PLENARY SESSION 0
Politics, Political Economy & History

Major Trends Shaping the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Enduring colonialisms in global health

- **Top down views**
  1. Our ideas are the best – let's 'present' them for implementation.
  2. Let's make our ideas (beliefs?) the basis of best practice for research & policy work.
  3. Our friend X, in that LMIC, can give us 'local' knowledge & demonstrate our racial inclusiveness

- **On the ground, 'in-LMIC' views**
  1. Interesting offerings, but largely de-contextualized.
  2. How can protocols be imposed, if we are to win political & administrative buy-in?
  3. How can this English-speaking, elite, big-city actor understand complex local needs & mobilize alliances?

Enduring extractions processes of extraction

- **Top-down civilizational view:**

1. Blimey (or another culturally specific HIC term for wonderment), this LMIC context is so much more complex….

2. Let's re-design best practice protocols to quietly accommodate crucial ideas from locales

3. Progress! Now, let's write an evaluation (history), arguing that our original plans guided the entire successful process

4. Let's move on to 'lead' another funded project

- **On the ground disbelief:**

1. When will these chaps step out of the posh cars & actually spend meaningful time on the ground?

2. We will adapt this policy to local socio-economic & political needs, to ensure inter-sectoral stake-holding

3. Why are our contributions not mentioned in reports that lead to follow-up grants, & journal articles that only seem to embellish HIC CVs (of people we hardly saw)?

4. These HIC 'colleagues' cannot be trusted

Warnings from recent history:
Or, the 'take home' points for Covid19 work

- Those who choose to communicate in non-European languages are not intellectually constrained

- Those working on the ground are ambassadors for global health research & policy protocols, with important contextual information that is crucial for successful implementation

- Policy projects that listen out for administrative, social & cultural concerns, & adapt appropriately & respectfully, are more likely to succeed (& embed future goodwill)

- 'Trust' is not generated by speaking down at people – but, by working with national & sub-national implementers, who are best placed to advise on & design terms for community engagement

- Those at the receiving end of project do & can think, & have long memories – memories of past campaigns & engagements remain important determinants of current (& future) engagement