MORE ON MALARIA, NETS AND FOREIGN AID

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Category: Africa

My thoughts on malaria and the aid industry in Africa stirred up some comments a few weeks back. Well, tmsruge weighs in with much stronger comments than I mine, inspired by some celebrity stunt in the US that I was unaware of.

> *The solution to malaria, much like varied solutions to ending our addiction to aid, can be found within Africa. My problem with the strategy of dealing with malaria employed byÂ Malaria No More,Â Nothing but Nets, et al is that it erodes the ability of local capacity to deal with this problem. It is also notÂ infinitelyÂ sustainable, and dare I say it, Â smacks of paternalistic ethos. Itâ€™s a band-aid on a gashing wound. Itâ€™s the â€œfly-to-Africa-and-adopt-a-brown-baby-instead-of-investing-in-a-sustainable-business-that-can-help-the-entire-familyâ€ syndrome. Africaâ€™s capacity to tackle these issues is vastly eroded by a Western celebrity culture of â€œlook at me, look at me, I am saving Africaâ€ -ism, and the misguided notion that Africans canâ€™t do anything for ourselves, therefore it is the Westâ€™s right to do things for us.*

> *Sure bed nets keep you from being bitten, but what are we supposed to do when we are not under the nets? But our lives could be that much richer is were earning a living as workers in the non-existent African anti-malarial industry. We could have been growingÂ artemisia and pyrethrum or working at a bed net factory; feeding my family with the proceeds, but alas, I canâ€™t...*

> *Wouldnâ€™t it be better to invest money into indigenous companies that can make the nets, therefore maintaining a sustainable business selling bed nets? Or investing in the agricultural sector so farmers are more able to meet demand for crops likeÂ Artemesia annua andÂ pyrethrum, easily-grown botanical ingredients in Â anti-malarial drugs?*
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> *These seemingly well-intentioned celebrity stunts ofÂ altruism are not killing mosquitos, instead they are killing the livelihoods of the very people that are supposed to benefit from the nets. And this is not symptomatic of celebrity cluelessness as applied to the eradication of malaria. Itâ€™s systemic fault in International Development sectors. Even WHO is also implicitly clueless in this regard. (Read more)*

Once again, I realise that this is counter-intuitive, but it makes a lot of sense. Creating and supporting local industries isn't as attractive as simply pouring money in to solve a problem, but it is a much better long term solution.

HT White African via Twitter