

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

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

While an interesting paper on the experiences of these practitioners. It is a shame that it starts out referring to history, but does not itself learn from history "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it".

The history of pandemics in Africa is long, as is the scholarly work done to understand these pandemics is large.

Many of the policies used to mitigate deaths from COVID-19, were also used in the 1918-1919 Influenza pandemic that killed 1.35 million people in sub-sahara Africa (1.5% of the population at the time). During this pandemic masks, restriction to movement (including stopping boats), quarantine etc. were also used, the only difference being the speed of creation of new vaccines. Quarantine was also used in the African 1888 Rinderpest epidemic that destroyed livestock.

Then as now, local communities were wary of the "white man's" medicine, often seeing the cause of the outbreak due to the vaccines that were given, see for example the Ebola outbreak in Gabon where vaccines were blamed. Then, as now, communities resorted to their own quarantine systems, whereby isolating the sick in a building.

I would therefore recommend removing this historical framing of this paper, or fully embrace it by referring to the vast history of pandemics in Africa, especially the 1918-1919 Influenza pandemic, from which so much could have been learnt, was learnt, and then was forgotten.