

Satirical essay critiques power imbalances in global health research

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International collaborations can help or hinder biomedical research for global health. Credit: Okeke, I. N., Medicine Anthropology Theory, CC-BY 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

When establishing partnerships with research counterparts in under-resourced countries, global health researchers often deploy discourse that claims to focus on sustainability and capacity building. But how is this viewed from the other side of the partnership? A satirical opinion article publishing September 30th in *PLOS Biology* by Iruka Okeke of University of Ibadan, Nigeria, highlights the extractive and exploitive aspects of health research partnerships between biomedical researchers in high-income countries and their counterparts in low-income, disease-endemic countries.

The actual short- and long-termed benefits of these collaborations may be one-sided. In her essay entitled "Twenty steps to ingrain power asymmetry in global health [biomedical research](#)," the author uses the global health lexicon as a rhetorical aid to offer a counter-perspective on research collaborations in low-income countries initiated and implemented by scientists from [high-income countries](#). The twenty steps spotlight twenty problematic practices of global health researchers that may maintain and exacerbate inequities in [health research](#).

According to the author, "Are you a laboratory scientist par excellence with international research ambitions? As my tip list draws on common stereotypes, I'll presume that you are a high-income country scientist with [low-income](#) country research aspirations." Among her twenty hot tips for success, Dr. Okeke has this handy advice: "Pick a Partner Country. Avoid locations where good research in the area has previously been conducted. Instead prioritize countries with pristine beaches, a game reserve or some other 'must see'. Holiday brochures could be helpful at this stage."

Okeke adds, "This satire chronicles unfortunate but common intentional and unintentional collaboration missteps that can compromise the sustainability and impact of global health laboratory projects."

More information: Okeke IN (2021) Twenty steps to ingrain power asymmetry in global health biomedical research. *PLoS Biol* 19(9): e3001411. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001411

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