

Fighting Africa's True Crisis

by Dennis Pinto

(NAPSA)—In today's world, it's important to read between the headlines.

For instance, if Kenya and its African neighbors received the same kind of mass media attention about its most profound problems as it has about its recent post-election troubles, then perhaps the continent could make some true headway in its battles against extreme poverty, chronic hunger and HIV/AIDS.



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But alas, it sometimes seems these critical issues, which are the root problems underlying the post-election incidents, are not newsworthy enough to make headlines. Indeed, Kenya's post-election riots are known by many newspaper readers, yet few know that an African child is orphaned by AIDS every 14 seconds. It has been well documented that 1,000 people have died in the two months since the disputed Kenyan election, but it is also true that 3,000 people die of malaria *every day* in sub-Saharan Africa.

As a Kenyan living in New York and the owner of a large safari outfitter operating in East Africa, I received daily news updates from the Kenya Tourism Federation, as well as reports from our staff on the ground during the recent unrest. The striking

discrepancies between what I heard from my Nairobi-based staff and fellow Kenyan tourism suppliers and what was portrayed by news outlets were astounding. The situation was neither as apocalyptic nor the violence as pervasive as implied in the news. Incidents were taking place almost exclusively in the heavily populated slums of major cities or in remote country areas—not in the vast majority of city neighborhoods and not on the typical tourist tracts. According to the Kenya Tourist Board, there were 40,000 tourists in Kenya during the turbulent post-election weeks, none of whom were harmed or inconvenienced in any way.

Too often, Africa's most pressing problems have not received the attention they deserve, and the African people have suffered because of it. Newspapers certainly have a responsibility to report the news—but those reports should not be limited to sensational, occasional problems. If members of the media want to highlight problems in Africa, then I call upon them to report on the formidable menaces that plague Africa every day. As Nobel Peace Prize nominee Bono writes in "The End of Poverty" by Jeffrey D. Sachs, "Fifteen thousand Africans die every day of preventable, treatable diseases—AIDS, malaria, TB—for lack of drugs that we take for granted...This is Africa's crisis."

What can the average person

do? Do not give up on Kenya. Ever since Kenya's independence 40 years ago, whenever the country has experienced any sort of domestic incident, pundits have predicted the demise of the country. This, of course, has never been the case. Kenya has prevailed as a model of stability and democracy in the otherwise volatile horn of Africa.

While a peaceful resolution to the disputed election has now been reached, the future remains bleak for those Africans who fight daily battles with hunger, poverty and disease. For more than 20 years, Micato's nonprofit foundation, AmericaShare, has been supporting residents of Nairobi's slums by providing access to such basic services as clean water, food, health care and an education. The efforts of AmericaShare and other worthy organizations, however, are largely ignored by the media.

In short, the real news story should be how the world can help Kenya and all African nations eradicate extreme poverty and chronic hunger, and ensure universal primary education and basic health care for all. That is the true crisis of Africa.

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