

## **WAAPH's CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE THEME: "ACCOUNTABILITY TO ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS"**

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The West African Academy of public Health (WAAPH) is an innovation –driven, consulting health development organization (CHDO) headquartered in Nigeria. It is known for improving public health education, practice and program implementation through high-impact research, teaching, mentoring and practice. It also works in the field of public health to support governments and partners to create dynamic, equitable, integrated, decentralized and participatory health systems within a just and empowered society in the spirit of universal access to health. And it seeks to partner with all actors interested in the health and wellbeing of West Africa.

**WAAPH** also seeks to strengthen West Africa's public health institutional and systems capability and provide knowledge to achieve better health outcomes for all in alignment with UN sustainable development goal three (SDG3): "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"

**WAAPH's** commitment to the theme: "**Accountability to Adolescents' Health and Human Rights**" is highlighted in its Virtual internship program (VIP) which is a platform for young people (Adolescents and Youths) to advocate and engage on global health related sustainable development issues.

The platform engenders action through individual and group feats as well as through partnership with youth structures and key institutions at national and international levels. It buttresses on the importance of youth engagement and how it can change the direction of a young person's life, prepare young people to become future leaders, with the understanding that youth engagement is a young person's civil right and youth engagement allows youths to make a difference in improving their community.

The Virtual Internship Program (VIP) gives the youths an opportunity to make their voices heard and encourages them to develop efforts and initiatives that nurture healthy adolescents. It is also aimed at increasing their public health literacy, and particularly in issues around child and adolescent health. The program builds their capacity in the areas of; Leadership, Public health and social media.

They are often engaged in advocacy and sensitization activities which include: Conducting social media activities; hangouts, panels, twitter views, coordinating online Youth Health campaigns, participating in free online courses, developing, promoting, and conducting global health education programs, to mention a few.

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## The Virtual Internship Programme (VIP) Overview

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The VIP is essential for consolidation of the organization's research, mentoring and training goals. The VIP focuses on skilled youths (under graduate and graduates) within West Africa. The VIP basically harnesses human, material and technological resources to achieve its aim.

### **Membership/ Duration**

The program accommodates ten to twenty (10-20) interns per term, on a rolling basis. Each term is expected to last for **3months**. However, extension is allowed.

### **Objectives of the Internship**

- To improve public health literacy among youths and the general populace.
- To increase the presence of the academy among global health actors.

- To create awareness on the academy's trainings and target programs.
- To promote advocacy in thematic public health areas.

### **Scope/ Methodology**

The VIP activities include; research, interviews and advocacy. The broad strategy of the VIP is the social media. All activities are published on social media.

**Research:** Thematic areas of public health are researched into and reviewed by interns. The research findings would be disseminated via the social media, Twitter being the starting platform. Other social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram would be explored.

The social media is the main platform for the execution of the programme.

**Interviews:** Selected professionals in Public health and other executive stakeholders are engaged either in person and/ or via social media in form of tweet chat. Contact discussions are performed by the VIP coordinator and selected interns based on location. However, twitter views and other social activities involves all interns irrespective of location.

**Advocacy/Campaigns:** Media content (Messaging Videos and Photographs) are gathered from web resources or developed and disseminated via the social media to support and promote target programs within the academy as well as other related programs via the social media.

### **Expected Outcome of the Virtual Internship**

- Increased knowledge and expertise.
- Interns could be called upon to participate in implementation of future programmes.

- Improved Communication / online health advocacy Skills
- Increased Leadership and Civic Engagement
- Certificate of participation would be issued and possible membership of the Academy of Public health. (The latter would be based on performance and at the discretion of the Executive Director of WAAPH.)
- Improved relationships; Increased ability to work with diverse individuals and groups.

In May 2016, **WAAPH's** virtual internship program (VIP) kicked off with a cohort of ten (10) interns. In-line with the core focus of the program (SDG3 advocacy), the interns ran an online advocacy on malnutrition in children and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. The second cohort of interns consists of a kernel of eighteen (18) youths who would also work on adolescent health and ending female genital mutilation using advocacy and community sensitization. It would begin in April, 2017 and it is expected to run for a period of 12 weeks or more if extension is needed.

The academy's virtual Internship Program (VIP) is based on the need to increase public health literacy and critical return on investment on the sector by engaging youths, because an ounce of Public Health is worth a pound of healthcare. Thus far, it has helped youths increase their health literacy, influence and personal stake in the community. Via the Program, **WAAPH** is contributing its quota to the collective efforts to achieve the theme: **“Accountability to Adolescents’ Health and Human Rights”**