



Development

Before I moved to Washington, D.C., a friend of mine was worried that I would lose my idealism in the face of scoundrel politics. In fact, my frustrations with the government have decreased, while my frustrations with the NGO world have grown significantly.

Development has become as much about prestige, control of ideas, and money as any other field. The names of countries are used as status symbols—education work in Kenya for a few months, why, that’s equivalent to trotting around carrying a Louis Vuitton purse. Celebrities are praised for going to a remote village for a day and patting some poor brown children on the head, while those who are actually on the ground, and who have been working to help those communities for decades, receive little acknowledgement. Some development projects never get finished, money lines the pockets of corrupt officials, and bureaucracy continues its self-perpetuation. In the struggle for a better world, there is sometimes too much struggle amongst individuals

and organizations to be the biggest, brightest, and most praised or funded.

The field of development is unusual because it is essentially working to eradicate itself. It is not about a solid, self-aggrandizing career. It constantly changes, and progress depends not on how much we gain, but how much others gain. These concepts are so drastically different from the usual fields of work that too often they get intertwined.

“Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration.”

Aung San Suu Kyi

No Events