

African Contributions to Global Health

Video Transcript

Learning from Africa

TANJA: Welcome to this free open online course. How can knowledge from Africa contribute to improving health globally? How do you perceive innovation in the global healthcare sector? We look forward to exploring these and similar questions with you over the following five weeks. And hopefully this course will help clear up some misconceptions. Let's start by asking you for an estimate.

DORIS: The COVID-19 pandemic sparked many innovations in healthcare technology. Can you guess how many of these were piloted or adapted in Africa? According to an analysis by the World Health Organization, the correct answer to this question is more than 120. The study examined 1,000 examples of technologies in different parts of the world to respond to the health emergency during the pandemic. These technologies were either new or emerged from modifications to existing solutions. Africa thus accounts for 12.8 percent of these innovations.

TANJA: In fact, African experts contribute to global health in many ways -- and not only during a pandemic. The strategies and practices that improve healthcare in Africa could well be the very strategies and practices that would ultimately prove most effective on a global scale. We are thus convinced that studying applications, knowledge, and practices that are designed for the African healthcare sector may also benefit health systems worldwide.

DORIS: The central question of this course is: "How can knowledge from Africa contribute to improving health globally?"

TANJA: This basic question stimulates many further questions. Concepts of health-related knowledge and innovation touch on many perspectives that must all be included -- from public health and urban planning to history. These disciplines sometimes have differing notions of knowledge and innovation. How can they complement each other to help us find an answer to our central question?

DORIS: This, then, is yet another example in which diverse scientific disciplines can find answers together that they would miss if they were each operating on their own. In fact, our course is the result of an ongoing interdisciplinary project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.



This project brings together researchers from various fields to investigate how healthcare knowledge and innovations are circulated and how Africa contributes to global health; in the course, you will meet experts from the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute in Basel, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, the Department of History and the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel.

TANJA: The Centre for African Studies does not only bring together local scholars who work on Africa from different disciplinary perspectives. It is also a venue for conferences both national and international. It is a place for exchanges and partnerships. Doris and I will guide you through this course. As a historian of science, I am very much interested in the history of global health practices.

DORIS: And, as a public health specialist who has worked for the WHO and in several countries in the Global South, I am interested in health systems in Africa and what the rest of the world can learn from them.

TANJA: Each of the following five weeks has a different focus. You will find the contents of these five weeks and their different themes listed in our next step. We are very happy that you have joined our course. We look forward to reading your comments and discussions. To start them off: let us know in the comment section what comes to mind when you think about African contributions to global health.

DORIS: Again: a warm welcome to you!