

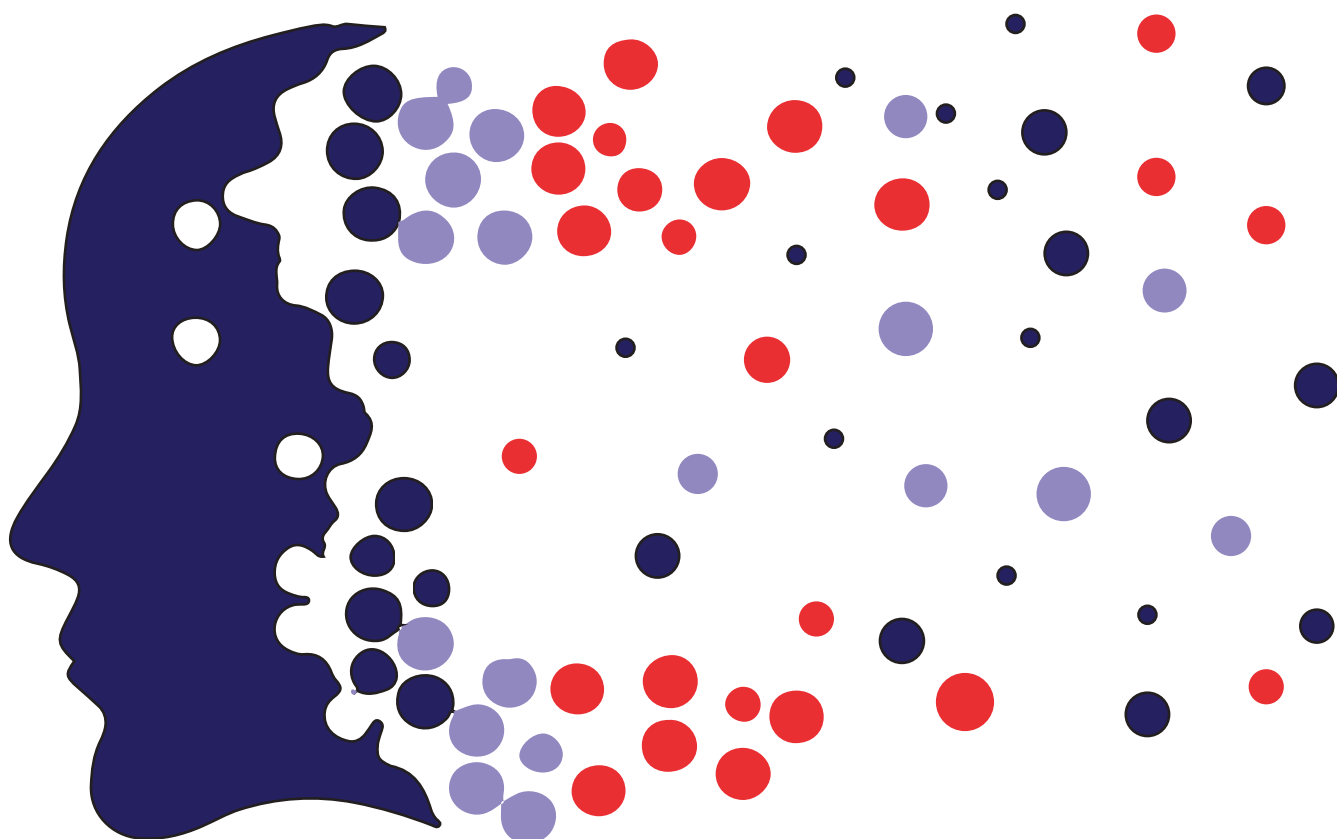


COMMUNIQUE

17th to 19th October 2024

The Great Indaba

**Crowne Plaza, Monomotapa
Harare, Zimbabwe**



2nd Edition Outcomes

Outcome 1. 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 underserved 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 underserved 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 to 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.



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 underserved 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

Delegates at the symposium highlighted 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 underserved and rural areas. The need for sustainable financing to support expanded mental health services was a key part of the discussion.

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 underserved 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.



Resolution 12: Traditional and Complementary Products in Public Health

The Conference

Acknowledging the significant role of traditional and complementary medicine in public health,
Resolves to:

- Promote the safe and evidence-based use of traditional and complementary medicines in healthcare systems, in alignment with the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023.
- Support research into the efficacy and safety of traditional medicines to ensure their safe integration into modern healthcare practices, in line with the AU's Framework for Traditional Medicine in Africa.
- Strengthen regulations to ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of traditional health products, in line with SADC Regional Standards for Traditional Medicine.

Resolution 13: Health Financing

The Conference,

Recognising the need for sustainable health financing to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare,
Resolves to:

- Advocate for increased public and private sector investments in health systems to achieve universal health coverage, in alignment with SDG 3.8 on universal health coverage and the African Union's Health Financing Strategy.
- Support the exploration of innovative financing mechanisms to fund essential health services, including the use of digital health financing tools, as outlined in the WHO Health Financing for Universal Health Coverage.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the allocation and use of health resources to ensure efficient service delivery, in accordance with the AU's Public Health Financing Framework.

Resolution 14: ICT, Media, and Technology in Public Health

The Conference,

Recognising the transformative potential of ICT, media, and technology in improving public health outcomes,
Resolves to:

- Promote the use of digital technologies, including telemedicine and e-health platforms, to improve access to healthcare services, especially in remote areas, in line with SDG 9 on building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation.
- Strengthen collaboration with the media to raise public awareness of key health issues and promote healthy lifestyles, in partnership with the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Framework.
- Invest in digital health data systems to improve decision-making, disease surveillance, and health service delivery, aligned with the WHO Global Health Observatory and the SADC ICT Policy Framework.

Resolution 15: Infrastructure Development for Public Health

The Conference,

Recognising the critical role of infrastructure in delivering quality healthcare services,
Resolves to:

- Prioritise investment in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural and under-served areas, to ensure equitable access to quality health services, in alignment with SDG 9.1 on building resilient infrastructure.
- Advocate for improvements in transportation and logistics to ensure the efficient distribution of medical supplies and personnel, in line with SADC Regional Transport Infrastructure Policy.
- Support the development of sustainable, resilient health infrastructure capable of withstanding the effects of climate change and other health crises, as outlined in the UNFCCC and WHO Health Systems Strengthening initiatives.

Conclusion

We, the delegates of the 2024 Public Health Symposium, commit to working collaboratively with governments, civil society, international organisations, and the private sector to implement these resolutions. We reaffirm our collective responsibility to re-imagine public health systems that are equitable, sustainable, and resilient, with a focus on achieving better health outcomes for all people in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Signed:



The Delegates of the 2024 Public Health Symposium

17th–19th October 2024, Harare, Zimbabwe