

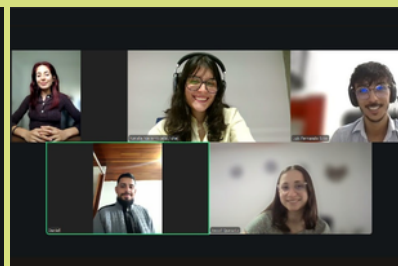
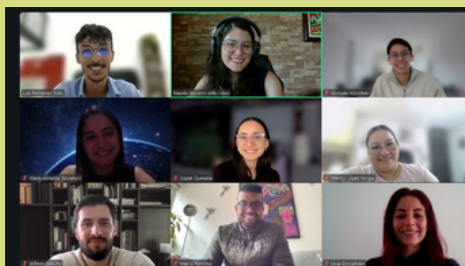
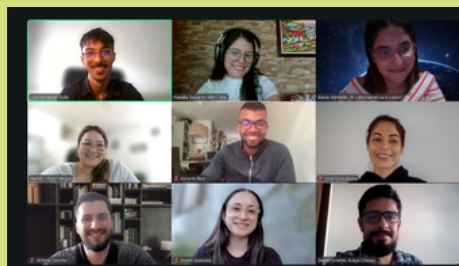
NEWSLETTER NO. 1

RAES JOVEN

¡Nuevas voces por la Equidad en Salud!

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PRESENTATION

In a regional context marked by deep structural inequalities, persistent social crises, and health systems that continue to reproduce historical exclusions, Young HENA emerges as a collective political commitment by the youth of the Americas to transform the very foundations of health equity. This initiative embodies the commitment, energy, and transformative vision of new generations in the region of the Americas.

Young HENA is the result of a participatory regional process, collectively built by young professionals and activists from different countries, to strengthen coordinated work on health equity, social justice, and the decolonization of health systems. As part of the Health Equity Network of the Americas (HENA), this initiative seeks to expand young people's participation in public health debates and to actively engage in the spaces where agendas, knowledge, and decisions that affect the lives of our communities are defined. It is therefore built on the conviction that equity is not an abstract ideal, but a field of political action that requires questioning power structures, colonial legacies, and the logics that have perpetuated injustice in our territories.

From a critical and decolonial perspective, Young HENA promotes the recognition of diverse, territorial, and situated forms of knowledge that have historically been marginalized in the production of health knowledge. The slogan "New Voices for Health Equity" represents a space for encounter, dialogue, and action for young people committed to building more just societies. We are committed to a public health approach that engages with the realities of our populations, recognizes the intersections between inequality, race, gender, territory, and class, and places the dignity of people and communities at the center.

This regional space brings together young professionals and activists between the ages of 25 and 39, with a commitment not only to understanding the social determinants of health, but also to helping transform them. Through capacity-building, collaborative networking, political advocacy, research, the generation of critical knowledge, and regional coordination, Young HENA aims to position young people as legitimate political actors in building fairer, more inclusive, and more sustainable health systems.

This bulletin is an expression of that commitment. It is a space to make visible voices that challenge, proposals that invite reflection, and experiences that build alternatives. It is also an invitation to collectively rethink public health from the Global South, from youth, and from transformative action. The consolidation of Young HENA reflects our conviction that young people must be part of the future of public health and active in its present. The group promotes transformative leadership grounded in participation, social commitment, empathy, and proactivity, to make a concrete impact on the challenges our health systems face.

Today, more than ever, we reaffirm that young people are not merely the next generation: we are a political present, a force for advocacy, and a collective power to challenge and reimagine the future of health in the Americas. We invite you to explore these pages to connect with ideas, initiatives, and actions that are transforming our region, grounded in the belief that health equity is both a right and a shared responsibility.

MEd. Luis Fernando Solís Calvo
General Coordinator
Young HENA

IN MEMORY



Dr. María del Rocío Sáenz Madrigal

"Dr. María del Rocío Sáenz Madrigal was an exemplary leader and an invaluable mentor in my life. Her leadership, integrity, and firm commitment to justice leave an indelible mark on those of us who had the privilege of learning from her. Thank you for your teachings, for your guidance, and for inspiring us to always become better people."

Wilmer Sancho, HENA Technical Secretariat

"Dr. Sáenz was a woman I deeply admired for her sensitivity, her leadership, her strength of will, her ability to stand firmly by her views, and for being a faithful defender of health equity and social justice. Always, but especially today, it is an honor to say that she was my mentor and that it has been a privilege to learn from her. Her trust and affection will accompany us throughout our lives."

Jossel Quesada, HENA Technical Secretariat

"Receiving the trust and guidance of someone like Dr. Sáenz at the beginning of my professional path meant a great deal to me. Her willingness to open spaces for new voices and young people reflects the generous way in which she exercised her leadership. I carry with me her warmth and her way of reminding us that health is, above all, a deeply human matter, and that we must always defend equity and social justice with conviction."

Natalia Navarro, HENA Technical Secretariat

"Rocío Sáenz, 'la doc,' as I used to call her, was truly a transformative woman. She taught me to be strong, to achieve goals, to be a person of my word, to follow through, above all, to follow through. She also taught me to be and act always from the values and principles we bring from our families, and to believe that it is possible. She was a leader, a friend, a colleague and companion, and a mentor in the broadest sense of the word. Thanks to her, today, equity is more than a word to me, and human rights are more than a list of statements; they have become my personal and professional life mission."

Luis Fernando Solís, HENA Technical Secretariat

"Dr. Sáenz was my mentor and my greatest example. We shared the pride of coming from a rural area, and from her I learned to honor my roots and the values that come from the countryside. Her teachings went far beyond the academic and professional spheres. As a woman in research, her leadership was fundamental in helping me understand the importance of occupying these spaces from a place of social justice and equity, without forgetting that, at the end of the day, we are human beings with our own stories and feelings. I am deeply grateful to life for allowing me to cross paths with her; her teachings, warmth, strength, sense of humor, and character will be remembered forever."

Wendy López, HENA Technical Secretariat

YOUNG HENA: ORIGIN, PURPOSE, AND STRATEGIC PROJECTION

Why was Young HENA created?

Young HENA was created to strengthen the participation, leadership, and coordination of young professionals committed to health equity in the Americas. It responds to the need to create spaces that promote their involvement in knowledge production and collective action in public health.

Its origin is linked to HENA's internationalization process, especially after its participation in the World Congress on Public Health in Rome in 2023. This experience helped open spaces for regional representation and encouraged the creation of a platform for young people in the region.

What guides its work?

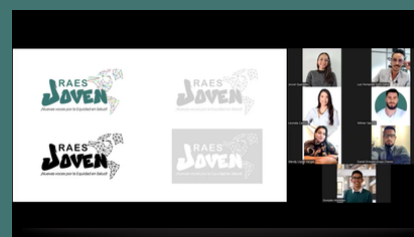
Young HENA's work is guided by the principles and values that shape HENA's broader efforts, particularly its commitment to health equity, social justice, the recognition of diverse forms of knowledge, and the promotion of critical and interdisciplinary approaches in public health.

Within this framework, the initiative also incorporates perspectives aimed at decolonizing health knowledge, promoting dialogue among local knowledge, territorial experiences, and global debates. Young HENA recognizes the importance of the social, cultural, and political context of Latin America and the Caribbean in developing proposals and solutions to address public health challenges.

It aims to promote processes of collective learning, the exchange of experiences, and knowledge generation that strengthen the regional health equity agenda and advance transformations in health systems and policies.

It is created with the purpose of consolidating a space for regional coordination that promotes transformative leadership, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among young professionals and researchers interested in contributing to health equity. Through this platform, Young HENA seeks to strengthen young people's capacities for analysis, advocacy, and collective action in the field of public health.

WHAT IS IT CREATED FOR?



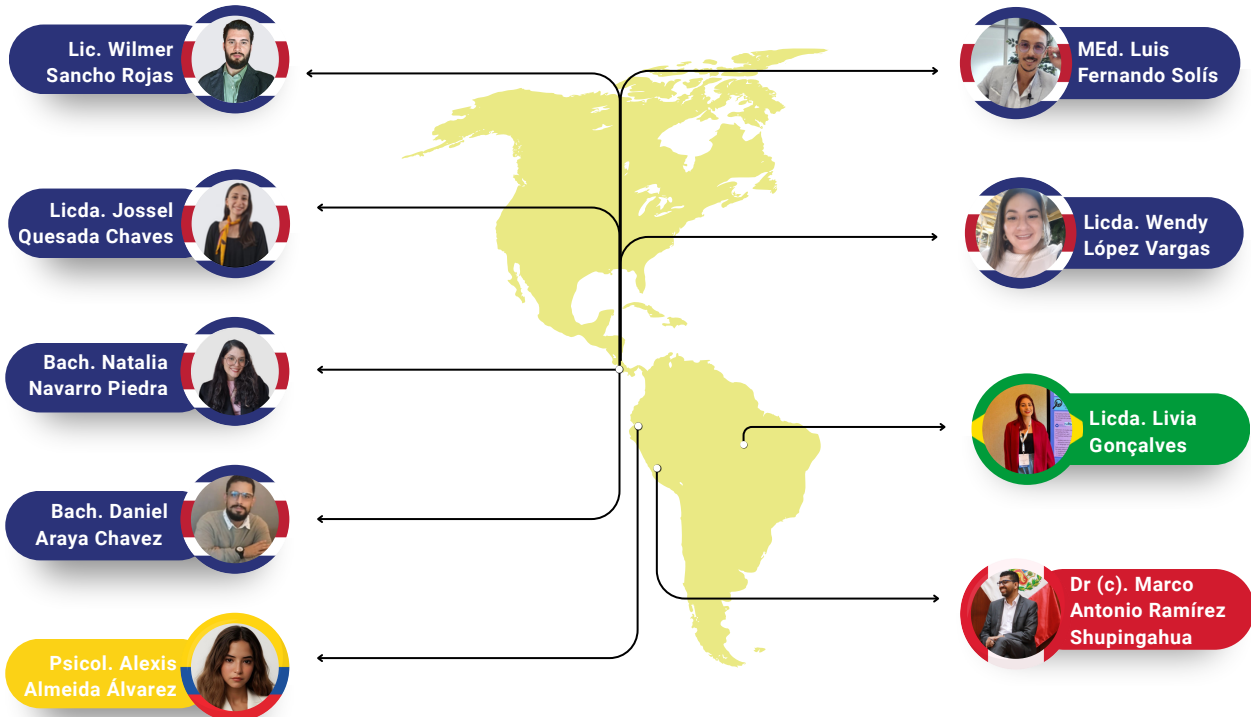
LAUNCH ELEMENTS AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Its creation included a regional mapping of actors and initiatives, with the support of strategic partners, which made it possible to identify key actors and lay the foundations for a regional community.

The launch of Young HENA represents a strategic step toward strengthening HENA's regional and international projection, consolidating new communities of learning and action, and promoting the leadership of new generations in the construction of fairer, more inclusive, and more equitable health systems.

YOUNG HENA LEADERSHIP CORE

Formation of the Young HENA Leadership Core



The Leadership Core is the team responsible for guiding and sustaining Young HENA's collective processes. Its central role is to ensure internal coordination of work, maintain continuity of agreements, and support the implementation of the defined lines of action. This Core is a shared leadership space that coordinates teams and initiatives, supports communication and decision-making, and fosters conditions for the progressive development of working groups. In this sense, rather than a hierarchy, it serves as a coordination axis that brings perspectives together, supports collaborative work, and strengthens the group's ability to project its work, sustain commitments, and deliver results.

A distinctive feature of the Leadership Core is its regional and diverse composition.

Including diverse countries, backgrounds, and contexts helps us incorporate comprehensive perspectives on health equity in the Americas, supports the regional relevance of our initiatives, and reinforces our intersectoral purpose. This diversity makes Young HENA a space for exchange and learning, connecting local experiences with a shared regional agenda. In this framework, it is important to highlight that the multidisciplinary nature of this team strengthens key capacities for network-based work, particularly in the coordination, generation, and use of knowledge and evidence, strategic communication processes, and support for the design and implementation of collaborative initiatives.

LEADERSHIP CORE



**MEd. Luis
Fernando Solís**
Costa Rica

Motivations:

To promote a regional network of young professionals in the Americas to amplify voices for health equity.
To advance the decolonization of knowledge through youth leadership articulated at the regional level.
To strengthen the engagement and coordination of actors across countries, based on previous experiences in global spaces.

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion (UCR); Master's Degree in Educational Management, with an emphasis on leadership.
Researcher at CICES-UCR and HENA Communications Coordinator.
Latin America Representative on the World Federation of Public Health Associations' Young Professionals Council.
Regional Coordinator of Young HENA.
Coordinator of the Permanent Cancer Forum in Costa Rica (CICICA-UCR).
Consultant in strategic planning, project management, and socio-educational health strategies.



**Licda. Wendy
López Vargas**
Costa Rica

Motivations:

To contribute to the health equity and decolonization agenda through public health research.
To strengthen the voice and coordination of young professionals in order to build regional alliances focused on responses that are relevant to the communities represented.

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion; completed coursework for the Bachelor's Degree in Law (UCR).
HENA Technical Secretariat, Project Area.
Coordination of regional initiatives on climate change and health, teaching competencies, and the right to health.
Consultancy and projects with international organizations.
Experience in research and scientific and academic production.



**Lic. Wilmer
Sancho Rojas**
Costa Rica

Motivations:

To contribute to the generation and visibility of public health initiatives led by young professionals in the region.

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion from the University of Costa Rica.
Member of the Technical Secretariat of the Health Equity Network of the Americas (HENA).



**Licda. Jossel
Quesada Chaves**
Costa Rica

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion (UCR).

Additional training in human rights, public health, peace, and sustainable development.

Researcher and member of the HENA Technical Secretariat.

Experience in regional cooperation, strategic planning, and public policy formulation.

Motivations:

To contribute to health equity and decolonization from a critical and transformative perspective.

To join a regional space for collective construction aligned with these approaches.

To strengthen youth leadership and participation in health in Latin America.

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion (c.) (UCR).

Researcher and member of the HENA Technical Secretariat; Coordinator of the Educational Area.

Experience in educational processes and support for populations in vulnerable contexts.

Work with adolescents, women heads of household, people with cognitive disabilities, and vulnerable communities.



**Bach. Natalia
Navarro Piedra**
Costa Rica

Motivations:

To learn from diverse realities and experiences in the work toward health equity and to collaborate with committed young people from the region.

To contribute to youth-led research and action in support of equity through inclusive, decolonized, and territorially sensitive approaches.



**Bach. Daniel
Araya Chavez**
Costa Rica

Education and experience:

Bachelor's Degree in Political Science (UCR).

Assistant at the University Council (UCR): support in research, institutional analysis, and preparation of reports for decision-making.

Experience in management modernization, process improvement, and university-government-private sector engagement.

Assistant at the Ombudsperson's Office of Costa Rica (2023): research and analysis of public policies on health waiting lists.

Motivations:

To contribute to the defense of the right to health from an equity and public policy perspective.

**Education and experience:**

Pharmacist, specialist in Collective Health.

Doctoral candidate in Pharmaceutical Care (UFSC).

Experience in public management of pharmaceutical care.

Research in pharmaceutical policies/services and public health.

Focus: LGBTQIAPN+ health and access to health care and services for trans people within the SUS.

Motivations:

To promote regional initiatives for health equity and decolonization.

To build bridges between research, practice, and activism in Latin America.

To promote the exchange of contextualized knowledge.

Education and experience:

Lawyer and doctoral candidate in Political Studies at Universidad Externado de Colombia.

Research professor at Universidad Santiago de Cali.

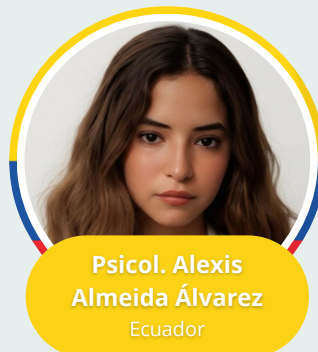
Director of Population at the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations of Peru (2021-2022).

Former specialist consultant in Human Rights for the IACHR/OAS.

President of Ashanti Perú – Peruvian Network of Afro-descendant Youth.

**Motivations:**

To promote intercultural dialogue among public health, human rights, and social justice, as well as to encourage the participation of young professionals committed to reducing the inequalities that affect Afro-descendant populations, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized groups.

**Education and experience:**

Clinical psychologist.

Community mental health project manager.

Focus: prevention and early intervention in Alzheimer's disease.

Science communicator and trainer in antimicrobial resistance.

Research training in Parkinson's disease and neurodivergence in childhood.

Interest in sexual and reproductive rights and public health.

Motivations:

To contribute through experience and interest in public health research.

To be part of a space aligned with her values and the health equity approach.

To strengthen the representation of Latin American youth within the group.

WORK DYNAMICS

Young HENA organizes its work through working groups based on strategic objectives. These groups plan, implement, and monitor actions through regular meetings, encouraging regional participation, consensus-based decision-making, and a collaborative approach aligned with the network's priorities.

Working Group – Strategic Objective 1



Objective:

To consolidate a regional group of young professionals, groups, and entities for joint work, capacity building, and action for health equity in the Region of the Americas.

Activities carried out:

Coordination sessions, participation in regional and international public health spaces, defining criteria for the incorporation of new members, and promoting proposals for engagement with strategic actors.

Progress:

Young HENA has consolidated its representation in global forums, established criteria to strengthen leadership, and advanced in the formalization of regional and global partnerships.

Working Group – Strategic Objective 2



Objective:

To identify new ways to generate impact and transform health systems through emerging leadership that incorporates equity, health promotion, education, and health communication approaches.

Activities carried out:

Regional mapping of actors, definition of research priorities with an equity and decolonization approach, formation of teams in different countries, and planning of participatory studies with methodological follow-up.

Progress:

Structuring of the regional research process, distribution of responsibilities, and definition of lines of work for knowledge production and future advocacy.

Working Group – Strategic Objective 3



Objective:

To share Young HENA's progress and proposals globally, generating evidence on public health needs and priorities in the Region of the Americas.

Activities carried out:

Systematization of the progress made by the working groups, development of content for regional and global audiences, and coordination of dissemination and communication strategies.

Progress:

Consolidation of content and evidence from Young HENA's work, strengthening its visibility, regional positioning, and capacity for advocacy.

GENERAL RESULTS



1. Group participation and organization

The active participation of 10 young professionals from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, and Peru stands out. They are organized into three working groups aligned with Young HENA's strategic objectives, which has enabled them to participate directly in decision-making and in planning and implementing activities.



2. Coordination and follow-up spaces

Since its launch in April, four regular Young HENA sessions have been held in 2025. These sessions made it possible to follow up on ongoing processes, share progress from the working teams, strengthen the group's organizational structure, and create spaces for dialogue, reflection, and regional coordination.



3. Strategic partnerships

Progress was made in formalizing two global strategic partners, the Sustainable Health Equity Movement (SHEM) and the Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) initiative. Regarding regional partners, initial engagement was established with the Red Juvenil Latinoamérica, strengthening opportunities for interinstitutional and regional collaboration.



4. Participation in global advocacy spaces

Within the framework of the World Health Assembly, M.Ed. Luis Fernando Solís Calvo, in his role as the Latin American representative to the Young Professionals Board of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (Young WFPHA), served as a Young HENA delegate at the WFPHA General Assembly.

During the launch of Young HENA, we connected with the US Consortium of Aging, Dementia & Latino Studies (CADLAS), strengthening Young HENA's formal representation in this space. This role was assumed by Alexis Almeida from Ecuador, who contributes to coordination and collaboration with the consortium.



5. Development of Young HENA's strategic proposal

In 2025, the Strategic Proposal of the Regional Group of Young Health Professionals of the Americas, "Young HENA," was published. It was the result of a participatory process that defined its identity, values, structure, strategic objectives, and priority lines of action, serving as a foundation for its consolidation, decision-making, and future planning. The link for consultation is attached: <https://www.kerwa.ucr.ac.cr/items/f80f3b51-44e0-4dd2-8b0e-a6e358cad3b0>

COLLECTIVE LESSONS LEARNED

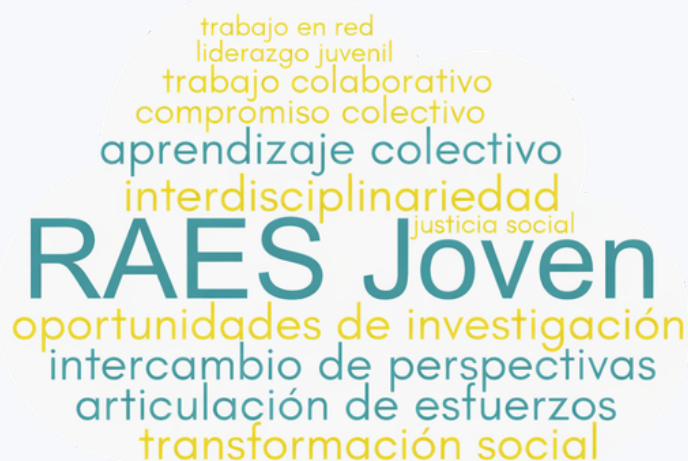
The experiences shared by members of the Leadership Core show that Young HENA has become a community for encounter, learning, and collective action for health equity across the region. Among the main lessons learned, the value of collaborative work and dialogue across different disciplines, territories, and perspectives stands out, as does the possibility of developing proposals from a critical, inclusive, and interdisciplinary perspective. Throughout this process, participants recognize that exchange with other young people and professionals from the region has broadened their understanding of the common challenges facing Latin America while also making visible the capacities and knowledge present in different contexts.

In this sense, Young HENA has helped reaffirm the strength of young Latin American voices, their capacity for advocacy, and their potential to advance innovative, equity-focused initiatives. This experience shows that the Leadership Core has built a shared conviction: when there is willingness, coordinated effort, and network-based work, it is possible to mobilize processes of change from the collective sphere.

Another relevant element is the motivation that comes from being part of a network of young people who share interests, concerns, and commitments around health equity. For several members of the team, Young HENA has represented a space that inspires, connects, and opens new opportunities for learning, research, and joint construction.

In this sense, the Leadership Core is recognized not only as a space that strengthens individual capacities but also as one that builds trust, a sense of belonging, and common objectives among those working toward equity from a regional perspective.

From the Leadership Core members, we can identify lessons, experiences, and shared meanings that have shaped their participation in Young HENA. In this regard, the word cloud below offers a visual synthesis of these elements and enables a general recognition of the themes, connections, and reflections that emerge most strongly in their narratives.



Overall, these lessons show that Young HENA serves as a strategic platform for strengthening young leadership, coordinating efforts, and building a shared agenda for health equity while reaffirming the role of young voices in mobilizing and transforming contexts across the Region of the Americas. From this perspective, Young HENA is a key space for continuing to invite young people interested in learning, contributing, and building fairer, more inclusive, and more sustainable responses for the region.

AND THE WORK CONTINUES...

For the upcoming period, Young HENA is projected to be an expanding space that will continue to strengthen an interdisciplinary community of young people committed to health equity in the region. In this sense, the team has identified key horizons to continue consolidating its development, broadening its reach, and strengthening its capacity for collective action.

Adding voices and expanding horizons

Expand the participation of people with diverse professional profiles, backgrounds, and fields of experience, strengthening our capacity for analysis, dialogue, and action.

Strengthening a youth agenda for equity

Top deepen the approach to emerging and priority issues for the region, maintaining a youth agenda that is attentive to current challenges and committed to equity, social justice, and decolonization.

Strengthening our capacities to transform

Strengthen and update key capacities and competencies to enhance our collective work and respond appropriately to changes in the regional and global context.

Expanding our coordination in new spaces

To continue opening opportunities for Young HENA's participation in spaces for exchange, learning, and coordination at the regional and global levels, thereby expanding our reach and connections.

This first year leaves a solid foundation for continued growth. Young HENA continues to open spaces to strengthen collective action, amplify young voices, and project new forms of collaboration in favor of health equity. The path ahead invites us to continue bringing together perspectives, knowledge, and energies committed to transforming our region.

What if you joined us?



¡Nuevas voces por la Equidad en Salud!



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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/raes-hena/>