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FOREIGN AID AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: IMPLICATION FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG'S)

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ABSTRACT

For the past five decades, Africa has been a beneficiary or recipient of foreign aid, bilateral; multilateral or even private. The essence of this aid is to provoke even development in the poor Nations of the World especially Africa. More than \$650 billion has massively been injected into the continent of Africa, yet there is no absolute or clear cut demarcation between Africa and poverty. Many African countries today, rather than progress from poverty to feasible wealth have become Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC's). Debt, and debt crisis is however where most African countries have found themselves. The paper is an examination of the role of foreign aid in developing the African continent, and the implication of such aid for the MDG's. The submission in this paper is that foreign aid has not only fostered underdevelopment in Africa, but has plunged the continent into a debt burden. The paper frowns at the West for continuous aid, being fully aware that a vast majority of the aid money (ies) ends up in the corrupt politicians and government bureaucrats' offshore accounts. The work is anchored on the Dependent theoretical framework.

KEYWORDS

Africa, Debt crisis, Development, Foreign aid, Underdevelopment.

BACKGROUND

For many decades and even centuries, the African continent has suffered oppression and backwardness. From slavery to colonialism, the story has been the same. Post-colonial Africa has struggled with chronic poverty and underdevelopment even after independence from the whims and caprices of the colonialists. The challenge of Africa is development, and essentially the fight against poverty. In the light of this, Africa's romance with the West for assistance and aid for development has not yielded any good. Africa's fight against poverty with reliance on aid from the West only but totally amounts to begging. Thus, the contention among many development experts is that Africa's persistent reliance on foreign aid and assistance only 'enables' Africa's poverty. This is so in that the more aid Africa receives the more debt she has to pay, owing to the fact that aid and debt are quite synonymous. In this way, Africa's effort at development is purely the development of debts. It is arguable that aid, to say the least has been quite beneficial and essential to some developing countries, yet that does not in any way suggests it has immensely engendered development and neither has it drastically reduce poverty.

The thrust of the paper is on foreign aid and development, with a view to understanding its implication on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The paper contends that foreign aid has not only fostered underdevelopment in Africa but has also plunged the continent into a situation of debt crisis. The paper further submits that the bulk of aid money to Africa ends up in the accounts of corrupt members of the political class. The paper is subdivided into four sections. The first section deals with the issue of conceptual clarification. The second section concerns itself with the theoretical framework, and in the third section we take a look at foreign aid and Africa's debt crisis. The last section deals particularly with the issue of the implications for the millennium development goals (MDG's).

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

WHAT IS FOREIGN AID?

Foreign aid here is seen as the transmission of capital, goods as well as services from one particular country or international organization for the benefit of the recipient country and its population. According to Aluko and Arowolo (2010), aid is used to cover all financial transactions made or guaranteed by one government to another. Ajayi (2000) defined foreign aid as a form of assistance by a government or financial institution to other needy countries, which could be in cash or kind.

Historically, the earliest form of aid was military assistance basically designed to assist warring parties that were in some way considered strategically important. In modern times, its use began in the 18th century when Prussia subsidized some of its allies (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). Thus the structure and scope of foreign aid today can be traced to two major developments following the 2nd World War. These are (1) the implementation of the Marshall Plan – a U.S sponsored package to rehabilitate the economies of 17 Western European countries, wherein a Marshall aid of \$17.5 billion was granted to these countries (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010; Aluko and Arowolo, 2010). (2) The founding of significant international organizations including the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank. These international organizations have played a major role in the allocation of funds as it were.

Since then, according to Todaro (1977) the aid system has remained a durable phenomenon of the international economic system. The aid world has become a complex of innumerable bilateral and multilateral agreements between recipients and individual donor governments, between recipients and European development Fund (EDF), the World Bank, the United Nations agencies and regional Banks. Foreign aid has its forms and shapes. It can come in the form of economic assistance such as:

1. Investment in the economy of the needy country
2. Loan
3. Infrastructural development, etc.

Aid can also come in the form of military assistance such as:

- a) Supply of military hardware.
- b) Military agreements, bilateral and multilateral, loose or solid or in defense pact.
- c) Supply of military technical assistance, as in the case of military presence, etc (Aluko and Arowolo, 2010).

From the above, it stands quite clear that foreign aid is not the same thing as loan. Their basic distinction is in the fact that, aid is more complex and encompassing; loan is thus embedded in aid. Loan can be defined as money or other valuable item that an organization, individual or even a country lends out

usually with interest. But in both, a particular concept is synonymous, and this is what we call debt. For the purpose of clarification, Oyejide, et al (1983) defined debt as the resource or money in-use in an organization which is not contributed by its owners and does not in any way belong to them. Gordon Brown, a former UK Prime Minister, addressing a jubilee rally in 2000 called debt, “the greatest single cause of poverty and injustice across the earth potentially one of the greatest threats to peace” (Nwaogwugwu, 2007).

Apparently, the major source of Third World and particularly Africa’s foreign aid is bilateral and multilateral development assistance. This includes grants, loans and technical assistance and multilateral flows (Arnold, 1979). Again, for the purpose of clarity, by bilateral foreign aid we mean a financial outflow from one country to another. That is, it involves capital outflow between two countries. This actually accounts for 60% of aid to developing Nations. On the other hand, multilateral aid according to Nwoke (1988) is a capital outflow from one international financial body rather than from government to government. Thus, this on its own amounts to 40% of global assistance to developing Nations.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

Development has been seen as a term covering intentional and unintentional changes, deliberate actions and change in general, and good as well as bad change (Thin, 2002). Different scholars view development from disparate point of view. The idealist school sees development as the restoration of meaning to the individuals. This approach however is similar to the participatory model of development, which emphasizes the group’s involvement in any form of activity that portends the improvement of their lives. (Coetzee, 1986; Ololajulo, 2006; Modo, 2006). Meanwhile, from the materialist perspective, power is central in development. One way of looking at this power is the attainment of increased productivity. Scholars here (Rostow, 1966; Dahl and Hjort, 1984) assume that economic growth is development. However, Crocker (1998) in Modo (2006) observes that what is often called development especially growth may be bad for people, communities and the environment. This is why Ake (1987) insisted that in the development process, what Africa needs is; *“the empowerment by whatever means of the common people. This is not a matter of legislation, although could help a little. It is rather a matter of redistributing economic and political power across board.”*

It is also in the light of this that Anikpo (1984) observes that development is the extent to which a group of people has control of the productive forces. In less technical language, what we are calling development is the continuous effort to improve the living standards and conditions through the application of a group’s cultural means. This is why Africa wants to take the bull by the horn to attain development, which translates to the creation and establishment of NEPAD - a new framework for Africa’s development. But in many ways the idea and issue of official development assistance in diverse form does not strike us as attempting self-development, but assisted development. This to a large extent is really not working in this part of the world.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

This paper adopts Dependency theory to explicate the nature of the relationship between foreign aid and development in Africa. Succinctly, the theory is employed to comprehend the elastic relationship between the donor of aid one hand and the recipient on the other hand. The dichotomy in this perspective is between what is called economically buoyant countries, otherwise known as developed countries and countries that are economically backward, also known as developing countries. The dependency theory seeks to establish the factors that propel or contribute to the development of underdevelopment in Third World Countries (TWC). Moreover, the theory is predicated on the assumption that resources flow from a ‘periphery’ of poor and underdeveloped States to a ‘core’ of wealthy States, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. Clearly, it is the contention and standpoint of dependency theory that poor States are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor States are integrated into the world system. (Todaro, 2003; Amin, 1976; Onimode, 1983).

Furthermore, it is the view of dependency theory that poverty of the countries of the periphery is not because they are not integrated or fully integrated into the world system as is often argued by free market economists, but because of the “how” they are integrated into the system. In other words, their relationship with the West with regards to foreign aid is however a dependent relationship, in every case, a dependent relationship of master – slave. In the end, the outcome of every such relationship is underdevelopment.

FOREIGN AID AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEBTS

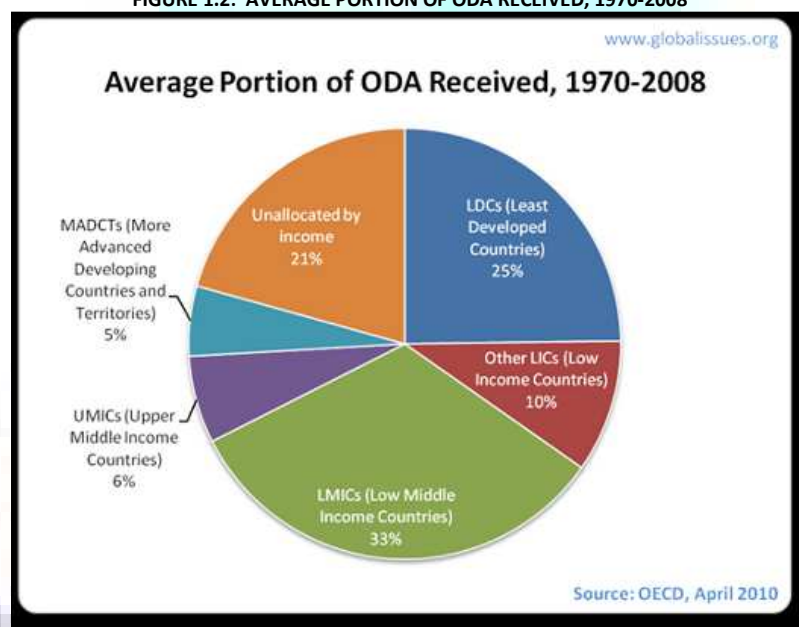
In 1970 the World’s rich countries agreed to set aside 0.7% of their gross national product (GNP) as official international development assistance (ODA). Though many rich countries are inconsistent in meeting their promised targets, as shown in figure 1.1 below, yet billions have been rolling in each year (Shah, 2010). From figure 1.1 only five countries have however lived up to the expectation of the 0.7% (GNP) mark. Research statistics shows that total aid from rich countries represents the bulk of reported net financial flows to the continent, accounting for between 40% and 90% in any given year since 1970. Figure 1.2 shows that from 1970-2008, the least develop countries of which Africa is a “full member” have received more ODA. Since 1960 nearly \$650 billion in aid has been provided to sub-Sahara African countries by the (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries (Sundberg and Gelb, 2006). Between 1981 and 1991, the World Bank provided \$20 billion towards Africa’s structural adjustment programmes. The practical purpose of the programme was necessarily to bring about transparency, efficiency and accountability in public institutions, and government agencies in Africa.

FIGURE 1.1: OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) FROM 2006 TO 2009 AT CURRENT PRICES (2008, USD MILLIONS)

	Country	ODA in U.S. Dollars (Millions)				ODA as % of GNI			
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
1.	Australia	2,572	2,798	2,954	2,912	0.3	0.32	0.32	0.29
2.	Austria	1,797	1,947	1,714	1,179	0.47	0.5	0.43	0.3
3.	Belgium	2,366	2,094	2,386	2,661	0.5	0.43	0.48	0.55
4.	Canada	4,167	4,237	4,795	4,341	0.29	0.29	0.33	0.3
5.	Denmark	2,726	2,805	2,803	2,922	0.8	0.81	0.82	0.88
6.	Finland	1,008	1,055	1,166	1,319	0.4	0.39	0.44	0.54
7.	France	12,793	10,670	10,908	12,746	0.47	0.38	0.39	0.46
8.	Germany	12,406	13,146	13,981	12,297	0.36	0.37	0.38	0.35
9.	Greece	519	546	703	618	0.17	0.16	0.21	0.19
10.	Ireland	1,175	1,242	1,328	1,077	0.54	0.55	0.59	0.54
11.	Italy	4,406	4,302	4,861	3,350	0.2	0.19	0.22	0.16
12.	Japan	12,328	8,660	9,579	8,556	0.25	0.17	0.19	0.18
13.	Korea	409	599	802	910	0.05	0.07	0.09	0.1
14.	Luxembourg	362	416	415	423	0.89	0.92	0.97	1.01
15.	Netherlands	6,539	6,738	6,993	6,675	0.81	0.81	0.8	0.82
16.	New Zealand	298	312	348	337	0.27	0.27	0.3	0.29
17.	Norway	3,720	4,193	3,963	4,650	0.89	0.95	0.88	1.06
18.	Portugal	479	506	620	523	0.21	0.22	0.27	0.23
19.	Spain	4,640	5,552	6,867	6,786	0.32	0.37	0.45	0.46
20.	Sweden	4,644	4,540	4,732	5,083	1.02	0.93	0.98	1.12
21.	Switzerland	1,971	1,883	2,038	2,271	0.39	0.38	0.44	0.47
22.	United Kingdom	12,974	9,167	11,500	13,179	0.51	0.36	0.43	0.52
23.	United States	24,723	22,252	26,842	28,305	0.18	0.16	0.19	0.2

Source: OECD Development Statistics Online, 2010.

FIGURE 1.2: AVERAGE PORTION OF ODA RECEIVED, 1970-2008



Obviously, poverty is the justification for aid, yet it is hardly the central decisive factor used for allocating such. The essence of foreign aid was primarily to assist poor countries escape the iron grip of poverty, but in many ways this is not the case. Thus when it was conceived after the Second World War, foreign aid according to Jallow (2006) was designed for two conceptually independent, but potentially conflicting set of goals. One was the diplomatic and strategic goals that advanced U.S short term political and long term strategic interest.; and secondly, the development of, and humanitarian goals that sought a long term alleviation of suffering.

It is worthy of note to mention that, all the decades of aid to Africa has not suffice development. In spite of the massive injection of aid over the past five decades, Africa rather than achieve economic growth to warrant development has become more dependent, with standards of living experiencing a net decline. Financial aid transfer to Africa has not fostered development but underdevelopment. It has left seventy countries primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa poorer than they were in 1980, and 43 more countries are even worse off than they were in 1970 (Jallow, 2006).

Private flows of aid to Africa especially from Multinational Cooperation's (MNC's) as well as investment funds are reflections of the permanent interests of investors. These flows have an unswerving negative force on the African continent due to flooding of the market with excess products, while protecting their own markets from the products of the poor countries who are trying to develop. Perkins (2003) reports that the World Bank and IMF are dominated by rich

countries who wield immense influence over them, as such are protective of their trade protectionism to the South. While there is pressure on Africa to liberalize her economy, the US and Europe continue to subsidize her agriculture. It is reported that Europe subsidizes its agriculture to the tune of \$35 - \$40 billion per year, whereas that of the US amounts to \$190 billion (UN News Centre, 2003).

Developing countries especially Africa continues to face trade barriers in various forms and against sectors like agriculture and textiles, where they possibly have an advantage. Ever since the Uruguay Round Agreement, the developing countries have not benefited as they were supposed to. New trade agreements like TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and GATS (General Agreements on Trade and Services) have however imposed considerable implication on economic development for developing nations (Fingers and Nogues, 2001). The estimated cost of trade barriers from the North to the South is over \$100 billion, much more than what developing countries receive from the west as aid (Aid Money, 2002.).

Thus, according to Christian Aid (2005), Sub-Sahara Africa is a massively \$272 billion worse off because of free trade policies forced on them as conditionality for receiving aid and debt relief. Furthermore, Christian Aid noted that these reforms which the rich countries coerce Africa to employ were supposed to boost economic growth, but in reality this is not so as Africa is eventually left barren and distant from development. The supposition here therefore is that the goal of aid is not distant from creating and maintaining dependent relations between the rich donor countries and the poor recipient countries, especially Africa.

To further buttress our position that foreign aid has fostered underdevelopment in Africa, we take a look at Somalia. In time past, especially in the 1980's Somalia was Africa's largest recipient of international aid (Maren, 1997). The huge flows from the West especially the United States of America gravely battered the productive sector of the Somalia economy particularly the agricultural sector. A World Bank finding on food import into Somalia in 1998 showed that aid had systematically undermined Somalia's civil society. Somalia had become more reliant on imported food than any other country in Africa south of the Sahara. Chosudovsky (2003) stated that Somalia remained a pastoral economy not until the early 1980's. Prior to this time, according to Chosudovsky, Somalia remained virtually self-reliant in food and food grain production. Livestock earnings accounted for 80% of export earnings in the country until 1983 when food aid began to arrive. He further argued that food aid program from the European Union as well as "economic medicine" from the IMF laid the foundation towards economic dislocation, and the demise of pastoral economy in Somalia. Thus, with loans and aids in the air, Somalia could not overcome her reliance and dependence on foreign assistance, hence a dependent nation in a dependent relationship.

There is need to state here that the greater part of the aid money received by African States ends up in the offshore accounts of corrupt government officials. Sharon Lafraniere (2005) laments that, "too much of the \$300 million in aid to Africa since 1980 has vanished into a sinkhole of malfeasance and waste". Jallow (2006) further contends that an Oxford international Group study has revealed that the external stock of capital held by Africans in overseas accounts, was between \$700 billion and \$800 billion in 2005, and nearly 40% of Africa's aggregate wealth was stacked in foreign bank accounts in Europe, United States and Japan. The point is that, in most cases, Western donors are usually fully aware of this situation. They are quite aware that in most times, 30% of the loans to African countries and governments went directly into the bank accounts of corrupt officials, yet the banks consider these officials and their governments as partners in development. The obvious fact here then is that these corrupt officials are nothing more than comprador bourgeoisies, who are in direct cahoot with 'donors' to continue derailing the continent from development.

Essentially, we must understand that aid is not charity, neither is it a donation borne out of pity. It is political and is driven by political interest. Little wonder it is administered most in conflict times. As posited by Sundberg and Gelb (2006), 'a great deal of aid was allocated to countries that became politically unstable or endured civil conflict'. In fact, the essence of this is to endear them to debt. This is so in that many foreign aids are 'tied funds' that come with conditions like preferential exports. This ensures that more money comes out of the recipient countries than is given. Especially as Smith (1994) puts it, 'most of Africa's debt resulted from loans to dictatorial governments, resulting in little benefit to the people'. Foreign aid has done little than was expected to Africa. Easterly (2006) laments that foreign aid has not done so much in spite of all the grand promises. It has plunged the African continent into a situation of debt crisis. By debt crisis we mean a situation whereby a country is heavily externally indebted and is unable to reimburse the principal of the debt (Mimiko, 1997). According to Ibrahim (1990), debt crisis is however a debt that can never be repaid. In this way we see it as a continuous situation of payment that never ends, but is transferred from one government to another.

George (1992) estimated that a net of about \$418 billion borrowed funds flowed right back from Africa to the North between 1982 and 1990. In the same vein, Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN secretary-general noted in 2003 that a whopping \$200 billion, the largest ever transfer of funds to 'other countries' was from the developing countries (Africa inclusive) in 2002 (UN News Centre, 2003). This however shows that more money even leaves the shores of Africa for the North. These are obviously funds that would have developed the continent and promoted the actualization of the millennium development goals as we journey to 2015. Such transfer of funds only tells us one thing—debt. Thus, Africa's debt crisis is without a doubt an 'evergreen debt'—that is, that generations cannot pay off. As at the year 2000, Africa owed an estimated \$350 billion external debt. The developing countries as a whole owed about \$1.3 trillion in 1990 (Aluko and Arowolo, 2010).

In 1976, Tanzania began the \$220 million Mufundi papermill factory project which turned out to be a fiasco. Yet, for 30 years Tanzania paid the bill for that ill-thought out experiment. No less than a couple of months after Tanzania's debt was forgiven under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives, which caused her debt to drop from \$3.8 billion in mid-1999 to \$2.6 billion in 2001. The World Bank quickly announced a new lending programme for Tanzania (Christian Aid, 2000). But of course this new programme of lending, which amounts to \$1 billion over a three year frame was just another opportunity to entangle Tanzania in the debt burden and generally breed underdevelopment. This is so, since savings will be spread out over 20 years and Tanzania must continue to borrow. Mutume (2001) posited that Tanzania's debt could increase to \$3.2 billion by 2005, and to \$6 billion by 2015. Fundamentally, Tanzania remains one of the world's poorest countries, despite her giant strides in recent time. On the other hand, Zambia got a possible \$3.8 billion debt write off, but still owes billions (Nwaogwugwu, 2007). The case of Nigeria's debt was a pathetic one before her 'debt sins' was eventually forgiven. Nigeria's debt profile had been put at \$31 billion, while her foreign reserve had grown to \$8 billion. Nigeria ought to service her debt by paying \$4.9 billion every year. Already Nigeria was in default on \$22 billion worth of Paris Club debts and was severely struggling to service her \$3.5 billion London Club debts obligations (CIA World Fact Book, 2008). The point in all this is that, rather than face development plans, African States were busy nursing their wounds of debt crisis, which further plunges the continent into backwardness. An obvious situation that will provoke reliance on foreign assistance and cause Africa to ever remain underdeveloped.

Figure 1.3 below shows estimates of indebted African countries debt servicing profile up the year 2015, when the million development goals is even expected to be achieved. One thing is clear here, and that is; the HIPC initiative is just another approach to continuous indebtedness.

FIGURE 1.3: ESTIMATES OF DEBT SERVICING

DEBT SERVICING OF 17 AFRICAN COUNTRIES ESTIMATES, \$Mn				
	2000	2005	2010	2015
Benin	62.5	36.9	43.9	72.8
Burkina Faso	33.8	41.5	54.7	83.2
Cameroon	312	347	375	n.a.
Gambia, The	19.6	9.8	18.7	23.4
Guinea	140	88	96	111
Guinea-Bissau	15	4	11	n.a.
Madagascar	104.5	81.6	119.5	156.2
Malawi	n.a.	47.1	55	85.9
Mali	88	66	76	125
Mauritania	87.4	43.3	n.a.	47.3
Mozambique	50	60	97	98
Niger	93.5	29	26.4	35.4
Rwanda	39.6	11.1	14.7	27.7
São Tomé & Príncipe	n.a.	1	3.3	2.8
Senegal	184.9	136.1	n.a.	n.a.
Tanzania	153.8	158.2	n.a.	258
Zambia	169	202	135	109
Source: World Bank, IMF.				

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG's)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) are a set of eight concrete, quantifiable objectives, adopted by the World leaders in 2000 and set to be achieved in 2015. In recent times, though a lot of changes have been met in the various facets of the goals, yet many if not all African countries are clearly on the wrong track towards 2015. Indeed, it has been noted that the debtor-countries have too much burden on their heads, the burden packaged with economic crisis and political difficulties. Expending 70 – 90% of export earnings on debt servicing connotes that virtually little is perhaps left for African countries to perform and meet the MDG's targets.

As it stands a vast majority of Africans are still wallowing in poverty. Globally, more than one in five PLWHA live in Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe; 5.6 million PLWHA live in South Africa alone. Swaziland has the highest prevalence of any country in the world: Approximately one in every four citizens is HIV positive. Whereas sub-Saharan Africa continues to be an abode for 23 million people living with Hiv/Aids, and the scourge of malaria still ravages the populace; while maternal cum infant mortality as well as environmental degradation are having a field day in the continent. In view of this, the realization of the MDG's by 2015 becomes a nightmare or worse still, a day dream. After all, it is the year 2012 and 2015 is just ahead, yet primary school net enrolment/attendance in Nigeria for 2009 and 2010 remain 83.09% and 83.28% respectively (World Bank, 2011). Under five mortality rate in 2009 is 138, while infant mortality (under 1) rate as at 2009 is 86. (UNICEF, 2010). This shows that a lot more need to and must be done to meet 2015.

CONCLUSION

We set out to understand the fundamental interface between foreign aid and development in Africa, and from the onset we tried to show that foreign aid in Africa is not development, but generates underdevelopment. The years of aid to Africa has not done Africa much good, but has rather made the continent worse off. The West and their aid are meted out to Africa with strict conditions, which equally rope-in the continent in debt. In most cases, these aid and loans fall into the wrong hands or rather are given to corrupt governments who end up stashing the funds in their offshore accounts. Such stashed funds in many cases come back to Africa as aid money. It is also understood in this work that such initiatives as the HIPC is not any salvation to African countries debt crisis. Rather it is another framework for enmeshing the continent in the mix of debt burden, as such further deep into underdevelopment.

With 2015 just ahead, the Millennium Development Goals stands challenged, as African countries are in a debt situation and attempting to service their debts rather than 'charge on' the MDG's. The implication of course is that Africa is further away from achieving these goals by 2015 and even beyond. Importantly therefore, we recommend a considerable reduction in aid acceptance in this 21st century. Acceptance of international assistance should be circumstantial, especially food aid to save humanity in times of famine and other disasters. Besides that, ODA has to be thoroughly weighed in the balance to know what sorts of conditions are attached to it and what purpose it would definitely serve. Aid acceptance for all practical purposes must necessarily be on the basis of needs assessment. They must be careful to understand that aid or assistance for development is nothing but 'hindrance to development'. Again, it is recommended here that Africa must review her socio-economic relationship with the IMF and World Bank as well as other donor institutions. For certain, their present relationship of course is basically an excruciatingly dependent relationship. More so, they must devise a way out of poverty by looking inward. This of course brings us to the point of saying that, African leaders must be accountable and responsible to their people. They must diversify their economy and employ the services of their best brains.

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