

## SHORT PAPER

Two articles were written by Bill and Melinda Gates and William Easterly. They are about ODA. Take a side of either essay, and discuss your opinion on achievements of past international cooperation.

\* (around 200 words)

\* Essays should be written in English and typed on A4 size paper. There is no fixed format.

\* It is considered as plagiarism to copy any sentences from the original text. Applicants would be disqualified from the selection process if the summary includes any copied sentences.

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OPINION

# Three Myths About Foreign Aid

BY BILL AND MELINDA GATES

By almost any measure, the world is better off now than ever before. Extreme poverty has been cut in half over the past 25 years, child mortality is plunging, and many countries that had long relied on foreign aid are now self-sufficient.

So why do so many people seem to think things are getting worse? Much of the reason is that all too many people are in the grip of three deeply damaging myths about global poverty and development. Don't get taken in by them.

**Myth one:** Poor countries are doomed to stay poor.

They're really not. Incomes and other measures of human welfare are rising almost everywhere—including Africa.

Take Mexico City, for instance. In 1987, when we first visited, most homes lacked running water, and we often saw people trekking on foot to fill up water jugs. It reminded us of rural Africa. The guy who ran Microsoft's Mexico City office would send his kids back to the U.S. for checkups to make sure the smog wasn't making them sick.

Today, Mexico City is mind-blowingly different, boasting high-rise buildings, cleaner air, new roads and modern bridges. You still find pockets of poverty, but when we visit now, we think, "Wow—most people here are middle-class. What a miracle." You can see a similar transformation in Nairobi, New Delhi, Shanghai and many more cities around the world.

Per-person incomes in Turkey and Chile are where the U.S. was in 1960. Malaysia is nearly there. So is Gabon. Since 1960, China's real income per person has gone up eight-fold. India's has quadrupled, Brazil's has almost quintupled, and tiny Botswana, with shrewd management of its mineral resources, has seen a 30-fold increase. A new class of middle-income nations that barely existed 50 years ago now includes more than half the world's population.

And yes, this holds true even in Africa. Income per person in Africa has climbed by two-thirds since 1998—from just over \$1,300 then to nearly \$2,200 today. Seven of the 10 fastest-growing economies of the past half-decade are in Africa.

Here's our prediction: By 2035, there will be almost no poor countries in the world. A few unhappy ones will be held back by war, political realities (such as North Korea) or geography (such as landlocked states in central Africa). But every country in South America, Asia and Central America (except perhaps Haiti) and most in coastal Africa will be middle-income. More than 70% of countries will have a higher per-person income than China does today.

**Myth two:** Foreign aid is a waste. Actually, it is a phenomenal investment. Foreign aid doesn't just save lives; it also lays the groundwork for lasting, long-term economic progress.

When pollsters ask Americans what share of the budget goes to aid, the most common response is "25%." In fact, it is less than 1%.

(Even Norway, the most generous nation in the world, spends less than 3%.) The U.S. government spends more than twice as much on farm subsidies as on international health aid. It spends more than 60 times as much on the military.

One common complaint about foreign aid is that some of it gets wasted on corruption—aid stories you hear—where aid just helps a dictator build new palaces—mostly come

**By 2035, a world with almost no poor countries.**

from a time when aid was designed to win allies for the Cold War rather than to improve people's lives.

The problem today is much smaller. Small-scale corruption, like a government official who puts in for phony travel expenses, is an inefficiency that amounts to a tax on aid. We should try to reduce it, but we can't eliminate it, any more than we can eliminate waste from every government program—or from every business, for that matter. Suppose small-scale corruption amounts to a 2% tax on the cost of saving a life. We should try to cut that. But if we can't, should we stop trying to save those lives?

Plenty of people call for aid programs to be shut down if one dollar of corruption is found. But four of the past seven governors of Illinois went to prison for corruption, and

no one demands that Illinois' schools or highways be closed.

We also hear critics complain that aid keeps countries dependent on outsiders' generosity. But this argument focuses only on the most difficult remaining cases still struggling to be self-sufficient. Here is a quick list of former major aid recipients that have grown so much that they receive hardly any aid today: Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Thailand, Mauritius, Botswana, Morocco, Singapore and Malaysia.

Aid also drives improvements in health, agriculture and infrastructure that correlate strongly with long-run growth. A baby born in 1960 had an 18% chance of dying before her fifth birthday. For a child born today, it is less than 5%. In 2035, it will be 1.6%. We can't think of any other 75-year improvement in human welfare that would even come close. A waste? Hardly.

**Myth three:** Saving lives leads to overpopulation.

Going back at least to Thomas Malthus in 1798, people have worried about doomsday scenarios in which food supply can't keep up with population growth. This kind of thinking has gotten the world in a lot of trouble. Anxiety about the size of the world population has a dangerous tendency to override concern for the human beings who make up that population.

Letting children die now so they don't starve later isn't just heartless. It also doesn't work, thank goodness.

It may be counterintuitive, but

the countries with the most death have among the fastest-growing populations in the world. This is because the women in these countries tend to have the most births too.

When more children survive, parents decide to have smaller families. Consider Thailand. Around 1960, child mortality started going down. Then around 1970, after the government invested in a strong family planning program, birthrates started to drop. In the course of two decades, Thai women went from having six children on average to having just two. Today, child mortality in Thailand is almost as low as it is in the U.S., and Thai women have an average of 1.6 children.

Saving lives doesn't lead to overpopulation. Just the opposite. Creating societies where people enjoy basic health, relative prosperity, fundamental equality and access to contraceptives is the only way to a sustainable world.

More people need to know about the misconceptions behind these myths. The fact is, whether you look at the issue as an individual or a government, contributions to promote international health and development offer an astonishing return. We all have the chance to create a world where extreme poverty is the exception rather than the rule.

*This piece is adapted from the forthcoming annual letter of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, of which the authors are co-chairs. Mr. Gates is the chairman of Microsoft.*

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第三版(财经新闻)

## COMMENT & ANALYSIS

# Western vanities that do little to help the world's poor

William Easterly

Bill Gates said last week that the world is better than it has ever been. Contentment may come easily to the richest man on earth. Yet the object of his satisfaction was not his own billionaire's lot, but the improving prospects of the planet's poorest people.

Mr Gates has spent the past 18 years giving away a large part of the fortune he amassed as co-founder of Microsoft. In that time, the foundation whose chairmanship he shares with his wife Melinda has made grants amounting to almost \$90bn. In a letter published last week, Mr and Mrs Gates attacked the default attitude that sometimes surrounds discussions concerning global development.

As they rightly insist, incredible progress has been made in the past 35 years towards the eradication of hunger and premature death. This refutes the dogma that poor countries are doomed to stay poor, that foreign aid is all wasted, and

that saving lives inevitably leads to the misery of overpopulation. These myths, they say, threaten to hold back the poor by persuading humanity that deprivation is an evil with which people must learn to live, when in fact it is a blight that can be eradicated.

But Mr and Mrs Gates promulgate myths of their own. They overstate the contribution that foreign aid makes to economic progress in the world's poorest regions. And they exaggerate the role played by philanthropists and politicians. These misconceptions, too, are pernicious, for they focus attention on development programmes that spread a costly misunderstanding on how poverty really ends.

Begin with the role of leaders. Mr Gates says there has been much progress, but that "we'll need to apply human ingenuity and act on our compassion" to keep it going. Conversely, he equates the idea that "the world is getting worse" to the idea that "we can't solve extreme poverty and disease". For Mr Gates, apparently, much depends on what "we" do. But who are "we", and

who put us in charge? Mr Gates seems to have in mind the global elite whose most prominent representatives were this week assembled in Davos: political leaders, business executives, philanthropists, academics and functionaries from international institutions such as the World Bank.

Yet the progress that Mr Gates celebrates began long before the club appointed itself troubleshooter of the world's problems, and before the advent of organised foreign aid. Consider the case of public health. In the rich countries of today, life expectancy has been rising and infant mortality falling at least since 1900. Poor countries began seeing similar advances shortly after the second world war. While there is still great global inequality on health outcomes, sickness is declining in almost all countries, regardless of how they are governed and how much foreign aid they receive.

This revolution is a story of many actors rather than conspicuous heroes, as Angus Deaton explains in his superb book *The Great Escape*. The germ theory of disease led to

more effective efforts to clean up the water supply, and spurred the invention of drugs such as penicillin. Improvements in transport spread knowledge, medicine and equipment more quickly. Educated parents practised better hygiene and knew how to get medicines for their sick children. Money was only a small part of the story. Ghana at the turn

**There is no definitive proof that aid stimulates the economic growth that is needed to lift people out of poverty**

of the millennium was a far poorer country than the US at the beginning of the second world war. Yet it had reduced its infant mortality rate to a similar level.

The contribution made by philanthropists and politicians should not be overplayed. Yet, if aid is a feeble instrument of economic progress, it is nonetheless a powerful

tool of self-aggrandisement for the western elite. "We" are important because we are the rich people giving aid, the political leaders of the poor countries that receive it and the experts who broker the exchange.

True, some aid programmes have targeted sickness with triumphant success. Mass vaccination campaigns kept millions of children from dying of measles and smallpox. Under promoted oral rehydration therapy to fight diarrhoeal diseases that used to cause far more deaths. But even if health aid has been a success, it does not follow that most progress on health is due to aid.

In other important areas, international assistance programmes have a patchy record. As Mr Gates himself acknowledges, there is no definitive proof that aid stimulates the economic growth necessary to lift people out of poverty.

Mr Gates is right that the world's rich should do more to support public health programmes that work. He is right, too, to decry the time wasted arguing over whether aid works. But the reason he gives—that the argument should

concentrate on how to make aid work better—is the wrong one. Aid spending is a drop in the ocean of the budgets of the governments that give it and the economies of the countries that receive it. Whether it works scarcely matters for development.

The obsession with international aid is a rich-world vanity that exaggerates the importance of western elites. It is comforting to imagine that benevolent leaders advised by wise experts could make the poor world rich. But this is a condescending fantasy.

The progress that Mr Gates celebrates is the work of entrepreneurs, inventors, traders, investors, activists—not to mention ordinary people of commitment and ingenuity striving for a better life. Davos Men may not be ready to acknowledge that he does not hold the fate of humanity in his gilded hands. But that need not stop the rest of us.

*The writer is author of the forthcoming book 'The Tyranny of Experts'*