

Nomination 5 Fly in the Eye Award 2024

'Lichtjes' (Chosen music video) | World Vision

We nominated Chosen for a Fly in the Eye Award four years ago and debated whether a continuation of this campaign could be considered again. However, the music video 'Lichtjes' ('Lights') from Chosen, released in May 2023, raises the bar even further. In short, we couldn't ignore it. The lyrics immediately dive into a cascade of clichés:

*'I see you standing there
In your worn-out clothes
You long to go to school
But you must work, you cannot learn.'*

The accompanying visuals, combined with the pathos of the music and voice, amplify these stereotypes (and their decontextualized representation) to the fullest extent. And it continues:

*'Every day again
You must walk for hours to fetch water
A better life seems far away
Your hope for opportunities has faded.'*

But just as all hope seems lost, the Chosen element of the campaign appears: the illuminated benefactor is chosen by the anonymous child (meant to symbolize the issues described above). The concept of 'being chosen' is revealed:

*'You see me standing there (...)
Then you point to me
You have chosen me
I can't believe it
So special, I am Chosen.'*

This highlights the centrality of the sponsor in the campaign once again. The inappropriate combination of overly dramatized poverty clichés that perpetuate decontextualized stereotypes and the almost lyrical heroism of 'the chosen one' (the sponsor) is symptomatic of fundraising based on child sponsorship.

This isn't the only campaign that raises concerns. For instance, PLAN International's selection menu, where sponsors can extensively choose (region, gender, age) before being shown a photo of a potential sponsored child, remains deeply troubling. It is, in fact, the exact practice Chosen attempts to critique, albeit in a misguided way.

The notion of contact between sponsor and sponsored child also rarely comes across effectively, at least in its representation. For example, the Woord en Daad Foundation produced an elaborate video titled 'I wish you... a hopeful future!' based on letters received by a family (?) in Burkina Faso. However, the Dutch letter writers primarily send: figuratively (in a religious sense) and literally (as we learn almost nothing about the recipients of the letters).

In the video, the letter recipients in Burkina Faso are seated together at a table in a family setting, but it is entirely unclear whether they are actually family. They have no interaction with one another, and we learn nothing about their specific circumstances. Both PLAN and Woord en Daad receive a special mention from us. And a more general piece of advice: sponsorship programs, don't do it.