THE CHALLENGE OF DEPENDENCY

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It is so easy for Westerners to think that the problems in the developing world can be answered by pouring money into it. This is true in the political sphere but also in the mission world. It is reletively easy to give money to projects and such like, but the results are not always as positive as we might hope.

The BBC has a fascinating piece today (and a TV programme tonight) on this issue.

> *While I was filming in Uganda, local newspaper editor Andrew Mwenda took me and my crew to his home village near the town of Port Loco in the west of the country. There he introduced us to two men, one in his sixties and one aged 26.*
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> *"This man represents the tragedy of aid," he said pointing to the older of the two. "While this man represents the potential of aid," he said indicating the younger man.*
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> *Mr Mwenda explained that the sexagenarian was the chairman of the local parish council who had spent most of his life living off aid money, supervising projects meant to benefit the community.*
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> *Today he is an alcoholic who still lives with his mother.*
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> ***Dysfunctional lifestyle***
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> *The younger man started selling potatoes in the village square at the age of 17.*
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> *Less than 10 years later he owns the largest and busiest store in the village. He has not received one penny from aid, yet he has bought himself land and has built a house.*
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> *"So you see," Mr Mwenda said. "If aid were to offer this young man support in the form of low interest credit he could not only expand his business offering employment opportunities and a valuable service to his community, he could also eventually pay the money back."*
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> *But instead of funding innovation and creativity, aid has funded the chairman's dysfunctional lifestyle. (read more).*

If we want to make a difference in the developing world, outside funds need to be given with sensitivity in such a way that they encourage local initiative and don't squash local ownership. Outside giving needs to respect the dignity of the recipients and must never be applied out of a feeling of guilt or superiority by the donors. Aid and outside funding can be extremely helpful, but it is a two edged blade and must be used carefully and wisely.