

## **Compassion | 'Een verjaarsdagscadeau voor Eldimar' en 'Julian Goedhart op reis in Peru' (winner Fly in the Eye Award 2023)**

Let's be clear right away: we do not like child sponsorship projects. They may have a seductive personal approach, but usually they result in an extravagant magnification of gratitude towards the sponsor. We see this struggle in two videos focusing on the birthday of sponsored children. While the root cause of poverty is named in the videos (an architectural 'entrenched' inequality in the one and a lack of job security in the other), the gratitude towards the 'generous' giver really is the center of attention. The perspective of the 'white savior' is therefore never far away – whether implicitly (in the one video the sponsor is present in the form of a [birthday present](#)) or explicitly (in the other video Dutch singer [Julian Goedhart](#) is traveling in Peru and 'spontaneously' decides to sponsor a child). We also witness the birthday of the sponsored children. When Goedhart states that he has 'never seen poverty up close', he makes it into an exotic phenomenon, because: 'here I am, in Peru'. While Goedhart is happy to see 'hope' in people – the eternal, misguided medicine against poverty – observing poverty up close seems to be a purifying experience for him: 'I think I have lost my Western skepticism'. The pitfalls of child sponsorship are ubiquitous in both videos, which is disappointing to see after Compassion already [won the Fly in the Eye Award in 2021](#) for a standard 'white savior' narrative.

Things often don't go very well in other places either. Despite the fact that the organization sometimes [quite nicely portrays](#) the role of the church as an expression of civil society where professionals on location get both screen time and credits, we almost fell off our chairs when we saw the [Compassion Experience](#), in which an 'African market' was recreated in Apeldoorn to make 'poverty and injustice more visible and close to young people.' All the pitfalls of the genre of the *misery simulation*, i.e. the privileged mimicry of poverty and other vulnerable living conditions, are featured here.

Of course, the pitfalls of child sponsorships and misery simulations do not only apply to Compassion. Several other organizations also fail to avoid them – and often fall into them with their eyes open. With regard to child sponsorship, [World Vision](#) this year again contributes to the pitfalls with their follow-up videos in the Chosen campaign, which we already nominated before ('hooray, you have been chosen'; we have rarely seen the sponsor being so central). [Red een Kind](#) also pulls out all the stops in a video contrasting poor, black children with the ideal picture of a Dutch middle-class family (and we see a milder expression of this at [Vastenactie](#)). Finally, these videos by [Livingstone](#) and [Stichting Mensenkind](#) show how quickly the usually misplaced perspective of the sponsor becomes central ('what it has brought me above all is a lot of gratitude'). All these communications receive a special mention from us.