

Migrant and Refugee Health: An Agenda for Africa

WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT

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An African Agenda for Health and Migration

Develops and builds on a strong African Academic Community of researchers ..

...who cooperate in a global context and take part in a global community of health and migration experts

Viewpoint

Repositioning Africa in global knowledge production

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Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 13–5% of the global population but less than 1% of global research output. In 2008, Africa produced 27,000 published papers—the same number as The Netherlands. Informed by a nuanced understanding of the causes of the current scenario, we propose action that should be taken by African universities, governments, and development partners to foster the development of research-active universities on the continent.

Background

The history of modern universities in sub-Saharan Africa dates to the early 19th century with the establishment of Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, in 1827. By the end of the 1950s, however, sub-Saharan Africa had few universities.¹ As independence, many African countries established universities, albeit with few trained Africans to run them. The political elite in newly-independent African countries valued higher education—seeing it as a strategic weapon in the fight against poverty, ignorance, and disease.^{2,3} As captured by Mamdani, “As independence, every country needed to show its flag, national anthem, national currency, and national university as proof that the country had indeed become independent.”⁴

The new governments defined higher education policy within their strategies for national development—driven by a desire to decolonise the continent and achieve socioeconomic progress.⁵ Universities were expected to train the professionals needed in the expanding public service, to extend the frontiers of knowledge, and to serve the national economy.⁶ This link between higher education and national development incentivised governments to fund universities. Consequently, during the 1960s, 10–25% of government expenditure in Africa went to education. Of this, 10–15% went to higher education.⁷ Political commitment was strong with the first regional meeting of African Heads of State and Government on higher education held in Addis Ababa in May 1961, and subsequently the conference of African university leaders in Madagascar, in 1962.⁸ Ironically, the 1962 meeting discussed the same intractable issues animating contemporary discussions about the place of universities in national development: staffing, financing, and content of curricula.^{9,10} The 1960s and 1970s were something of a golden era for higher education in Africa. The 1980s witnessed a reversal in the fortunes of African universities. Many spiralled into decline as national economies suffered because of the oil crisis and International Monetary Fund-sponsored structural adjustment programmes.¹¹ University campuses quickly became centres of political opposition and civil unrest.^{12,13}

Among other outcomes, major cuts in funding for public sector institutions occurred. Poignantly, this coincided with rapid growth in university enrolments and the establishment of more universities in response to growing numbers of young people seeking access to higher education. Enrolment rose steadily from 181,000 in 1975, to 600,000 by 1980, and 1750,000 by 1995.¹⁴ Reductions in funding amidst growing numbers of students, created tensions between the political elite and academia, which precluded working together in search of solutions. This has had lasting consequences for universities. The growth in demand for higher education continues: between 2000 and 2010, annual enrolment more than doubled from 2.3 million to 5.2 million.¹⁵ Over and above structural adjustment demands to reduce overall public spending, education funding was preferentially diverted to primary and secondary education on the belief propagated by the World Bank, subsequently contested,¹⁶ that the rate of return from primary and secondary education was greater than that from higher education.¹⁷ Top faculty at African universities emigrated as working conditions deteriorated. Africans graduating abroad with post-graduate degrees chose to remain outside Africa to be productive.¹⁸ These factors disproportionately affected research and innovation, research training, and policy engagement.

Road to renewal

Since the 1990s, African universities have sought to regain their role as agents of transformation. Under pressure from mounting evidence on the destructive effects of structural adjustment in Africa, the World Bank changed its policy in favour of supporting higher education, thereby affirming universities' significance in political and socioeconomic transformation.¹⁹ A 2014 World Bank study²⁰ showed that sub-Saharan Africa has increased the quantity and quality of its research output substantially in the past 20 years: it more than doubled its annual research output from 2003 to 2012; its overall share of global research increased from 0.44% to 0.72% during the same period. Africa's global citations have also grown from 0.06–0.16% to 0.12–0.28%.²¹ This growth is strongly linked to advances in health sciences research, most of which is externally funded rather than the result of deliberate decisions by African governments. Health sciences research accounts for 45% of all sub-Saharan African research.²² Research output for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) lag behind other disciplines and has been declining annually at 0–2% since 2002. On a per capita basis, African universities remain severely underfunded in view of increasing enrolment, the establishment of

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Research in African Universities done by African Researchers is needed

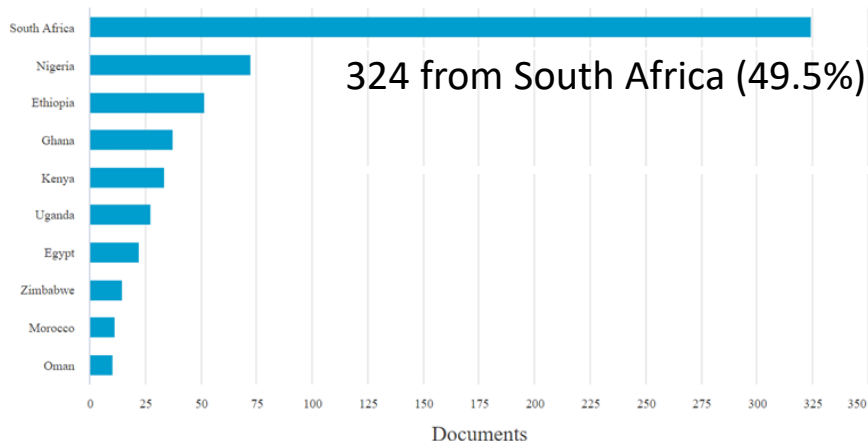
Preliminary findings from a search for peer reviewed literature (Scopus, 2000-2021):

Out of 34,059 papers on health and migration subjects, 654 papers can be identified from African countries and with researchers with African affiliation

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

Scopus



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Partnerships are key

Project 2020-2022

“Migration Governance and Health in Austria and Uganda”



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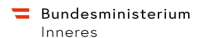
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1st Online Course on Health and Migration

Facilitators & moderators (in order of appearance)

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Jo Vearey, Hadijah Mwenyango,
Dominik Zenner, James Mugisha,
Roy William Mayega, Gary Jones,
Lika Nusbaum

1st online course

- March 1 – April 1, 2021
- 17 thematic sessions
- 17 facilitators from 9 countries:
Austria, Uganda, South-Africa, Kenya,
South-Sudan, Tunisia, UK, Philippines,
Australia
- 108 applications
- 46 participants from 10 countries:
Uganda, Democratic Republic of
Congo, Somalia, South-Africa, Sudan,
South-Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia,
Zimbabwe, Turkey
- 35 participants awarded a certificate
of completion (minimum number of
sessions, 2 course papers)



Lessons learnt and looking ahead

- Growing demand for Migration Health related skills requires consistent investment in human capital
 - training, research and publication

- Online teaching, despite its associated challenges, can be a useful tool towards an Africa wide capacity building plan
 - promotes inclusion – students and facilitators
 - requires investment in digital technologies

- Strong partnerships, corroborations, and funding are critical for the success of any training programme



Health and Migration

Online Course March/April 2021