
Seebohm, Frederic


In this article, Frederic Seebohm discusses one of humanity's most serious issues, world hunger. He specifically focuses on the issue in detail within Africa, where he spent two decades working. As he worked in Africa, he came to the realization that there was little economic or agricultural progress going on within the newly independent countries, despite discussions on the issues being made. Various countries providing aid followed the "trickle down" policy which gave to top officials in the hopes that the money would be spent in such a way that it would affect the rest of the country, eventually helping the poorest of the nation. Instead, the money never reached the people of the nation, so they went elsewhere to survive.

Seebohm also mentions a book, *Down to Earth*, by Eric Eckholm, which describes the issue in detail. Various statistics in the book explain how the world is losing usable farm land each year even though millions are still going hungry. This trend seems to be continuing today, as the amount of hungry people in Africa according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations for 2010 was around 270 million as well as continued deforestation and desertification. With the population increasing throughout Africa, hunger has been becoming a greater issue and it is becoming increasingly necessary to address it.

Africa has also become more dependent on food aid over the past few decades. Seebohm discusses how the importing of grain has been affecting the typical African's preferences, causing their diet to change. This leads people to become dependent on the aid of other nations, since they can't produce their own grain. They also were importing alcohol and other goods in surplus, but none of it is reaching the people of Africa. Seebohm also references Tony Jackson and Deborah Eade's *Against the Grain* to explain how large amounts of food aid is sent, but this food doesn't do anything to prevent poverty. With all this surplus and aid, there is no reason for people to produce their own crops and sell them for profit.

Seebohm feels that instead of focusing on "least developed countries," governments should focus on "wherever there is some chance of success." This still doesn't give responsibility to Africa's nations, which is part of the problem. Seebohm feels it's necessary to improve relations between African nations and England United Kingdom and that it's England's (the UK is more than England) responsibility to their former colonies to help them, especially since England knows better than Africa what is needed (well this is a pretty condescending way to put it. The UK has many more resources in part due to colonization). He concludes by saying it is in the West's best interest to help Africa because if they don't, someone else will, preventing England to benefit from it.

I found it interesting that even twenty-seven years later, this issue still is largely ignored by international governments and has made little apparent progress (it has not been ignored but not that much progress has been made). Rather recently, there has been some technological improvements and increasing financial growth, but African nations are still very far from ending mass hunger. Seebohm wrote this over two decades ago and most of the issues he discussed still apply, although he was writing with a clear bias toward Western industrialized culture. Instead of trying to aid countries in the way the West wants, African nations need to find their own way towards success in poverty and hunger prevention. While hunger is a huge issue within Africa, it can't be the responsibility of the West to solve it, because the West has their own impoverished and hungry to aid.