



Groundbreaking Virtual Reality Films Released by World Vision and Contrast VR

Young filmmakers tell their #StoriesAfterSyria

[LONDON, DOHA, SAN FRANCISCO] (March 15, 2018) – After seven years of war, Syrian children living in refugee camps want to tell their stories and be heard. Aid and development agency World Vision has partnered with Al Jazeera’s virtual reality studio Contrast VR to release today *Dreaming In Za’atari: Stories after Syria*, an immersive film exploring the hopes and dreams of three young people living in Jordan’s Za’atari refugee camp. VR animations bring their stories to life, transforming the spaces around them.

Dreaming in Za’atari is directed and produced by Contrast VR’s editorial lead Zahra Rasool and narrated by actor Liam Cunningham, United Nations Ambassador Dr. Alaa Murabit and former head of the United Nations Development Programme and former Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark.

In addition, World Vision and Contrast VR are unveiling *7 Stories for 7 Years*, seven powerful, short 360 films written, shot and directed by child refugees to mark the seventh anniversary of the conflict in Syria. Using Samsung 360 cameras, Contrast VR producer Joi Lee trained the seven first-time filmmakers in immersive shooting so they could share their experiences with the world, both the challenges they face and why they still have hope. Post-production was completed by Contrast VR’s Maria Fernanda Lauret. The films are a part of Contrast VR’s ongoing initiative “My People, Our Stories,” a project to train and equip young, diverse filmmakers to produce VR storytelling from within their communities.

Eighteen-year-old wife and mother Marah, says: “When I first arrived to Za’atari, I didn’t care for anything. But after receiving photography and film training, it became my dream to become a professional filmmaker. I hope with this workshop in 360 video, I can film a great movie about life here in the camp. My message to every young woman in the world is, do not stop dreaming for any reason.”

Over the past seven years, more than 5.6 million people have fled Syria, seeking refuge in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and beyond. Millions more remain trapped inside Syria.

“For millions of children, life as a refugee is all they know. Syria is a place their parents talk about and they hear of in the news,” says Wynn Flaten, Director of World Vision’s Syria Response. “Children aren’t mere victims, though, they bring a perspective and insight to crises that can shock and inspire decision-makers and adults around the world. That’s why this project matters to us, and them.”

“When World Vision approached us, we saw an invaluable opportunity,” explains Contrast VR’s Joi Lee. “These young Syrians have grown up under constant news coverage of their plight, but rarely have they been given the opportunity to share their stories and shape news coverage. It was clear they had their



own stories they wanted to share. By training a new group of young storytellers in VR filmmaking, we can see their perspectives come to life in an intimate and visceral medium.”

All the films can be viewed across World Vision’s social media channels, and on Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera Arabic, AJ+, Contrast VR and Samsung’s social media channels.

More information is available at www.wvi.org/storiesaftersyria

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About the filmmakers

In, *7 Stories for 7 Years* seven young filmmakers share intimate portraits of their lives in Za’atari Refugee Camp.

- 15-year-old Obada’s film is about football and the friendships he’s formed
- 16-year-old Yousef profiles his older brother who started a barbershop in the camp
- 16-year-old Tabarak remembers adapting to life in Za’atari
- 16-year-old Nisreen profiles her disabled theater teacher
- 17-year-old Marah, a young wife and mother, offers a glimpse into her life and shares her aspirations to become a filmmaker
- 16-year-old Najat explores how she developed a love of performing in Za’atari
- 15-year-old Mahmoud compares the camp to life in Syria

About World Vision

World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. World Vision began responding to the Syrian crisis in 2011. It works with Syrian children and their families inside Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. Last year World Vision assisted 2.2 million Syrians including 1.3 million children. That work included psychosocial support and child protection initiatives, providing access to clean water, sanitation, health services and education. Learn more at wvi.org

About Contrast VR

Contrast VR is Al Jazeera’s immersive media studio, specializing in the production of compelling 360-degree video, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) content. The studio also collaborates with existing departments across Al Jazeera Media Network to produce best-in-class 2D and 3D content. Contrast VR produces unique documentaries, videos, and live streams that push the boundaries of narrative storytelling while taking viewers directly to the front lines of the biggest news events in the world. Learn more about the studio at contrastvr.com.

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