



**A film by Chew on it productions
in partnership with WORLDwrite**

Press Release: Unwanted help

Chew on it productions in partnership with WORLDwrite are delighted to announce the completion and premiere of *Keeping Africa Small*, a must-see documentary on Sunday 16th December at the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation in London.

Keeping Africa Small is a remarkable exposé of unwanted help. Pricking the assumption that Western NGOs* are the good guys in developing countries, this film instead shows how their projects offer peanuts and preach sanctimonious lessons rather than meeting the needs and aspirations of the people they are there to help.

Shot in Ghana, travelling from a paltry “pet programme” in a rural community to measly microcredit schemes in Accra, we hear from Ghanaians who are angry. Whilst NGOs celebrate their make-do-and-mend projects as ambitious steps for the millennium, Ghanaians by contrast see them as pitiful programmes and missionary-style behaviour modification projects. But Ghanaians have had their fill of being treated like children; as Godbless puts it: “we have big brains, big dreams... and want to live in liberty.”

Their insulting programmes are eloquently summed up by David Ampofo, who describes one example – Water Aid’s campaign to reintroduce the rope pump in his country – as: “... a sad reflection for mankind that when there are rockets going to the moon they are busy preparing this for people to fetch water.”

* Non-Governmental Organisations

Director Ceri Dingle says:

“I have travelled and filmed in Ghana many times before but this time wherever we went we met Ghanaians who were utterly sick of western NGOs’ interference and bizarre projects that keep them poor and think so small. We had to make this film because it is the aspirations, the great ideas and obvious capacity of Ghanaians that should be heard over the noise of NGOs.”

Producer Viv Regan adds:

“As Christmas looms and shoppers hit the high streets NGOs will try and entice us with cuddly furry friends and hand pumps for people living in Africa. But before succumbing to these “feel good” gift campaigns, I am hoping people will watch this film, listen to what Ghanaians are saying and ask ‘is this what Africans really want?’”

Contact Details

For more information and interviews contact:

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Synopses

Short Synopsis (39 words)

NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) are seen as the good guys in developing countries, yet their programmes eschew growth and exemplify low horizons. Ghanaians are sick of them; they want material progress not behaviour change. A remarkable exposé of unwanted help.

Medium Synopsis (103 words)

From small-scale projects to HIV/AIDS programmes, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) are everywhere in the developing world. However well meaning they may be, their programmes epitomise low horizons and often get up the noses of everyone – from fishermen to shanty town inhabitants – and even make them laugh out loud. Shot in Ghana, Godbless, Wofa, De Roy and local fishermen and women loathe the peanuts offered and sanctimonious lessons in good behaviour. They want jobs and material advancement, and for NGOs and aid agencies to stop treating them like children. As Godbless tells us: “Africans have big brains, big aspirations... and want to live in liberty.”

Long Synopsis (197 words)

From small-scale projects on education, health, water and sanitation to big-budget HIV/AIDS programmes, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) are everywhere in the developing world. But however well meaning they may be, their programmes – which eschew growth and exemplify low horizons – often get up the noses of everyone, from fishermen to shanty town inhabitants, and even make them laugh out loud. Shot in Ghana, Godbless, Wofa, De Roy and local fishermen and women are not ignorant; they are articulate and angry. Godbless is tired of NGOs spending money on their own programmes that Ghanaians have no need for, and then being forced to constantly report back on the progress of these pointless, pitiful projects. Wofa loathes the peanuts offered by NGOs in the form of microcredit and small loan schemes, as well as their sanctimonious lessons in good behaviour. He wants material progress, factories, concrete blocks for building and jobs, not behaviour change programmes.

Ghanaians are sick of NGOs and aid agencies treating them like children and telling them what to do. As Godbless tells us: “Africans have big brains, big aspirations... and want to live in liberty.” *Keeping Africa Small* is a remarkable and crucial exposé of unwanted help.

The Background Story by Producer Viv Regan

Keeping Africa Small is the fourth and penultimate documentary in the *Pricking the Missionary Position* series we shot in Ghana in the aftermath of the UK's Year of Africa, when statesmen met at the G8 and celebrities mingled at Live8, both focusing on poverty in Africa and promoting campaigns such as Make Poverty History.

Our original idea was to make a film that examines the impact of debt relief in Ghana but when we arrived we could not ignore how western campaigns, from debt relief to celebrity cruising to well meaning NGOs, provide so very little for our peers in the developing world and demean, if not dismiss, the aspirations and capacity of Ghanaians.

What was palpably different from our previous trips was the anger and disappointment felt by Ghanaians towards western NGOs and their projects. All spoke about how they wanted NGOs to stop their poverty reduction and basic needs programmes and instead trust them to decide for themselves what they need. Of course many Ghanaians we met did not have the luxury to turn away help offered although some did refuse to have anything to do with the crew until they were satisfied we were not yet another western NGO in town.

In rural areas we saw firsthand these pitiful projects. One man was provided a grass cutter, a small forest animal, cuter looking than a rat but of similar size, to breed and sell to eat. There they were in the rabbit hutch, one male and one female grass cutter, to help a whole family out of poverty; does that sound like progress to you?

In a shanty town that, the night before, had suffered a fire that spread because of their makeshift wooden huts (a disaster not uncommon in shanty towns) and where people were living in desperate situations, we were told NGOs' projects amounted to awareness campaigns on teenage pregnancy, family planning and child trafficking. Amidst the insanity and squalid shacks people are forced to make do with, who would think it possible that such projects could be prioritised? It certainly wasn't the residents' idea of help.

And if this wasn't enough, to add insult to injury, all of these projects impose intense monitoring, recording and evaluating – in other words surveillance. We saw sheet after sheet of paperwork local workers had to fill in to make sure none of the peanuts that they were given was being used "inappropriately". At every NGO conference here in the UK monitoring and evaluation is the number one complaint, so why do NGOs impose their own pet bugbear onto people in Africa who, by the definition of needing NGOs' help, are among the poorest in the world? Can you imagine giving a homeless person a pound and then demanding he provides a report and evidence on how he spent it? It would be a comedy if it wasn't so wrong. Ultimately it tells us that Ghanaians are not trusted and this must be challenged, along with the projects that epitomise our own low horizons for those "over there" and the behaviour modification programmes that would make the old missionaries blush.

It's time the NGOs left town.

Production Information

Production Company

A Pricking the Missionary Position Film

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Production Notes

Original format: DV CAM

Online edit: Avid Express Pro

Digital cut format: Mini DV, DV CAM, Digibeta & DVD PAL (all regions) & DVD NTSC

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Length: 26:00

Completion: November 2007

Contributors (in order of appearance)

Brendon O'Donnell	Youth Campaigns, Action Aid
Kate Turner	Save the Children
Dave Tucker	Campaign Coordinator, Traidcraft
Gerrard Allt	Campaigns Officer, Water Aid
Kweku Ofori-Bruku	Water Engineer
Ceri Dingle	Presenter
David Ampofo	CEO, Channel Two Communications
Kwame Agyapong	Director, Afrika World Studios
Matts Karlson	World Bank Country Director, Ghana
Nii Ayitey Tetteh Okpe II	Chief of Anamole
Nash Kuadjo Abbey	National Youth Coordinator, Amasaman District
David Kisabena Ofosi	Researcher, Kuapa Kokoo FairTrade Cooperative
Dorte Jorgensen	Danish Technical Advisor, School For Life, Tamale
Professor Akilaagpa Sawyerr	Secretary General, Association of African Universities
Joseph Yeboah	NUGS Representative, University of Ghana
De Roy Kwesi Andrew	Translator and Student
Abraham Godbless Ashie	Project Manager DIF & National Youth Workers Association
Chief Fisherman	Council of Chiefs, Jamestown
Chief Fisherwoman	Council of Chiefs, Jamestown
Nuertei Nortey	CENCOSAD worker
Wofa Owusu Ansah	Old Fadama Representative

Crew

Ceri Dingle	Director
Viv Regan	Producer
Ian Foster & Andy Hirst	Cinematographer and Camera
Terri Badham & Sadhavi Sharma	Sound
Steve Daley	Trasna Producer
Helen Sewell	Production Assistant and Research
Justin Smyth & Claire Uzan	Trasna Footage
Philip Thompson & David Comerford	Trasna Footage
De Roy Kwesi Andrew	Researcher and Translator
Balint Tusor	Editor
Lajos Pataki	Online Editor
Rob Harris	Post-production and Research
Kyle Duncan	Web Design
Tory Dunn	Original Soundtrack
Natalie Theobald	Post-production Assistant
Athanasia Pappas	Post-production Assistant
Millicent Kumeni	Translator
India Rose Gebler & Robin Welsh	Film Logging and Research
Justine Minkiewicz & Emmy Wasirwa	Film Logging and Research
Carol Dodsworth & Asmita Damania	Film Logging
Keresha Thomas & Holly Stead	Film Logging
Nathan Furlonge	Graphic Design
Emilia Brumini	Graphic Design Assistant

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