

Ebola Virus: Fears & Celebrations

The Good Side of the Ebola Virus:

The old adage that says that everything that has a bad side also has a good side is very true and in this case, despite taking the lives of more than 5000 people in the West African Countries, something positive can still be mined out of this deadly virus that has proven to be more than an African problem.

Ebola is a virus disease that is spread through direct contact with the body fluids (urine, vomit or blood) of infected persons. This mode of transmission is contrary to popular and misguided belief that it can be transmitted through air. The highest casualties have been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, it is not limited to these countries as various persons have tested positive to the virus in USA and Spain as well as other parts of the World, clearly making it a global epidemic.

Because of its main mode of transmission is through contact with infected persons, it has greatly inhibited the movement of persons to the affected places. Kenya for example has cancelled all its flights to West Africa. This has and will clearly have a long term economic effect. The virus has also hurt the tourism sector, which is further grappling with the effects of Al Shabaab and insecurity in the country.

Africa to the white man is one village, and it is hard to convince him even with the Google map that West Africa and East Africa are miles apart. Thus like the Aids virus it is not strange to hear one talk of "Africa is infected by Ebola". Thus despite of Kenya's geographical position and the fact that the country is Ebola free; the number of tourists has been significantly dropping, with most opting to be stay away.

Not all is Lost:

In as much as it has clearly devastated Africa and the world at large, not all is lost. To begin with the government of Kenya has tightened screening at all ports of entry. This means all major international airports as well as major land ports of entry. This means that our once porous borders that were easily penetrated by the Al Shabaab may finally be tightened as the government tries to fight the virus.

The need to collectively combat the virus in the continent has presented a window of opportunity for Africa to unite together to come up with solutions to not only curb the virus but also other threats such as terrorism. It is important to note that through regional integration and pooling of resources is the only way the country and the continent can move forward towards curbing the virus as well as position themselves for a brighter future.

If the epidemic persists in the long term, then it is likely that e-commerce will generally be boosted in Kenya and the continent as a whole. People will find it convenient and safe to shop online rather than to go to the markets, where chances of coming into and contracting the virus are very high. Therefore, I foresee a situation where e-commerce is going to boom and become a key driving factor in the so called 'digital economy'.

It will also be realistic to assume that in a capitalist system it will be business as usual as large pharmaceutical companies will also benefit, as potential profits will definitely guide the development of vaccines as well as the deployment and training of health workers, after all one's man poison is another man's meat.

Nevertheless in the end all efforts should be geared towards stopping the menace that is Ebola but we should also not be ignorant of the few benefits it might present, as they old adage goes, there are always two sides to a coin. Let us not just look at one side.

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