

Sponsored symposium: Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)

Advocacy challenges and opportunities for stepping up support for poverty-related and neglected disease R&D after COVID-19

COVID-19 has exposed many gaps and challenges in our collective capacity to tackle infectious disease outbreaks but it has also triggered substantial investment and policy reform in this area. Ministers of Science from the EU and the African Union (AU) held their first-ever Ministerial meeting in July 2020 to discuss equitable access to COVID-19 technologies and ways to step up cooperation on poverty-related and neglected infectious diseases (PRNDs), in particular via the EDCTP. In November 2020, the AU-EU announced a new partnership to strengthen pandemic preparedness.

PRND R&D has played an important role in tackling the current pandemic. Technologies, research platforms and networks focused on HIV, tuberculosis (TB), Ebola and other poverty-related diseases have contributed to a faster and more efficient response against COVID-19: e.g. HIV vaccine platforms are being used for COVID-19 vaccines, and TB and Ebola rapid diagnostics have been repurposed for COVID-19. Since COVID-19, it is all the more important to step up efforts and avoid a potential attention shift to other areas, risking deprioritising PRND R&D investments. It is therefore critical to highlight the contribution of PRND R&D to epidemic preparedness and health security and the need to protect and increase funding dedicated for PRND R&D.

This session aims to bring together African and European researchers, civil society and decision makers to discuss how COVID-19 has impacted their work, funding and environment; and how we can harness the political interest created by the pandemic for PRND R&D.

Chair: Agustin Martin Lasanta, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Belgium

Speakers:

Agustin Martin, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, Belgium

Introduction: EU-Africa tools on epidemic preparedness and PRND R&D

Bartholomew Dicky Akanmori, WHO AFRO, Republic of Congo

Nick Chapman, Policy Cures Research, Australia

A more enabling environment for PRND R&D in Africa: challenges & opportunities

Marleen Temmerman, Aga Khan University, Kenya

Highlighting the value of PRND R&D during the COVID-19 pandemic

Catherine Hankins, Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development, The Netherlands

The EDCTP3 Strategic Research Agenda: harnessing COVID's momentum to advance PRND R&D