**African musicians sing homegrown alternative to Geldof’s Band Aid 30**

Social media rallies behind ‘less patronising’ record with lyrics that stress importance of trusting doctors on Ebola

 Tiken Jah Fakoly recording the single, Africa Stop Ebola, with Salif Keita Main. Photograph: Africa Stop Ebola/3D Family Productions

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As the latest Band Aid single becomes [the fastest-selling single](http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/band-aid-30-set-for-record-breaking-number-1-3295/)of the year so far, concern is simmering over the style of the fundraising drive, just as it did 30 years ago.

Band Aid’s original single was accused of being patronising, perpetuating a “white saviour” narrative; the release of the new video to raise funds to tackle Ebola has triggered accusations that the musicians’ approach to [Africa](http://www.theguardian.com/world/africa) has not evolved.

Solome Lemma, co-founder of Africans in the Diaspora and the Africa Responds initiative on Ebola, a fundraising effort to support local organisations [working on the issue](http://africaresponds.org/), said it was commendable that Geldof was helping with the Ebola response, but questioned the initiative’s “patronising” style. Writing for [Al Jazeera,](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/11/africa-doesn-want-any-more-we-20141112103245331194.html)she noted that the original song “not only created misconceptions about Ethiopia, but it did so in a patronising way”.

She said she felt the same way about the new version. “The song is patronising and negative and it is sad that they haven’t worked with and included African musicians, especially from the countries affected. You have very well-known, mainstream singers, talking about Africa with very little inclusion of Africans,” she said.

“We learned from the first Band Aid that you can raise money, but money can also create more problems if you don’t do it well. The first Band Aid did raise money, but it left Ethiopia and the rest of Africa with a very negative legacy, that survives to this day.”

Lemma was born in Ethiopia and moved to the US when she was 12 in the early 1990s. “I came with a lot of pride about what I could teach people about Ethiopia.

I was shocked that the first that everyone asked me was: “Were you starving? People associate Ethiopia with famine and hunger and poverty to this day even though it’s one of the sixth fastest growing economies in the world. I hoped Geldof would ask himself ‘How can we do this differently this time?’” she said, but was disappointed that the new fundraising exercise was similar in style to its predecessors.

The debate has refocused attention on the methods used by rich nations to raise money for countries hit by crisis. Jørn Wichne Pedersen, president of the Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund, a development organisation that has spent several years campaigning to get western charities to improve the way they fundraise.

He helped create Africa for Norway, [a spoof campaign](http://www.africafornorway.no/)based on the original Band Aid song, that has African singers belting out a moving charity single, calling for donations to help send radiators to Norway, where poor children are freezing in the snow. “Collecting radiators, shipping them over there, spread some warmth, spread some smiles,” the musicians sing, smiling beatifically, before the video cuts to sad images of snow in Norway.

Pedersen was also dismayed that the campaigning style had not moved on. “Getting involved in the fight against [Ebola](http://www.theguardian.com/world/ebola) is commendable, but we wondered why the world’s leading musicians can not create awareness without using stereotypes.

“Scholars and activists have been criticising Band Aid for 30 years; why hasn’t Band Aid been able to listen and change things a little bit. Why do they still call this song Do they know it’s Christmas?’ Yes, they know it’s Christmas,” he said.

Pedersen’s organisation runs an anti-awards ceremony, the [Rusty Radiator awards](http://www.rustyradiator.com/), to highlight problematic tendencies in international charitable campaigns.

“Oxfam published a study two years ago showing that three out of four people become desensitized to the traditional fund-raising images that show hunger, drought and disease. That’s what creates the ‘Oh dear effect’. You see something shocking, but you’ve seen it thousands of times before and then you switch TV channels,” he said.

Tim Hunter, fundraising director for Oxfam GB, said charities were much more conscious of the need to avoid showing communities that they were trying help as passive victims. “Thirty years ago people didn’t think about a lot of the images.

“We now feel more part of a global village now. We ask: would we want our families to be portrayed in that way? We are conscious of the need to demonstrate that our work is about empowering people those communities, rather than having a sense of them and us.”

But there was a delicate line to tread. “It is a crisis situation in west Africa, so equally we need to not shy away from telling the truth. We support what Band Aid is doing, and we support people doing whatever they can to support that humanitarian response.”