

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE UNFORTUNATE 'EBOLA AMBUSH': A NEED TO FUND RESEARCH IN AFRICA

Nwaopara, A. O., FIIA, PhD

Published: 30th September, 2014

Over the years, African scientists have lamented the poor funding of research in the continent, amidst wastages, funds misappropriation, corruption and misguided priorities. Come to think of it, what would have been the situation if all the wasted funds in Africa were appropriately channeled towards research in medicine, and agriculture, as well as science and technology? Would Africa not have become a heaven-on-earth if her wealth from natural resources like crude oil, diamond and gold, among others, were fully and properly invested in education, health, research, housing, industrial development and overall social welfare of her citizens?

On the contrary, many African communities are bedeviled by economic and leadership crisis, epidemics, poverty and hunger, unemployment, political instability, general underdevelopment, insecurity and hopelessness. It is rather unfortunate that most of these calamities are man-made, while some retrogressive/negative human attributes like corruption, greed, quest for power, religious intolerance, and sectionalism -ethnicity, tribalism, and racism, remain the major causative factors triggering them. Such human induced calamities, as well as the myriads of life threatening epidemics -Malaria, HIV/AIDS, cholera, river blindness, guinea worm infestations and hemorrhagic fevers like Lassa, Dengue and recently, Ebola, have become the unending woes of a beautiful continent.

Of greater concern is the fact that these epidemics characteristically confront an unprepared and seemingly helpless continent already plagued by wars and excessive squandering of her abundant natural resources. It is indeed disheartening to note that as Africans, we seem not to learn from the mistakes of the past and subsequently ensure that conscientious efforts are made towards addressing the anomalies that have kept our mother continent in the chains of underdevelopment and at the mercy of giants from other continents.

It is high time therefore, that Africans realized that the African 'dream' and 'destiny' lies in their hands. Our leaders must begin to make concerted efforts towards preventing some of these calamities plaguing the continent and forcing them to seek for external help. They must begin to look beyond acquiring power, wealth and fame, as events have shown that human survival stretches beyond personal aggrandizement. They must also avoid actions that have so far triggered mutual distrust, armed revolutions, communal crisis, militancy, and recently terrorism.

In addition, African leaders must begin to fund innovative research in various facets of life as innovation remains that key to fixing the numerous challenges of human existence. They must be proactive in their policy formulations and appreciate the fact that most of the strategies adopted by developed countries to attain their enviable heights in education, health, science and technology, among others, are products of genuine and well funded research coupled with requisite policy formulation and implementation. They must also realize that the major reasons why Africa is becoming a viable breeding ground and safe-heaven for terrorists are unemployment, poverty and injustice.

Above all, our leaders must understand that a sincere commitment to funding innovative and proactive research enhances a nation's capacity to meeting the exigencies of her population and in particular, serve as a shield against life threatening situations like the current 'ambush-like' Ebola virus epidemic, which has so far overwhelmed us despite having reared its ugly head many years ago.

