

FEBRUARY 2023

# EAST, CENTRAL & SOUTHERN AFRICA HEALTH COMMUNITY



## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



## LATEST FROM THE SECRETARIAT



### **13th Best Practice Forum & 29th Directors Joint Consultative Committee Meeting**

Lesotho hosts successful 13th Best Practices Forum and 29th Directors Joint Consultative Committee meeting in collaboration with ECSA-HC to improve health programming and policy direction in the region.



### **Launch of the ECSA Adolescent and Nutrition Strategy**

ECSA-HC and Nutrition International launch new strategy to improve adolescent nutrition in the region, addressing diverse needs and encouraging greater commitments for accountability.



### **71st Health Ministers Conference**

Lesotho hosts successful 71st Health Ministers Conference for ECSA-HC, bringing together senior officials under the theme of stronger health systems post-COVID-19 for attainment of Universal Health Coverage in the region

## 13TH BEST PRACTICE FORUM

The Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Lesotho in collaboration with the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) hosted the 13th Best Practices Forum (BPF) and the 29th Directors Joint Consultative Committee (DJCC) meeting in Maseru, Lesotho. The conference brought together Senior Officials from the ECSA Health Community Member States, partner organizations, research institutions, civil society organizations and other key stakeholders deliberate and share best and promising practices in the region to improve programming and inform policy direction within the Health Sector.

Setting the tone to the conference, the Director General of the ECSA Health Community, Prof. Yoswa Dambisya highlighted the theme of the conference, which was “Stronger health systems post COVID-19 for the attainment of universal health coverage in the ECSA Region”. In his remarks, Prof. Dambisya alluded to the need for regional collaboration between the Member States to tackle and respond to health issues in the region and further reiterated on the impact of COVID-19 on the health system which showed that the Member States needed concerted efforts to mitigate any threats and future pandemics. On behalf of the Secretariat, Prof. Dambisya expressed gratitude and appreciation for the interest and support shown by Member States and Partners in shaping up the health agenda in the region.

Dr. Richard Banda, who represented WHO Lesotho also gave his remarks, pointing out the need to further strengthen pandemic preparedness and response as COVID-19 is surely not the last. Dr. Banda shared that the WHO has recently assessed recommendations from multiple reviews on the future of preparedness and responses to pandemics and other health emergencies, where findings supported the need to strengthen the global architecture for health emergence, preparedness, response, and resilience. During his remarks, Dr. Banda assured all present at the conference that WHO shall continue to support countries to expand access to essential medicines, which is a pillar of universal health coverage.

Officially opening the meeting was the Principal Secretary to the Ministry of Health in Lesotho, Ms. Maneno Ntene who commended ECSA-HC for supporting Member States in the implementation of policy recommendations and bringing Member States together to deliberate on progress in the implementation of global and regional resolutions.



Prof. Yoswa Dambisya-Director General ECSA-HC



Dr. Richard Banda-WHO Lesotho



Ms. Maneno Ntene- Principal Secretary Ministry Health Lesotho



## BEST PRACTICE FORUM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### Country and regional responses to Covid-19: Challenges Lessons and Opportunities.

A key note presentation was presented by Professor George Osanjo from KEMRI on post COVID-recovery and sustainability and a best practice from Dr. David Okello from ACHEST on how Uganda responded to COVID-19 through a Community Engagement approach. The approach involved creating village task forces in all districts, led by local leaders, cultural leaders, women's groups, opinion leaders, and religious leaders, who met weekly to discuss health issues. This approach resulted in increased home-based care, improved trust within communities and health facilities, reduced hygiene-related diseases, and increased male involvement in antenatal care.



Prof. George Osanjo-KEMRI



Dr. David Okello From ACHEST

### Strengthening systems for prevention, preparedness, detection of and response to emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases

A key recommendation was made under this sub-theme that as a region we need to build resilient systems that continuously respond to emerging and re-emerging diseases. To achieve Universal Health Coverage, there is a need to strengthen weak systems that directly cause high morbidity and mortality. The roles of government ministries, development and implementing partners, and community leaders should be clearly defined and engaged at all levels to achieve this goal.

### Consolidating sustainable local solutions for human resources for health

A charter on African health workforce investment that highlighted principles and commitments was presented by Dr. Oguchukwu Chukwuekwu from WHO-AFRO. The charter presents principles and commitments to facilitate urgent alignment and stimulation of health workforce investments, strengthen coordination, visibility and commitment to build the health workforce. The charter is critical in halving inequalities in access to a health worker by 2030, and in influencing major current and new investments in health and social sectors that are in the pipeline. We believe that this charter will help ramp up momentum and encourage major investments in the health sector.

### Accelerating interventions and gender inclusiveness towards better health outcomes in RMNCAH

Dr. Bannet Ndeyabangi from UNFPA highlighted the importance of prioritizing interventions that address discriminatory gender and social norms, promote positive masculinity, empower civil society organizations and activists, and promote human-rights based laws and policies to promote equality and prohibit discrimination. Meanwhile, Samantha Ski from URC shared insights from a Landscape Analysis on using data to address violence against children, emphasizing the importance of data-driven interventions. These discussions underscore the need for a coordinated effort to address social and gender-based issues and leverage data to promote meaningful change.



Dr. Bannet Ndeyabangi-UNFPA South Africa



Ms. Samatha Ski-URC

### Innovative approaches towards sustainable financing of health care

Key approaches were recommended through a paper presented by Dr. Rene Loewenson from Training and Research Support Centre In EQUINET. There are opportunities for self-determined health financing through progressive taxation. To achieve this, it is important to understand targets such as the 5% GDP and Abuja's 15%, as well as to identify health financing gaps. Efforts to boost domestic revenue capacities, expand wealth and progressive tax revenue, and increase transparency in and barriers to IFF outflows are crucial. Linking taxes with other financing in pooled national health insurance and ensuring out-of-pocket spending is less than 15% of total health expenditure are also recommended. To avoid tax competition within the region, it is essential to work across countries with ATAF and avoid tax exemptions that undermine revenue. Finally, supporting finance ministers in negotiations for global tax system reform within a UN framework and a 25% METR can help to meet UHC, SDG, and health security demands.

## LAUNCH OF THE ECSA ADOLESCENT AND NUTRITION STRATEGY

The East, Central and Southern African Health Community (ECSA-HC) in collaboration with Nutrition International recently launched a new strategy aimed at improving adolescent nutrition in the ECSA region. The Adolescent Nutrition Advocacy strategy is designed to address the diverse needs of member states and encourage greater political, economic, and social commitments and accountability for adolescent nutrition.

Adolescents represent a critical phase of growth and development, and good nutrition is essential for their health and well-being. Poor nutrition during this phase of life can lead to numerous health problems such as stunting, anemia, and obesity. It can also affect cognitive development, academic performance, and productivity in adulthood. Unfortunately, malnutrition remains a significant public health problem in the ECSA region, particularly among adolescent girls.

The new advocacy strategy seeks to address this issue by providing guidance and motivation to drive greater political, economic, and social commitments to adolescent nutrition. It is based on the principles of the World Health Organization's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health and is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The strategy focuses on strengthening policies and programs that promote adolescent nutrition, improving access to and utilization of nutrition services, and increasing awareness of the importance of nutrition for adolescent health.

It also seeks to promote greater coordination and collaboration among stakeholders and to hold decision-makers accountable for progress made in improving adolescent nutrition.

Speaking at the launch, Prof. Yoswa, the Director General of the ECSA Health Community Secretariat emphasized the importance of the strategy in improving the health and well-being of adolescents in the region. "We need to invest in adolescent nutrition if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure a healthier future for our youth," he said.

Nutrition International's Regional Director for Africa, Dr. Richard Pendame, also highlighted the significance of the strategy in promoting good nutrition for adolescents. "Good nutrition is not a luxury; it is a fundamental right of every adolescent. This strategy will go a long way in ensuring that adolescent nutrition is prioritized and given the attention it deserves," she said.

The Adolescent Nutrition Advocacy strategy launched by ECSA-HC and Nutrition International is a critical step towards improving adolescent nutrition in the ECSA region. It provides a roadmap for greater commitments and accountability for adolescent nutrition and emphasizes the importance of investing in the health and well-being of our youth. We hope that the implementation of this strategy will lead to better health outcomes and a brighter future for adolescents in the region.





## 71ST HEALTH MINISTERS CONFERENCE

From February 8th to 9th, 2023, Maseru, Lesotho played host to the 71st Health Ministers Conference for the East Central and Southern Health Community (ECSA-HC). The conference, which was held under the theme "Stronger Health Systems Post Covid-19 for attainment of Universal Health Coverage In the ECSA Region", brought together health ministers and senior government officials from the government of health, from countries in the region.

The conference provided a platform for health ministers to share experiences and best practices, and to discuss the challenges facing their respective health systems. The focus was on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the region, as well as other emerging and re-emerging health threats, including infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases.

During the conference, health ministers discussed a range of issues, including the need to improve access to vaccines and strengthen health systems' capacity to respond to emerging health threats. They also emphasized the importance of collaboration between countries and the need for investment in health systems to ensure they can effectively respond to future crises.



In her opening remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister of Lesotho, Hon. Nthomeng Majara, emphasized the importance of the conference and the need for increased investment in health systems. He also underscored the importance of universal health coverage and the need to address the social determinants of health to ensure the health and wellbeing of all people.



In conclusion, the 71st Health Ministers Conference for the East Central and Southern Health Community held in Maseru, Lesotho, provided a platform for health ministers to discuss and strategize on the future of health care in the region. The conference highlighted the need for increased investment in health systems, the importance of collaboration between countries, and the need to address the social determinants of health. These efforts will go a long way in improving health outcomes and strengthening health systems in the region.



# PICTORIAL



Ministry of health Kenya as the New HMC Chairperson



Dr. Mpoki The chairpeson of ECSA College of Health Science



Delegate from the Ministry of Health Eswatini



Left Minister of health Zimbabwe, Middle Lesotho Minister of health, Right ECSA-HC Director General during the Adolescent Nutrition Advocacy strategy launch



Delegates from Malawi



Delegates from Ministries of Health



Gareth wood-KIDSOR

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## RESOURCE MATERIALS

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To access all presentations from the 13th best practice Forum click the link below

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RzE\\_bbcWIWIqXvQHo2Cgx3CBeAylvbrU?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RzE_bbcWIWIqXvQHo2Cgx3CBeAylvbrU?usp=share_link)

To access more pictures click the link below

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