

Title: Do Trickle-down Development Efforts in Africa Trickle Down?

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Abstract:

Trickle-down economic theory holds that government policies that stimulate profits and growth among the largest businesses will eventually benefit the entire economy, including the economically depressed. Proponents argue that economic growth flows down from the top to the bottom, indirectly benefiting those who do not directly benefit from the policy changes. Their belief is that a rising tide floats all boats.

Development efforts in Africa appear to have been significantly influenced by such “trickle-down” down mind-set. The electrification of Africa presents an example of how this mind-set works. “Small dams could help deliver electricity to much of Africa’s population, but since they lack the prestige of larger-scale projects, few of them get built” The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday May 8, 2007.

It is easy to see that these top-down development efforts benefit the wealthy and well-connected in Africa. Is there evidence that these top-down development efforts benefit the masses at the grassroots?

We observe that despite the good intentions and efforts of governments, churches, and other nongovernmental organizations (NGO), Africa lacks behind the rest of the world in almost every index of development.

This failure is because trickle-down development efforts hardly come with a long-term commitment:

1. To educate and mobilize Africans at the grassroots to accept responsibility for solving Africa’s problems.
2. To empower Africans at the grassroots to develop the character, competence, and the tools needed to solve Africa’s problems.
3. To connect the haphazard and isolated development efforts in Africa into an integrated system for more effectiveness

Torchbearer Foundation for Missions, Reconciliation, and Development is established to address this need.

We are training leaders in holistic community development and to enabling these leaders to establish Christian discipleship ministry projects. These projects are designed to be a visible demonstration of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to transform every aspect of individual and community life, encourage investment in prayer, in people, and then in projects at the grassroots, before investing in projects at regional (national) level, mobilize the grassroots to accept the primary responsibility for solving their own problems and overcoming the challenges of life, catalyze the transformation of the individual from the inside out and the development of the community from the bottom up, develop the character, competence, and skills necessary for community leadership, bring the benefits of advancements in art, science, technology, and business to the masses at the grassroots, and generate

income in order to finance activities focusing on prayer, evangelism, Christian discipleship, leadership development, and community in small groups.

I will discuss the various actors in the Torchbearer Foundation system, our basic principles for action, our ministry model, and the connection between our small groups (Torches, Beams, Sparks, and Flames), our Torchbearer Community Development Centers, and the local churches.