

International Justice Mission | Mudraise Versla Slavernij (Mudraise Beats Slavery; nomination Fly in the Eye Award 2023)

With fundraising sports events it is almost never exactly clear what the connection is between the sporting part and the cause for which participants are making an effort. What about running 100 kilometres against the sexual exploitation of girls? 'Superheroes still exist,' [Free a Girl](#) states. It is precisely the absence of a logical link between the action and the goal that often makes the heroism associated with these kinds of events extremely dubious. We see another example at [Open Doors](#): 'Participating in the Muskathlon for Open Doors means you will be looking your persecuted brothers and sisters in the eye and hearing their stories first-hand. In the environment they live in, you deliver a sports performance of stature.' A strange way to discuss the vulnerable position of people: delivering a sports performance (of stature!) yourself in the place where they are persecuted.

However, these two campaigns only receive a special mention, because the nomination was clearly has to go to International Justice Mission with their [Mudraise against Slavery](#). Here, the sporting element is so curiously prevalent, and the connection so far-fetched, that we can hardly make sense of it. The FAQ on the site do help, but also make the symbolism misplaced: 'MudRaise is symbolic: you go through the mud (...). This will cost you and make you dirty. Our colleagues in the field also encounter many obstacles in their work of liberation; but they keep going until they have got that one girl out of the brothel, and rescued that little boy from the fishing boat.' This 'symbolism' is completely disconnected from the perspective of the exploited people at stake (and relegated to 'that one girl' and 'that little boy'). It is also completely disconnected from any context, as the heroism of the athletes and aid workers takes centre stage. And this happens while it is precisely exploitation and 'modern slavery' that require precision, context and care (please note that [OneWorld already warned](#) against the use of the term 'modern slavery'). While a sign reading 'Until All Are Free' is constantly dragged along in the aftermovie of the mud race, the video is entirely about the mud, the sweating, the laughing, the cheering and the medals. The actual problem, i.e. exploitation and violence, is not highlighted in the video and is unfortunately also neglected on the rest of the website. Even in the examples that appear, the explanation is generic, simplified, de-contextualised and fragmented, while elsewhere on the website the sports achievements are highlighted in all their glory. After their [Fly in the Eye nomination two years ago](#), IJM's [Mudraise against Slavery](#) is another shot far removed from the bullseye.