

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

My Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I write this letter to you with a tremendous amount of joy in my heart. African countries are making progress. The economies of many countries are improving but not at the rate we would like to see. The health problems are being tackled with a great deal of zeal but not as adequately as we would like to see. As a matter of fact, a recent report on the tiny country of Rwanda indicates a lot of progress. Yahoo News (3/27/2013) reported by Ryan Lenora Brown contends:

Rwanda has tapped its post-conflict period to transform core programs like healthcare. Major gains include precipitous drops in HIV deaths and child mortality.

19 years later, however, Rwanda is on pace to become the only country in sub-Saharan Africa to meet all of its health-related Millennium Development Goals, and the tiny pocket of Central Africa has posted some of the world's most staggering health gains in the past decade, outpacing nations that spend far more per capita on healthcare.

And Dr. Binagwaho, who once stuffed her suitcases full of basic medicinal supplies to take home to Kigali whenever she traveled abroad, is now leading that charge as minister of health.

In an article published earlier this year in the British Medical Journal (BMI), a team of doctors and researchers working in Rwanda laid out the country's swift rise.

Between 1994 and 2012, they wrote, the country's life expectancy climbed from 28 years to 56 and the percentage of the population living in poverty dropped from 77.8 percent to 44.9 percent.

In the past decade, deaths from HIV have fallen 78 percent – the single largest decline in the world during that time frame – while tuberculosis mortality has dropped 77 percent, the most significant decrease in Africa. (<http://news.yahoo.com/tiny-rwanda-staggering-health-gains-set-standard-africa-195136173.html>)

In my recent trip to Central and East Africa, I had a pleasant surprise before our plane touched down in Kigali, Rwanda. The pilot announced that when we deplaned, we were not allowed to



carry plastic bags into Rwanda. Now, as an environmental scientist, it was good to hear that the government of a small country like Rwanda has an environmental policy that bans the use of plastic in its country. The country is making tremendous strides in all development fronts.

African countries are investing in education at all levels. The primary, secondary, and tertiary education systems are improving especially because private schools are providing quality education. The public schools are still far behind in quality since they depend on government funds for support. As far as tertiary education is concerned, I am quite hopeful that with the linkages that African universities have with universities in the developed nations of the world, steady process is achievable. However, it seems the universities in Africa are playing “catch up” technologically. More smart classrooms are needed in the universities in Africa. During my recent trip, I was able to make my presentations using power point. The private and public schools must invest in technology and scientific equipment. Overall, the articles in this issue address a myriad of concerns including some social and political matters. It is our hope that they will contribute to the understanding and remedy of the problems. We thank you for your support.

With best regards,

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