

Video Script 'Through Innocent Eyes... the Children of War'

Total Time: 17 minutes

*Fighting broke out in the main streets of the city today...
We're only a hundred metres from the frontline...
Under fire from snipers children still trying to get to school...
More than a thousand civilians lost their lives...
... and still the death toll rises...*

Narrator: Today, war is global. Right now, millions of people – hundreds of races and cultures – are all trying to survive the same set of circumstances. Their homeland is at war. Today, war is usually directed against civilians, not soldiers. They are easy targets. Organised armies can fight back. Civilians can't. Today, more than ever, war affects children. And of all the people affected by war, children are the most powerless.

New Zealand Students:

"They are so young, and they often don't know what's going on or why their homes are being destroyed. They have got no idea why these people are fighting."

"The ordinary people are probably the most defenseless victims in wartime."

"I don't agree with war personally, because everyone seems to lose, no-one wins, people get hurt and people die."

Narrator: There are many different ways children can be hurt by war. Bullets, bombs, rockets and land mines that were intended for enemy soldiers can hurt or kill children instead. Sometimes innocent civilians are targeted intentionally.

An orphan in Rwanda – found hiding amongst the corpses of her family.

Emmanuel Bior – an eight year old Sudanese refugee – scarred for life whilst fleeing with his family.

14 year old Sohn – victim of one of Cambodia's millions of land mines.

Ayir, aged seven, and Tong, aged four. With their mother, they walked more than 140 kilometres in 10 days to find a feeding station in the Sudan.

FORCED OUT AND FORCED APART (graphic)

Narrator: Children and their families can be forced out, forced to run for safety, leaving their homes, their villages, sometimes even leaving their country. Many are horribly injured or killed during their escape. Many more end up in refugee camps like this one in Zimbabwe. It can take months, even years before these people can return home safely.

Monique: *"We were given information that some people were coming to kill us. So my whole family ran out of the house and we went and hid in the bush. During the night we were separated. In the morning, my mother and father were gone. I never saw my mother again. I saw so many of my friends killed. My friend Juri – I remember her the most, because she was my close friend. But I saw many others killed as well. I wish everything could come back to normal, and that I could go back to school. That is my wish."*

Narrator: Many children are separated from their families or orphaned during war. Some are lucky. In time, they are reunited with family members. This is Biziru. He was nine years old when he was separated from his family, during the war in Rwanda. When he was brought to the Unaccompanied Children's Centre, he weighed only 11 kilos. Most of his immediate family were killed – but World Vision workers managed to find some other family members, and reunited them with Biziru.

New Zealand Students:

"They're just so helpless. Sometimes kids are separated from their parents and their relatives and they're practically walking around in the streets with nothing, nothing at all!"

"I think it's terrible, I can't understand how other humans can do that to kids. And considering a lot of them have kids of their own I can't understand why they can do it to other people's."

A COUNTRY DESTROYED (graphic)

Narrator: Eventually continued fighting means the destruction of roads, houses and fields. Schools and even hospitals are destroyed. Transport and communications grind to a halt. Food and supplies dwindle. The economy of the country can end up in ruins. People in the towns and villages find themselves walking further and further away from home to find food and clean water. Often they put themselves in danger, coming close to enemy soldiers or areas where there are land mines. And people can begin to starve, and die of disease. War is the single biggest cause of famine in the world.

New Zealand Students:

“I think a lot of the time, people don’t know why there are wars – you know they say that it’s about things like land and money and issues, but there’s really no reason for wars but people do it because they don’t want to compromise. I think it boils down to the fact, people don’t want to compromise and then, so they go to war. They think that what they can’t gain by talks or negotiations they think they’ll get it by force.”

“I think the scariest thing about being in a war would probably be being alone. There would be no one to turn to if my family like, if I’d been separated or they’d been killed. I think that would be the scariest thing.”

MONEY FOR GUNS (graphic)

Narrator: What little money the country has is often used to fund the war effort – it buys guns and ammunition – it pays for soldiers and mercenaries. Around the world, two million US dollars are spent on the military every minute – over one thousand billion US dollars a year. But a country at war often neglects the needs of civilians and children, there is not enough money left over to pay for schools, hospitals or medicine.

New Zealand Students:

“They are losing everything that they ever had and have to survive with basically no food, no water or electricity or anything else. It is amazing that they do. I don’t know how they could survive in those sort of conditions.”

“No-one’s really there for them.”

“I’d feel really scared and I wouldn’t know what to do.”

“I would panic. I probably would panic, I think something like that I can’t picture anything like that ever happening to me. Its something that you just don’t, can’t imagine ever happening.”

Narrator: In some countries, children are even forced to fight. Around the world, there are nearly quarter of a million soldiers under the age of sixteen. Some are as young as eight. Even though most countries have laws to stop children joining armies, many wars are happening inside countries – civil wars, where government troops are fighting against rebel armies. These rebel armies just want soldiers, no matter how young and they don’t care about breaking the government’s laws.

New Zealand Students:

“It’s horrible how some kids are forced to kill people.”

The scariest thing would probably be watching people die around you and not being able to do anything about it?”

“When I see on TV like war and stuff, I get sad because lots of the pictures show children or murdered people. But then I get angry because why are people doing this? That is why I ask why? There is no reason that I can find that justifies killing on any level.”

A LIVING NIGHTMARE (graphic)

Narrator: Many children will be haunted by memories of war for the rest of their lives. Children who have lost their homes and everything they owned. Children who have been forced to watch their friends, their neighbours, their families killed in front of them. After days and nights spent living in fear, trying to cope with sadness and loneliness, these children will still have the nightmares long after they have reached safety. Heather McLeod works for World Vision in the Unaccompanied Children Centres of Rwanda. The country was the scene of horrendous genocide in 1994.

Heather McLeod: *“From what I’ve seen when I’ve travelled round the country – I’ve seen clothes scattered over the road, with blood on it, that you know has been because people have run in distress, and they’ve been killed there. And it’s just town after town that you see that and the enormity of it just seems incredible to me. Children have been moved around, you hear stories, kids who’ve been moved again and again and have no security. The stories have been about seeing people being massacred and seeing kids sweep out blood, to clear up so they can sleep in a building. Those are the stories that will stay in my mind.”*

THE HIDDEN KILLERS (graphic)

Narrator: Wars can still kill people long after the fighting has stopped. Many countries around the world have been scattered with land mines. Small powerful explosives that can lie hidden for years, waiting for someone to come too close. Millions of people have been killed or injured by them. Many of them children. This is Madalena Esperanca, from Angola. She is ten years old. Two years ago, while she was walking from her village to visit relatives, she stood on a landmine, and lost her right leg to the hip. Louisa Domingos is 14. She was also caught in a landmine blast two years ago.

Louisa: *“I was out with a group of other people looking for food. We were close to the path, near some eucalyptus trees, looking for casava, when I fell into the mines.”*

Narrator: Louisa now has two artificial legs, and is back with her family. This is New Zealander Dave Karam, a demining expert working in Angola.

Dave Karam: *“What we’ve done here is those blue and white sticks are where we’ve actually found the mines. Those were all anti-personnel blast mines. So you can see from this location on the other side of the road that some of the mines were not more than 10 or 11 inches from the road. So it’s an immediate risk to the people who are using this road.*

So this belt was found about 9 or 10 mines here, another 4 on the other side and another 3 just up here. All within a matter of 2 to 3 meters from the sides of the road. And that’s why we get a lot of accidents here because the people are walking along, the local people carrying wood, food or whatever, as the vehicles come past and they move off the sides, for the vehicles and pop. And we also found that two of the mines up here and again they are 10 inches from the side of the road, had both been set off and if it wasn’t due to the fact of rains getting into the mines and causing them to multifunction in some sense then those people still have their legs.”

Cocceicao Antonio Sangunza: *“I went out to the field to look for food because I was hungry. And I stepped on a mine. Life is hard enough on two legs – how is it going to be when I only have one? On two legs I can move out into the market, into the field – now I am depending on one leg. How am I going to do it? Mines are something really bad in life.”*

Narrator: In Cambodia 40 million of these land mines have been left scattered across the fields and roads. That’s enough to kill and injure people for the next hundred years.

New Zealand Students:

“I can’t see how human people, being so “civilised”, can actually go that far to killing other human beings. Just for greed, or land – a human life is worth more than that.”

“They lose everything they’ve ever had and the way of surviving, I don’t know – I don’t understand how they can survive. Somehow they manage to scrape by because they survive – but losing everything must be absolutely terrible – horrible.”

“ I think it is wrong and shouldn’t be any wars, and it’s real stupid.”

“ I think it’s pretty sad that the civilians get hurt in wars and that it should be soldier to soldier sort of war, innocent people shouldn’t get hurt..”

A PATH TO PEACE (graphic)

Narrator: War brings terrible suffering to children – but right now, many people are trying to help these children of war, with food, shelter, medical care – and love. And many people are working for peace, so that other children won't have to suffer.

Over the years, many countries have seen war. Countries like Mozambique where nearly 20 years of war caused massive devastation. But today, things have changed. With peace has come the return of many refugees. Crops are growing in the fields again. Children are able to live normal lives – free from the fears of war. They are back home. Countries like Mozambique show peace and recovery are possible. With help from their neighbours, from other foreign governments and aid organisations, help from people all over the world.

It's hard to fight for peace during a time of war. And it can be even harder to bring about change when you live in a country that is many miles away from the war zones. But there are still ways of taking positive action, without becoming involved in the fighting. Ways we can help stop the suffering of millions of children around the world.

The Bible: *“They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore”* (graphic)

New Zealand Students:

“Yeah I think we should help those who we see are defenseless and helping themselves.”

“If we make our opinions well known, maybe we can change someone else's.”

“We could help someone like write to Parliament or, something to someone to just help other countries.”

“One person like me couldn't save the whole lot of them, but I could try to save one of them at least..”

“Just try and do something about it – just try and help them that little bit.”