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Beyond Corruption and Inaction: Rethinking the Role of the Global Health Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in Improving Health Outcomes in Uganda

The paper will explore the limits of “development” in delivering better health outcomes in Uganda. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) is the foremost global institution working to curtail these diseases in Africa. However, since its inception in Uganda in 2002, the GFATM has been plagued by scandals of corruption and inaction. Funds have often been misappropriated or unutilised. Even where they have been used properly, the case of malaria prevention bednets being used as wedding veils, juice strainers and fishing nets points to the inappropriateness of the health promotion paradigm adopted by the GFATM.

We attribute theft and apathy by the elite and the misunderstanding of the use of bed nets by sections of the local population to the gap between aid donors and the African ruling elite on one hand, and on the other, to the gap between urban and rural citizens and subjects. The latter phenomenon is described by Mamdani (1996) as “decentralised despotism” and by Ekeh (1975) as Africa’s “Two Publics.”

We propose elements of social justice theory (Rawls, 2003) and (Miller, 2003) as a possible path to re-conceptualising development in manner that will quicken both the African elite and the rural poor to work together to define their own problems and take responsibility for crafting solutions that are endogenous, relevant and more sustainable.