

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.