

Empowering Youth and Women for Transformative Public Health: Strategic Imperatives for Africa CDC's Agenda

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the critical role of youth and women in addressing key public health challenges in Africa and proposes actionable strategies for enhancing their engagement within the framework of the Africa CDC's priorities. By delving into the intricate nuances of youth and women empowerment across diverse health domains, including Sexual Reproductive Health, Mental Health, Anti-Microbial Resistance, Climate/Health Nexus, and Domestic Vaccine Manufacturing, this paper offers comprehensive insights on the importance of Youth and Women Mainstreaming in Public Health. Through a detailed examination of youth and women's contributions, challenges, and opportunities, this paper aims to inform policy formulation and programmatic interventions that foster inclusive and sustainable health outcomes for African communities.

Keywords: Public health, Sexual Reproductive Health, Mental Health, Sustainable health

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Africa's dynamic health landscape, the involvement of youth and women emerges as a critical determinant of success in addressing complex health challenges. Against the backdrop of the Africa CDC's strategic vision to institutionalize youth engagement, this paper sets out to explore the multifaceted dimensions of youth and women empowerment in public health. By delineating actionable priorities and innovative approaches, this paper seeks to inspire transformative change that highlights actionable youth and women engagement strategies [1].

Understanding the Significance of Youth and Women Engagement

- a. **Youth Empowerment:** Beyond being beneficiaries of health interventions, youth are dynamic agents of change, possessing the energy, creativity, and resilience to drive innovative solutions. Engaging youth in decision-making processes and program design not only ensures relevance and effectiveness but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment
- b. **Women's Leadership and Advocacy:** Women play pivotal roles as caregivers, community leaders, and health advocates, yet they often face systemic barriers that hinder their full participation and empowerment. By empowering women to take on leadership roles and advocate for their rights, we can

unlock their potential as drivers of positive health outcomes and social change [2].

- c. **Intersectionality and Equity:** Recognizing the intersectional identities and experiences of youth and women is essential for designing inclusive interventions that address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of diverse populations. Embracing a gender-sensitive and rights-based approach ensures that no one is left behind in the pursuit of health equity and social justice.

Strategic Priorities for Africa CDC

- a. **Institutionalizing Youth Advisory Mechanisms:** Establishing formalized platforms, such as youth advisory boards or councils, within the Africa CDC to facilitate meaningful youth engagement in policy formulation, program planning, and implementation. These platforms should be inclusive, representative, and equipped with the necessary resources and support to amplify youth voices and perspectives [3].
- b. **Mainstreaming Gender-Responsive Approaches:** Embedding gender considerations across all facets of public health programming, from research and data collection to service delivery and monitoring, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. This entails adopting gender-sensitive indicators, disaggregating data by sex and age, and promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes.

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- c. ***Investing in Youth-Led Innovation and Entrepreneurship:*** Creating conducive environments for youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship in healthcare, leveraging digital technologies, social media platforms, and youth networks to catalyse grassroots solutions to pressing health challenges. Providing targeted funding, mentorship, and technical support can nurture a culture of innovation and empower young change makers to drive sustainable impact in their communities [4].
- d. ***Strengthening Health Systems and Workforce Development:*** Prioritizing investments in health system strengthening and workforce development to build resilient and responsive health systems that meet the diverse needs of youth and women. This includes expanding access to quality healthcare services, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, and investing in training programs to equip healthcare providers with the skills and competencies to deliver gender-sensitive and youth-friendly services [5].
- e. ***Fostering Multisectoral Collaboration and Partnerships:*** Promoting collaboration and partnerships between the Africa CDC, government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, private sector entities, and youth and women's organizations to leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks for sustainable health outcomes. Engaging diverse stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes enhances the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of

public health interventions and ensures that interventions are contextually appropriate and culturally sensitive [6].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, empowering youth and women in public health is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in Africa. By prioritizing youth and women engagement and investing in tailored interventions that address their unique needs and capabilities, the Africa CDC can unlock the full potential of these demographics as drivers of positive change. This paper serves as a roadmap for Africa CDC leadership to prioritize youth and women empowerment within the broader context of public health governance and programming, paving the way for a healthier, more resilient Africa.

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