

Introducing **Sabine Frankin**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Recipient at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University.

Sabine Frankin earned her Ph.D from the School of Organisations, Economy and Society at the University of Westminster in London, U.K. Her research interests are in African politics, global health, and institutions. Sabine is a Visiting Researcher at the Westminster Development Policy Network and is currently a 2022-2023 AAUW Postdoctoral Research Fellowship recipient at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University. We spoke to Sabine about her current research, important issues facing global health today, and the positive health effects of gardening.



Hi Sabine! As a visiting researcher at the Westminster Development Policy Network and a postdoctoral research fellow at Yale University, what projects are you currently working on?

Hi, thank you for inviting me for an interview. My research is at the intersection of political science, economics, and public health. Specifically, I look at how public health emergencies are governed. Currently, I am on a postdoctoral research fellowship funded by the AAUW to research local emergency management strategies of the COVID-19 outbreak in Sierra Leone. When investigating government policies during an emergency, I am particularly interested in how local communities engaged with these policies and how effective that was. It is a "lessons learned" approach as I want to understand the strengths and weaknesses of decisions made, who were involved in that decision-

making, and why. Thus, the aim is to improve the implementation of strategies for future public health emergencies that would be more effective and save lives.

What do you think is the most important issue facing global health today, and how do you think researchers can contribute to addressing this issue?

Although I focus on catastrophic disease outbreaks, the truth is that as devastating and attention-grabbing as these events are, they are not the real threat to the public health of the global community. It is just a symptom of the bigger problem of the lack of access

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and equity to universal primary healthcare in rich and poor countries and everyone in between. Most of the interventions and funding on the global health agenda focus on narrow and vertical short-term delivery of health goods and services, and not on horizontal strengthening of health systems and public health infrastructure to support communities in the long run. So, if we only think about global health security as short-term firefighting a new disease (like COVID or bird flu outbreak), we miss the bigger threat to our global health security, which is equitable access to healthcare and public health services focused on prevention. This is where we need the research and implementation science (i.e., funding and resources) to be directed.

I've heard that you learned gardening during the pandemic. What impact do you think gardening could have on people's health? Did you experience any positive effects yourself?

I have a bit of a green thumb so personally, it was a great way to be outdoors to positively affect my mental and physical health, especially during quarantine time. In fact, I don't think I had ever interacted so much with my neighbors, as we were all outdoors taking care of our plants and lawns. So, there was a social interaction element too. If you have allergies, like I do, then you can always work on indoor plants. Overall, I think gardening is a healthy activity that people from all walks of life can enjoy, it is also a fun social activity to do with children or loved ones, so I see this as an activity that can benefit physical and mental health.



A photo of Sabine's 10-foot tall rose bush.
Photo Credit: Sabine Franklin.

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