



African Contributions to Global Health

Video Transcript

Drug development in Africa

TANJA: This week, we will explore drug development in Africa. We will dive into pharmaceutical practices and learn more from two leading experts at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Professor Dr Christian Burri and Dr Eric Nébié. Christian, you have been involved in drug and vaccine development for a long time. How would you describe your field of interest?

CHRISTIAN: During my training and professional career, I had the privilege of becoming involved in various aspects of Public Health, implementation of new interventions, and drug research and development. In the latter, my experience includes gene cloning, parasite cultivation, drug screening, pharmacology and toxicology, lead selection, the conduct of clinical trials of Phases I to III, quality management and ethical and regulatory tasks. I was involved in many topics and could contribute to the treatment of various diseases, but my original and continued passion is sleeping sickness or human African trypanosomiasis. Over the past thirty years we could make tremendous progress in treatment of this fatal disease; for instance we could reduce the treatment-related mortality from 5% to almost zero.

TANJA: Thank you, Christian. Eric -- what are your research interests?

ERIC: My research interests focus on clinical research efficiency improvement, tropical diseases research, innovative health interventions implementation and health systems preparedness to epidemics.

TANJA: Thank you, Eric. Drug research and development is a broad field with many examples that offer insights. During the HIV/AIDS pandemic, for instance, generic drugs development has changed the traditional excessive HIV drugs costs from a daily treatment cost of 41 to 1 USD. Only then did patent monopolies start to be publicly criticised and fall.

CHRISTIAN: The global distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine illustrates the challenges of drug and vaccine development, but also what is possible in extremis.

ERIC: Industry is under pressure to develop and produce medicine as cheaply and efficiently as possible. In this regard, it is our firm belief that much can be learned from product development partnerships and drug development in Africa.



CHRISTIAN: Product development partnerships emerged in the late 1990s as an innovative collaboration model for research and development of interventions against neglected diseases. They emerged in the form of public-private partnerships that then came to be known as product development partnerships. One prime example is the 'Medicines for Malaria Venture', based in Geneva, Switzerland. It was established in 1999. Reigniting stalled research and development into antimalarials, the 'Medicines for Malaria Venture' has since developed 13 antimalarials and has contributed to saving more than 2 million lives.

ERIC: This week, we will investigate drug development from the perspectives of academia, product development partnerships and pharma industry.

TANJA: We will focus on the challenges of drug development in Africa as well as its success stories. Through concrete examples, we will illustrate what drug researchers and development stakeholders can learn from Africa.