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Health for all at 75



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Youth leading for health

As WHO is celebrating its 75th anniversary, this is the perfect time to discover all of the aspects of WHO. I thought that I would tell you a little bit about how younger generations are having a say in the world of WHO.



Delegates at the Global Model WHO.

LISANNE HOPKIN,
NEWSPECIAL EDITORIAL ASSISTANT¹

More than half of the world's population is under 35 years old, and yet young people often have little say in public policy decisions that affect them.

We know what we want for our futures, we'll fight for justice and the improvement of our planet. We may be young and less experienced, but our voices matter just as much as those from older generations.

The World Health Organization recognizes that young people have a critical role to play in the unprecedented challenges that the world is facing today, and is committed to engaging and partnering with young people everywhere. As WHO so eloquently puts it: 'young people's ideas, skills and contributions

continue to enrich institutions and processes, their engagement is central to the success of policies and programs aimed at improving young people's health and wellbeing'.² The World Health Organization is very keen to support and engage the younger generations, as 'we need the ideas, the energy and the leadership of young people to build a healthier, safer and fairer future'.³

As WHO celebrates its 75th Anniversary, one key point that has been built up for decades is the momentum around youth. This is illustrated by two key youth initiatives that have been launched this year: the WHO Youth Council and the first Global Model WHO. WHO also supports the Youth Delegate Program which provides a space for young people to participate in decision-making through attending meetings, such as the

World Health Assembly. In addition, with the support of WHO, the Global Youth Mobilization final impact report "Unstoppable Together: Celebrating 2 Years of Youth-led Global Action" was launched to highlight the reach and impact of the Big Six partnership and investment in youth-led solutions over the last two years.

The WHO Youth Council is a network 'that includes youth representatives of health and non-health organizations and movements'. It serves 'as a platform for designing and incubating new initiatives and for expanding existing youth engagement initiatives of WHO'.⁴ It's about taking more steps towards achieving part of WHO's goal of health for all. The Youth Council also gets to interact with WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, as well as other senior WHO leaders.⁵

It is clear that young people are being listened to, as the WHO Youth Council has just had its inaugural meeting hosted by WHO. From January 27th to January 30th, 'representatives from 22 diverse youth organizations from health and non-health backgrounds' came together to discuss ways to accelerate progress on 'universal health coverage, noncommunicable diseases, mental health and youth leading for health'.⁶ There were several outcomes from the meeting, all of which will be vital to helping and supporting WHO in its progress for health for all, but also helpful for the young people of today who want to see the world be a better place, and believe that they can achieve that.

The Global Model WHO is organized by the World Federation of United Nations Associations



©WFUNA
Youth delegates representing countries at the Global Model WHO.

(WFUNA) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), and provides authentic student-led simulations of the World Health Assembly to high school and university students from all over the world and from different academic disciplines.

From 10th to 19th February, over 200 students from over 40 countries participated in the first ever Global Model WHO. In addition, 29 student volunteers from over 18 countries supported the conference by representing the WHO secretariat and providing guidance to the youth delegates.

The youth delegates were introduced to a world that would be similar to the one that leaders around the world would experience by accurately simulating the flow of debate on various World Health Assembly agenda items and how decisions are taken on them.⁷ Through these simulations, the delegates learned

more about global issues and the importance of multilateralism. In addition, they also developed leadership and diplomatic skills, particularly those that are important to reaching consensus, and a range of interpersonal and academic skills, including negotiating, debating, public speaking, and conducting research on health issues that people face worldwide.

During the 10-day event, eight Committee A sessions were organized covering seven health topics:

- Universal Health Coverage: Reorienting health systems to primary health care (Committee A1 and Committee A7)
- Strengthening Infodemic Management
- Public health emergencies: preparedness and response
- WHO global action plan on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, 2019–2023
- Substandard and falsified

medical products

- The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities
- Global agenda on health, environment and climate change

Key outcomes of the simulations are the eight resolutions negotiated by the delegates, where they displayed their commitment, common sense and passion to work on solutions to global health challenges. Resolutions drafted and adopted during the conference can be viewed here.⁸

There were many ‘side events’ that took place over the ten days of the Global Model WHO. WFUNA and WHO provided opportunities to the younger generations to learn about several global health topics, such as ‘adolescent sexual reproductive health, antimicrobial resistance, behavioral science, inclusion and disability’ and many more. There were also ‘several skill building

workshops’, and sessions on ‘public speaking, what it’s like to work at the United Nations, and success in the workplace’.⁹ Furthermore, there was also a session focused on WHO’s 75th anniversary, which provided a look at all the successes and achievements in the past, as well as what the future of health may look like. All in all, lots of exciting content that could really be beneficial to young people.

It’s very encouraging to see the ways in which WHO and other UN organizations are taking steps to help shape the futures of the younger generations. We are being guided and supported in so many incredible ways, and it’s reassuring to see that our futures and our voices are being heard and taken into consideration.

Here’s to shaping and supporting many more futures for many more generations to come. ■

1 Article written in collaboration with Dorine van Der Wal and Iris Blom, WHO

2 WHO. “WHO Youth Engagement.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization.

3 Ibid.

4 WHO. “WHO Youth Council.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization.

5 WHO. “WHO Holds an Inaugural Meeting of the New Youth Council.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 30 Jan. 2023.

6 Ibid.

7 <https://wfuna.org/www.wfuna.org/wimun/global-model-who/simulations>

8 Global Model WHO: Promoting Greater Understanding of WHO’s Work in Public Health.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 23 Feb. 2023.

9 Global Model WHO: Promoting Greater Understanding of WHO’s Work in Public Health.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 23 Feb. 2023.

If you want to find out more about the WHO Youth Engagement, Youth Council or Global Model WHO, you can do so by visiting WHO Youth Engagement: www.who.int/initiatives/who-youth-engagement



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