

Africa manages to illustrate the richness, the beauty and the intensity of this vast swath of land that lies to the south of Europe and to the west of Asia - attached to both by a mere strip of land.

Africa has great natural beauty - its powerful rivers, its screaming forests, its vast deserts, and, because of this, it was once viewed by early European explorers to be the land of hope. In it you could see man in his natural environment, you could see animals and plants so colourful and wonderful, that nothing in Europe could rival them.

Anything and everything was possible in the land brimming with possibility and resources. Sadly, for Africa, it has always been the continent's beauty and natural resource that has been its downfall. In the 19th century it was the Europeans who grabbed the land and in the 20th it was the local chieftains and power hungry inhabitants and in the 21st century it has been the puffed up politicians and rock stars that lay a claim on this land.

**‘AROUND 11 MILLION PEOPLE
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FOOD IS RUNNING OUT.
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2005 - THE YEAR TO MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

Oxfam, one of the largest charities in the world, along with its allies created the Make Poverty History campaign. They aimed to raise awareness around the globe for the plight of the poor, the impoverished and the suffering and especially for the millions of Africans who suffer from the tragic trio of Aids, dictatorship and poverty. They always knew that in one year you could never make poverty history, but they hoped that they could get the ball rolling, that they could start something.

World charities hoped that with poverty in the public eye, the politicians would be forced to act, would want to act. Yet, they got little more than broken promises and lies. The G8 summit was expected to result in debt cancellations, charity increase, and trade tariffs being eradicated. Instead, there were promises and pledges to make poverty history and very little action.

Today, at this very moment, in 2006, Africa is facing one of its worst food shortages ever. Does it feature in the media? Hardly. Do those politicians who cared so much last year have anything to say? You'll be lucky. Oxfam has launched an emergency appeal because donations from governments were not as high as expected. It would seem, as with everything, that politicians are all talk and no action.

SO WHAT'S LEFT?

A tired, disillusioned public, especially the youth, who rant and rave but feel powerless to act. Those that care, those that truly care, feel betrayed, angry and frustrated. It doesn't matter that they often donate money or time to charities. It doesn't matter that they buy fair trade foods and goods and it doesn't matter how much they empathise and pity those suffering due to poverty. The world is staying the same and it would seem that those with the power don't care.

I'm a pessimist and always have been, but even I can't deny that there is a certain will concerning world poverty that hasn't existed before. Maybe it's as a result of the Make Poverty History campaign, or maybe it's simply due to the compactness of the modern world. I don't know. The truth is it doesn't matter. All that matters is if you can do something. As the song by Diamond Dogg says "don't just say it do it". If you have an idea or a plan that could help end world poverty, act on it. Write to MPs, to MEPs, to Parliament and to the Government. Show that you do care, that you care what happens to the people around you, the people in this world.

To make poverty history requires innovation and determination. If we are to make our government and governments around the world act to permanently eradicate poverty we have to remind them of two things. Firstly that this is what we want and that as they act on our collective national behalf it is their duty to do as we require and secondly, that we all share the human condition - we are all 'brothers and sisters' if you like - and that is reason enough to act. Then? **Anything is possible.**

By Charlotte Harris