

Obama Still Funding Failed 'Faith-Based' Programmes

It is time to put an end to the grants for faith-based organisations in the name of preventing HIV/AIDS, writes author.

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During a trip to Uganda last fall, I travelled through small villages near Jinja, a city about 71km from Kampala and home to the source of the Nile. Young Mormons, wearing the uniform of crisp white shirt, black tie, nametag and backpack, walked from hut to hut.

They travelled in pairs: one white Mormon and one black Mormon. My driver and guide told me that having a black missionary made the approach easier. Presumably, the young black missionary would speak at least Swahili.

However, those rite-of-passage mission trips are funded by the church, enabled through strict adherence by congregants to its aggressive tithing requirements.

But it is when mission trips - by any other name - are funded by US taxpayer money that we must put a stop to it.

George W Bush ushered in an era of unprecedented funding to faith-based (read: Christian) organisations.

The US has always funded religion in one way or another - think of tax-exempt status for churches and all houses of worship no matter the religion and multi-million dollar support of Catholic hospitals.

But Bush's vision was special. Billions in US taxpayer money was doled out to the Evangelicals who got him elected, a *de facto* payoff. The funds came through virtually every department under executive branch oversight, including the Department of Defense, Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Domestically, the grants had names like "Healthy Marriage", "Compassion Capital" and "Abstinence-Only" programmes among others. But arguably, one of the largest payouts to these religious groups came via [PEPFAR](#) - President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

So what's the big deal - that was George W Bush? He is history and we have moved on, right?

The answer to that is *kinda*.

How taxpayer money is 'wasted'

President Obama has done precious little to end PEPFAR funding to anti-gay, anti-condom, "abstinence-only" organisations operating in Africa (and indeed other parts of the world).

Failed and damaging abstinence programmes are being implemented throughout Sub-Saharan Africa - they did not go away when George W Bush left the White House.

For example, [Samaritan's Purse](#) (SP) was the most rewarded faith-based organisation under President George W Bush. Between 1999 and 2002, it received over \$6.5m in federal grants, accounting for 17 percent of total funding to "Evangelical" organisations, according to the National Committee on Responsible Philanthropy (NCRP).

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