

Policy brief

Mobilizing Youth Leadership in Action on Antimicrobial Resistance



Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

AMR	antimicrobial resistance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NAP	national action plan
NGO	nongovernmental organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
UN	United Nations

This policy brief has been developed by members of the Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR. The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions, policies, or decisions of the Quadripartite organizations-FAO, UNEP, WHO, and WOAH- or the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR.

Executive summary

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an escalating global health crisis. It causes more than 1 million deaths annually and threatens to escalate into a public health and economic catastrophe. Young people are a key, yet underused, resource in addressing this issue. Today's youth, which [accounts for 16% of the global population](#), will bear the future burden of AMR, but they can also offer the innovative solutions, digital proficiency and grassroots leadership that are essential for driving sustained change (1). Despite their potential, youth have so far remained largely peripheral in AMR policy discussions and actions.

To address this gap, this policy brief recommends integration of youth meaningfully at local, regional and global levels by:

- establishing youth representation in national and global AMR decision-making bodies;
- investing in capacity-building programmes to enhance youth leadership, advocacy and innovation;
- facilitating youth participation in developing, implementing and monitoring national action plans (NAPs) on AMR; and
- promoting youth-led initiatives and public awareness campaigns on AMR and appropriate use of antimicrobials.

Engaging youth not only ensures equitable representation but significantly strengthens local, national and global responses to AMR, safeguarding global health for generations to come.

01

Introduction: AMR – a defining challenge

AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to antimicrobial medicines. As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines become ineffective, and infections become difficult or impossible to treat, increasing the risks of disease spread, severe illness, disability and death (2). The rise of AMR has profound implications: increased mortality and morbidity due to infectious diseases in humans and animals – with an estimated 1.3 million human deaths attributable to AMR in 2019 (3); reduced agricultural productivity, especially in low-income countries (4); and broader consequences that can disturb the stability of ecosystems and have a significant economic impact worldwide – estimated at US\$ 412 billion in additional health-care costs and US\$ 443 billion in lost productivity every year by 2035 (5). AMR is primarily due to misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in human and animal health and agricultural production, besides antimicrobial pollution from health-care facilities, farms and manufacturing plants (2). Systemic issues such as inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene in communities, inadequate access to health care, deficient waste management systems and unscientific agri-food production practices contribute to the problem, especially in low- and middle-income countries (6).

The [Political declaration of the United Nations \(UN\) General Assembly High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance in 2024](#) emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary, One Health approach with whole-of-society strategies in all affected domains (7). Thus, the design, implementation and review of policies on AMR, such as NAPs, can benefit from representation not only of institutions and organizations but also of the people they are to serve. Engagement of youth is essential to achieve the goal of a united front against AMR.

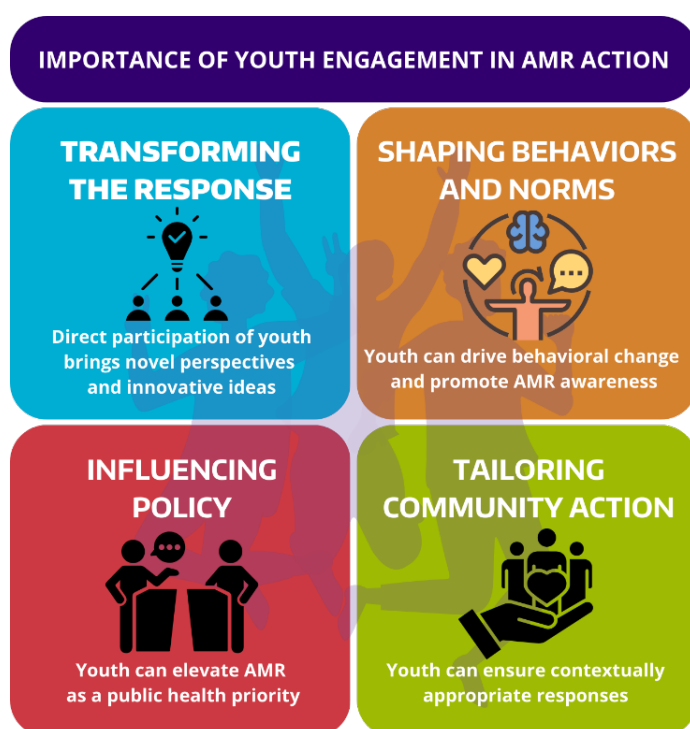
Complementing the [Youth Manifesto on AMR](#), which was published before the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on AMR in 2024, the aim of this document is to disseminate the position of the [Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR](#) on meaningful youth engagement in AMR interventions and guide relevant stakeholders in actions and strategies for youth inclusion in AMR interventions at various levels.

02

Why youth engagement in AMR matters: importance of youth involvement in decision-making on AMR

Meaningful engagement and inclusion of youth in the design and implementation of actions and interventions on AMR is a strategic action that can transform the fight against this global threat. It means moving beyond the conventional role of youth as intermediaries or messengers and ensuring their direct participation in decision-making. As key stakeholders, youth bring novel perspectives, innovative ideas and an affinity for digital solutions and thus projects and policies that are both forward-thinking and adaptable. As present and future leaders, their involvement is crucial to ensure generational continuity, cultural change that favours antimicrobial stewardship and long-term leadership that will set the stage for the sustainability of AMR prevention and mitigation, ultimately strengthening the global response to this ever-escalating challenge.

Fig 1: Importance of Youth Engagement in AMR Action



Young people shape consumption and societal norms, particularly in terms of lifestyle, including nutritional habits. As a primary force for bringing about change, they can drive behavioural change in their communities, such as advising against self-medication with antibiotics and advocating for food products made without routine use of antimicrobials. Their influence on use of digital platforms can be leveraged to promote public awareness and shift consumer demand towards practices that mitigate AMR. As a powerful, growing demographic group, young people are a politically influential bloc that can influence health policy discourse. As advocates, voters, health professionals and students, they have the potential to elevate AMR to a public health priority and build a constituency that demands stronger regulatory frameworks and funding for research and responsible antimicrobial stewardship in all sectors. They can also advocate with policy-makers on critical issues such as inequality, access to medicines and sustainable agri-food production.

Youth are also often on the front line in affected communities, including in low- and middle-income countries where the impact of AMR is most severe. Meaningful youth engagement can ensure responses that are tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations and are culturally and contextually appropriate.

03

Opportunities for youth involvement in AMR action

Insights from the 2024 UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on AMR and the Youth Manifesto on AMR

Launched in 2024, the Youth Manifesto on AMR calls for national and global engagement of youth in AMR on four priorities (Fig. 1): (1) advocacy and engagement, (2) education and capacity-building, (3) patient care (including for non-human patients) and (4) addressing AMR with a One-Health approach (8). The manifesto took a holistic approach, outlining the actions that young people want under each of the priorities.

Fig. 2. Priorities outlined in the Youth Manifesto on AMR



Source: Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement on AMR (8).

The youth manifesto promotes engagement of youth in activities beyond raising awareness and outlines various structural and decision-making roles for youth on AMR. These include promoting behaviour changes on antimicrobial consumption in their communities, sensitizing national and global actors on the specific AMR challenges faced by youth, supporting decision-making on AMR by attending national and global AMR policy events and, crucially, providing input on NAPs for AMR.

In an encouraging sign, the Political Declaration of the 2024 UNGA High-level Meeting on AMR mentions young people in two articles: 14 and 29. The second mention is one of several commitments related to AMR governance and is a clear step towards realization of the Youth Manifesto's call for meaningful youth engagement on AMR.

Articles in which “youth” are explicitly mentioned in the Political Declaration of the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on AMR 2024

14. Acknowledge the need to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first, and to ensure equitable and timely access to quality essential healthcare services and safe, effective, quality, affordable essential medicines including antimicrobials, and vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics and other health products, while respecting and promoting human rights, gender equality, sociocultural factors and the dignity of the person and the principles of equality and non -discrimination, as well as supporting and empowering those in vulnerable situations, including women, newborns, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, immunocompromised patients, people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by tuberculosis, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, people living in conflict affected States and humanitarian settings, including those impacted by climate change and natural disasters, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, those living in poverty and extreme poverty in both urban and rural areas, and people living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing;

29. Promote participatory, inclusive and transparent approaches to health governance for antimicrobial resistance at local, national, regional and global levels, including by exploring modalities for enhancing a meaningful whole-of-society approach and social participation, by involving all relevant stakeholders, such as local communities, health workers and care workers in the health sector, patients, survivors of antimicrobial-resistant infections, farmers, animal health and environmental and ecosystem sector professionals, academia, volunteers, civil society organizations, humanitarian personnel, faith-based organizations, the private sector and youth in the design, implementation and review of national action plans on antimicrobial resistance, to systematically inform decisions that affect health so that policies, programmes and plans better respond to needs, while fostering trust in health systems.

04

Strategies to strengthen inclusion of youth in AMR decision-making

Engagement of young people in action against AMR requires redefining youth, from passive recipients of knowledge to stakeholders with the capacity to bring fresh ideas, challenge norms and reimagine solutions through creativity, digital fluency and grassroots action.

Therefore, achieving meaningful engagement of young people in AMR includes establishing pathways in which youth perspectives are valued from the start. It requires a shift from consultation to co-creation, with spaces in which young people help set priorities, design interventions and evaluate impact – a space that invites discussion of ideas that may challenge tradition, that is not dismissive of the personal or professional background of collaborating youth and allocates proper resources to sustain their participation.

To address the significant barriers to full engagement in AMR policy and action that youth face (9), the following principles are proposed to guide a transformation in favour of youth. They are described in more detail in Table 1.

- Reduce the barriers to participation by manageable, **sustainable resource mobilization** to provide support, such as stipends, mentorship or flexible timelines, as young advocates may face financial limitations, time constraints due to academic or professional workload or lack of access to professional networks.
- Change discussions from **technical jargon** or limit its use to avoid an assumption of profound technical knowledge. While some young people may have a background in relevant sciences, others may not. Use of clear language to explain concepts can clarify ideas.
- Ensure **diversity and inclusion** while advancing youth engagement in the AMR space. In many instances, young people from high-income countries and those who are fluent in English have significantly more opportunities than others, which can skew discussions and limit impact. A gender focus in youth engagement and respect for cultural sensitivities are also important.

Table 1. Barriers to and recommendations for youth engagement on AMR

Barrier	Cause	Recommendations	Stakeholders
Limited awareness of AMR among young people	AMR is not yet adequately mainstream in communications with youth. AMR is dismissed as a topic that is too technical or not relevant to young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include AMR content in curricula at all levels of education. ● Launch social media campaigns oriented to youth, linking AMR with the interests and priorities of young people. ● Co-create communication assets with young people. ● Conduct peer-to-peer education programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ministries of education, health, and youth affairs ● national AMR coordinating committee or secretariat ● nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) ● student unions or associations
Token participation	Engagement with no real decision-making power and lack of understanding of the critical role of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish youth seats on national AMR committees, technical working groups or task forces. ● Establish multisectoral youth working groups within national AMR governance structures. ● Promote creation of youth delegate programmes, and facilitate their participation in global meetings (e.g. UN General Assembly, ministerial conferences). ● Co-design policy workshops and consultations with youth organizations. ● Create youth-led AMR monitoring committees. ● Facilitate inclusion of national youth-led organizations in the AMR Multistakeholder Partnership Platform and similar national structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ministries of health, agriculture and veterinary services, environment and youth affairs ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● youth organizations ● universities ● UN partners ● NGOs

Insufficient funding and resources	Budgets prioritized for institutional action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allocate and promote small grants for youth-led AMR projects. ● Approach the private sector for matched funding. ● Include a spending line for youth in national AMR budgets. ● Design a national or regional platform offering resource support for youth, such as the Youth Empowerment Fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ministries of health, finance and youth affairs ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● private donors ● NGOs
Lack of capacity or training	Few tailored learning opportunities, disproportionate distribution of learning opportunities among regions, few resources allocated for creation and maintenance of capacity-building for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop accessible in-person or e-learning opportunities on AMR for youth. ● Establish mentoring in all the One Health fields. ● Organize “hackathons” to crowdsource youth-led innovations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ministries of health, education and youth affairs ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● tertiary education institutions ● professional societies and organizations ● tech hubs.
Limited diversity in youth participation	Societal expectations of roles and behaviour and structural societal issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure gender-balanced, diverse youth panels. ● Identify and include youth representatives from vulnerable groups of society in youth-focused initiatives. ● Promote success stories of diverse youth champions. ● Work with community leaders to endorse youth roles in AMR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● community leaders and groups ● NGOs
Fragmented multi-sectoral collaboration	Decentralized mandates across the One Health spectrum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Convene regular One Health youth forums. ● Map and link youth groups across sectors. ● Issue joint action calls at national, regional and global levels. ● Facilitate interaction and joint learning opportunities for students in human and animal health, agriculture and the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ministries of health, agriculture and veterinary services, environment and youth affairs ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● universities ● UN partners
Weak monitoring and evaluation	No youth-specific indicators for progress or inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-create youth engagement indicators in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of AMR national action plans. ● Publish periodic reports on youth engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● national AMR coordinating committees or secretariats ● UN partners ● ministries of youth

05

Conclusion

AMR is one of the most urgent threats to global health, food security and sustainable development, and addressing it requires mobilization of all generations and sectors. The experiences highlighted in this brief show that, when youth are meaningfully engaged as decision-makers, innovators and advocates, they bring fresh perspectives and practical solutions to the fight against AMR. Their leadership in campaigns, interprofessional collaboration, research and policy advocacy demonstrates that youth are not just the future but are key actors today. To accelerate progress, institutions, governments and stakeholders must invest in youth capacity-building, ensure that youth are represented in every stage of AMR policy and action and support youth-led One Health initiatives. We can build more resilient, equitable, practical strategies to safeguard antimicrobials and protect the health of future generations by raising youth voices and fostering intergenerational, intersectoral collaboration.

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9. Youth engagement on antimicrobial resistance (online). Uppsala: ReAct (<https://www.reactgroup.org/toolbox/raise-awareness/youth-engagement-amr/>).

Further information on youth engagement

Youth Manifesto on AMR	https://www.qjsamr.org/docs/librariesprovider25/working-group-on-youth-engagement/youth-manifesto.pdf
AMR toolkit for youth engagement	https://www.qjsamr.org/publications/m/item/m
Youth engagement on antibiotic resistance toolbox	https://www.reactgroup.org/toolbox/raise-awareness/youth-engagement-amr/
Engaging youth in antimicrobial resistance at the country and regional level: Policy brief	https://www.reactgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Youth-in-Antimicrobial-Resistance-Policy-Brief.pdf

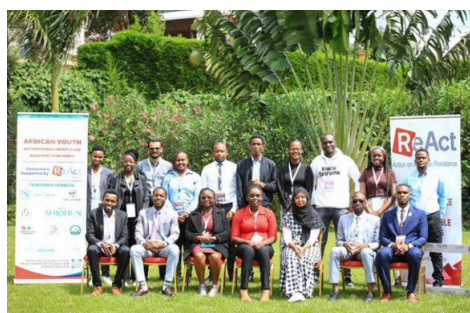
Annex. Case studies and success stories



Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR

Supported by FAO, UNEP, WHO and WOA, this body has institutionalized inclusion of youth in AMR policy, launched the Youth Manifesto at the 2024 UN General Assembly High-level Meeting, created resources such as the “Oh no! Leslie got malaria” story book and ensured youth voices at top-tier events to drive both policy relevance and public engagement.

Learn more at: <https://www.qjsamr.org/technical-work/working-group-on-youth-engagement>



African Youth AMR Alliance Task Force

This regional alliance, which unites 13 youth-led groups across Africa, illustrates the power of coordinated networks in driving regional action. By focusing on capacity-building and local policy engagement, the Alliance has adapted AMR strategies to African contexts and shown that regional youth networks can fill gaps left by national actions and ensure locally relevant solutions.

Learn more at: <http://www.ayaratf.org/>



Global AMR Youth Summit

Launched in 2021 by the International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation, the International Federation of Medical Students' Association, the International Veterinary Students' Association, the International Association of Dental Students and the International Association of Students in Agriculture, this global summit united 2.5 million students and young professionals in human and animal health and agriculture to champion One Health AMR stewardship, drawing thousands of youth participants from around the world.

Participation of youth leaders in drafting and validating the NAP and the national communication plan to combat AMR in Burkina Faso



Actions des Jeunes contre la Résistance aux Antimicrobiens (Youth Action against AMR) played an active role in Burkina Faso in 2024 in drafting and finalizing the NAP and the National Communication Plan on AMR. The group helped to shape an inclusive communication strategy targeted at young people. The revised NAP was launched publicly during World AMR Awareness Week 2024, with

youth mobilization. The involvement of the group ensured a youth-driven, innovative perspective and demonstrated their ongoing commitment to awareness-raising and broad youth engagement in combatting AMR.

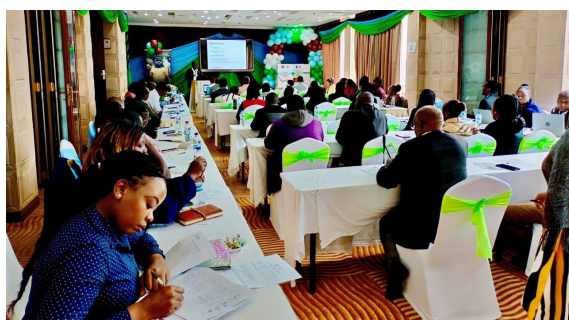
Participation of youth leaders in implementation of Kenya's AMR NAP and National Communication Strategy



In July 2024, youth-led and youth-serving organizations and student leaders reviewed Kenya's 2018 National AMR Communication Strategy and prepared a draft National AMR Communication Strategy 2023–2027 for validation. The youth leaders are members of the National Advocacy Technical Working Group under the National Antimicrobial Stewardship Interagency Committee to support implementation of Kenya's AMR NAP, and they

run the Youth Event Sub-committee that plans AMR awareness and advocacy activities, including youth AMR competitions and awards, during the annual national World AMR Awareness Week, in partnership with the Government and NGOs.

Youth involvement in development and implementation of subnational AMR work plans: Nyeri County Antimicrobial Stewardship Interagency Committee (CASIC) Work Plan.



Nyeri County, Kenya, has meaningfully integrated young people into governance and multisectoral AMR work. Youth now sit on all six technical working groups of the county-level action plan and played central roles in developing, implementing and reviewing the work plans, including the frameworks for monitoring and evaluation and costing. Youth lead AMR education and awareness campaigns, moderate working group meetings, facilitate training for health, veterinary and environment

professionals, support animal vaccination programmes, conduct antimicrobial stewardship tasks in hospitals (e.g. point-prevalence surveys of antimicrobial use and consumption and laboratory surveillance) and serve on committees on drugs and other therapeutics.

About the Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR

The Quadripartite (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Environment Programme, World Health Organization and World Organization for Animal Health) created a working group to inform and guide awareness-raising and inclusion of young people in global AMR action. The Group comprises 14 members from 14 youth-led or youth-serving organizations, selected according to their backgrounds to ensure sectoral, gender and geographical representation. The members are expected to contribute actively to AMR activities and campaigns and also assist in defining strategies that can influence other youth-led or youth-serving organizations and engaging youth directly in the global response to AMR.

