



YOPA testimonial by the Institute of Tropical Medicine (Antwerp)

A vast majority of teenagers do not meet guidelines for healthy movement behaviours (i.e. physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep), posing major risks for developing multiple non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Sustainable implementation of lifestyle interventions focused on teenagers is a key challenge.

The [YoPA](#) or Youth Participatory Action project, focuses on promoting health equity by engaging adolescents in urban settings in a co-creation process to implement community interventions that will improve their physical activity and well-being. The project obtained funding from Horizon Europe's Health Cluster, addressing the call topic '[Non-communicable diseases risk reduction in adolescence and youth](#)'.

Launched in 2023 and running for five years, YoPA proposes a participatory, youth-centred approach to four urban communities in Denmark (Aalborg), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), Nigeria (Osogbo), and South Africa (Soweto). Adolescents aged 12-19 year work alongside researchers, urban planners, policymakers, and community leaders to co-create evidence-based interventions addressing physical activity and other health-related issues.

YOPA applies a participatory and complex systems perspective in a youth-centred co-creation processes addressing the challenges of health inequities and physical inactivity.

The project is a collaboration between 10 partners, research institutes, municipalities and NGOs: Amsterdam University Medical Centre, Netherlands, Stichting Alexander, Netherlands, the City of Aalborg in Denmark, The University of Southern Denmark, the Universidade Lusofona in Portugal, Redeemer's University in Nigeria, the NGO VARCE, the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, Wits Health Hub, and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp, Belgium.

The [Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium \(ITM\)](#) is responsible for the application of the realist evaluation methodology, to better understand the mechanisms underlying the co-creation processes in the different settings. The complexity-oriented methodology of Realist Evaluation is ideally suited to better understand how the interaction between context and mechanisms underlying collective action generate outcomes. The aim is to better understand how co-creation in the different settings is being implemented by local actors and how the co-creation process contributes to adolescents' health and well-being.

Furthermore, YoPA will develop an open access Toolbox to share its approach with researchers and policymakers, fostering sustainable, youth-led solutions for healthier urban environments.

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