



# Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health Strategy

2025-2028



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Africa CDC is a continental autonomous health agency of the African Union established to support public health initiatives of Member States and strengthen the capacity of their public health institutes to detect, prevent, control; and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats.

### Safeguarding Africa's Health

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Cover photo: Second Africa CDC Youth Pre-Conference. November 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia.

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# List of Abbreviations

**Africa CDC:** Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

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**AU:** African Union

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**AUC:** African Union Commission

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**CPHIA:** Conference on Public Health in Africa

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**COVID-19:** Coronavirus Disease-19

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**HIV/AIDS:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

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**NPHO:** New Public Health Order for Africa

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**RECs:** Regional Economic Communities

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**SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals

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**SRHR:** Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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**UN:** United Nations

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**UHC:** Universal Health Coverage

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**WHO:** World Health Organisation

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**YAT4H:** Youth Advisory Team for Health

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**YPC:** Youth Pre-conference

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**YES! Health:** Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health





Second Africa CDC Youth Pre-Conference. November 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia.



# Foreword

The burgeoning youth population across Africa represents a formidable force for innovation, resilience, and progress. As we step into the years 2025 to 2028, Africa finds itself at a pivotal juncture where the energy, creativity, and ingenuity of its young people can significantly shape the future of global health. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) recognizes this immense potential and is committed to fostering an environment where the youth are not just beneficiaries but active participants and leaders in global health initiatives.

The **Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health (2025-2029)** is a testament to our engagement and commitment to inclusivity and empowerment of young people. It underscores our belief that the youth are key stakeholders in the quest for health security, equity, and resilience. This strategy aims to create meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to and benefit from health policies, programs, and innovations.

In crafting this strategy, we have engaged with youth from diverse backgrounds and experiences, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but are integral to our planning and implementation processes. We understand that the challenges of the 21st century—ranging from pandemics to climate change—require a collaborative and multi-generational approach. By engaging the youth, we are investing in a future where health systems are robust, inclusive, and adaptive.

The strategy outlines clear pathways for youth participation, including the creation of enabling policy environments, inclusive platforms for dialogue and innovation, empowering partnerships, capacity-building opportunities, and sustainable financing mechanisms for young African changemakers in public health. It is designed to harness the dynamism of Africa's youth, providing them with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to drive impactful health initiatives.

As we embark on this journey, we call upon governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to join us. Together, we can build a healthier, more prosperous Africa where the youth are at the forefront of global health leadership.

We are confident that with the implementation of this strategy, we will witness a transformative era where the youth's contributions to global health are recognized and amplified. This is not merely a strategic document but a movement towards a more inclusive and healthier future for all.

On behalf of the Africa CDC, I extend my deepest gratitude to all the young people who have contributed to developing this strategy. Your insights, passion, and commitment are the driving forces behind this initiative. Let us move forward together, united in our vision (New Public Health Order) for a safer and healthier Africa and a healthier world.

**His Excellency Dr Jean Kaseya**  
**Director General, Africa CDC**



# Acknowledgements

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who worked towards creating the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health (2025-2028). This Strategy was developed in line with the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and the New Public health Order for Africa, to create an enabling policy environment for young people in Africa to meaningfully contribute to shape the continent's health architecture.

I hereby acknowledge the efforts of the Africa CDC Ag. Deputy Director General, Dr. Raji Tajudeen for spearheading the revision of the drafts to develop this Strategy. I also acknowledge all Africa CDC Heads of Divisions and their delegates for their invaluable guidance and inputs. Special thanks to the team from the GIZ Office to the African Union, led by Mr. Ibraheem Sanusi, Head of SCPRA Project for their invaluable technical and financial support. Last but not least, I highly commend the leadership of the Africa CDC Youth Division team for leading the process as well as the highly participatory approach and technical input from the other Divisions, Partners, Youth experts, and Civil Society Organizations (Youth Foundation for Development, Education & Leadership), Africa CDC Youth Advisory Team for Health (YAT4H) 2022 and all Youth Pre-Conference 2023 Delegates, in the development of this Strategy.

Your collaborative efforts in crafting this strategic framework will undoubtedly pave the way for meaningful youth engagement, innovative solutions, and sustainable impact in the field of public health across Africa and beyond. By recognizing the importance of involving the voices and perspectives of young people, you are driving positive change and inspiring a new generation of healthcare leaders.

Thank you for your hard work, vision, and perseverance in creating a roadmap that embraces diversity, inclusivity, and excellence. Your dedication to advancing global health through youth empowerment sets a powerful example for us all.

With profound appreciation,

**His Excellency Dr Jean Kaseya**  
**Director General, Africa CDC**

# Executive Summary

Africa's youth, aged 15-35 and constituting over 65% of the continent's population, play a crucial role in addressing prevailing health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and the more recent COVID-19 pandemic. Their innovative solutions and active participation in health systems and community outreach programmes are vital to building a safer and healthier Africa, as well as achieving global health security. However, despite their contributions, they remain underrepresented, with their voices largely unheard and ideas often overlooked in public health leadership, policy, and decision-making spaces.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), as a continental health agency established to strengthen the capacity of Member States to detect, prevent, and quickly and effectively respond to disease threats, recognises the value that youth bring to advancing health security on the continent and globally. African youth, embodying the spirit of innovation, advocacy, and active participation, with an inherent understanding of their communities' unique challenges, are crucial partners for the Africa CDC's health promotion, health innovation and disease prevention efforts.

Ensuring that youth are meaningfully engaged in all aspects of health programming, including governance, is crucial to harnessing their full potential for Africa's health security and prosperity. Recognising this, the Africa CDC has been engaging African youth through initiatives such as the African Union (AU) COVID-19 Vaccination Bingwa Initiative, the Africa CDC's inaugural Youth Advisory Team for Health (YAT4H), and its annual Youth Pre-Conference (YPC).

This document presents the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health, which builds on the Africa CDC's prior youth engagement efforts to create an enabling policy environment for youth engagement and leadership within Africa CDC and Africa's public health architecture at large.

The Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health, 2025-2028, is designed to mobilise, empower, and engage young Africans in shaping the continent's public health future. The strategy has five strategic objectives, developed, and refined through an extensive consultation process with the Africa CDC Divisions' representatives, the YAT4H, youth delegates at the Africa CDC YPC 2023, and other young public health professionals from various AU Member States.



The strategic objectives are:



### Architectures for Youth Engagement:

Develop a framework for mainstreaming meaningful youth engagement in Africa CDC's work and the New Public Health Order.



### Accessible and Inclusive Spaces:

Create accessible spaces (physical and digital) for active youth collaboration and knowledge exchange.



### Youth-led and Youth-oriented Partnerships:

Empower youth-led partnerships and initiatives in public health through collaboration and resource provision.



### Talent/Workforce Development for Youth:

Expand the public health workforce by developing capacity through training, mentorship, fellowships, and scholarships.



### Financing for Youth-led Initiatives:

Establish sustainable funding mechanisms for youth-led programmes and innovation.

The Africa CDC Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health Strategy is the first of its kind, aiming to mainstream African youth at all levels of Africa's health service delivery, governance, and leadership. It recognises young Africans as existing leaders and changemakers who are already shaping the health of their communities.

The Africa CDC calls on member states, partners, and youth to join us as we work together towards an Africa where young people are engaged as equal partners and co-architects in building a safer, healthier, and prosperous continent for all.



**GET VACCINATED**  
**FIGHT**  
**COVID-19**  
**PROTECT**  
**AFRICA**

Africa CDC  
**Saving Lives**  
and **Livelihoods**

in partnership with  **mastercard**  
foundation

**I AM A BINGWA**  
**INITIATIVE**

**GET VACCINATED**



# Background and context

## THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PUBLIC HEALTH IN AFRICA

To improve Africa's health and enhance public health practice and policy on the continent, engaging young people is critical. Africa has a burgeoning youth population, **with individuals aged 15-35 constituting more than 65% of the total population**<sup>1</sup> (the age range defined in the African Youth Charter)<sup>2</sup>. This demographic group plays a crucial role in addressing prevailing health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and the more recent COVID-19 pandemic.

AU Bingwa East Africa regional training. November 2022 - Dar es Salam, Tanzania

<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization, 2022. World Health Statistics 2022: Monitoring health for the SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>

<sup>2</sup>African Union, 2019. Africa Youth Charter. [Online] Available at: <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter> [Accessed 02 January 2024].

This engagement will be pivotal to improve health outcomes across the continent. The average life expectancy in Africa is eight years lower than the global average (64 years in Africa compared to 72 years globally)<sup>3</sup>, Africa's infant mortality rate (47/1000) is almost double that of the global average<sup>4</sup>, and the continent struggles with a significant prevalence of infectious diseases – 94% of the global malaria cases and deaths take place in Africa.<sup>5</sup>

These lagging outcomes are due to many underpinning factors. Affordable healthcare remains a significant challenge in Africa with the percentage of people paying out of pocket

for healthcare double the global average. There is an acute shortage of healthcare workers – in Africa there are an estimated 1.55 healthcare workers per 1,000 people<sup>6</sup>, which is far below the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended minimum threshold of 4.45 health workers per 1,000 people. Physical access to a health facility is limited, with only 23% of the African population living within five kilometres of a primary healthcare facility.<sup>7</sup> Low health literacy rates among the populace can also act as a barrier to preventive health practices and timely seeking out of care. Underscoring these barriers are weak and ineffective health systems that are plagued by lack of investment and innovation.



Africa Health Tech Summit. October 2024 - Kigali, Rwanda

<sup>3</sup>UNFPA, 2021. *Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE) during responses to epidemics and pandemics*. [Online] Available at: <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/en/publications/meaningful-adolescent-and-youth-engagement-maye-during-responses-epidemics-and-pandemics>

<sup>4</sup>World Bank, 2021. *Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births) - Sub-Saharan Africa*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN?locations=ZG>

<sup>5</sup>World Health Organization, 2021. *\*World Malaria Report 2021\**. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/teams/global-malaria-programme/reports/world-malaria-report-2021>

<sup>6</sup>Ahmat A, Okoroafor SC, Kazanga I, et al. (2022). *The health workforce status in the WHO African Region: findings of a cross-sectional study*. *BMJ Glob Health*. 7(Suppl 1): e008317. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2021-008317.

<sup>7</sup>World Health Organization, 2016. *Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030*. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/pub\\_globstrathrh-2030/en/](https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/pub_globstrathrh-2030/en/)



# 65%

of Africa's total population is aged 15-35



# 47

per 1000 infant mortality rate of the continent is almost double that of the global average



# 94%

of the global malaria cases and deaths are recorded in Africa



# 1.5

Healthcare personnel against the WHO recommended minimum threshold of 4.45 per 1000 population



# 23%

of the African population live within 5 kilometers of a primary healthcare facility



# 64

The average life expectancy in Africa is 8 years lower than the global average

A youth population that is educated and empowered to actively participate in shaping a healthy continent will be instrumental in fostering sustainable health for generations to come. To address the myriad and complex health issues facing the African continent, it is imperative that the youth assume an active role in advocating for, leading and implementing public health initiatives, as well as preparing for future threats. By taking on this responsibility, the youth contribute to the well-being of the public, thus creating a foundation for a healthier and more resilient Africa.

The AU Agenda 2063 and the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030, with their aspirations and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are anchored in the principle of inclusivity, encapsulated by the mantra 'leave no one behind'. Young people must be integrated and meaningfully engaged in all matters of their lives and futures. Their inclusive engagement is a linchpin of the global goal to eradicate poverty in all its manifestations, combat discrimination and exclusion, and narrow the gaps of inequality and vulnerability. Given young people's sheer majority in Africa, prioritising their inclusion in safeguarding Africa's health will empower them and ensure a comprehensive, equitable and successful pursuit of sustainable development.



## KEY HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AFRICA

*In a survey carried out as part of the consultative process for the development of the Africa CDC **Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health**, respondents identified sexual and reproductive health, substance abuse, mental health, and HIV/AIDS as the top health issues affecting young people in Africa*

According to the WHO, half of all mental health disorders in adulthood start by age 14, but most cases are undetected and untreated.<sup>8</sup> HIV/AIDS amongst young people continues to remain a challenge. In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls and young women accounted for more than 77% of new infections among young people aged 15-24 years in 2022 and were more than three times as likely to acquire HIV than their male peers.<sup>9</sup>

Other identified health issues affecting young people include Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and sexual and gender-based violence. According to the WHO, NCDs accounted for 37% of all deaths in the Africa region in 2019, up from 22% in 2000<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>WHO, 2023. Adolescent and Young Adult Health. [Online] Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions> [Accessed 01 March 2024]

<sup>9</sup>UNAIDS, 2023. Global HIV & AIDS statistics Factsheet. [Online] Available at: [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/UNAIDS\\_FactSheet\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf) [Accessed 2024]

<sup>10</sup>WHO, 2022. World Health Organization (WHO) Noncommunicable Disease Progress Monitor. (Online) Available at: <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/353048>



### AGE 14

half of all mental health disorders that will be experienced in adulthood develop



### 77%

of new HIV infections among young people aged 15-24 years in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022 were among adolescent girls and young women



### 37%

of all deaths in the African region in 2019 were due to NCDs. This number has shown a significant increase from 22% in 2000

## What are young people doing?

*At the Africa CDC, the role of youth is multifaceted and critical. Youth embody the spirit of innovation, advocacy, and active participation essential for advancing public health across the continent. They are not just beneficiaries of health policies; they are active contributors and innovators, reaching communities that large organisations struggle to access. In Africa, young people are at the forefront of finding solutions to the continent's health challenges.*

### **Young Africans leading advocacy, activism, and policy:**

Young Africans are powerful advocates for public health. With increasing access to technology and social media, they are more connected and informed, with greater awareness and activism around public health issues, from local health crises to pandemics. They amplify crucial health issues, influencing public opinion and policy through relatable content creation and propagation. Harnessed meaningfully, their voices advocate for health rights, push for improved access to quality health services, and ensure that health policies are responsive to the needs of all segments of the population, not only their peers, but also their parents and wider communities.

Their involvement is also pivotal in policy development. The importance of including young voices in formulating health policies cannot be overemphasised, as they provide current and relevant perspectives leading to efficient, cost-effective, and successful policies and interventions. By involving youth in these processes at all levels, policies will be comprehensive and reflective of Africans' diverse experiences and needs.

### **Young people leading community engagement:**

Young Africans are vital in community-level health promotion and disease prevention. Their roles extend from grassroots mobilisation for health campaigns to the frontlines of public health emergencies. They have formed organisations, associations and networks at community, national, regional, and continental levels to address shared health challenges and organise and lead community sensitisation campaigns to address specific health-related concerns, such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, antimicrobial resistance, and COVID-19.

As volunteers, communicators, and mobilisers, youth have shown an extraordinary ability to connect with communities, disseminate critical information, and actively



participate in logistics and support services during crises. For instance, young people trained as peer counsellors have been crucial in HIV/AIDS management to help stem the rise of HIV infection amongst young people. They have also led campaigns on COVID-19 vaccination, including the recent AU Bingwa Initiative where they promoted the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine and advocated for their peers, families, and communities to get vaccinated <sup>11, 12</sup>.

## Young Africans Pioneering Innovations and Research:

Health research and innovation represent critical arenas where young Africans play a pivotal role. Despite encountering significant challenges such as limited access to training, funding, and mentorship opportunities<sup>13</sup>, young African researchers, both on the continent and within the diaspora, have emerged as trailblazers in scientific research and development across Africa. Their contributions span from epidemiology and public health to biomedical sciences and technology-driven solutions<sup>14</sup>. The contributions of these young researchers extend beyond addressing pressing health issues endemic to their regions to fostering collaborations that transcend geographical boundaries and contributing to health innovation on the continent.

Furthermore, from health apps to telemedicine, young Africans are at the vanguard, using their digital proficiency to tackle health challenges in novel and effective ways. This technological adeptness is enhancing healthcare delivery and is instrumental in disease surveillance and the management of health information systems. Emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, offer additional opportunities for young Africans to test use cases for these technologies within the African health ecosystem. Several health technology start-ups on the continent are already innovating on digital health platforms and tools to bridge the gaps on access to healthcare in Africa.

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<sup>11</sup>Africa CDC, 2022. African Union COVID-19 Vaccination Bingwa Initiative. [Online] Available at: <https://africacdc.org/african-union-covid-19-vaccination-bingwa-initiative-2/> [Accessed 02 January 2024].

<sup>12</sup>Le, L. H. & Kifle, Y., 2023. The Bingwa Initiative – how young people have boosted Africa's COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. [Online] Available at: <https://health.bmz.de/stories/the-bingwa-initiative-how-young-people-have-boosted-africas-covid-19-vaccination-campaigns/> [Accessed 10 January 2024].

<sup>13</sup>Adebisi, Yewande A., Nurudeen D. Jimoh, Aniekan E. Bassey, et al. 2024. "Harnessing the Potential of African Youth for Transforming Health Research in Africa." *Global Health* 20: 35. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-024-01039-7>.

<sup>14</sup>Woolston, Chris. 2019. "Meeting the Challenges of Research Across Africa." *Nature* 572 (7767): 143-145. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-02311-2>.

African youth are more than just demographic; they are agents of change, professionals, innovators, advocates, and leaders in the public health sector. Their role in the AU's health agenda is a testament to their invaluable contribution to shaping a healthier, prosperous and more resilient Africa.



AU Bingwa exhibition booth at the Third International Conference for Public Health in Africa (CPHIA).  
November 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia



## A case for the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health

*In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a seismic shift towards emphasising the importance of robust primary healthcare systems, accelerating the adoption of digital health technologies, and highlighting the need for global health security.*

The pandemic also spurred a greater focus on mental health and well-being and reshaped public attitudes and policy towards health financing and health workforce development. While these priorities have come to the forefront, they have not displaced long-standing issues on equity, access, education, and funding that continue to impact Africa's health. There is a renewed necessity for more agile strategies which can respond to the healthcare needs of today.

Despite young people's active participation in public health efforts, there is currently no cohesive youth engagement strategy focused on health that specifically targets African youth. All non-AU strategies have the cutoff age for youth at 24, which excludes a large swathe of youth aged 15-25 as defined by the AU. While existing strategies contribute various elements to what could be a comprehensive approach, there currently appears to be no singular, all-encompassing strategy in place. There is therefore an opportunity to program with these specific demographic characteristics in mind.

A second glaring absence is the strategic engagement of youth in Africa's health tech sector. This is not to say that initiatives encompassing innovation and technology do not exist; however, they are not codified in policies and strategies that guide engagement. This is a massive gap, given the reliance on technology on carrying out our daily lives, and on potentially solving some of the more persistent health challenges the continent is facing.

Finally, most of the existing youth-focused strategies focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). While this is a major public health issue for young people in Africa, it does not solely encapsulate the breadth of public health issues young Africans must grapple with, especially in a post-pandemic and digitally borderless world.

These factors present a unique opportunity for the Africa CDC to spearhead and introduce a targeted approach to take advantage of an evolving public health ecosystem. Such an approach could effectively leverage the current trends in advocacy, public-private partnerships, and innovation within Africa's health sector.

## AFRICA CDC'S STRATEGIC PLAN (2023-2027) AND THE NEW PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER FOR AFRICA

*The Africa CDC, a continental autonomous health agency of the AU, was officially inaugurated in January 2017. Its primary mandate is to foster Member States' public health innovations and initiatives, enhancing national health institutions' capacity to effectively combat disease threats and pandemics alongside the myriad challenges these crises entail.*



Africa CDC Youth Engagement Strategy Consultation Workshop. February 2024 - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Africa CDC works to realise the vision of a New Public Health Order for Africa (NPHO), a public health policy framework fortifying the continent's preparedness for future health emergencies. The NPHO advocates for a unified continental strategy underpinned by five foundational pillars to redress prevailing global health disparities.



## These five pillars are:



**Strong African public health institutions** that represent African priorities in global health governance and that drive progress on key health indicators



**Expanded manufacturing of vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and other health products** to democratise access to life-saving medicines and equipment



**Investment in public health workforce and leadership programmes** to ensure Africa has the workforce it needs to address health threats



**Increased domestic investment in health, including the domestic mobilisation of financial resources, human capital, technical resources, and networks**



**Respectful, action-oriented partnerships** to advance vaccine manufacturing, health workforce development, and strong public health institutions

*The NPHO is enabled through the 5Cs, which were introduced by the Director General of the Africa CDC, His Excellency Dr Jean Kaseya, at the 3rd Annual International Conference for*

*Public Health in Africa (CPHIA 2023) as the vision for reshaping Africa's healthcare landscape. They are **Community** (building community health programmes to serve communities), **Connectivity** (intelligent health systems), **Capacity** (skilled workforce, strong institutions, and local production of medical products), **Collaboration** (results-driven and respectful partnerships), and **Climate** (climate adaptation strategies).*

The African continent has reached a pivotal juncture in the evolution of its healthcare infrastructure, underscoring the imperative for more self-reliant health systems. Projections indicate that by 2050, Africa's population will surge to approximately 2.5 billion, representing over 60% of the anticipated global population increase. This demographic shift, particularly the tripling of the working-age population (15-64 years), presents a spectrum of challenges and opportunities.

In response, the Africa CDC, entrusted with the critical role of ensuring the continent's health security, has developed a Strategic Plan for 2023-2027. This plan draws upon the insights and experiences from the inaugural Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. Under six programmatic priorities, it outlines a comprehensive health agenda for Africa, aspiring towards a vision of a continent that is not only safe and healthy but also prosperous and innovative. The plan commits to bolstering institutional capacities and the public health workforce, laying a robust foundation for sustainable health infrastructure. The priorities are outlined below:

Strengthen integrated health systems to prevent and control high-burden diseases	Build up proactive surveillance, intelligence gathering and early warning systems
Ensure robust emergency preparedness and response capabilities for all public health emergencies	Strengthen national public health institutes
Expand clinical and public health laboratory systems and networks	Expand health products, technology, innovation, and manufacturing

The successful implementation of this Strategic Plan is anticipated to significantly enhance Africa's healthcare systems, equipping the continent with the necessary tools and preparedness to confront and manage future disease outbreaks and pandemics effectively.



## Development of the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health

*It is in this context that the Africa CDC was keen to involve young Africans in the process of shaping the Africa CDC's Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health through the organisation of three major youth consultation meetings.*

The first youth consultation was held from 24 to 25 November 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia, during the Youth Pre-Conference (2023) on Public Health. This framework allowed 250 young participants from all over Africa to reflect on the current state of the New Public Health Order for Africa, share their role in each of the five pillars and suggest innovative solutions that can enhance meaningful youth engagement to health challenges.

The second highlight was the consultation of 271 young people through a virtual survey from December 2023 to January 2024. The aim was to engage young people from the continent who did not take part in the Lusaka YPC by answering key questions, identifying challenges faced by young people and sharing innovative ideas and recommendations.

The consolidation of these two consultations made it possible to develop the first draft of the **Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health** with clear alignment with the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Following this, a third consultation was held in February 2024 with young experts and Africa CDC staff at the Africa CDC headquarters in Addis Ababa. During this consultation, 25 participants - youth leaders including those involved in the AU Bingwa initiative, members of the YAT4H and other young people - gave their meaningful inputs and provided vital recommendations to support the development of various sections of the strategy.

The final draft was then revised and approved by the Africa CDC leadership with contributions from various divisions and subject matters.



Second Africa CDC Youth Pre-Conference. November 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia.







# Chapter 1: About the strategy

The Africa CDC Youth Division will implement the Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health (YES! Health) for three years from 2025-2028.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STRATEGY

The overarching objective of this strategy is to mobilise, engage, and empower African youth in the promotion and realisation of the Africa's New Public Health Order through the implementation of Africa CDC's Strategic Plan 2023-2027. At its core, this strategy will provide a platform for action on regional, continental, and global health issues. It will set clear guidelines across strategic thematic areas for engaging young people on public health across the African Union.



## VALUE PROPOSITION

This strategy is a uniquely inclusive plan for public health engagement by all African youth as defined by the Africa Youth Charter (ages 15-35)<sup>15</sup>. The value proposition of this strategy is:



**Broad health focus:** This strategy will encompass health issues and systems beyond single-issue youth engagement which has been prevalent in the health ecosystem. This approach will ensure that issues are not isolated but examined and tackled in the realistic interdependent systems in which they exist. It will also provide opportunities for young people to lead national, regional, and continental advocacy efforts around their health priorities.



**Coordinated and mandated leadership:** The strategy will be spearheaded by the Africa CDC, which is best placed to implement this strategy given its continental mandate and internal and external partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, through the intentional and meaningful engagement of youth through initiatives such as the Youth Pre-Conference and YAT4H, the Africa CDC has demonstrated the requisite commitment and capacity to meaningfully engage youth on public health activities.



**Policy engagement:** Recognising youth as not just beneficiaries but crucial stakeholders, this strategy will actively engage young professionals in shaping policies. It will foster a sense of ownership and create an enabling policy environment for the active participation of youth in their own development, for example through the active engagement of the YAT4H<sup>16</sup> as integral architects to ensure relevant and resonant policies for young people and the continent.



**Community engagement:** The strategy will capitalize on young people's knowledge of and proximity to their communities, providing platforms and resources to scale youth-led community engagement initiatives where possible. As community engagement is one of the 5Cs driving the vision of the Africa CDC, Africa CDC will utilise existing networks such as the AU Bingwa, as a springboard for expanded youth and community engagement.

<sup>15</sup> African Union, 2019. Africa Youth Charter. [Online] Available at: <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter> [Accessed 02 January 2024].

<sup>16</sup> Africa CDC, 2023. Announcement of the Africa CDC Youth Advisory Team for Health (YAT4H). [Online] Available at: <https://africacdc.org/news-item/announcement-of-the-Africa-CDC-youth-advisory-team-for-health-yat4h/> [Accessed 02 January 2024].

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The **YES! Health Strategy** is guided by the following guiding principles which aim to foster a collaborative environment that empowers youth, centres innovation, and promotes inclusion to create lasting positive change:



**Youth engagement:** At its heart, this strategy will involve young people in decision-making processes and initiatives that affect their health and well-being. It will create opportunities for young people to participate in health-related policy development, research, knowledge development, programme implementation, and advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns.



**Youth leadership:** The strategy will create opportunities for youth leadership at all levels in the health sector. It will empower young people to take an active role in promoting health and well-being in their communities, at national, regional, continental, and global levels.



**Multi-sectoral approach:** Recognising that health is influenced by various social, economic, and environmental factors, the strategy aims to engage a diverse group of stakeholders, including from education, environment, finance, civil society, agriculture, and the private sector. The strategy will also seek integration across programmes and initiatives contributing to peace, security, stability, economic development, and sustainable development.



**Collaboration:** The strategy will utilise collaboration in addressing health issues faced by youth and their communities. It will promote collaboration and exchange both amongst youth and intergenerationally. It will also focus on interdisciplinary and multisectoral collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to people working in creative disciplines, public servants, policymakers, public finance professionals, behavioural change specialists.



**Innovation:** Centring innovation, this strategy will support the development of agile solutions that are tailored to local contexts and health challenges. It will encourage the development and use of new and innovative approaches to health education, health workforce development, advocacy, and community mobilisation. It will broaden its reach by leveraging the latest in digital technology alongside innovative non-digital approaches to ensure resources and opportunities accessible to a diverse and widespread youth population across Africa.

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**Gender balance:** The strategy recognises the importance of gender balance in the achievement of its strategic objectives as well as in promoting gender-intentional programmes and plans. It will put marginalised gender groups at the centre of programming and utilise an equality approach from planning to implementation. As part of the strategy's M&E framework, gender-disaggregated data on the reach of the programmes and initiatives encompassed by this strategy will be collected. The insights from this data will be applied to future programming.

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**Inclusion:** The strategy recognises the importance of deliberately ensuring that marginalised youth, rural youth, persons with disabilities, and youth in low-income communities are targeted as beneficiaries and implementers, while ensuring that a principle of leaving no one behind is adhered to in its implementation.

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**Regional spread:** The strategy is for Africans within all five geopolitical regions of the continent and the African diaspora at large. Programming under the strategic objectives will ensure equitable regional spread in targeting stakeholders and beneficiaries of its programmes.



## INSTITUTIONAL MANDATE

The following are the main policy documents and decisions which provide the institutional mandate for the Africa CDC to develop and implement a strategy to engage youth in Africa on public health matters:

**The Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027<sup>17</sup>:** constitutes the central strategy, which underpins the work of the Africa CDC, with clear goals, objectives, and priorities to guide the delivery of health policy and programming in Africa. The **Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health** is complementary to the implementation of the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

**The New Public Health Order<sup>18</sup>:** a framework of action developed to address the continent's health challenges by promoting collaboration, innovation, and equitable access to healthcare. It emphasises strengthening health systems, addressing health inequalities, and increasing local capacity for disease prevention, detection, and response. Additionally, it prioritises community engagement, strategic partnerships, and leveraging technology to advance public health across Africa.

**The AU Agenda 2063<sup>19</sup>:** This is the blueprint for Africa's development, outlining the aspirations and visions for the future of the continent. The AU Agenda 2063 provides the impetus for the AU's policies, programmes and initiatives which cascades into the regional and national government bodies. This strategy specifically responds to Aspirations 1 and 6 of Agenda 2063.

**The Africa Health Strategy (AHS)<sup>20</sup>:** The AHS is a long-term plan (2016-2030) set up by the African Union to improve the health of people across Africa. A key focus of the strategy is achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030. Some of the strategic priorities for achieving this include:

- Strengthening health systems
- Increasing investments in healthcare
- Addressing social factors that impact health (such as poverty and education)
- Reducing the burden of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria
- Combating non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart diseases.

<sup>17</sup>Africa CDC, 2023. Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027. [Online] Available at: <https://africacdc.org/download/africa-cdc-strategic-plan-2023-2027/> Accessed 02 January 2024].

<sup>18</sup>Africa CDC, 2023. The New Public Health Order: Africa's health security Agenda. [Online] Available at: <https://africacdc.org/news-item/the-new-public-health-order-africas-health-security-agenda/> [Accessed 10 January 2024].

<sup>19</sup>African Union, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. [Online] Available at: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview> [Accessed 10 January 2024].

<sup>20</sup>African Union, Department of Social Affairs. The Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030.

**The African Youth Charter<sup>21</sup>:** Developed by the AU, the African Youth Charter outlines the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of young people on the continent. It aims to promote the active participation, empowerment, and development of African youth. The charter recognises the significant role of young people in shaping the future of Africa and highlights their rights to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation. It also calls for the elimination of discrimination, violence, and exploitation against young people, and encourages their involvement in decision-making processes at all levels of society.

**The AU Commission Youth Engagement Strategy: The African Governance Architecture-Youth Engagement Strategy (AGA-YES)<sup>22</sup>:** Conceived at the Youth Consultation on the second annual High Level Dialogue on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights, which was held in Dakar, Senegal from 23 to 24 November 2013, it seeks to provide a guiding framework for AU Policy Organs and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to ensure sustainable engagement of youth in democratic governance processes within the framework of the AGA (African Governance Architecture). It recognises youth as today and **tomorrow's leaders** with the ability to create and lead innovative actions, programmes, and initiatives on the continent; youth as partners playing specific roles in defining and implementing democratic governance initiatives as an integral part of the AGA overall objective; and youth as beneficiaries of AU Organs and RECs actions, programmes, and initiatives.

**The AU Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Wellbeing (EHW) of Young People in Africa<sup>23</sup>:** The EHW Strategy built upon the regional commitments, initiatives, and global movements converging to improve learner well-being within the education context. These include the African Union Roadmap on **Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth (2016<sup>24</sup>)**, which urged countries to scale up age-appropriate and culturally sensitive education for reproductive health to avert the complications and challenges associated with early and unintended pregnancy (EUP) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and their consequent impact on the development and well-being of young people.

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<sup>21</sup>African Union, 2019. Africa Youth Charter. [Online] Available at: <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter> [Accessed 02 January 2024].

<sup>22</sup>Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission, 2018. African Governance Architecture (AGA) Youth Engagement Strategy 2016-2020. [Online]. Available at: <https://au.int/en/documents/20200521/youth-engagement-strategy>

<sup>23</sup>UNESCO, 2023. AU Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Well-being of Young People. [Online] Available at: <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/au-continental-strategy-education-health-and-well-being-young-people> [Accessed 10 January 2024].

<sup>24</sup>UNFPA\_ Interim\_Technical\_Briefs\_Adolescents\_and\_Young\_People\_23\_March\_2020.pdf [Accessed 02 January 2024].

**The WHO Health Promotion Strategy for the Africa Region 2013<sup>25</sup>:** It called for a multi-sectoral approach to address needs for health information as well as social, economic, and environmental determinants associated with both communicable and non-communicable diseases. This strategy underscores the need for schools to prioritize dissemination of health information and development of related life skills, as well as ensure that systems for strong linkage and active referral are in place to address vulnerabilities that often act as key determinants.



Africa Youth in Digital Health Network Co-creation Workshop. October 2024 - Kigali, Rwanda

<sup>25</sup>WHO, 2013. WHO Health promotion: strategy for the African Region 2013. [Online] Available at: <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/355473> [Accessed 15 February 2024].







# Chapter 2: Strategic objectives

These strategic objectives provide the core actions for youth engagement aligned to the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027. These objectives are built to respond to the six priorities of the strategic plan and the five pillars of the New Public Health Order.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: ARCHITECTURES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

**Develop an architecture to coordinate and mainstream youth engagement within the Africa CDC.**

### ACTIONS:

1. Implement a comprehensive strategy to mobilise, meaningfully engage and empower young people.
2. Commit human and financial resources to deliver and mainstream youth engagement across the Africa CDC programmes/divisions/activities.
3. Deliver reports on the state of youth engagement in public/global health in Africa at CPHIA.
4. Institutionalise the YAT4H through regular recruitment of the advisory team's members and active engagement in policy decisions pertaining to youth and health at the Africa CDC. Embed the YAT4H in the architecture of the Youth Programme.
5. Prioritise the active involvement of youth at all stages of implementation and knowledge management on the Africa CDC Strategic Plan.



Africa CDC Youth Engagement Strategy Consultation Workshop. February 2024 - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

**Facilitate accessible and inclusive spaces (physical and digital) for active and meaningful youth engagement and collaboration.**

### ACTIONS:

1. Convene virtual, hybrid and in-person events, such as Youth Voices (see annex 1), for youth in public health on the continent to share and exchange knowledge and cross fertilisation of new ideas.
2. Establish sustainable, timely digital platforms and communication channels for young people to access and exchange knowledge and resources, especially during public health emergencies and threats.
3. Integrate African youth voices and knowledge into continental and global spaces and policy processes by platforming youth at major continental and global summits and assemblies such as the CPHIA, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the World Health Assembly (WHA).
4. Support the development of regional, national, and subnational youth engagement strategies and the involvement of youth in health programmes and initiatives.
5. Recognise and showcase outstanding young health professionals and advocates at YPC/CPHIA etc. through awards and certifications.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: YOUTH-LED AND YOUTH-ORIENTED PARTNERSHIPS

**Empower and promote youth-oriented partnerships in public health initiatives by providing resources and collaboration with diverse and multi-sectoral stakeholders.**

### ACTIONS:

1. Facilitate and sponsor continental youth-led networks that promote public health initiatives, such as with the AU Bingwa Initiative and the Youth in Digital Health Network (see annex 1).
2. Work with universities to support youth-led networks across schools to develop and run community outreach projects.
3. Engage with and encourage multisectoral actors (e.g., NGOs, philanthropies, private sector) to partner with youth organisations and networks to run projects, encouraging multisectoral collaboration.



Africa Health Tech Summit. October 2023 - Kigali, Rwanda

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: TALENT/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH

**Develop programmes to expand the quantity and quality of the public health professional workforce, and recruit, train, mentor and retain diverse talents.**

### ACTIONS:

1. Develop and expand tailored fellowship programmes such as the Young Professionals Programme (see annex 1) as a pipeline to build leadership capabilities and groom a new generation of young public health experts and leaders on the continent.
2. Conduct an annual audit of public health expertise to identify gaps and forecast investments needed. This audit will inform the design of evidence-based scholarship programmes by the Africa CDC that will be made available to qualified youths.
3. Provide job-shadowing, training, internship, and mentorship opportunities for talented youth to develop skills in high-demand areas identified by the annual audit, supporting job creation and access to dignified work opportunities.
4. Develop thematic summer programmes, abstract mentorship programmes and short courses to support young researchers and early career researchers in resource-limited settings.
5. Leverage online tools, such as virtual meeting platforms and e-learning through audio-visual training materials, to improve access to mentorship and training opportunities to more youth.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: FINANCING YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES

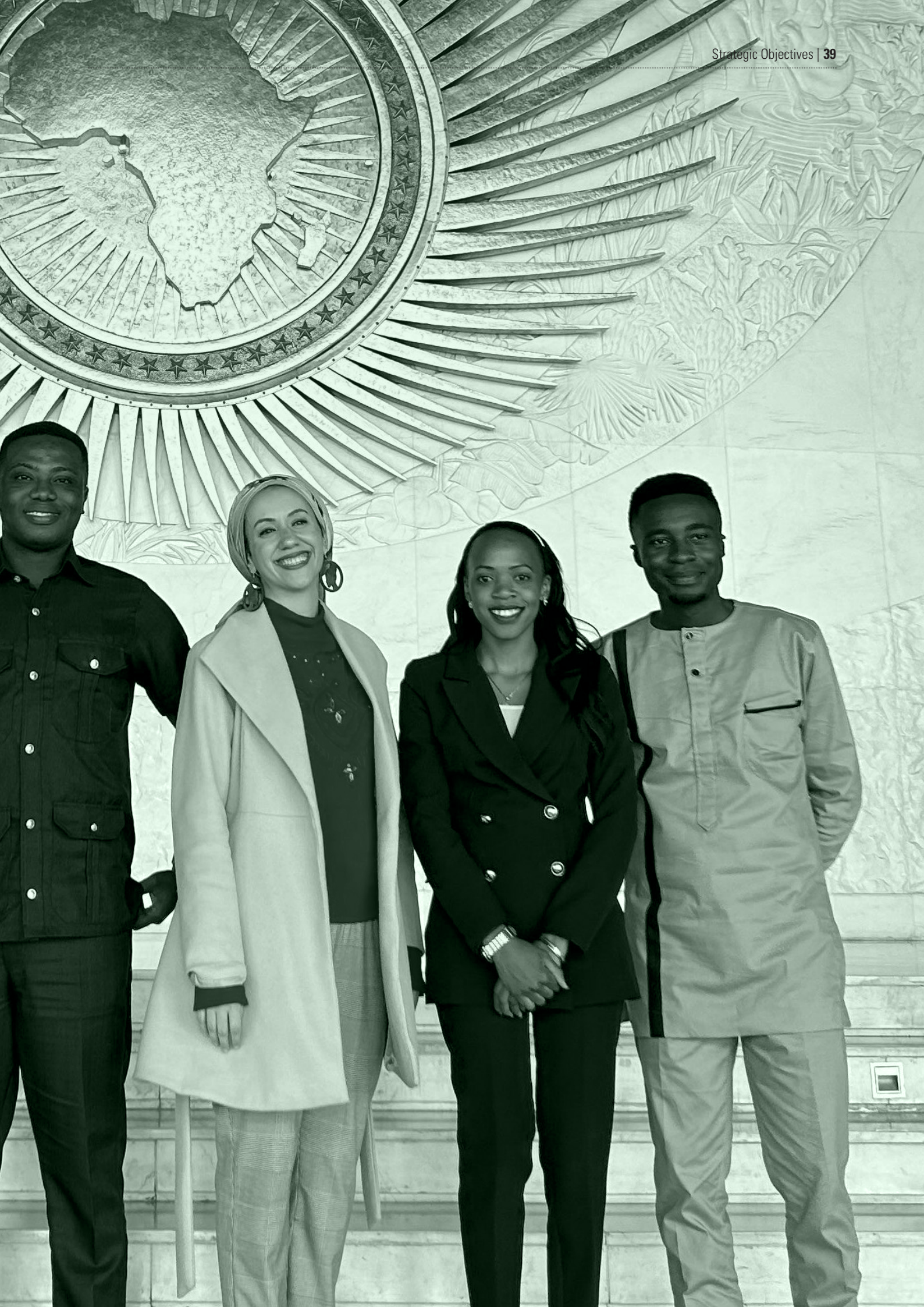
**Develop and support sustainable continental and regional funding mechanisms for the implementation of youth-led programmes.**

### ACTIONS:

1. Allocate small grants through initiatives like Bingwa Plus (see annex 1) for youth-led innovative projects and small-scale initiatives and launch innovation challenges to develop homegrown solutions to African challenges.
2. Support community-based youth advocacy and campaigns with tools, resources, and grants to enhance the effectiveness of grassroots initiatives and campaigns on public health matters.
3. Facilitate the development of a grant award programme for young persons who have done outstanding academic, research or scholarly work on African public health issues.













# Chapter 3: Enabling environment

## DRIVERS AND ENABLERS

**Partnerships:** Strategic partnerships are crucial for successful implementation of the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health. By collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, private sector entities, educational institutions, and youth-led organisations, the Africa CDC will leverage a wealth of expertise, resources, and networks. These partnerships will also enable the pooling of resources, sharing of best practices, and amplification of outreach efforts, ensuring that the youth engagement strategy is robust, inclusive, and far-reaching.

**Coordination:** Effective coordination among Regional Coordinating Centres (RCCs), Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and partners is fundamental to the strategy's success. This involves establishing clear communication channels, aligning objectives and activities, and ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged and informed throughout the process. Engaging with RCCs and Member States also ensures that the strategy is tailored to the specific needs and contexts of different regions, enhancing its relevance and effectiveness.



**Knowledge generation and management:** Generating and disseminating evidence and knowledge on young youth engagement in public health is critical to developing needs-based activities and efficiently allocating resources during the strategy's implementation. By establishing a knowledge hub and promoting the contribution of youth to the body of knowledge in Africa, Africa CDC can facilitate informed decision-making, innovation, and continuous learning. This, in turn, will strengthen the strategy's adaptability and effectiveness.

**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** A robust M&E framework is essential for assessing the progress, outcomes, and impact of the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health. This framework should include clear indicators, benchmarks, and feedback mechanisms to track performance and gather insights from participants. Regular M&E allows for the identification of successes and challenges in real time, enabling timely adjustments to strategies and interventions. This continuous learning loop is critical for ensuring the strategy remains responsive to the needs of youth and achieves its intended goals.

**Funding:** For this strategy to be implementable, sustainable, and scalable, securing sustained funding is critical. The Africa CDC will explore various funding streams, including international donors, government allocations, private sector partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms, to support the diverse components of the youth engagement strategy and ensure that planned activities can be executed effectively.



Second Africa CDC Youth Pre-Conference 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**The Africa CDC:** oversees the execution of the Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health, spearheading its planning, monitoring, and reporting processes. The organisation will facilitate both physical and digital forums to encourage youth participation in the strategy's implementation and ensure transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the Africa CDC will be responsible for securing necessary resources, engaging relevant stakeholders, and fostering partnerships essential for the successful realisation of the strategy. Additionally, it will aim to promote the uptake of the strategy across Member States to optimise its execution.

**Youth:** actively participate in amplifying and implementing the strategy and will be instrumental in demonstrating its value and engaging with their peers. They will also assist in the mobilisation of resources, as well as in the execution, monitoring, and evaluation of the strategy to ensure its effectiveness. They are expected to collaborate with pertinent organisations to expedite the strategy's implementation, ensuring a more comprehensive and impactful approach. Through advocacy efforts, young people will encourage Member States to adapt and integrate the action plan within the framework of the Youth Engagement Strategy, aligning national efforts with continental objectives.

**Africa CDC YAT4H<sup>26</sup> :** serve as representatives of the African youth and provide advice to the Africa CDC leadership on the implementation of the strategy by considering young people's meaningful participation and engagement on public health and ensuring inclusivity. The advisory team will also support the Africa CDC in ensuring timely and efficient implementation of the strategy, maintaining a transparent and responsive approach to meeting set objectives, and the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy's implementation.

**AU Commission (AUC):** play a pivotal role in implementing the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health by conducting widespread sensitisation efforts among the youth across the continent and integrating this strategy into the overarching Youth Engagement Strategy of the Commission. Through the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, the Commission will support the mainstreaming of youth engagement and leadership into the activities of the Africa CDC.

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<sup>26</sup>Africa CDC, 2023. Announcement of the Africa CDC Youth Advisory Team for Health (YAT4H). [Online] Available at: <https://africacdc.org/news-item/announcement-of-the-Africa-CDC-youth-advisory-team-for-health-yat4h/> [Accessed 02 January 2024].



**Member States:** align the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health with national priorities and contexts by actively involving young individuals in the implementation of the New Public Health Order and the Africa CDC Strategic Plan at the national level. Member States should recognise and engage young people as knowledgeable contributors within national public health programmes, valuing their insights and expertise in shaping effective health interventions. Furthermore, Member States are to align their national youth policies with the principles and objectives of the strategy to ensure a cohesive and supportive framework for youth participation in public health initiatives.

**International and local partners:** offer technical assistance to facilitate the execution of the strategy, especially in hard-to-reach communities which partners are uniquely placed to serve, thus enhancing its effectiveness, reach and efficiency. They will assist in mobilising the necessary resources to ensure the strategy's successful implementation and provide support for its monitoring and evaluation to assess progress and outcomes. Additionally, partners will assist in identifying any gaps in the implementation process and offer pertinent recommendations to address these issues as needed.











# Chapter 4: Monitoring and evaluation

A M&E mechanism will be established to rigorously oversee the strategy's implementation. To achieve the objectives and results of this plan strategy, the monitoring and evaluation will involve the Africa CDC staff, young people from different regions, youth participants in Africa CDC programmes, the Africa CDC YAT4H and other important stakeholders and partners.

There will also be a technical working group that will monitor strategy implementation at various levels and conduct and/or oversee annual assessments, ensuring the strategic initiatives remain aligned with the strategy's objectives. The technical working group will include representatives from the Africa CDC, partners, youth advisors, and will convene annually to critically analyse actions against the strategic objectives, the challenges encountered, and the solutions adapted to meet these challenges. To capture the incremental progress of the strategy, quarterly reviews will be systematically conducted across the strategic objectives by the Africa CDC Youth Programme.

At the core of the M&E framework is a results matrix, a tool designed to meticulously track the progress of activities towards achieving the strategic objectives. This matrix will detail specific outcomes and outputs, along with

associated indicators and targets to measure performance.

At the end of the implementation of the strategy, a comprehensive evaluation study will be conducted to assess the results achieved. This final evaluation will be supplemented by an external audit to validate the findings. The findings will then be promptly communicated to all stakeholders. Integral to these evaluations is the consideration of gender disparities, and assessing how and whether gender-inclusive policies are developed and woven into Africa CDC's health programmes.

In the spirit of accountability, decentralised feedback mechanisms will be established, utilising traditional and digital platforms to enable young people to contribute their insights on the strategy's implementation in an inclusive manner to the technical working group.



Second Africa CDC Youth Pre-Conference. November 2023 - Lusaka, Zambia.



## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

The AU continues to strengthen systems for monitoring and reporting on youth engagement on the continent through performance indicators in the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment. Similarly, Africa CDC sets out monitoring roles in its strategic plan for actors on continental, regional and national levels.

This strategy objectives adhere to SMART principles – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. In this vein, indicators developed against the objectives will align to these principles.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	INDICATORS
<b>Develop an architecture to coordinate and mainstream youth engagement within the Africa CDC.</b>	<p>The Strategy for Youth Engagement and Participation in Global Health is fully implemented.</p> <p>Number of countries adopting the strategy at national levels.</p> <p>Number of RECs adopting and engaged to support the implementation of the Africa CDC Strategy for Youth at regional level.</p> <p>The YAT4H has been institutionalised.</p> <p>Number of youth experts engaged by the Africa CDC in knowledge exchange and data collection on health across the Africa CDC events and programmes annually.</p> <p>An annual state of youth engagement in global health activity held</p>
<b>Facilitate accessible and inclusive spaces (physical and digital) for active and meaningful youth engagement and collaboration</b>	<p>Number of events/youth dialogues organised annually to foster youth engagement on public health issues.</p> <p>Number of youths engaged through these platforms annually.</p> <p>Number of youth health champions trained in health programmes and initiatives annually.</p> <p>Number of youths reached out to communities annually.</p> <p>Number of youth health advocates recognised/awarded annually.</p>



<p><b>Empower and promote youth-oriented partnerships in public health initiatives by providing resources and collaboration with diverse and multi-sectoral stakeholders.</b></p>	<p>Number of youth-led networks and the Africa CDC Public Health Corps (AfPHC) established on the continent annually.</p> <p>Number of youths trained through AfPHC annually.</p> <p>Number of local community projects implemented annually in collaboration with universities.</p> <p>Number of youths engaged annually in these initiatives/ outreach projects.</p>
<p><b>Develop programmes to expand the quantity and quality of the public health professional workforce, and recruit, train, mentor and retain diverse talents.</b></p>	<p>Number of fellowships (Young Professional Programmes) awarded and implemented annually.</p> <p>Number of mentorship events held annually.</p> <p>Updated and maintained roster of youth experts/mentees in public health.</p> <p>Number of job shadowing and consultancy opportunities provided annually (job creation).</p> <p>Number of scholarships and training provided annually.</p> <p>An annual audit of youth public health expertise in Africa report is conducted and provided.</p> <p>Number of short courses/programmes organised annually.</p>
<p><b>Develop and support sustainable continental and regional funding mechanisms for the implementation of youth-led programmes.</b></p>	<p>Special funds institutionalised and aimed at supporting youth-led programmes/projects and activities.</p> <p>Number of public health innovation challenges organised annually.</p> <p>Number of innovation projects supported annually.</p> <p>Number of grant awards given to young public health scholars annually.</p>

## ANNEX 1: PROPOSED FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

The strategy incorporates several flagship projects aimed at driving transformative change across the continent. These projects are designed to enhance operational efficiency, foster innovation, and improve the overall effectiveness of the strategy. By focusing on key areas such as digital health transformation/technology and innovation, advocacy, health promotion and community workforce enlargement, youth talent and leadership development, mentorship, jobs creation, and greater youth representation, the strategy aims to create a culture of continuous improvement and sustainable growth. These flagship projects represent the Africa CDC's commitment to achieving its strategic objectives and positioning youths as the public health leaders of today and tomorrow in Africa.

PROJECTS	WHAT IS IT?
<b>Africa Youth in Digital Health Network (YiDHN)</b>  <b>(Enabler A)<sup>27</sup></b>	<p>Creating a dedicated network for youth in digital health will help amplify youth voices, promote youth-led innovation, and build bridges between young leaders and established organisations. This will ultimately strengthen Africa's digital health ecosystem.</p> <p>The objectives are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a platform for young leaders in digital health to connect, collaborate and support each other.</li> <li>2. Advocate for increased youth representation and engagement in digital health programmes, policies, and leadership.</li> <li>3. Showcase and scale youth-led digital health innovations across Africa.</li> <li>4. Develop the capacity of youth to design, implement and evaluate impactful digital health solutions.</li> </ol>
<b>Public Health Innovation Challenge (PHIC)</b>  <b>(Enabler A)</b>	<p>An annual thematic public health innovation challenge targeted at youth-led organisations who are providing agile tech solutions in healthcare at local, national, regional, and continental levels. It will culminate in a finale at the annual YPC where the winner will be awarded seed funding to support scaling up their innovation.</p>
<b>Africa CDC Fellowship Program (Young Professionals Program)</b>  <b>(Enabler B)</b>	<p>This is a fellowship programme which will recruit, deploy, and train public health professionals as fellows to serve for 1 or 2 years at the Africa CDC HQ, national centres and RCCs. The main purpose is to identify and absorb young public health talent to drive and mainstream the continental agenda at national and regional levels and strengthen coordination across Africa.</p>

<sup>27</sup> This is to indicate which priority or Enabler in the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-27 the flagship project is linked to.



### **AU Bingwa 2.0 (Youth Health Advocates)**

#### **(Priority 1)**

This will see the scaling up of the current AU Bingwa into the AU Bingwa 2.0, who will mobilise and advocate for vaccinations beyond COVID-19 and focus on reducing the burden of vaccine-preventable illnesses.

The AU Bingwa 2.0 will leverage youth engagement for advancing sustainable health security in Africa to contribute to the “2 million community health workers initiative” endorsed by the Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.649 (XXIX) taken by the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government, at the 29th Ordinary Session of the AU in 2017. Young African people will be recruited, trained, and empowered to serve as Community Health Workers (Youth Health Champions) for a positive impact on public health outcomes in their communities.

The AU Bingwa 2.0 will serve as an initiative to promote and create job opportunities for young people, empowering them to contribute to strengthen health systems and sustainable development.

The remit of the AU Bingwa 2.0 will also expand to include advocating for local manufacturing of vaccines and medical commodities, SRHR, Mental health, Climate change, AMR (Antimicrobial resistance), community engagement and mobilisation and other pressing health topics and challenges on the continent.

### **AU Bingwa Plus**

#### **(Enabler D)**

The Bingwa Plus Initiative aims to empower young Africans (aged 18-35) to address public health issues in their communities. It will act as an incubator/ accelerator, providing funding, mentorship, and resources to help young leaders develop and implement innovative, scalable solutions to public health challenges in their communities.

The Africa CDC may grant authorisation and endorsements for interested civil society organisations (CSOs) and youth-focused organisations to implement the Bingwa Plus under the supervision of the Africa CDC Youth Program.

### **Mentorship programmes**

#### **(Enabler B)**

Mentorship targeted at public health professionals across the continent will be through two tracks:

Broad, accessible mentorship via recorded videos on the Africa CDC YouTube channel, live webinars with topical guests, and takeover Thursdays (suggested day) for weekly social media live chats.

Intensive one-on-one mentorship offered to the Africa CDC Fellows and African youths. Young people will be matched with mentors within the system as part of the programme

## **Africa CDC Public Health Corps (AfPHC)**

**(Priority 1 - Enabler D)**

The AfPHC will be self-formed clubs in universities supported and endorsed by the Africa CDC. The Africa CDC will create an engagement toolkit to help students set up these clubs and will hold training of trainers to onboard the pioneer club members from pilot universities. These clubs will organise local community projects to support public health advocacy on topical issues. They will engage with each other and report to the Africa CDC through an online engagement hub. The Africa CDC will facilitate cross-institutional exchange and learning to foster pan-African engagement and provide the YPC or other events as a platform for convening delegates of the AfPHC.

## **Youth Voices**

**(Priority 1 - Enabler D)**

The Africa CDC will convene several youth dialogues online and offline to foster youth engagement on public health issues which arise across the continent, through webinars, online chats, local events. These dialogues will culminate in the annual YPC, the outcomes of which will be integral to the CPHIA outcomes.



Inaugural Youth Pre-Conference. December 2022 - Kigali, Rwanda.





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