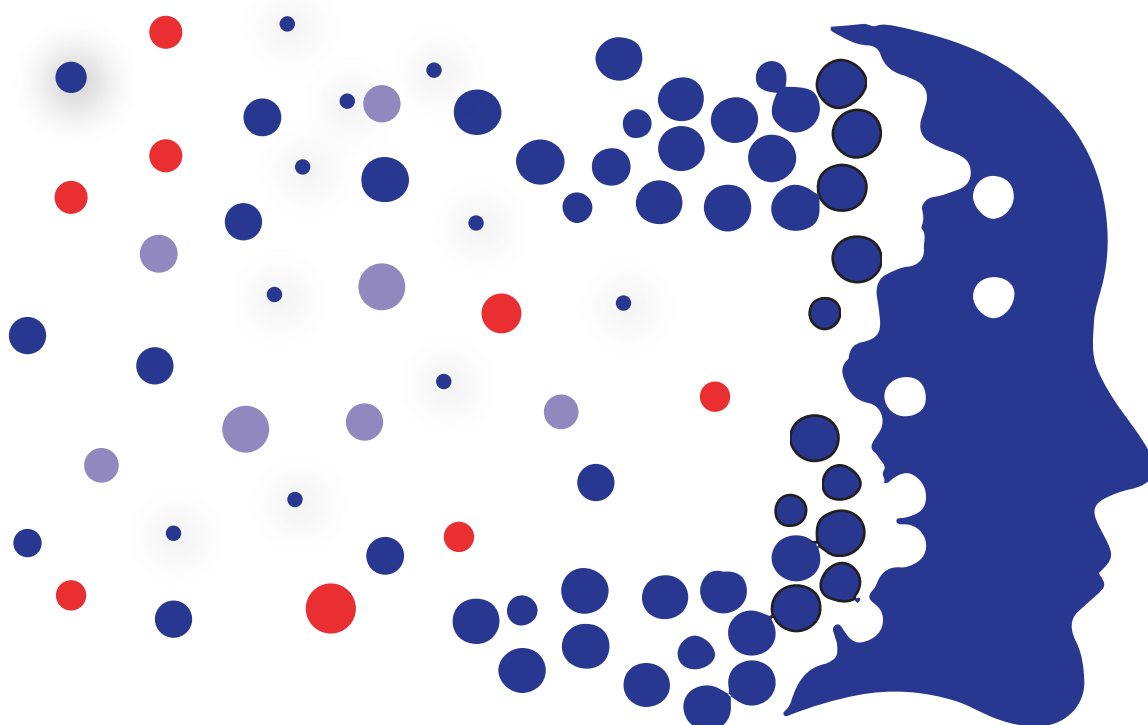# Outcomes

17th to 19th October 2024

The Great Indaba
Crowne Plaza, Monomotapa
Harare, Zimbabwe

2nd Edition Outcomes

Outcome1. Waste Management, Climate Change, WASH

- Key outcomes include the adoption of climate-resilient waste management practices, such as zero-waste and circular economy approaches, Aimed at reducing environmental contamination and improving health outcomes.
- Delegates called for the widespread implementation of low-cost, scalable WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) solutions, particularly in resource-poor and rural areas, to ensure universal access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services.
- A significant resolution was made to integrate climate change adaptation into national health and environmental policies, with a focus on cross-sectoral collaboration between ministries of health, environment, and water.
- The symposium underscored the importance of developing sustainable financing models to support WASH and waste management initiatives and reduce the reliance on external donor funding.
- Delegates highlighted the need for enhanced community engagement, with local communities being empowered to take an active role in waste management, water conservation, and climate adaptation efforts.
- The outcomes also called for the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and ensure accountability in addressing public health risks arising from climate change, waste, and water-related issues.

Outcome 2: Women and Public Health:

Inculcation of gender considerations into national health policies, with a particular emphasis on maternal health, family planning, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

- Participants highlighted the need for strengthening healthcare infrastructure to support women's health, especially in rural and undeserved areas, and called for enhanced training of healthcare professionals to provide quality, gender-sensitive care.
- Address challenges women face in accessing healthcare services, advocating for the establishment of policies and funding mechanisms that prioritise women's health needs, including mental health and sexual and reproductive health.
- Delegates noted the importance of empowering women through community-based health education, raising awareness about women's health rights, and ensuring their active participation in healthcare decision-making.
- Encourage multi-sector partnerships to promote collaborative efforts between government, civil society, and the private sector to address the barriers women face in accessing comprehensive healthcare.

Outcome 3. SRHR, Family Planning and Public Health

- Integration of SRHR into national health policies, expanding services to undeserved and rural areas, and enhancing the capacity of healthcare professionals through targeted training.
- Strengthening of community-based education to increase awareness and promote access to SRHR rights, with a focus on marginalised populations.
- Finding solutions the growing threat posed by the withdrawal of donor funding for SRHR services in Zimbabwe, calling for the establishment of sustainable, domestic financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships and the reallocation of national health resources.
- Legal reforms to promote SRHR and gender equality, empowered youth-led advocacy, and strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and ensure accountability.

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Outcome 4. Inclusive Approach to Public Health

- Outcomes include the integration of inclusive health policies that prioritise accessibility and non-discrimination in healthcare services, particularly for persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other undeserved groups.
- Delegates called for the development of frameworks that address health disparities by ensuring equitable access to services, including mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and chronic disease management.
- Enhance healthcare providers' capacity to deliver inclusive, patient-centred care, through training programmes that focus on cultural competency and the needs of diverse populations.
- The symposium also emphasised the importance of community engagement, advocating for active participation of marginalised groups in healthcare decision-making processes and policy development.
- Strengthening partnerships and collaborations between healthcare systems, community organisations, advocacy groups, and governments to improve inclusivity in public health.
- Campaigns to reduce stigma and promote the acceptance of diverse health needs and rights.

Outcome 5. Mental Health Drug and Substance Abuse

1. Strengthening Integrated Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care

The symposium emphasised the need for a more integrated approach to mental health and substance use disorder treatment. This approach aligns with Zimbabwe's Mental Health Policy (2019) and the National Drug Master Plan (2018-2023), advocating for improved coordination between mental health services, addiction treatment, and primary healthcare.

Delegate opined that, the Multisectoral Drug and Substance Abuse Plan (2024-2030) should guide the integration of mental health and substance use services across healthcare, law enforcement, education, and community sectors. This would ensure a cohesive response to mental health and substance abuse challenges, involving not just health professionals but also educators, social workers, and other stakeholders working together to provide holistic care. Participants recommended the establishment of multi- disciplinary care teams at local health centres to better address the complex interrelation between mental health issues and substance abuse.

2. Enhancing Public Health Financing for Mental Health and addiction Services

Delegates at the symposium underscored the critical need for increased government investment in mental health and substance abuse services. This call was in line with the goals of the National Health Strategy for Zimbabwe (2021-2025) and Multisectoral Drug and Substance Abuse Plan (2024-2030), urging more resources to be allocated for prevention, treatment, and capacity-building, particularly in undeserved and rural areas. The need for sustainable financing to support expanded mental health services was a key part of the discussion.

3. Policy Reform for Decriminalising Substance Use and Promoting Harm Reduction

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4. Community-Based Prevention and Early Intervention Programmes

Scaling up community-based programmes aimed at the early detection and intervention of mental health and substance use disorders. This is in line with the Mental Health Strategy, which calls for targeted initiatives for vulnerable populations, including youth, women, and marginalised communities. Recommendations included strengthening school-based mental health education and creating youth empowerment programmes to reduce stigma and encourage early help- seeking behaviours.

5. Expanding access to Digital Mental Health and Substance Use Services

The symposium also recognised the potential of digital health solutions to improve access to mental health and substance use treatment, particularly in remote and rural areas. Delegates called for the promotion of mobile health platforms, telemedicine, and digital addiction recovery tools as means to reach undeserved populations and provide remote counselling and support.

6. Reducing Stigma and Promoting Mental Health awareness

Another key outcome from the symposium was the recognition of the need to reduce stigma surrounding mental health and substance abuse. In line with the Mental Health Act (2019), which emphasises the protection of human rights and access to care. Participants called for national awareness campaigns to challenge negative stereotypes and promote positive narratives around mental health and addiction recovery. The symposium stressed the importance of involving the media, community leaders, and influencers to create a more supportive environment that encourages individuals to seek help without fear of discrimination.

7. Promote WHO Quality Rights Training

Delegates recognised the need to address mental health and substance abuse as public health priorities, and affirming the importance of the WHO Quality Rights Initiative in promoting the human rights, dignity, and recovery of individuals with mental health conditions and drug abuse disorders, this resolution calls for the establishment of Quality Rights Champions—individuals and institutions committed to advocating for rights-based, person-centred care.

8. Support Scaling up of the Friendship Bench in Zimbabwe

Participants acknowledged the success of the Friendship Bench model in addressing mental health challenges, its adoption in other parts of the world and called for its expanded implementation in Zimbabwe and particularly in Africa. Integrating this approach into primary healthcare can improve mental health outcomes and strengthen Zimbabwe's public health system.

Outcome 6. Nutrition Traditional and Complementary Products in Public Health

- Delegates emphasised the urgent need to address malnutrition through a holistic approach that incorporates both modern and traditional health practices.
- Participants highlighted the importance of promoting breastfeeding as a critical strategy for preventing malnutrition, particularly in the first 1,000 days of life, and the role of traditional foods in providing culturally appropriate and nutrient-dense alternatives to combat both undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.
- Delegates called for the integration of traditional knowledge with modern nutrition science to create evidence-based interventions that support breastfeeding, improve maternal and child nutrition, and enhance food security.
- Delegates proposed the need for policy frameworks that balance the use of traditional and complementary health products with modern nutritional standards, ensuring their safety, efficacy, and accessibility while addressing public health challenges like malnutrition.
- Strengthening collaborations between healthcare providers, traditional healers, and policymakers was seen as crucial for promoting sustainable, community-driven solutions to these pressing health issues. Participants called for an inclusive and supportive environment for breastfeeding employees, female students, and others by ensuring access to clean, private, and comfortable lactation spaces. The resolution reinforced the need to promote awareness of breastfeeding policies, encourage supportive return-to-work programmes for employees transitioning from parental leave, and regularly evaluate these measures through employee feedback to continually improve our workplace culture and make it more inclusive for all caregivers. Participants commended the Women's University in Africa's Gender and Diversity Centre as a best practice in Zimbabwe.
- Delegates called for the promotion of the consumption of traditional foods, such as small grains (millet, sorghum, teff), and high-fibre products as part of a broader strategy to combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Delegates noted best practices demonstrated by National Foods Private Limited, which has successfully enhanced the nutritional content of staple foods through biofortification.

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Outcome 7: Access, Affordability & Localisation (Production) Of Pharmaceuticals in Zimbabwe

- Delegates highlighted need for improving access to essential medicines through local production and innovative financing models. Outcomes highlighted the importance of enhancing the affordability of pharmaceuticals by reducing reliance on imports and fostering the growth of local pharmaceutical industries.
- Self-sufficiency in drug production by leveraging local resources, improving infrastructure, and investing in the training of skilled professionals.
- The symposium also noted the barriers to access, including high import costs, supply chain inefficiencies, and regulatory challenges, calling for policy reforms that support local production and distribution.
- Need for more affordable and accessible essential medicines, especially for marginalised communities, to ensure equitable healthcare.
- Collaborative efforts between government, the private sector, and international partners were deemed essential to strengthening the pharmaceutical supply chain and improving local production capacity.

Outcome 8. Health Financing, Accountability, Consumer Protection and Competitions Regulation in Public Health

- On Health Financing, Accountability, Consumer Protection, and Competition Regulation, delegates called for robust financial mechanisms to ensure sustainable funding for public health initiatives, with a focus on transparency and accountability in the allocation of resources.
- Strengthening public health financing through both domestic resource mobilisation and international partnerships, while ensuring that funds are effectively used to improve healthcare access and outcomes.
- Stricter consumer protection laws to safeguard the public from exploitative practices, particularly in healthcare services and the pharmaceutical market.
- Delegates called for strengthened health financing, enhanced accountability, improved consumer protection, and greater competition in healthcare, emphasising the vital role of key institutions such as Transparency International Zimbabwe, the Consumer Protection Commission, the Competition and Tariffs Commission and the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, among others. These institutions play a critical role in ensuring transparency, safeguarding consumer rights, and promoting fair competition within the healthcare sector.
- Effective competition regulation was highlighted to prevent monopolistic practices that could drive up costs and limit access to essential health services.
- Integrated regulatory frameworks that address not only financial accountability but also ensure fair competition, consumer rights, and equitable access to quality health services.
- Collaborative efforts among government agencies, regulatory bodies, civil society, and the private sector were identified as essential to creating a more accountable, transparent, and competitive public health environment that protects consumers and promotes long-term health system sustainability.

Outcome 9: National Health Policies

- Align Zimbabwe's national health policies with international frameworks, such as the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Universal Health Coverage (UHC) goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Strengthening of health policy frameworks to address both immediate and long-term public health challenges, ensuring equitable access to essential healthcare services, including maternal and child health, infectious disease prevention, and non-communicable diseases. Workplaces and institutions encouraged to implement menstrual leave policies allowing women to take paid or unpaid leave during their menstrual periods without fear of discrimination or job loss.
- Resolved, that all healthcare facilities, including clinics and hospitals, should provide timely and appropriate care to pregnant women, with clear policies against sending expectant mothers home, especially in advanced stages of labor. In addition to, training and resources for qualified midwives should be expanded to ensure safe deliveries for all women, regardless of their location or financial status.
- Pregnant teens should be allowed to sit for their exams and continue their education without discrimination, ensuring that school policies are inclusive and supportive of adolescent mothers. Schools should provide counselling and healthcare services to ensure the well-being of both the teen and her child.
- Stakeholders to take active measures to ensure the widespread dissemination of crucial health information, especially regarding maternal health, sexual and reproductive rights, and disease prevention.
- Local governments and municipalities prioritise the construction and maintenance of clean, accessible public toilets in urban and rural areas to promote hygiene and prevent health issues. Special attention should be given to locations with high foot traffic, such as markets, transport hubs, and schools, to improve overall public health.
- The legal age of consent for Healthcare services should be revisited to ensure that children and adolescents access essential health services, including reproductive Healthcare. Laws should be amended to protect the rights of minors and ensure their access to necessary medical services in a confidential, non-judgemental manner.

Outcome 10. Maternal Health

- Delegates reaffirmed the need to ensure universal access to skilled maternal healthcare, particularly in Zimbabwe's rural and remote areas, where access to quality services remains limited.
- Reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in Zimbabwe by strengthening emergency obstetric care and addressing the leading causes of maternal death, such as haemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, and sepsis.
- Integrate maternal mental health services into Zimbabwe's maternal healthcare system, raising awareness, and reducing stigma around conditions like postpartum depression.
- Provide universal access to contraceptives and expanding sexual education programmes to help reduce unintended pregnancies, particularly among Zimbabwe's adolescent population.
- Delegates recognised the role of social determinants such as poverty, education, and gender inequality—in maternal health outcomes and committed to cross-sectoral approaches that address these factors in Zimbabwe.
- Adopt of digital health solutions and mobile applications to support prenatal and postnatal care in undeserved communities.
- Increased financing for maternal health through public-private partnerships, ensuring that Zimbabwe's health system has the necessary resources to implement these changes.
- The symposium concluded with a call for global and local solidarity to achieve safer, more equitable maternal healthcare for women across Zimbabwe.

Outcome 11: Ai, Digital Health and Public Health

- Delegates recognised the potential of Ai and digital tools to transform healthcare delivery in
- Zimbabwe, especially in rural and undeserved areas, by improving healthcare access, efficiency, and outcomes.
- Expanding the use of Ai-driven diagnostic tools and telemedicine platforms to support early detection of diseases, improve treatment outcomes, and reduce the burden on overstretched healthcare facilities.
- Call for data-driven decision-making in public health, enabling more effective disease surveillance, resource allocation, and outbreak response.
- Training healthcare workers in Ai and digital health tools, ensuring that Zimbabwe's health workforce is equipped to leverage these technologies effectively.
- Ensure that digital health solutions are accessible and inclusive, particularly for Zimbabwe's marginalised communities, women, and rural populations.
- Addressing challenges such as data privacy, cybersecurity, and the digital divide to ensure that Ai and digital health tools are implemented ethically and securely.
- Call for collaborative partnerships between governments, tech companies, and international organisations to provide the necessary funding and infrastructure for scaling digital health initiatives in Zimbabwe and across Africa.
- The symposium reinforced the transformative potential of Ai and digital health in improving public health outcomes, with a focus on creating innovative, sustainable solutions tailored to meet the unique needs in Zimbabwe

Cross Cutting Outcomes

- The 2nd edition of the Public Health Symposium generated transformative cross-cutting outcomes that reflect the interconnectedness of health systems, technological advancements, and societal well-being.
- Delegates came together to identify shared challenges and innovative solutions to improve health outcomes globally, with a focus on collaboration, equity, sustainability, and the integration of new technologies.
- These outcomes emphasise the need for holistic, multifaceted approaches to public health that bridge gaps in healthcare delivery, promote social justice, and leverage digital innovation.

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