

YOUTH PRE-CONFERENCE 2023

250 Young Professionals to Chart the Future of Healthcare in Africa

As the continent with the world's largest demographic of young people, with at least 65% of the Continent population under the age of 30, Africa has an opportunity for its growth – but only if these new generations are fully empowered to realize their best potential. It is especially important that young people are included in decision-making and given appropriate opportunities to work and to innovate. Youth innovation and participation in health systems are vital to building a safer and healthier Africa. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is actualising this to forge innovative solutions for health security through initiatives like the [AU COVID-19 Vaccination Bingwa Initiative](#).

In December 2022, Africa CDC convened the inaugural Youth Pre-Conference (YPC) on the margins of the 2nd Annual International Conference on Public Health in Africa (CPHIA), kicking off long-term strategic engagement with Africa's young professionals in various domains of healthcare, technology, policy and advocacy, to advance sustainable health systems in the continent. The conference themed "Meaningful Youth Engagement for Advancing Sustainable Health Security in Africa" brought about the creation of Africa CDC's inaugural [Youth Advisory Team for Health \(YAT4H\)](#), an immediate response to the consensus that the youth must be involved in decision-making at all levels in tandem with nurturing a new generation of conscious and well versed public health leaders.

The Youth Pre-Conference demonstrates Africa CDC's resolve and commitment to a youth-centered approach to the actualisation and implementation of the [New Public Health Order for Africa](#) in line with [Agenda 2063](#), most specifically "Development cannot be achieved without adequate investment in healthcare. With the current demographics, healthy young people will provide a labor base that is able to impact transformation through their engagement in work, innovation and entrepreneurial aspirations".



Following the landmark success of the inaugural event, Africa CDC is bringing together 250 young people from across the African continent for the second Youth Pre-Conference on the margins of the 3rd Annual International Conference on Public Health in Africa, in Lusaka, Zambia, between 25 – 26 November 2023. This edition seeks to advance the institutionalization of strategic partnership between Africa CDC and Africa’s young people through an all-inclusive space to reflect on the current state of public health leadership on the continent and to share further perspectives on youth-led solutions for improved health security.

Youth Pre-Conference 2023

This year’s theme **“Youth Leadership for a Safer and Healthier Africa”** not only builds upon the solid foundation laid by its predecessor. It accentuates the imperative of youth leadership in health governance and discourses – from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The young professionals would provide **insights into critical topics including digital and mental health, climate nexus, medical manufacturing, inclusion and disability, youth health workforce development, and adolescent and young adult reproductive health and rights for a better future through various panel discussions.** Yet, as a capacity-building platform for emerging public health leaders, the conference offers a dynamic growth opportunity for the young professionals to meet, and learn from, accomplished exemplars with greater experience, thereby gaining more skills as they delve into the complexities of leadership.

Total Applications	Selected candidates	# Countries represented (incl. Diaspora)
3,247 1,817 Male 1,430 Female	250 145 Male 105 Female	51

The composition of the 250 participants, selected from a pool of over 3,000 applicants, reflects the evolving nature of health systems thinking. Notably, it affirms that health is inherently intersectional and multidisciplinary and that health systems do not exist in silos. With the participants representing African youth across all countries, diverse relevant and intersected professions, gender and age spectrum, one of the critical features of the Youth Pre-Conference is inclusivity, as it offers equal opportunity to everyone in furtherance of “health for all”. Perspectives from diverse groups, including minority populations across socio-economic settings and backgrounds, hold immense potential to drive transformative changes in Africa’s healthcare systems, making them more resilient, responsive, and inclusive.

Charting the future of healthcare in Africa

The 2023 Youth Pre-Conference comes again at a critical juncture in global health where the world and Africa particularly face multiple conflicts and humanitarian crises amidst growing concern for mental health and the emerging recognition of the One Health approach. Africa CDC’s One Health approach recognises human, planetary, and environmental health interconnectedness to achieve the New Public Health Order.

Community health is at the heart of the Agenda 2063, which aims for an Africa where citizens are healthy, well-nourished and able to contribute; and young people constitute a huge pool for the Africa CDC’s vision to establish and operationalize a continental coordination mechanism for community health in Africa. The concept of “health for all”

remains hollow unless all individuals are given the opportunity to engage. The diverse perspectives hold immense potential to drive transformative changes in healthcare systems, making them more resilient, responsive, and inclusive.

Beyond being a discussion forum, the Youth Pre-Conference is a platform for meaningful actions. The young professionals will collaborate to develop concrete strategies, recommendations and projects capable of addressing pressing healthcare challenges across the continent. The generated solutions will be grounded in real-world experiences and shaped by the unique, innovative insights the young leaders have to offer. Thus, the Youth Pre-Conference 2023 is more than a conference; it serves as a clarion call and a testament to Africa CDC's unwavering commitment to empowering young leaders in the public health domain.

Furthermore, beyond meeting as young people, the participants will also have a chance to participate in the discussions at CPHIA, providing an opportunity for engagement with other actors, sharing their own insights and perspectives and ensuring that discussions are inclusive and all-encompassing.

There will also be a gallery walk that provides young researchers the space and the opportunity to share their discoveries, innovation and entrepreneurial pursuits within the health sector. This practically demonstrates the leadership role that young people are already playing in the health sector.

As we continue to advance sustainable health systems in Africa, the Youth Pre-Conference will contribute hugely to creating a safer and healthier Africa for all generations. It is an invitation to drive positive change, foster collaboration, and shape the future of public health on the continent.

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