



THE YOUNG EPILEPSY SECTION (YES) PROGRAMME AT THE 4TH AFRICAN EPILEPSY CONGRESS

The Africa region of the Young Epilepsy Section (YES) held its first programme at the 4th African Epilepsy Congress at Entebbe. During a town hall style meeting, Dr Musa Watila started the programme with a What is YES presentation, including Its aims. He further described how to get involved and discussed the key outcomes and future directions for YES in Africa.



Figure 1: The YES town hall meeting

Dr Edward Kija (Tanzania), Charles Hammond (Ghana) and Robert Sebuya (Uganda) then gave an overview of the challenges and opportunities they faced as young clinicians and researchers in sub-Saharan Africa. These presentations were then followed by a Q&A session. Some of the issues raised were difficulties faced by young professionals regarding training and funding opportunities. A major threat discussed was the impact of the brain-drain on epilepsy care in this region. A challenge discussed was what Edward Kija called ‘brain-in-the-drain’ – a situation where trained professionals waste their talent due lack of equipment, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and opposition from less-trained senior colleagues. Suggestions were given on how YES could help coordinate its activities to overcome these obstacles.

An in-house meeting of YES-Africa was convened immediately after the town-hall meeting, with 27 persons in attendance.



Figure 2: Some of the YES delegates

After discussing the need to have a new African representative to YES, a new regional representative and four sub-regional leaders (to help with coordinating YES activities), were elected .

The following leaders were elected:

- i. Naluca Mwendaweli (Zambia) – YES-Africa regional representative.
- ii. Samuel Angwafor (Cameroon) – sub-regional leader Central Africa
- iii. Tichasvika Mwoyofiri (Zimbabwe) – Southern Africa
- iv. Cadnelle Affognon (Senegal) – West Africa, and
- v. Chantel Kauyabutembo (Rwanda) – East Africa

It was agreed that the past YES-Africa representative (Musa Watila) should continue to help the new leadership for a smooth transition. A WhatsApp group for the leadership was created for ease of communication.



Figure 3: The Elected YES-Africa leadership together with the ILAE president. From L-R: Cadnelle, Sam, Musa (past leader), Samuel Wiebe (ILEA president), Naluca, Chantel and Tich.

A YES booth was set-up during the congress to advertise the YES meetings and give information on the workings of YES. It received a huge interest and twenty-six persons registered to become members during the congress. YES now has 47 registered members from Africa (10 from North Africa). All new members will create and join the Slack Channel and join taskforces.



Figure 4: At the YES booth

1. Future directions for YES: 2019 – 2021

Since the kick-off workshop in London, May 2018 where only one person from sub-Saharan Africa was in attendance, YES-Africa has grown (although much slower than other regions). The AEC provided an opportunity to connect with one another and our membership has more than doubled.

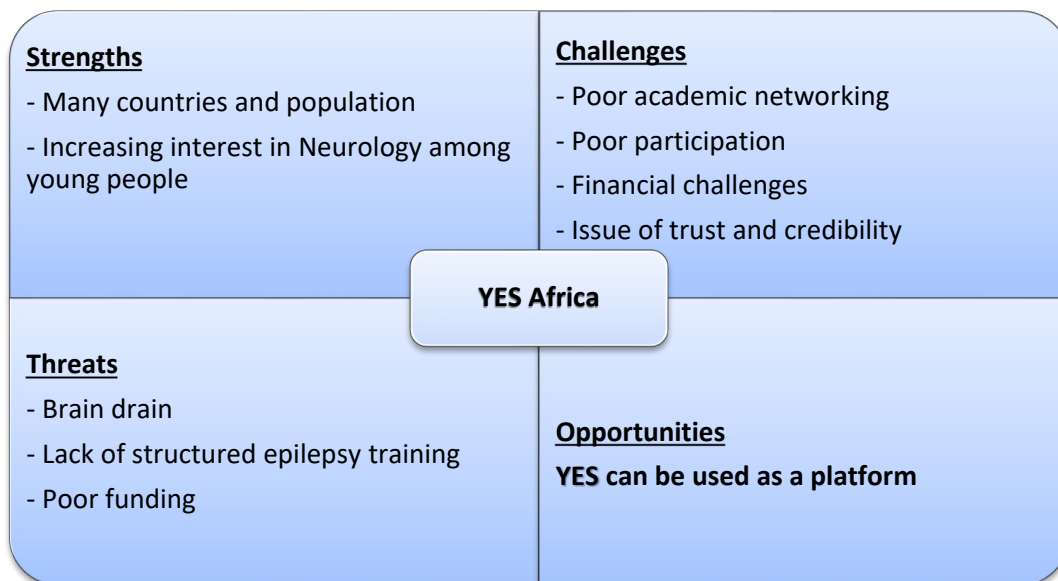


Figure 5: Leadership elected at the kick-off workshop in London

Our goals for the next two years:

- Improve the involvement of young people in epilepsy care and research, and by extension the ILAE.
- Develop a strong network of young people involved in epileptology from Africa and to connect them with YES members from other parts of the world. The social media could help us achieve this.
- Together with the international YES group, create a database on resources and courses available, such summer schools, teaching courses, trainings and funding opportunities that promise to advance their career path in epilepsy research and care.
- Through our regional liaisons, bring information from sub-regions into the YES databases.
- Encourage increase participation in mentor-mentee programmes of the ILAE - to help with the challenges of career development.

- Encourage members to form advocacy groups, who through public education will help demystify issues of epilepsy in Africa.



Drs Musa Watila and Naluca Mwendaweli

for the YES-Africa leadership