



ENGAGE AFRICA FOUNDATION

FESTIVAL 2022
COMMUNIQUE

THEME:
MOBILIZING FOR A HEALTHY AFRICA

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**WELCOME
KARIBU
BEM-VINDO**



3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING




**NDEWO
AKWAABA
E KAABO**



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INTRODUCTION

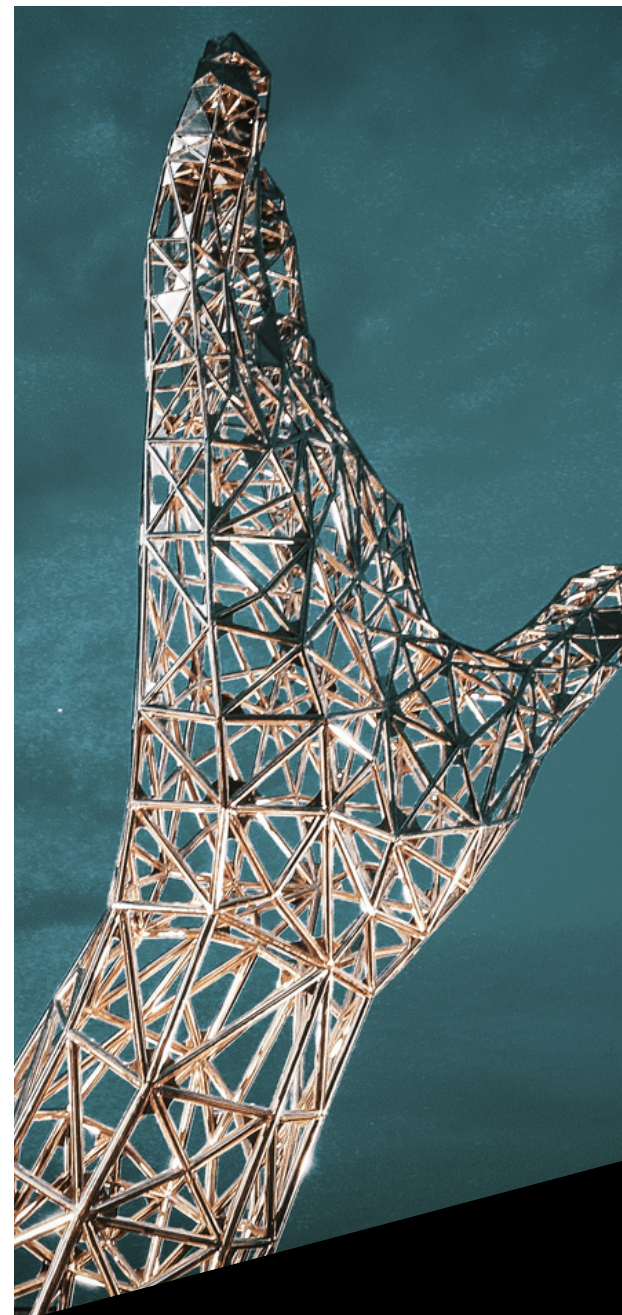
#EAFESTIVAL2022

MOBILIZING FOR A HEALTHY AFRICA

Engage Africa Foundation (EAF) is a pan-African network of volunteers on a mission to promote the prevention of non-communicable diseases in Africa through people-centered solutions and to use this as a catalyst for the amplification of lasting solutions for health creation in Africa.

Between September 3rd and 4th, 2022, EAF hosted the second edition of the EAF Festival. Following the first edition that was hosted between August 6th and 8th, 2021 and tagged “A Promising Future”, EAF Festival 2022 was themed “Mobilizing for a Healthy Africa”. The festival focused on empowering participants to re-envision Africa’s health in ways that are more sustainable, equitable, efficient, and innovative.

To achieve this, EAF invited African health practitioners on the continent and in the diaspora to shed more light on Africa’s health development with specific focus on six sub-themes namely “health promotion,” “advocacy,” “health systems and governments,” “health communication,” “preventive interventions,” and “lifestyle change”.



Based on the discussion and masterclasses; the following priority areas for innovative, cost-effective and people-centered action on NCDs in Africa are recommended:



- Prioritising gender equitable economic development for sustainable health promotion.
- Regional frameworks and collaborations to address privacy, equity and access to data given the growth of health promoting technologies on the continent.
- Emphasizing respect for the rule of law, and holding political office holders and public servants accountable for their actions and inactions, especially when it comes to health policies.
- Leveraging strategic partnerships between health leaders and health policy decision makers within Africa and in the diaspora to strengthen advocacy processes across Africa.
- Investing in grassroot organizations that are at the forefront of diffusing health information at the local level to strengthen advocacy processes.
- Strong investments in infrastructure, competitions and policy incentives to support the affordability of non-motorised transportation, particularly cycling.
- Role modeling to innovatively and efficiently improve physical activity participation in resource constrained countries.

Dr. Ebele Mago

President, Engage Africa Foundation

#EAFFESTIVAL 2022

Audience
Analytics



41.2K
Tweet Impressions

24.8K
YouTube Impressions

Top cities and countries:

- Lagos/Abuja, Nigeria
- Toronto, Canada
- Sydney, Australia
- Rwanda
- United States
- Cameroon



82.1%
of YouTube viewers
are between the
ages of 25 and 34



HEALTH PROMOTION

LEVERAGING OUR CULTURE FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

Panelist: Fr. Anselm Adodo

Hosts: Ajoke Adebisi & Samuel Soyinka

The session started with discussions around how cultural beliefs can influence health. Fr. Anselm Adodo stressed that people's beliefs determine their health behavior; using an illustration of a woman refusing breast cancer treatment because of her cultural beliefs. The panelist went on to share that culture influences the food people eat, and a balanced diet is not necessarily expensive. He said it is vital for communities to have the knowledge of what constitutes a balanced diet.



There were discussions around how gender impacts non-communicable disease prevention. Fr. Adodo talked about how women would hide their health conditions because society will usually stigmatize them, especially in the case of sexually transmitted infections where men unlike women, can easily open up without the fear of stigma. He stressed that men cope with lifestyle related diseases better because they are in control of their finances, unlike women who mostly have to depend on men for funds to seek care. He emphasized that financial independence is crucial to promoting the wellbeing of women.

The session ended with Fr. Adodo mentioning that traditional medicine is officially part of the health care system in Nigeria, especially at the local level, irrespective of the resistance by the orthodox medical practitioners.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH PROMOTING TECHNOLOGIES

Panelists: Morenike Akinyemi
& Arnaud Nibaruta

Host: Dr. Ebele Mogo

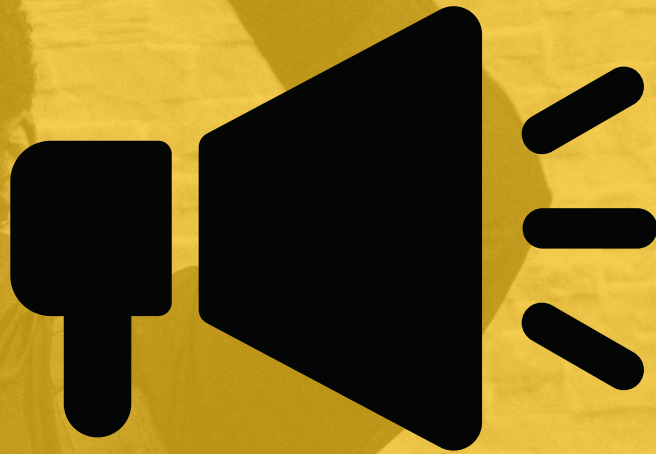
This session centered on how technologies can equitably improve health. Some touchstones were the need to 1) put users at the centre of technology, 2) understand the factors driving a desire to change behaviours and, 3) create occasions for feedback on technologies. Panelists shared what not to do and these included 1) creating in isolation, 2) creating for technology sake, 3) ignoring funding and, 4) ignoring digital literacy.



The audience was encouraged to use the simplest technologies such as short messaging service (SMS) and Whatsapp to reduce the burden of processes users need to engage, and to consider pairing technologies with in-person support to improve technology literacy for high-risk populations. Trustbuilding and provision of resources in different languages were emphasized.

Users were also encouraged to “dance with the systems”, by tapping into existing networks, values e.g respect for elders, and resources in communities e.g community leaders to build trust and promote impact.

Panelists noted a growing prominence of artificial intelligence and machine learning in Africa. Yet, they noted the need for regional frameworks and collaborations to address emerging concerns such as privacy and access to data. Government was cited as key for creating policies encouraging entrepreneurs to collaborate, exchange resources and innovate for high-need populations.



ADVOCACY

STRENGTHENING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ADVOCACY IN AFRICA

Panelist: [Dr. Iyore James](#)

Host: Elias Gbadamosi

The focus of [this session](#) was to highlight and explore how state and non-state actors in Africa's health system can drive change to strengthen the continent's non-communicable disease advocacy system.

Dr. Iyore James, the panelist on this session noted that Africa's health advocacy system's weakness generally stems from 1) paucity of financial investments in health across Africa, 2) lack of political vision and policies that allow innovation and protect intellectual property, 3) ineptitude of political leaders in connecting healthcare and sustainable/economic development.

All of these combined ultimately stifle innovation, expansion, development, while limiting the strength and reach of Africa's health advocacy system.

The fundamental step, as Dr. James noted, towards rejigging Nigeria's - and in extension, Africa's - non-communicable disease advocacy system is to promulgate respect for the rule of law. Dr. James maintained that Africa's health advocacy systems will become stronger when political office holders and public servants are held accountable for their actions and inactions as applicable to health policies.

In their submissions, other speakers on the panel - Dr Tagbo Ekwonu, Dr Susan, Mr Aimable Uwimana - unanimously posited that medical philanthropy is not enough to build more effective non-communicable disease advocacy systems. To strengthen advocacy processes across Africa, health leaders and health policy decision makers within Africa and in diaspora need to forge strategic partnerships to share tangible and intangible resources.



STRENGTHENING HEALTH ADVOCACY PROCESSES IN AFRICA

Panelist: Dr. Joy Aifuobhokhan
& Patterson Siema

Host: Elias Gbadamosi

Our panelists for this session, Dr Joy Aifuobhokan and Mr Patterson Siema explored the challenges bedeviling health advocacy processes in Africa and the actionable ways to combat those challenges.

According to our panelists, the African continent has evolved a great deal in the past decade. They noted that at the forefront of this evolution are grassroots health mobilizers and organizations leading the charge toward effective health advocacy with little resources and investment.

To strengthen Africa's health advocacy processes further and ensure that health information reaches those who need it the most, panelists noted that we first need to recognise that health advocacy is local. There is therefore a pressing need to build capacity and invest generously in grassroots health organizations that are at the forefront of diffusing health information at the local level.

At the country, sub-continental, and continental levels, the panelists asserted that the willingness and willpower of political leaders are the most important matrices from which strong health advocacy processes will emanate and diffuse from. While noting that there are countries within Africa willing to advance health advocacy but without adequate investments to mobilize policies, the panelists opined that multilateral relationships could be a step in the right direction.

Besides, as they harp on the importance of research evidence towards strengthening health advocacy systems, the panelists noted that only about 1.1% of research evidence on health in Africa is produced by African researchers in Africa. Health policy decision makers therefore make decisions based on very limited evidence. Panelists therefore urged African philanthropies and governments should generously fund health research across the continent.





**HEALTH
SYSTEMS &
GOVERNMENTS**

HOW GOVERNMENTS CAN CREATE HEALTHY CITIES

Panelist: Dr. Babatunde Omilola

Hosts: Preetha Raj & Cynthia
Cao

This session centered on the role of governments in creating health. Some identified roles for the government included 1) investing resources 2) building partnerships e.g multi-agency task forces and public private partnerships for health 3) conveying health as a human right 4) building conditions to create brain gain, not drain 5) creating policies, standards and regulations 6) ensuring efficient resource use and reducing wastage.



Diverse systems factors were illustrated such as in the food sector where there is need to 1) produce healthier food 2) deal with shocks like climate change and war 3) reduce waste 4) improve distribution.

To achieve these goals, the panelist noted that long-term investments in vital public goods are critical. Health cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health but a responsibility shared across agriculture, social services, finance, to mention but a few. Attention was drawn to resource wastage which often happens concurrently with resource insufficiency in various sectors.

Attention was also drawn to other levels of government such as mayors who can invest in walkable streets, green spaces and healthy food environments. The example of Dakar, Senegal, where there is a growing norm of communal exercise was given.

SYSTEMS CHANGE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Panelist: Tabitha Mpamira

Hosts: Anthony Lerno & Abhiraj Virk

This session centered on how coordinated grassroots initiatives can press for health systems change at the national levels. Some core areas of discussion were 1) core values of advocacy, 2) Trauma and its impact on regional health systems, 3) identifying challenges to addressing sexual violence in system reform, and 4) promoting awareness of sexual violence and its impact on broader health systems.



The panelist, Tabitha Mpamira, encouraged the audience to “think local” when working with communities for positive change. Whereas grand visions do not make an impact, but identifying and mobilizing local assets promote sustainable change.

Listeners were encouraged to think about the power of local voices, how to organise voices, and how to transform local voices into engagement and advocacy.

By promoting cultural humility, the panelist argued, grassroots advocates can respect and understand the importance of communities in understanding local health challenges. By understanding challenges at the local level, advocacy toward effective systems change can be realized at the national level.

LOGISTICS OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Panelist: Margaret Mutumba

Host: Chika Jones

The session was with the founder of MedAtlas, an organization that helps individuals find licensed specialist clinicians anywhere in Africa. The conversation focused on Universal Health Coverage in Africa. MedAtlas allows specialists on its platform to lead on pricing but ensures they are properly educated about the African context, so pricing is fair.



The panelist touched on how infrastructure available for citizen records and taxation have a huge bearing on the healthcare structure of a country. She noted that public health systems in African countries are plagued by mistrust as most people do not think they will get the right quality of healthcare. While we await government infrastructure for universal healthcare coverage, at a micro level, she gave Unjani clinics as an example of a community healthcare system that serves as a stop gap.

Margaret Mutumba also highlighted the importance of building healthcare by leveraging people who have the right amount of community and language context to provide support. She also speaks on how technology like WhatsApp has helped with better communication within online communities, while cautioning on the issue of privacy and misinformation.

On funding for MedAtlas, she mentioned universities as a fertile ground to get the necessary support for a health startup. Universal does not mean the same for everyone, so it is vital to know what baseline to build from.

In conclusion, the panelist noted these factors affect the possibilities of universal health coverage for a country: community context, data, taxation infrastructure, technology and trust.



HEALTH COMMUNICATION

HEALTH PROMOTION, MISINFORMATION, & DISINFORMATION IN THE MEDIA

Panelists: Dr. Emeka Okorochoa
& Wemimo Onikan

Host: Elias Gbadamosi

Combatting health misinformation and disinformation in Africa is salient as both have real debilitating consequences for our society if not nipped. Panelists on this session, Mrs Wemimo Onikan and Dr Emeka Okorochoa, explained that health information and disinformation stems from lack of adequate health knowledge, the propagation of political or religious agenda and a desire to make pecuniary gains.



The panelists specifically identified the proliferation of internet technology and smartphones as contributing significantly to the rapid spread of health misinformation and disinformation. In the same vein, using COVID-19 as a touchpoint, the panelists noted that the fast evolving nature of novel health situations sometimes create a breeding ground for the spread of misinformation.

While acknowledging that it is practically impossible to eradicate health misinformation and disinformation, Dr Okorochoa and Mrs Onikan did share insightful thoughts on how the scourge of health misinformation and disinformation can be combatted systematically. The panelists identified improved health reporting, capacity building interventions for media practitioners, investment in local health information sharing networks, and bridging gaps in knowledge through prompt information dissemination by appropriate health organizations as panaceas for health misinformation and disinformation.



PREVENTIVE INTERVENTIONS

CYCLING THROUGH AFRICAN CITIES

Panelists: Seun Adesanya

Hosts: Osazemen Aghedo & Aimable
Uwimana

This session centered on experiences and perspectives on cycling through African cities. It emphasized how cycling was once a major mode of transportation in Nigerian communities, despite currently being among the least. However, the panelist encourages the audience to use cycling to go to work, market or to church because it concurrently facilitates transportation and keeps one physically active. This can therefore fight non-communicable diseases caused by a sedentary lifestyle.



The panelist adds on how cycling has the advantage of allowing people to enjoy adventure through photography. "You cannot park your car and experience your city the way that cycling allows you to," Seun Adesanya emphasized. Cycling has been an alternative mode of transportation and useful for mental health, physical activity and access to nature during the COVID pandemic; and can be considered for the future pandemics.

To promote cycling in African cities, there is a need for strong investment in cycling infrastructures, cycling competitions like the Lagos Marathon, car free days like those in operation in Kigali, and policy incentives that support affordability of bikes like how Rwanda reduced taxes for bikes. Role modeling is also important to promote cycling in African cities. An instance of ladies who cycled a round trip from Ikeja to Ajah would motivate other women to cycle.

The panelist believes in a promising future of cycling in African cities that are cyclable and walkable.

CREATING HEALTH-PROMOTING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Panelist: Dr. Weyinmi Orighoye
Hosts: Rafayat Ahamed & Adaobi Ugwu

The panelist discussed various mechanisms for effective health promotion in schools and highlighted the strategy of co-designing or co-creating health initiatives with young people that gives them the opportunity to contribute their ideas, participate in physical activity and promote healthy eating in schools. The need for properly understanding the environment was highlighted to foster collaboration amongst different populations that should be involved in health promotion which includes children with disabilities, community members, the school population, parents, leaders, and district leaders.



Age-appropriateness of health education materials was highlighted, as the school has a role in building age-appropriate content for improving the impact of health promotion in the school. The panelist stressed that no age is too young for the discussion on health issues like substance abuse in schools

Strategies for influencing children's health behavior at developmental stages was highlighted. It was explained that most school children are still in a spongy phase where they easily absorb health information, so, it's easier to influence the health behavior of younger children to eat healthily and exercise. On the contrary, though it is harder to influence pre-teens and teenagers to engage in physical activities, we can still leverage examples to change the mindset of students in the adolescent developmental stage.

DESIGN AND HEALTH IN AFRICA

Panelist: [Dr. Lamed Tatah](#)

Hosts: Osazemen Aghedo & Lonnie Choy

This panel elaborated the role of design in health with focus on Africa. It focused on the need to analyze systems we currently have in our society and see ways they help promote, benefit health for the population and reduce harms.



Also, the panelist explained that the fact that most communities/towns in Africa are young, developing and just transiting to cities, can be used to our advantage as it gives room for designing cities to suit our interest either by mimicking already existing working designs or being innovative with ours.

The panelist further emphasized that it is essential for citizens to have advocacies, activism, dialogues, engagement with local authorities and be involved in city design as it will help build cities that are workable, and help restructure the ones that have been built. However, it will require youths, members of the public to be keen on city design as this leads to having cities that encourage green spaces. Nevertheless, the panelist acknowledges that it might not be an easy task, but it is a necessary one and holding systems accountable will make this a reality.

MASTERCLASS: FOOD SYSTEMS AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Host: Temitope Adegoroye

This masterclass focused on food systems and health outcomes in Africa. In his opening statement, Adegoroye shared several facts about Africa's food systems. In his presentation, he spoke about the inefficiency in the food system where Africa has over half of the world's arable land, but the food system is valued at \$284 billion. Also, only about 7% of the world's cereals and vegetables are produced in Africa. As a result, 58% of Africans are moderately and severely malnourished and this trend is shifting towards an increase in obesity.



In defining food systems and its components, Adegoroye emphasized the importance of their sustainability which is being able to ensure the availability and security for population groups. Moreover, food systems need to be resilient, regenerative, inclusive, and empowering with consideration to climate change and the environment. In relation to non-communicable diseases, African food systems have changed with consumers' demand to purchase fast, easy, processed, and convenient foods. This trend translates into poor diets and an increase in diet related NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and vascular diseases. Hence, interventions to address food systems and health outcomes should be multi-sectoral and nutrition sensitive.

Such interventions include what Sahel Consulting is doing through their Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDNN) program such as training and extension, home garden intervention, and financial inclusion and policy. To conclude, Adegoroye said that "social and agricultural interventions can be used as vehicles to promote positive change with regards to healthy diet and improved health and nutrition status especially for vulnerable populations."



**LIFESTYLE
CHANGE**

MASTERCLASS: EATING HEALTHY WITH AFRICAN VEGETABLES

Host: Helen Okorienta

The masterclass facilitator taught the audience how to prepare the African Spinach sauce. She listed the recipes and ingredients needed to prepare the sauce, including; blended pepper, garlic, onion, tomatoes, kpomo, and the African spinach. She showed the process of making the sauce, by showing how to season the protein (fish) that will be used to prepare the meal. She stressed that the seasoned protein should be left for an hour before grilling, frying, or steaming.



After explaining how to season the protein, the facilitator showed how to prepare the main sauce, which included the steps taken to put together the ingredients, including seasoning, salt, and oil. She stressed that the seasoning and salt should be added in moderation, to avoid any harm to health. The African spinach was the last item to be added to the sauce, after which the sauce was left to cook for two minutes.

It was a beautiful meal at the end. The facilitator ended the session by mentioning that the meal is affordable to prepare and the ingredients are readily available. She said, there is no need to go to special places to get the meal, because it can be easily prepared at home.

MASTERCLASS: MAKING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Host: Tomiwa Adaramola

This masterclass focused on healthy lifestyle choices with an emphasis on regular exercise, healthy diet, meditation and relaxation, good sleep, hygiene and hydration. The facilitator defined healthy lifestyle choices as; “choices which help one establish and maintain a quality of life that reduces the risk of developing diseases of any kind and also enhancing one’s quality of life”. He went on further to explain the importance, advantages and impact of activities such as regular physical activity, good sleep, meditation, proper hydration, and healthy diets on physical, social and mental wellbeing.

Furthermore, he talked about sweet & salty foods, sharing data on the recommended needed amount of sugar per day in the bodies of men and women and the recommended source of sugar. For salt, he shared the functions of salt in the body and the adverse effects of having too much salt (sodium) in one’s system. To further emphasize this, the facilitator used burger and pounded yam and egusi soup as an illustration, highlighting the salty and sweet parts of these dishes.

He concluded by saying there is a need to find balance and not necessarily taking these foods out completely from one’s diet and this can be done either by counting your calories or finding a healthy substitute to some of the food we eat that contains these things in excess.



MASTERCLASS: YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL ACTION FOR HEALTH

Host: Joshua Agusiobo

This session centered on how access to public space can affect public health and wellbeing. The panelist highlighted the major aspects of engaging individuals to utilize public spaces for health by focusing on best experience the participants must get, tourism potential and the fun of it. The panelist stressed that public spaces leverage affordability and inclusivity since they are free. Even if people cannot afford the gym, they can go there to exercise, socialize and get things off their chest.




The COVID lockdown period was used as an illustration to highlight how public spaces can be therapeutic; when people would use Okpara Square in Enugu to socialize, engage in physical activity, get things off their mind, and connect with others. As a result, close to 1000 persons who jog there every Saturday are not only able to socialize and exercise; but also able to network, especially when communities were managing and recovering from the economic challenges caused by the pandemic. Young people also need creative and healthy ways to channel their energy; and events like hiking and cycling are suitable to bring them together.

The Hikers Trail from Enugu State in Nigeria is an inspiring example of creating communities for healthy social participation via public spaces and African countries are encouraged to rely on public spaces in situations where there are limited infrastructures for physical activities.




NEXT STEPS



Engage Africa Foundation is grateful for the time and shared experiences offered by panelists and masterclass hosts towards the success of Engage Africa Foundation Festival 2022. From health promotion, health advocacy, health systems and governments, health communication, preventive interventions to lifestyle change, we have learned about how everyone, in their ability and experience, can contribute toward innovatively and creatively mobilizing for a healthy Africa. More importantly, Engage Africa Foundation appreciates the hope and promise provided by the panelists toward maximizing dialogues, interventions and researches that aim to address non-communicable diseases in Africa, either on the continent or from the diaspora.

Engage Africa Foundation appreciates the group of diverse festival attendees from various corners of the world who offered their time and attention to the #EAFFestival2022. We are thankful for the attendees who have been with us from our very first edition in 2021 and who offered their time and attention once more for our second edition. We are confident that these are not just mere words but one we can all put to action - EAFFestival2022 tagged "Mobilizing for a Healthy Africa". We also appreciate the new family of attendees who have joined us. At EAF, we are committed to hosting the third edition of the #EAFFestival in 2023. We hope to increase African countries, practitioners, institutions and university representation; and we welcome everyone to connect with us for future engagement and collaboration.





Dr. Ebele Mogo



Chika Jones



Elias Gbadamosi



Ajoke Adebisi



Aghedo Osazemen



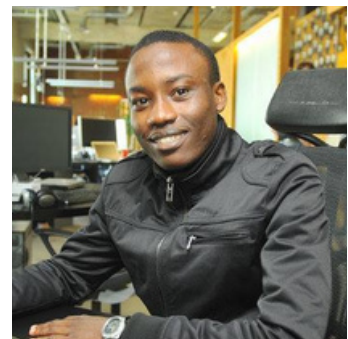
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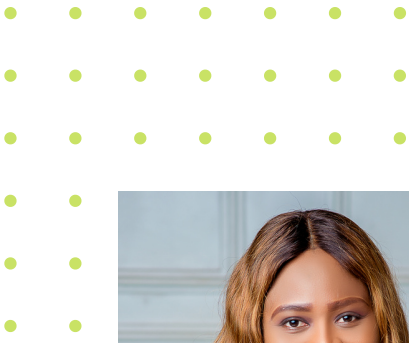


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