



Youth Leaders Call for Equitable Global Health Governance Amid Rising Geopolitical Tensions

The Trainee Advisory Committee of the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH), alongside the Commonwealth Youth Health Network (CYHN), the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) Asia Pacific Division, and Amplify Health & Development in Africa (AHDA), released key findings from a global focus group discussion with youth trainees. The dialogue highlighted how geopolitical tensions and Global North-South power asymmetries are undermining health equity, distorting funding priorities, and weakening multilateral cooperation.

The discussion, held on September 21, 2025, highlighted how global health funding is increasingly tied to donor nations' "strategic interests," such as health security, at the expense of long-term, equity-driven programs. This trend jeopardizes the sustainability of health interventions and creates unequal opportunities for early-career researchers and trainees. Participants also critiqued how major donors often set agenda priorities, favoring disease-specific programs that overshadow local health system strengthening. A key concern raised was that "data is often kept by donors and not returned in a manner that local NGOs can use," hindering local ownership and sustainable development.

In response to these challenges, the youth participants outlined a clear path forward. They emphasized the power of youth to drive more equitable decision-making through advocacy and solidarity. The focus group strongly championed South-South Collaboration and LMIC-led partnerships as vital mechanisms to reduce reliance on donor-driven agendas and strengthen regional resilience.

The Trainee Advisory Committee at CUGH urges the following actions based on the youth recommendations:

- Global health institutions and donors must prioritize local ownership by ensuring agenda-setting and program design are co-developed with local implementers and communities.
- Increase transparency and equity in data sharing by guaranteeing that data collected in partner countries is accessible and usable by local organizations for sustainable planning.
- Governments and financial institutions must combat corruption and ensure resources are effectively directed towards strengthening health systems, noting the significant loss of funds that impacts low- and middle-income countries.
- Educational institutions should integrate geopolitical literacy into global health curricula to prepare the next generation of leaders to navigate and reform the current landscape.
- Support youth representation in global health governance bodies to ensure decision-making is inclusive, representative, and responsive to the on-ground realities.

The insights from this discussion will contribute to ongoing dialogues and inform future advocacy efforts aimed at creating a more inclusive and equitable global health architecture. The time for

structural reform is now. The global community must work together to dismantle power asymmetries, uphold equitable partnerships, and restore the principles of justice and fairness in global health.