

Review of: "Post-Pandemic Reflections from Sub-Saharan Africa: What We Know Now That We Wish We Knew Then"

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The article makes many important points but seems to be based solely on work in Nigeria and Uganda and it might have been more accurate to stipulate that. For example, the South African case and the role of health insurance companies in combating the pandemic was very different from what the authors describe in Nigeria, for example. Here it would have been good to have more evidence for sweeping claims about health profits or payments for COVID treatment across Sub-Saharan Africa.

While one can applaud the authors wish to keep scientists in control, this avoids the vexed question of: which scientists? This was particularly important given the massive disagreements between scientists in places like Great Britain and attempts by governments to set up committees that would co-ordinate governments and scientific and health advice. As the ongoing British inquiry into their pandemic planning experience shows, this is not as easy or straightforward as the authors suggest. Surely elected politicians have to balance the interests and costs and benefits of, for example, re-opening schools? Nor do the authors accept how complex it is to give clear scientific advice when dealing with an unknown disease. Health communication policies stressing the need for health experts to be first with advice arguably led to disillusion later when that advice was contradicted or withdrawn.

The authors also neglect the key questions of what international pressures on Africa were and how much they drove responses. For example, to allow travel from or to African countries, what was needed and how much did that affect policy in Africa? What about the tricky question of whether to pay for more expensive Western vaccines or cheaper but perhaps less effective Chinese vaccines?

Finally, the authors seem to move towards arguing for a herd immunity strategy, and against the strict control and stay at home rules, particularly for a far more youthful African populace where confinement to homes was, in their views, counter-productive. But they don't engage with that question, which is a pity!