiée dans le fokontany (quartier) Berary, Ambovombe Androy. Plusieurs photos et vidéos l'attestent. Pour avoir relayé une information inédite, vérifiée, confirmée sur place, Gaëlle Borgia est l'objet d'une campagne de dénigrement, d'insultes répétées sur les réseaux sociaux, qui s'apparentent à du cyber-harcèlement.

Selon l'article 7 du code de la communication « aucun journaliste ne peut être empêché, ni interdit d'accès, aux sources d'information, ni inquiété de quelque façon que ce soit dans l'exercice régulier de sa mission de journaliste ». Pourtant, un communiqué officiel publié le 23 juin 2021 des autorités Malagasy accuse notre consœur de véhiculer de « fausses informations ». Pour appuyer ce discours, un reportage diffusé sur la Télévision Nationale Malagasy (TVM) en date du 23 juin 2021 soutient que Gaëlle Borgia aurait soudoyé des réfugiés climatiques pour obtenir de faux témoignages sur une consommation de chutes de cuir de zébu qu'elle aurait inventée. Nous regrettons que nos confrères n'aient pas sollicité Gaëlle Borgia présente sur place, pour connaître sa version des faits et/ou pour avoir des précisions afin de constater par eux même une situation connue de tous. dans les quartiers défavorisés d'Ambovombe et que tout un chacun peut vérifier.

Nous déplorons l'utilisation malhonnête de médias publics pour susciter une haine dangereuse et mal placée envers une journaliste. User de méthodes violentes pour forcer des personnes à témoigner contre Gaëlle Borgia, comme cela a été raconté par plusieurs personnes Ambovombe, est choquant et à l'opposé de la liberté de la presse. Mais surtout, cela peut potentiellement porter atteinte à sa sécurité sur le terrain et se pose comme une entrave à sa mission, qui est de rapporter des faits, afin que le droit à l'information soit garanti.

Nous voulons et cherchons une presse libre dans ce pays que nous aimons et admirons. Dans un État où rien n'est parfait, la vérité peut parfois être blessante. Mais nous sommes avant tout guidés par notre profession et la déontologie du journalisme. Nous ne sommes pas des agents de communication. Nous ne voulons pas créer de polémiques mais simplement exercer notre métier de journalistes.

Nous rappelons que Gaëlle Borgia est en ce moment la seule journaliste internationale présente dans le sud de Madagascar. A l'heure où les frontières sont fermées et où l'accès aux zones sinistrées par la crise alimentaire est difficile, il est plus que jamais essentiel de laisser les journalistes faire leur travail librement. Nous rappelons qu'il s'agit d'une liberté garantie par l'article Il de la Constitution de la Quatrième République.

Nous demandons à ce que cette cabale nauséabonde devenue du cyber-harcèlement cesse pour Gaëlle Borgia et pour tous les autres journalistes, nationaux comme internationaux à Madagascar.

Laure Verneau, Le Monde Afrique, RFI
Manjakahery Tsiresena, AFP

Rijasolo, AFP
Raissa loussouf. BBC
Sarah Tetaud. Rfi. France Info
Laétitia Bezain. Rfi
Emre Sari, Jeune Afrique
Henitsoa Rafalia, Anadolu, European Pressphoto Agency (EPA)

Appendix 3

Tables showing OFG participant characteristics. Source: own graphs

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
1	M.	Female	French	France	Master's student in African Studies	24 January 2023
	M.	Female	French of Malagasy origin	France	Undergraduate student in International Relations	
	A.	Male	Italian of Congolese origin	France	Master's student in African Studies	
No. of Participants: 3						

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
2	M.	Female	French of Malagasy origin	France	Undergraduate student in Digital Art	26 January 2023
	A.	Male	Malagasy	Madagascar	Entrepreneur	
No. of Participants: 2						

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
3	L.	Female	Malagasy	France	Chairperson of an association	26 January 2023
	C.	Female	Malagasy	France	PhD student in Digital Marketing	
	D.	Female	Malagasy	Germany	Young Pedagogy graduate	
	N.	Female	French of Malagasy origin	France	Master's student in Nutrition	
No. of Participants: 4						

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
4	P.	Female	Malagasy	Madagascar	MBA student	28 January 2023
	T.	Male	Malagasy	Madagascar	Hotel manager	
No. of Participants: 2						

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
5	E.	Female	French	France	Special Education Teacher	30 January 2023
	R.	Female	French of Malagasy origin	France	Highschool student	
	W.	Male	Vietnamese	France	Student in Computer science	
No. of Participants: 3						

Group	Participants	Gender	Nationality	Location	Occupation	Date of Discussion
6	I.	Male	Malagasy	Madagascar	Humanitarian photographer	02 February 2023
No. of Participants: 1						

Appendix 4

Interview guide for OFG with non-experts respondents. Source: own graph

Topic	#	Questions
Part 1: Basic demographic information	1	Please, briefly introduce yourself (e.g. what's your name or preferred nickname, age, occupation, place of residence ethnic/cultural background?)
	2	What interested you in being involved in this study?
Part 2: Introducing "Kere"	3	How often do you follow the news on Madagascar?
	4	Have you heard about the famine outbreak in Southern Madagascar? If so, what do you know about it?
	5	How did you hear about this? (e.g social media, media outlets etc…?)
	6	If so, what have you heard?
Part 3: Presentation of images from the selected campaign to participants	10	What do you see in these pictures and what are your first impressions?
	11	How do you visualize Madagascar based on these images?
	12	Would you say that overall these images are typical of what you see in the media/NGO sector today?
	12	Do you think these photos are representative of the realities of the Malagasy communities in Southern Madagascar facing famine?
	13	If your answer was "no", what do you think would be a more accurate representation of the lives of famine-affected communities in Southern Madagascar?
	14	Do the campaigns encourage you to make a donation?
Part 4: Additional information	15	Are there any questions from your side? Or do you have anything else to add that we haven't discussed?
Thank you for your participation in this OFG		

Appendix 5

Consent form OFG participants. Source: own work

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

GLOBAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

Formulaire de consentement pour les groupes de discussion

Objectif

Je suis Faneva Rahenitsoa, étudiante en Master d'Études Africaines au sein du Global Studies Institute de l'Université de Genève. Je rédige actuellement un mémoire portant sur les représentations digitales de l'Afrique, notamment sur les sites web et les réseaux sociaux d'organisations de développement/humanitaires.

Dans le cadre de ce projet de recherche supervisé par Professeure Estelle Sohier, vous êtes sollicité(e) à participer à un groupe de discussion (focus group) virtuel au cours duquel vous serez invité(e) à discuter/donner votre avis sur les images extraites de trois campagnes humanitaires liées à la famine dans le sud de Madagascar.

Procédure
- Cette étude sera réalisée sur *Zoom* en présence d'une assistante qui assurera la prise de notes.
- Vous serez placé(e) dans un groupe de 2 à 5 personnes et il vous sera demandé de répondre, tour à tour, à des questions semi-structurées pendant 40 à 60 minutes.
- Ce groupe de discussion fera l'objet d'un enregistrement audio.

Objectifs
- Vos réponses resteront confidentielles et aucun nom ne figurera dans le rapport final. Par ailleurs, si vous choisissez de participer, il vous sera demandé de respecter la vie privée des autres membres du groupe de discussion en ne divulguant aucun des sujets abordés au cours de l'étude.
- Vous pouvez choisir de participer ou non au groupe de discussion, et vous pouvez arrêter à tout moment au cours de l'étude.
- Veuillez noter qu'il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises réponses aux questions du groupe de discussion. Souhaitant entendre les nombreux points de vue différents, j'encourage tout le monde à apporter sa contribution.

Traitement de l'information recueillie

Les enregistrements seront retranscrits de façon anonyme et confidentielle. Une fois transcrits, les enregistrements seront détruits, les transcriptions seront gardées de façon sécurisée.
Les résultats seront utilisés dans le cadre du mémoire et pourront éventuellement être publiés.

Pour participer à la recherche, je vous prie de bien vouloir cocher chaque case ci-dessous et de me retourner ce formulaire à l'adresse Faneva.Rahenitsoa@etu.unige.ch :
- Vous confirmez avoir lu et compris les informations ci-dessus et que vous avez eu la possibilité de poser des questions.
- Vous comprenez que la participation est entièrement basée sur le volontariat et que vous êtes libre de changer d'avis, et de sortir de l'étude à n'importe quel moment.
- Vous donnez votre consentement à l'utilisation éventuelle mais totalement anonyme de certaines citations de la discussion dans le mémoire.
- Vous êtes d'accord pour participer à l'étude.

Nom, prénom: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6

Tables showing SSI respondents' characteristics. Source: own graph

Participants	Gender	Institution	Background	Date of Discussion
1	Male	MOFA	Studies in Environmental audit, Corporate financial audit and Economic Diplomacy	23 May 2023
2	Male	MOFA	Initial training in teaching with experience as a consultant, specifically in Rural and Environmental Development projects	25 May 2023
3	Female	MOFA	International Law studies, PhD on Madagascar's brand image	07 june 2023
4	Female	MOFA	Former National Nutrition Office staff	19 june 2023
5	Female	EDBM	Marketing and International Management studies, 24-year career in Economic Development in Madagascar, Private Sector Development and Public Administration	21 june 2023
6	Male	CUA	Expertise in Political Communication and Social Entrepreneurship	19 july 2023
No. of Participants: 6				

Appendix 7

Interview Guide for OFG (turned SSI) With Experts. Source: own graph

Topic	#	Questions
Part 1: Background information	1	Please, briefly introduce yourself and professional background?
	2	Can you tell us about your current profession? What does it involve? What does a typical project/assignment look like?
Part 2: Transitional question	3	Is there a particular project you enjoyed working on?
	4	In your career, have you ever had to work on "difficult/complicated" issues? If so, can you tell me more? Did you encounter any difficulties?
Part 3: Presentation of images from the selected campaign to participants	5	What do you see in these pictures and what are your first impressions?
	6	How do you visualize Madagascar based on these images?
	7	Would you say that overall these images are typical of what you see in the media/NGO sector today?
	8	Do you think these photos are representative of the realities of the Malagasy communities in Southern Madagascar facing famine?
	9	If your answer was "no", what do you think would be a more accurate representation of the lives of famine-affected communities in Southern Madagascar?
	10	Do the campaigns encourage you to make a donation?
Additional information	11	Are there any questions from your side? Or do you have anything else to add that we haven't discussed?
Thank you for your participation in this OFG		

Appendix 8

Interview Guide for State Agents. Source: own graph

Topic	#	Questions
Part 1: Background information	1	Could you provide a brief introduction about your educational and professional background?
	2	Can you describe your current profession and responsibilities?
Part 2: Transitional question	3	What image is the Malagasy government aiming to portray to the international community?
	4	What strategies and initiatives have been implemented to promote this image, and what role does your institution play in these efforts?
	5	In your opinion, have these strategies and initiatives been successful in achieving the desired image?
	6	Have there been any challenges or obstacles encountered during the implementation of these strategies?
Part 3: Charity images	7	How do you perceive the influence of humanitarian campaigns on shaping the image of Madagascar? Do these campaigns align with or contradict the image promoted by the government? Why do you believe so?
Suggestions	8	Are there any recommendations or further remarks from your side?
Thank you for your participation in this SSI		

Appendix 9

Consent form SSI participants. Source: own form

UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE

GLOBAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

Formulaire de consentement pour un entretien

Objectif

Je suis Faneva Rahenitsoa, étudiante en Master d'Études Africaines au sein du Global Studies Institute de l'Université de Genève. Je rédige actuellement un mémoire portant sur les représentations digitales de l'Afrique, notamment sur les sites web et les réseaux sociaux d'organisations de développement/humanitaires.

Dans le cadre de ce projet de recherche supervisé par Professeure Estelle Sohier, vous êtes sollicité(e) à participer à un entretien individuel au cours duquel vous serez invité(e) à discuter/donner votre avis sur le lien entre les campagnes humanitaires sur la famine dans le sud de Madagascar et l'image publique du pays.

Procédure
- Cette étude sera réalisée en présentiel pour une durée de 30 à 60 minutes.
- Il vous sera demandé de répondre à des questions semi-structurées sur la base de votre expérience

Droits des participants
- Vos réponses resteront confidentielles et aucun nom ne figurera dans le rapport final
- Vous pouvez choisir de participer ou non à l'entretien, et vous pouvez arrêter à tout moment au cours de l'étude.
- Vous pouvez recevoir une copie de l'attestation de consentement.

Traitement de l'information recueillie
- Vous pouvez recevoir une copie de l'attestation de consentement.
- Les résultats seront utilisés dans le cadre du mémoire et pourront éventuellement être publiés.

Pour participer à la recherche, je vous prie de bien vouloir cocher chaque case ci-dessous et de me retourner ce formulaire à l'adresse Faneva.Rahenitsoa@etu.unige.ch :

- Vous confirmez avoir lu et compris les informations ci-dessus et que vous avez eu la possibilité de poser des questions.
- Vous comprenez que la participation est entièrement basée sur le volontariat et que vous êtes libre de changer d'avis, et de sortir de l'étude à n'importe quel moment.
- Vous donnez votre consentement à l'utilisation éventuelle mais totalement anonyme de certaines citations de la discussion dans le mémoire.
- Vous êtes d'accord pour participer à l'étude.

Nom, prénom : _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 10

Stakeholder map related to the recommendations. Source: own graph

During my semester abroad at Ewha Womans University, I also had the chance to enroll in Professor Jie-ae Sohn's class "*Development Cooperation and Media*", which aimed to provide us with an understanding of the role of communication in World Politics. The course was divided into four sections: (1) Understanding the media (2) NGOs & Aid agencies' use of communication strategies (3) Development Cooperation & Public Diplomacy (4) Tools to build an advocacy campaign. As part of this module, we were asked to conduct various stakeholder analyses of existing campaigns. Drawing on these teachings, I mapped the stakeholders relevant to the activities suggested in Chapter 6 on how to popularize critical literacy among the Malagasy public.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="3">ISSUE PREDISPOSITION</td></tr>
<tr><td>FOR</td><td>UNDECIDED</td><td>AGAINST</td></tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="3">LIKELIHOOD TO CARE AND DO SOMETHING</td>
<td>VERY</td>
<td>Local and international organizations working on ethical storytelling, education and HR issues

Activists/opinion leaders (e.g Marie Christina Kolo, Francesca Raoelison, Max Fontaine, Audrey Randriamandrato)

Activists photographers (e.g Malala Andrialavidrazana, TangalaMamy)</td>
<td>State authorities

Influencers (e.g Kala Naps, Aaron en Parle, Tefi)

Popular singers such as Shyn & Denise

Media industry (TVM, RTA, TVPlus, Radio Plus, RDJ, MaFM, Viva Radio)

Businesses (e.g Cinepax)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>Young Malagasy citizens and diaspora members active on social media, exposed to global movements such as BLM

Malagasy elites including academics, journalists, politicians, artists

Fondation H</td>
<td>Other segments of the Malagasy public that do not really consume images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Malagasy public in rural areas or those from lower social classes who are likely to be illiterate</td>
<td>Conservative Malagasy public</td>
</tr>
</table>

Appendix 11

SWOT analysis of recommendations. Source: own graph

During my academic exchange at Ewha Womans University (South Korea) in the fall of 2022, I had the opportunity to attend Professor Hyekyung Kim's lecture entitled "*NGOs and International Cooperation*", which was intended to give us an overview of the challenges facing NGOs today. The course was divided into three sections: (1) NGOs and their role in development (2) Organization and management of NGOs (3) NGOs and multi-sectoral fields. As part of this class, our assignments consisted of conducting SWOT analysis of NGO projects. In an effort to build on these lessons, I decided to apply this method to the recommendations proposed in Chapter 6 on how to democratize critical literacy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Activities reaching different profiles (not just students) Information presented in a fun entertaining way to motivate people to learn Combines both online and offline elements	Require large financial resources because it involves multiple stakeholders (see appendix 6) Demand specific skills (ie for the podcast the following are needed: technical, networking and interpersonal skills, ability to conduct efficient interviews) The ability to translate complex thoughts from English to Malagy in an entertaining and digestible manner is necessary Activities may mainly be accessible to diaspora members and Antananarivo-based individuals from middle to upper classes
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Opinion leaders have increasingly adopted critical outlooks on the representation of Madagascar (e.g Audrey Randriamandrato, a feminist activist denounced the "poverty porn" used by Dylan Thiry when he visited the island) so they may support the initiatives The Black Lives Matter movement may have increased people (especially the youth)'s predisposition to be exposed to critical literacy	Limited interest from the community, especially from conservative groups Sustainability problems due to lack funding and creative ideas Lack of access to people in rural areas or from lower classes

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