



Towards a More Resilient Veterinary Workforce for Africa 2024

Continental Conference
26 – 28 November 2024 Nairobi, Kenya

Youth Perspectives on Futures of the Veterinary Workforce in Africa Executive Summary January 2025

In November 2024, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and partners hosted the **Africa Continental Conference: *Towards a More Resilient Veterinary Workforce for Africa 2024***. The conference aimed to evaluate progress, share regional experiences, and encourage further investments in veterinary workforce development.

In preparation for the conference, WOAHA launched its first direct youth engagement project. From August to November 2024, WOAHA brought together 80 young people from over 16 African countries to explore the future of the veterinary workforce using futures and foresight methodologies.

The project consisted of three Youth Futures Workshops: two online sessions (in English and French) and one face-to-face event in Nairobi (in English). These workshops built upon WOAHA's first major youth-focused event, **'Is WOAHA Ready for the Future?'**, held earlier at the 91st General Session in May 2024 with International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA) representatives. Through these consultations, participants identified key challenges, opportunities for innovation, and critical dilemmas shaping future veterinary workforce development.

While WOAHA has traditionally supported education through developing guidelines and curricula, this initiative on workforce development marked WOAHA's first direct engagement with youth stakeholders. This Youth foresight process created an inclusive platform for exploring critical uncertainties and trends. Participants examined emerging disruptions and opportunities affecting veterinary education and workforce development, emphasising the importance of futures thinking in building resilience. They later presented their findings to decision-makers, veterinary education professionals, and associations at the November Conference.

The 2024 Conference provided a crucial opportunity to examine the current state and future evolution of Africa's veterinary workforce over the next 20-30 years. It highlighted the importance of anticipating future needs while addressing current challenges, emphasising that meaningful engagement with future custodians and experts as well as inter-generational dialogue, are essential for maintaining relevant workforce planning and education.

Feedback from youth participants highlighted how the collaborative foresight methodologies were empowering and eye-opening, providing them with new skills which they felt would be valuable in their studies and career.

The initiative also strengthened WOAAH's and Members' commitment to inclusive engagement, highlighting how workforce development efforts can remain relevant to the evolving needs of young professionals by involving youth across stages of planning for policy, but also for education and enterprise development.

By incorporating foresight methodologies, WOAAH has demonstrated leadership in preparing for future challenges in veterinary services. This project marks a significant step toward ensuring the resilience and adaptability of the veterinary workforce in Africa. Through amplifying the voices of the next generation, WOAAH is paving the way for a future-ready animal health sector.

Key takeaways

The Africa conference 2024 identified youth perspectives in workforce planning as one of ten Recommendations to Memberr. Recommendations on wellbeing and mental health, gender inclusion, collaboration and digitalisation also reflect priorities from the youth consultations.

Engaging young people directly adds value to decision-making and ensures workforce planning is relevant to future needs.	Futures thinking enhances awareness of anticipated changes within and outside the veterinary domain, fostering resilience.	Veterinary education and service delivery can adapt to emerging workforce changes.
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