The 2003 *Pictures for Change* survey demonstrated that NGO usage of images had changed very little over the past ten years and the ongoing debate of majority world representation had not made a significant impact on the sourcing of images (see www.picturesforchange.org). Central to this debate (outlined in Kate Manzo’s paper, p9 in this journal) was the unresolved issue of how to work with local professional photographers in the process of imaging emergencies and development.

At the 2005 *Recontres Africaines De La Photographie* festival in Mali, African photographers met to discuss their latest exhibitions and the development of the profession throughout the continent. As western audiences have sought an alternative aesthetic many of the photographers have succeeded in making links to art galleries outside Africa, but few have developed working relationships with the international NGO’s that work within their country. ‘The problem we face is not quality but communication’ Chab Touré, director of Gallerie Chab in Bamako told me. While events such as the festival in Bamako encourage photographers to develop their inherent photographic culture, UK based NGOs need their image makers to conform to complex visual strategies designed in the UK and for a UK audience, which are not being understood by indigenous majority world photographers.

When discussing the issue of sourcing photography the subject is often divided into two separate categories, commissioning and stock. Commissioning is the process of...
employing a photographer to shoot a specific set of images for sole use by a particular organisation, publication or project. In the paper *The Production of a Contemporary Famine Image, Journal of International Development*, 16 (2004), I describe an emerging digital image economy that is training and using increasing numbers of indigenous majority world photographers to shoot on commission. The new mega picture agencies that facilitate this are, however, not driven by the ethical concerns of representation but rather by economic interest. As internet access and speeds increase so local photographers became a cheaper and faster way to deliver news photography. This model has proved that with investment into training and equipment majority world photographers can provide a more effective commission service to international clients than sending photographers from the north. The theory that a majority world photographer offers a different point of view is however much less clear as photographers working within this field learn to construct their images to maximize economic return and therefore file pictures that reflect a western perspective of affairs in their country.

The process of accessing and buying stock photography has also undergone immense change over the past decade. What was an inefficient cottage industry run predominantly by enthusiasts has become a highly competitive global industry spearheaded by Bill Gates and Mark Getty (Corbis and Getty Images). Images that are not digitized and metadata are invisible to the internet based databases that make up this new industry. As daunting as the new technology appears, it has however brought new opportunities for majority world photographers and a campaign for fair-trade photography. Organisations such as Africa Pictures.Net in South Africa and The Drik Picture library in Bangladesh are in the process of developing software systems that allow the photographers they represent to upload their own images and sell directly into an international market. Coupled with this is growing support for the work of Kijiji*Vision, a UK based NGO that lobbies international NGO’s and other stakeholders to adopt fair trade policies when buying stock photography.

In the guiding principles of Siobhan McGee’s *Report on the Review of the Code of Conduct: Images and Messages relating to the Third World* (presented to Dóchas Development Education Working Group, 6th July 2005) it is recommended that member organisations should ‘always use local photographers where possible (provided the quality is of sufficient standard)’. It is my argument that the issue is not one of quality but of investment and communication training. There are now a number of established networks that can provide lists of professional photographers in most countries of the world. Majority world photographers often lack the initial investment of a digital camera (now less than the price of a return airfare to the UK) although the long term economic benefits far outweigh the initial outlay. If NGO’s are serious about using local photographers, they need to invest in training photographers to understand the brand images they now rely on and in many cases the digital cameras needed to deliver online.

**Contacts and references**

Drik Picture Library: www.drik.net
Kijiji*Vision: www.kijiji.org
Recontres Africaines De La Photographie: www.afaa.asso.fr

**D J Clark** is Lecturer and Programme Leader on the MA Photography at the University of Bolton, a photojournalist represented by Panos Pictures, and is completing a PhD in the Geography Department at Durham University. In 2003 he was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship for research in Bangladesh and Ethiopia which was published in ‘The Production of a Contemporary Famine Image,’ *Journal of International Development*, 16 (2004). He has also authored a forthcoming article ‘China, Photography and Famine.’ And was one of the three curators of the ‘Imaging Famine’ exhibition, at the Newsroom Gallery in London last summer. d.j.clark@bolton.ac.uk