

Nomination 2 Highflyer Award 2024

'Free To Be Me' + 'Women of the Soil: Cultivating Change in Kenya' | HIVOS

The second Hoogvlieger nomination this year goes to HIVOS. This Dutch INGO, which supports civil society organizations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East in the areas of digital rights, climate justice, and gender equality, previously won the Hoogvlieger Award in 2019 for its campaign '[Small Change, Big Deal](#).' Last year, as part of an alliance, they were also nominated for '[Voices for Just Climate Action](#).' This year, HIVOS stood out in the field of gender equality.

The first campaign, '[Free To Be Me](#),' focuses on supporting LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists in twelve countries in the Global South (though which countries these are isn't immediately clear). A strength of HIVOS in this campaign – and consistently in their work – is their emphasis on supporting local organizations and activists, enabling them to advocate for equal rights and be empowered as leaders.

In the [accompanying 8-minute video](#), two local HIVOS staff members in Nairobi, Kenya, Saida Ali and Andrew Maina, speak about how LGBTIQ+ individuals in Kenya (and possibly across the continent, the geographical context remains somewhat unclear) often lack full (economic) rights and access to (economic) spaces. Both speak calmly and eloquently about these issues, and we see them walking through the city together when not speaking indoors. While it might have been more compelling to include voices beyond HIVOS staff, the video succeeds in its straightforward approach, delivering a clear, engaging, and urgent message about LGBTIQ+ rights.

In another successful HIVOS video, a variety of voices are included, especially those of individuals who have experienced inequality and are fighting for equality. In the video '[Women of the Soil: Cultivating Change in Kenya](#),' part of the campaign [Rural Women Cultivating Change](#) (RWCC), several rural Kenyan women share their stories. As 'critical agents of change,' they contribute to gender equality within their communities and particularly within the agricultural economy, focusing on crop diversity.

While HIVOS's role in the RWCC program is mentioned, the video primarily highlights the work of three grassroots organizations: the Seed Savers Network, Groots Kenya, and the Indigenous Women & Girls Initiative, as well as their impact on women farmers in Kenya. This 18-minute mini-documentary takes its time to interview a wide range of women (and some men), addressing politics and policies along the way.

Though both '[Free To Be Me](#)' and '[Women of the Soil: Cultivating Change in Kenya](#)' remain unmistakably NGO-produced films (the voice-over and music in the latter were somewhat unnecessary), they showcase the potential of (mini-)documentaries when time is dedicated to allowing people to speak and explain issues of structural gender inequality.

We'd also like to highlight three successful shorter videos on this topic: [this video](#) from the [Green Livelihoods Alliance](#) (including IUCN NL and Milieudefensie) on the inclusion and participation of women in protecting tropical forests; [this video](#) from Rutgers featuring Kenyan youth activist Beatrice Nyamwenge Okech, focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR); and [this video \(and toolkit\)](#) from Make Way on embracing intersectionality within SRHR. All three deserve a Highflyer special mention!