

Brief report panel debate *Stop filming us!* 18/02/2021

Film screening and discussion with director Joris Postema

Documentary maker Joris Postema explores in 'Stop Filming Us' how people in Goma (DRC) value the way African people are portrayed in Western media. His journey leads to special encounters, serious discussions, and remarkable insights. And for many who have been working 'in the field' the 55 minutes present numerous recognizable dilemmas. Stop Filming Us is a must-see for anybody who is working in humanitarian aid or development aid.

For the constituency of KUNO, KUNO organized a film screening together with director Joris Postema and explored the relevance of his film for humanitarian practice.

The three panel members, with their differing backgrounds and professional experiences, brought differing insights to the discussion after the film screening of *Stop filming us!*. Here these insights are briefly summarized.

Panel members:

- Nina Schmitz, Head of Communication & Fundraising - Stichting Vluchteling
- Daan Verbaan, Coordinator Disaster Management & Humanitarian - Kerk in Actie
- Joris Postema, Director of the documentary *Stop filming us!*

First of all, by all panel members it was agreed that the scene of the documentary where the Congolese people discussed with Joris Postema whether he should have left the DRC was a powerful scene. In the documentary, it brought up the discussion amongst the locals whether they were ready to ask the foreigners to leave. This links the relevance of the documentary to the humanitarian field: the question whether people are ready to do it themselves, should be asked more frequently.

Yet, this debate also brought up three fields of tension in the humanitarian sector. Categorized by each panel member these main issues were brought forward:

Daan Verbaan touched upon the tension between the problematic side of life in vulnerable areas on the one hand and the power of life and agency on the other. The latter may be more interesting, yet funders have an interest in depicting 'the problem'. The challenge for the humanitarian field is to focus more on the positive elements, without forgetting issue one wishes to raise awareness for. Daan points out that integrity is at the heart of the matter, which becomes complicated through the involvement of the multiplicity of partners, funders and broadcasting companies who all have their own ideas on how it should be done.

Nina Schmitz brings forward that she was very impressed by the scene where a local filmmaker is asked by the INGOs to depict local people in a vulnerable position, on behalf of the interest of western funders. Nina points out that NGOs think that they know what funders want, because the system works. However, it might actually work in a different way as well. There is a responsibility with NGOs to educate their audiences on what is actually going on 'there', and reflect upon the instructions we give to local filmmakers on how to present their images. She argues that we should talk with the people, instead of about them.

Joris Postema brings the conversation back to funding, explaining that there is a lot of inspiration amongst local filmmakers, but it is very difficult to get their projects funded. This is an element that needs a lot more attention, and it might have to be picked up by humanitarian organisations (with a double mandate, e.g. in media). Joris raises the idea of giving the same assignment to a filmmaker in the Netherlands and in the DRC. He thinks we could learn a lot from the difference between both projects, which would clearly represent the issues at hand.

To conclude, the screening was received in a positive atmosphere and inspired many viewers to share it with other humanitarian organisations for its relevant lessons. Agreed upon was that we are not there yet, but we are working on it: attention for displaying recipients of aid remains a continuous project.