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Clinton Foundation Considered Pulling Out Of Rwanda To Save WJC's Image

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Saving face by getting out of Rwanda was candidly discussed on record by former President Bill Clinton's director of foreign policy, according to an email released through WikiLeaks.

Amitabh Desai is the current Director of Foreign Policy for the Clinton Foundation, and formerly helped create the Haiti Development Fund, established by President Clinton, Carlos Slim and Frank Giustra in 2010. Giustra is at the center of multiple Clinton Foundation scandals, and heads a global initiative with President Clinton. **(RELATED: These Are The Two Companies That Could Land Clinton In Hot Water)**

Desai wrote to Foundation board members and staff in February, 2012, including Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton's campaign director John Podesta, describing the challenge that the Foundation faces with its initiatives in Rwanda:

The Rwandan public and government associate Soyco and Rwandan Farmers with WJC, but we have little or no operational input or control of those programs. This presents reputational risks – for example next year if Soyco is accused of unjust labor practices, or an accident/fatality occurs at the factory, or if the farmers complain the factory isn't paying them fair prices, etc, there is a risk that WJC is held responsible, albeit unfairly.

The foreign policy director begins by giving two options that he deems: "NOT RECOMMENDED." The first is to "continue the status quo. Reputational risks persist. WJC and we may talk about continuing to do agricultural work in Rwanda but the facts on the ground no longer support that claim."

Desai recommends as a back-up to "try to establish operational input/control with the businesses. This is probably not feasible since we have no representation at Board or Management level in Soyco or Rwandan Coffee. Even if feasible, is this really desirable? Do we want to be minority stakeholders in these businesses? This would require staff /local resources."

The first proactively recommended option given to WJC and the Foundation to save face would be to "declare progress and implicitly distance WJC from the ongoing operations of the business. During the next Africa trip, WJC could visit the sites of the businesses, declare the progress that's been achieved, and implicitly/overtly say we have succeeded in creating new businesses and that continuing responsibility for the businesses now shifts to the shareholders on record."

To complement this option, Desai suggests establishing "a support program for soy and coffee farmers who are selling produce to Soyco and Rwandan Farmers."

The arm of the Clinton Foundation which provides programming in Rwanda is called the Clinton-Hunter Development Initiative ([CHDI](#)). Collaborating with billionaire Sir Tom Hunter, Clinton announced CHDI at the inaugural meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in September, 2005. The project would have \$100 million, to be used over 10 years, to develop a self-sustaining, integrated and systemic approach to poverty alleviation in Malawi and Rwanda. Desai is a sitting board member of CHDI.

Bruce Lindsey, chairman of the board for the Clinton Foundation, replied all to the e-mail describing his views on what approach the Foundation should take: "Tom Hunter sent an email to WJC recently saying he hoped to be in a position to re-engage thru CHDI in Rwanda in the not too distant future. Announcing that our job in Rwanda is done and we are withdrawing would end that possibility. Ewan Hunter sits on the Board of both Soyco and Rwanda Coffee."

"To the extent that he is identified with CHDI and not the Hunter Foundation, the reputational issues, at least as far as the public is concerned, would still exist even after our 'announcement.' The government would understand the distinction, however," Lindsey concluded.

It does not appear that the Foundation made any significant efforts of scaling back, as the Clinton Development Initiative announced the expansion of its Rwanda efforts in February, 2015.

"Through a new agreement with the Government of Rwanda, CDI will adapt and implement agricultural programs that have been operating successfully in Malawi and Tanzania to help more Rwandan farmers increase their crop yields and improve their access to markets. This work will also help more Rwandan farmers adapt to, and mitigate the impact of, climate change to further increase their yields and incomes," the Foundation said in a press release.

It does, however, appear that at least one of the proposals from the email came to fruition. Chief among the aims laid out in the 2015 announcement, was the increase of "domestic production of soya, including production by smallholder farmers, and using that production to meet demand from large scale buyers of soya within Rwanda."

This reflects the complementary option put forth by Desai in the 2012 email.

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