

UNICEF | 'Are you with us' (nomination Fly in the Eye Award 2023)

Besides a special mention for their ambassador video, this year UNICEF also receives a nomination from for glorifying their aid workers. This English-language video with Dutch subtitles is all about the aid worker as a hero, or, as the voiceover calls it, 'the deterrent', 'the persistent', 'the unreasonable'. Portraying aid workers as 'big-game players' that the world needs and 'diehards' who never give up shows the same kind of chest-beating as the AMREF Flying Doctors video, but this time even more dramatic and (therefore) even more misplaced. At times, largely due to the voiceover, the video is even strongly reminiscent of Apple's equally problematic 'Think Different' commercial (1997), in which consumers of an Apple computer are equated with famous world changemakers such as Martin Luther King, Mohammed Ali and Gandhi.

UNICEF's Annual Review 2022 also goes into the wrong direction: after first showing all the disasters in the world that year, the organisation states that they give children hope, safety, nutrition and education, and young people a voice (you can't give people a voice, because they always have one themselves). They even mention in their Annual Review that they colour the Netherlands blue on World Children's Day, after which they thank all volunteers and donors for the support while we only see images of anonymous children. The UNICEF campaign 'Help little go-getters now' is not very pretty either. Here, for €3, donors can help 'little go-getters like Mohahub', where we are shown a picture of a black child with only the statement that he is malnourished and without treatment 'won't get a fair chance for the future'.

In the aid workers-as-heroes category, a special mention goes to the Red Cross, for the interview in Trouw with two Red Cross workers who talk about 'what it is like to work in one of the most dangerous countries in the world', South Sudan, where they say it is one 'dull misery', and that despite having been to 'many hopeless places in the world' for their work. Doctors without Borders received a special mention as well, for 'Water: source of life and disease'. In this video images of anonymous, mainly black, people in vulnerable situations are accompanied by a monotone Dutch voice-over explaining how important clean water is for them and what Doctors without Borders does to achieve it. That the video was made this way is striking after the (international) declaration that Doctors without Borders was committed to better representation and wanted to break from the white savior genre.