

Nomination 1 Fly in the Eye Award 2024

'The struggle of Jennifer and her family' | Cordaid

The use of poverty porn, i.e. graphically depicting human suffering, particularly suffering bodies, devoid of agency and context, may be on the decline, but each year we still see various organizations guilty of it. Perhaps the most egregious video in this category in the past year was ['Enough is Enough'](#) by World Vision. This video employs all the hallmarks of poverty porn: generic footage of malnourished children, a dramatic voice-over, no speaking time for the people depicted, no context beyond the claim that 'on the other side of the valley' children no longer live in poverty thanks to the aid organization, bombastic music when the organization appears, and a call to the audience to 'put an end to child hunger now.' Normally more than enough for a nomination. However, because this is such an overtly American campaign adopted by the Dutch branch, and because World Vision already has two nominations in the 'Fly in the Eye' category this year, we have chosen to nominate a comparable campaign instead: ['The struggle of Jennifer and her family'](#) by Cordaid.

The video starts off reasonably well, with 11-year-old Jennifer from South Sudan explaining in her own language how she and her family cultivate a piece of land that produces too little because the soil is too dry. However, after thirty seconds, when a Dutch voice-over makes its entrance, things rapidly go downhill. In his first sentence, he immediately emphasizes that for this family, every day is 'a battle against extreme poverty,' as the entire family is shown sitting in a contrived and melancholy lineup before the camera. He then repeats that they harvest too little food due to drought and asserts that their poverty is 'enormous.' At this point, Jennifer emerges with a small plate of food and tells her sisters, 'this is all for today.' The fact that she says this with a laugh, and the camera then conspicuously zooms in on the plate, makes it evident that the scene was staged.

Jennifer then explains that 'getting water to the land' would be a solution but that they must travel far to do so. As we see Jennifer and her mother walking to a water point, the voice-over regrettably takes over again, repeating exactly what Jennifer just said. Besides being irritating, the voice-over could have been omitted entirely. It truly goes off the rails when it claims that there is now hope because Cordaid is helping with an irrigation system.

Of course, such a system is a good idea, and Cordaid's assistance in this regard is commendable. However, the way the narrative shifts abruptly from utter despair to abundant happiness is profoundly disorienting. Most jarring of all is that Jennifer and her family are absent from this segment. In other words, the recipients of the aid, the people using the irrigation system (seen giving each other slow-motion high-fives to celebrate the system's success), are entirely different people who are shown for the first time! At the end, there is a brief return to the same somber image of Jennifer's family, but the disconnect between their drought problems and the solution provided to others by Cordaid is astonishing – enough to warrant a nomination.

Special mentions also go to SOS Kinderdorpen, CARE Netherlands, and Hart voor Kinderen. While [Hart voor Kinderen](#) has once again released some traditional poverty porn spots over the past year, ['Give light, give life'](#) by SOS Kinderdorpen and the [Socutera TV spot](#) by CARE randomly feature children in vulnerable situations.