

A Proposed Approach to Facilitate the Accessibility of Scientific Articles to Trainees in Africa

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Personal Reflection on Africa's Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Epidemic

Since few decades, the population of Africa, our beloved continent, is booming. This is not bad news. Let us embrace this positively and celebrate our demographic growth and work to establish a sustainable economic growth. This is an important opportunity for the future of Africa which has tremendous potentials. However, key responsibilities arise from increased population growth. For instance, healthcare services and the availability of high-quality pharmaceutical products should be provided to respond to patient's medicines demands. In sub-Saharan Africa, unfortunately, key health sectors remain poorly run and facing important challenges.

As human being and being human, what do we do if we do not have what we need? Well, we tend to find alternative solutions. This is exactly what is happening with (1) the

shortage of pharmaceutical drugs and (2) the supra-expensive imported drugs in Africa. Unfortunately, many of us in Africa rely on counterfeit medications to cure some acute or chronic pathologies. This is a widely spread way as an alternative approach to get medicine in Africa. I personally grew up within this system. With the nearest pharmacist miles away, it was not uncommon to run across the street to buy medications for our indisposed relatives at home. I did not of course run laboratory tests to determine whether the hundreds of medications I bought for myself or for my relatives were authentic, unexpired, not overdosed, or effective. However, I do know, at least I can attest and confirm, that the storage conditions are far to be optimal. In addition, the pharmaceutical medication sellers were not pharmacists. One legitimate question is to ask whether the millions of medications currently available on our street markets are effective.

Some could ask whether these medications bought to cure some of my relatives' acute diseases actually worked. Well, I do not know. Sometimes, we got better from our illness when taking these medications. Sometimes it was right away. Sometimes it took few days or weeks to get better. Overall, we grew up healthy without any major health issues. Maybe we were a little bit lucky to escape the dark side of counterfeit medications. Maybe these medications exerted placebo effect on us. Maybe these counterfeit medications were overdosed in active component and we were lucky to survived as other might passed away because of overdosed medications.

I can go through a lot of *maybe* and hypotheses. But *maybe* we should start to make sure that what we sell to treat our population is well designed and intended to be used as well as verifying the concentration of the drug our population take. As society, how do we organize to eradicate this epidemy of counterfeit medications? Here are few of my thoughts. *First* of all, let us organize our society to make sure that affordable

drugs are available in established neighboring pharmacies. Let work together to make sure that the majority of our people could have the privilege to offer to themselves high quality drugs when they are sick. Finally, a well coordination between our leaders in collaboration with the vigilance population to denounce the presence of counterfeit network of fake medications will certainly be as critical for the fight against counterfeit medicines which will be a long-term fight.

At the end of the day, health is life! Let us not play with our health. Let us take care of our health. We have only one life!

How African scientists can give back to their home continent

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Coronavirus pandemic cataclysm prediction in Africa. What can we learn from the impact of negative image on the disease outbreak prediction?

As a Guinean-born scientist working in France, I followed with worries Covid-19 cases in Africa since late February after the WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned countries with weaker health care systems to get prepared for a potential arrival of the virus and even request US\$675 million support from the global community to help prepare and protect the vulnerable countries from COVID-19 outbreak. In parallel in the western media, the hell on earth have been promised for Africa, which I partially believed in at some point. After five months of COVID-19 outbreak, although the COVID-19 cases are still risen on the continent, it is obvious that the cataclysm prediction did not happen. At least currently. Looking back, I am wondering whether the negative image of the continent contributes to the exaggerated alarming prediction of COVID-19 impact in Africa. If yes, as a perspective what the continent could do better to gain a more acceptable image projection.

COVID-19 hell on earth prediction in Africa: an analysis driven by Africa negative reputation in the West?

What do we hear on TV or read in newspapers or online media everyday about Africa? This question could sound as a nonsense for someone, but for Africans, news on TV, newspapers are mostly negative even sometimes in cartoon movies. The

continent is portrayed abroad as an attractive place to be especially during a global pandemic driven by a highly contagious virus without any cure or vaccine. We all see that when the virus outbreak was at its peak in different European countries, the governments from Europe have encouraged their citizens living in Africa to travel back to their home countries given the uncertainty and potential upcoming catastrophic in Africa due to COVID-19. The continent carries a “hopeless” reputation in Western media and when the pandemic reaches Europe, the discourse reflected what we habitually hear on TV and read in newspapers : “The hopeless continent”, “We must help Africa”, ...



Current facts on the ground

As the world is currently learning to cohabit with the virus, although we still have far way to go, the overall Africa virus cases and death toll linked to COVID-19 are far behind what happen in Europe and United States for example. And when it should be the time to learn about **how** the continent handle the coronavirus cases, it is unfortunate that media are more insisting on **why** the Africa resist to this pandemic.



On the analysis in the media focusing on the why instead of how Africa resisted, many papers (concrete) highlight potential contribution of African resilience, a young and healthier population, and other environmental factors. Although I am not fully convinced by these new theories and as we are still learning from this coronavirus, it might be important to ask as well how the African countries organized themselves in the midst of the pandemic and whether other people can learn from Africa.

It is time to start counting on Africa during global challenges

We have all experienced and still experiencing difficult times during this COVID-19 pandemic. From social distancing to stay at home order or lockdown, we are still looking “globally” for a better solution to help us coming back to where we were in early January 2020. Since we are still looking for best ways to deal with this virus, as global citizen, we shall not neglect any potential approach and strategies from our neighbor countries or continent which might work and we should promote scientific humility and share our will to learn from anyone regardless of his country wealth or ranking position between nations.

Yes, African healthcare system is far to be equipped as their Western counterpart. It is true that the ability to develop COVID-19 test might be sub-optimal compared to what we can see abroad. Maybe the democracy system is not lining up with what we defined as democracy in the western world. However, it might be possible that some governmental decisions taken in Africa might be decisive in slowing down the virus progression.

It is time for Africa to take in charge its narrative

Although with the arrival of social media in the diffusion of information, traditional media such as TV are still the primary choice of people to get their daily and global news. When it comes to reshape the image of the continent, it might be the time to work in Africa to establish a unique continental media TV and newspaper with an international scope. By doing so, Africa can counterbalance in real time what is wrongfully reported on Africa while highlighting Africa success as well. By doing so, Africa should force other media for a fairer reporting and analysis on Africa.

African Diaspora Scientists Federation: Leveraging Science and Technology to Benefit Africans

Science and technology are transforming our society and it is clear that we all in the world are benefiting from it including African populations. Nonetheless, African populations could be considered as the least benefiting of

science and technology in the world. To fully benefit from science and technology, African countries should invest massively in the training of scientists in the goal to respond competently at the local level to some science-based issues, such as climate change and disease outbreaks, for example. In the past two decades, African governments have increased, still insufficiently, their investment in tertiary education in the goal to drive the continent's growth through the implementation of sustainable technological capabilities. However, after the training of the future talents, African countries face difficulties to retain some of their scientists or students in science due to the lack of resources and opportunities in science for ambitious young scientists in a competitive world. This situation leads "automatically" to brain drain. Yet, it is possible to reverse or attenuate this brain drain situation. To do so, we are calling for active promotion of brain circulation in Africa coming especially from African scientists who are living in countries rich with cutting-edge technologies.



Our organization, African Diaspora Scientists Federation (ADSF) aims to provide a platform where volunteer African Scientists in the diaspora, through an intra and inter-disciplinary collaborative manner, could respond to consultation requests from African governments and non-

governmental organization (NGOs) on specific topics by providing analysis and opinions. Our second program, Science Experience and Career Path Exchange (SECPE), is a self-directed mentoring program that gives us the opportunity to be matched 1:1 with a mentor, or mentee from our database. The program provides a digital platform where we can form new connections, learn, and collaborate from peers residing in the diaspora or Africa, by sharing career advice and experiences. This program is designed to boost and build scientific confidence among the next generation of African scientists at an early age. Our last program, called Share 1 h of Your Science During Holidays, aims to organize and integrate one hour of a seminar for African scientists in their holiday schedule while visiting Africa. ADSF is responsible to organize the seminar by finding an interested institution and African scientists traveling for vacation and then organize the seminar. This program is designed to foster collaboration between African scientists in the diaspora and African scientists in Africa.

At ADSF, we are calling for African diaspora scientists to take the leadership on African science and technology implementation and development, which we believe would contribute to Africa prosperity through science and technology. In view of their background, African diaspora scientists are the most untapped African science and technology advocacy group. These scientists might advocate for science and technology development alongside African leaders and shape the paths for the setting up of rigorous science policies in Africa. Our platform is active and we are welcoming new members to join our initiative and inspire the next generation of African scientists.

Please visit us at <https://www.adsf.club> and join us to speed up Africa transformation through science and technology.

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