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Global youth advocating for COVID-19 vaccines for all

As of Aug 24, 2021, globally there were more than 212 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and more than 4 million deaths from COVID-19.¹ Current infections are driven by SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in largely unvaccinated populations.^{2–4} As of Aug 24, 2021, the global distribution of more than 5 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses reveals gross disparities in vaccine access: the EU and North America received 727 million and 547 million doses, respectively; Asia received 3 billion doses; South America received 336 million doses, while Africa received 93 million doses, translating into a vaccine coverage rate below 1%.⁵ Richer countries continue to secure and hoard vaccines leaving low-income and middle-income countries behind.

Although not often highlighted, youth have had an important role in COVID-19 response efforts during the pandemic. The Global Shapers Community, a group of young changemakers spread across 450 hubs around the world, convened a group of more than 250 community members in over 60 countries who drove engagement between Fortune 500 companies, government officials, and members of multilateral entities, including WHO, involved in COVID-19 response efforts.⁶ This early call to action allowed the community to formulate responses to local challenges through global best practices and insights. Furthermore, the grass-roots nature of the community allowed for prompt distribution of trusted, accurate information through a global campaign

called #PreventionOverPanic. This campaign aimed to simultaneously encourage risk-mitigating activities and respond to pervasive levels of anxiety related to the pandemic. After the success of this initial effort across 70 countries, the community sought to deepen its impact by launching and supporting projects aimed at tangible outcomes globally. To date, these projects have assisted nearly 2 million beneficiaries, raised over US\$500 000, and distributed over 1 million items of personal protective equipment, benefiting communities globally.

Similarly, the Forum of Young Global Leaders (YGL), a community of 1400 members and alumni of 120 nationalities, leading initiatives across multiple sectors including business, technology, arts, government,



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For the Forum of Young Global Leaders see <https://www.younggloballeaders.org/>



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For the Global Youth Coalition championing Vaccines For All website see www.vaccinescoalition.com
See Online for appendix

and health, organised projects aiming for systems change. For example, a YGL led project in Siaya, Kenya, worked with 200 youth and 1359 community health workers to support handwashing, mask wearing, and COVID-19 case management using digital tools, and reached about 500 000 community members and achieved a radio listenership of more than 2 million. Communities reached by this project had fewer SARS-CoV-2 infections and fewer diarrhoeal and upper respiratory tract infections than neighbouring communities where the intervention did not take place; and the use of essential health services, including maternal health services, was maintained during the intervention.⁷ Future steps will aim to scale up similar but locally adapted interventions across sub-Saharan Africa with the ultimate goal of strengthening primary health-care systems.

Youth are also contributing to post-pandemic recovery plans. The World Economic Forum's Davos TaskForce produced a Youth Recovery Plan which summarised the insights and ideas from 2 million participants from more than 150 cities and 180 countries.⁸ Within the pillar of public health, youth are calling for more community-driven health solutions to rebuild trust in health systems.⁸ Furthermore, youth are calling on G7 nations and international organisations to prioritise COVID-19 vaccine equity.⁸ Given our commitment to vaccine equity, we formed the Global Youth Coalition championing Vaccines For All, and on International Youth Day 2021, we launched a global campaign to advocate for vaccines for all. The coalition is using a digital survey to assess current barriers to vaccine uptake among youth and others who are eligible to get the vaccine. Some respondents have been exposed to misinformation, and they expressed concerns about changes in their menstrual cycle and potential fertility. Such concerns will need to be addressed to maintain trust and the demand for COVID-19 vaccines among some younger citizens. The initial results of our survey highlight the complex nature of vaccine uptake

among young people which does not rely solely on vaccine supplies.

Contrary to what we have seen so far, we envision a world that is more unified, more equitable, and more committed to collectively achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and restoring dignified livelihoods for all. We call on the global community, regardless of age and background, to join us in our efforts by following and resharing the hashtag #vaccinesforall and visiting the Global Youth Coalition championing Vaccines For All's website.

We are both members of the Global Youth Coalition championing Vaccines For All and a full list of coalition members can be found in the appendix. NK received a grant from the Wellcome Trust (grant number: 221407/Z/20/Z). DW is Founder and Managing Partner of Novamed that provides consulting and technical services for organisations covering health services, medical education, and knowledge resources, none of which are related to vaccines development. Novamed has current projects with Impact Consulting Partners, Windward, First Step, and Visionaries summit. DW has received travel support from the Government of Jamaica to attend and participate in the World Under 20 Athletics Championships held in Nairobi, Kenya. DW is the World Economic Forum Global Shapers Community Co-Chair of the COVID-19 Steering Committee.

*Neema Kaseje, David Walcott
nkaseje@gmail.com

Surgical Systems Research Group, PO Box 4074, Kisumu, Kenya (NK); Novamed Health, Kingston, Jamaica (DW)

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The Lancet Commission on cancer and health systems: harnessing synergies to achieve solutions

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Strong health systems require strong cancer systems and strong cancer systems strengthen health systems. This symbiotic relationship should be cultivated and

leveraged to substantively advance universal health coverage. Yet, it has been largely ignored in global health.^{1,2}