

# An open letter to Bill Gates

...my response to a recent gatesnotes

Dear Bill Gates, as always I enjoy each and every of the thoughts you share through gatenotes.com because it's usually very thought provoking, and today's wasn't an exception. Thank you for that detailed report- Goalkeepers 2018- which explains the challenges and what to do about them. It was a very insightful read.

You talked about a trend you have spotted; one that actually sees the number of poor people increasing. More troubling for me as it was for you was the fact that by the middle of this century, 40 percent of people in extreme poverty will live just two countries, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo. Distilling deeper, what is even more worrisome but at the same time a source of hope is the fact that 75% of all the people living on under a \$1 a day are smallholder farmers. And there are over 64 Million of them in Nigeria alone.

This tells me that if we solve the problems of the very low earning potential of farms in Nigeria; if we are able to raise crop yields, and connect farmers to guaranteed markets of fair buyers; if the situation where farmers who grow cocoa cannot afford chocolate, or who grow most of the food but sometimes go to bed on an empty stomach can be addressed; we would have gone a long way to have solved the problem of extreme poverty.

So clearly, the sustainable solution to this problem isn't more aid or more donor funding; it is to create an ecosystem that welcomes the world to Nigeria and Africa for fair trade, not ones that exploit her and foist unequal terms of trade on her. It is removing the frictions in the value chain that perpetuates poverty among smallholder farmers. Because guess what? When farmers earn more, they are able to better educate their kids, and provide their families. More income also means they can afford better health care, which also translates to increased life expectancy.

And that is at the heart of what we do at Kitovu Technology Company; a social enterprise that uses data to eliminate guesswork and supply chain inefficiencies in African agriculture. We are committed to enabling farmers make more money off their farms and eventually transforming Africa into the hub that feeds the world. It is not going to be an easy journey, but like they say, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step; I am glad that Kitovu has taking a great step towards addressing this problem.

Once again, thank you for all the work you do in Africa and for sharing your thoughts and experiences with the next generation. Till we meet again in the virtual world of gatesnotes.com, permit me to sign off at this juncture.

Warm regards,  
Nwachinemere Emeka