

NAIROBI DECLARATION ON EVIDENCE TO POLICY

Accelerating the implementation of the regional and global strategies on oral health in the WHO African region



16 November 2023, Nairobi, Kenya

We, the participants of the Evidence to Policy Conference, oral health educators, chief dental officers, representatives from Ministries of Health and WHO, from 24 countries of the WHO African region¹, meeting in Nairobi to determine key evidence-informed strategies and actionable recommendations to accelerate the creation, dissemination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of oral health policies in the WHO African region;

Recognizing that oral health has too often been relegated to the periphery of health care systems, with many people experiencing poor oral health, including 480 million Africans affected by oral diseases which cause pain, disrupt employment and school attendance, thereby limiting personal potential, imposing a heavy burden on communities and governments, and slowing social and economic development in the region;

Cognizant of the provisions of the WHO Global strategy on oral health and its Action plan (2023–2030) and the African Regional oral health strategy 2016–2025 to address the oral disease burden through the recognition of the status of oral health as part of noncommunicable disease prevention and control towards universal health coverage, we hereby affirm and commit to:

1. Strengthening collaboration between academic institutions and ministries of health through the establishment of formal partnerships and communication channels;
2. Encouraging active government support and involvement for oral health research and policy activities, including prioritizing oral health research agendas, securing and allocating dedicated and sustainable funding;
3. Building research capacity in oral health, including by developing and implementing training programmes and mentorship schemes to enhance skills in oral health research, particularly in implementation science and policy evaluation;

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4. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders, such as nongovernmental organizations, patient advocacy groups, professional associations, the private sector, and international health organizations in oral health policy development and implementation;
 5. Integrating oral health in all policies through active efforts to incorporate oral health into all policies and programmes across the life course;
 6. Utilizing digital technologies and leveraging digital platforms, including social media, institutional websites and online repositories, to disseminate oral health policies and research findings;
 7. Establishing and fostering collaboration at national and regional levels to share resources, expertise, and best practices;
 8. Prioritizing and focusing research efforts on identifying practical solutions, effective implementation strategies, and robust evaluation methods, while ensuring that research priorities align with public needs and challenges in oral health;
 9. Developing and disseminating evidence-informed policies, guidelines, and standards for oral health practice, research, and policy implementation;
 10. Including oral health, public health and population-based oral health research in curricula health professionals.

We pledge to maintain the relationships formed at this meeting and to expand them to others who share our belief that oral health is a right and not a privilege. As such, oral health must be considered a fundamental component of universal health coverage. We will work collectively to build the evidence required to inform policies that are actionable and lead to accessible, affordable and high-quality oral health.

¹ Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Republic of Tanzania, United Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Participants in Nairobi, Kenya, on 16 November 2023.

Ezekiel Adebayo

University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Nigeria

Ashu Michael Agbor

Universite des Montagnes Dental School,
Bangante, Cameroon

Palakina Pagninsi Agoda

AGODA Département d'Odonto-
Stomatologie de l'université de Lomé, Togo

Sunday Ajike

Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria

Benjamin Akhiwu

University of Jos, Nigeria

Charles Anyanechi

University of Calabar, Nigeria

Charhrazad Farah Belmabrouk

Faculté Département de
médecine dentaire, Algeria

Ihsan Ben Yahya

Mohammed VI University of Health
and Sciences, Morocco

Ba Boubacar

Université des Sciences Techniques et
Technologiques de Bamak, Mali

Ramat Braimah

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria

Maitu Abibo Buanango

Faculdade de Ciências de Saúde, Mozambique

John Button

Penn Dental Medicine, USA

Alonso Carrasco-Labra

Center for Integrative Global Oral Health, USA

Joseph Chukwudi

Okeibunor Afro ARD, Congo

Oluranti Dacosta

University of Lagos, Nigeria

Oumar Raphiou Diallo

Gamal Abdel Nasser University, Guinea

Temitope Esan

Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

Wondwossen Fantaye

Addis Ababa University Ethiopia, Ethiopia

Agnes Gatarayihwa

University of Rwanda, Rwanda

Maren Gaughan

Penn Dental Medicine, USA

George Githu

Kenya Medical Training College, Kenya

Michael Glick

Center for Integrative Global Oral Health, USA

Seydou Gueye

Ministry of Health and Social
Development, Mali

Wendpoulomé Aimé Desiré Kaboré

Université de Ouagadougou
– Ufrsds, Burkina Faso

Alexandre Kabuya Wa Muele

Oral Health Programme, Ministry of Public
Health, Hygiene and Prevention, DR Congo

Reuben Kagai

University of Nairobi, Kenya

George Kariuki

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Elizabeth Ketterlinus

Penn Dental Medicine, USA

Rebecca Kiptui

Clinical Services, Ministry of Health, Kenya

Esther Kiritu

Division of Oral Health, Eye and Hearing Care,
Ministry of Health, Kenya

Tomas Labarca

Universidad de los Andes, Chile

Folake Lawal

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Ochiba Lukandu

Moi University School of Dentistry, Kenya

Yuka Makino

AFRO NCDs, Congo

Fiona Makoni

University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Codou Badiane Mané

Ministry of Health and Social Action, Senegal

Marta Mapengo

Dimingos Ministry of Health, Maputo

Cleopatra Matahira-Zinhanza

University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Elhadj Babacar Mbodj

Institut d'Odontologie et
destomatologie, Senegal

Dr James Mchenga

Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Malawi

Danilo Milanés Zambrano

University of Rwanda, Rwanda

Farayi Moyana

Harare Institute of Technology, Zimbabwe

Matilda Mtaya Mlangwa

Muhimbili University of Health and Allied
Sciences, United Republic of Tanzania

Penny Muange

Division of Oral Health, Eye and Hearing Care,
Ministry of Health, Kenya

Chrispinus Mumena

Copperbelt University School
of Medicine, Zambia

Miriam Murithi

Division of Oral Health, Eye and Hearing Care,
Ministry of Health Kenya

Regina Mutave

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Annet Mutebi

Makerere University, Uganda

Joseph Muiruri Kibachio Mwangi

WHO South Africa, South Africa

Mary Magdalene Nalyanya

Division of Oral Health, Eye and Hearing Care,
Ministry of Health, Kenya

Fidele Nyimi Bushabu

Kinshasa University, Democratic
Republic of the Congo

Babaka Jeremiah Nzobo

Oral Health Services, Ministry
of Health, Dar Es Salaam

Walter A. Odhiambo

University of Nairobi Dental School, Kenya

Olufemi Omitola

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Duniel Ortuno

Universidad de los Andes, Chile

Olivia Osiro

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Lieketseng Petlane

Ministry of Health, Lesotho

Ian Ramdin

Dental Services, Ministry of Health
and Wellness Port, Louis

Jeannot Randrianarivony

Institut d'Odontostomatologie Tropicale
de Madagascar, Madagascar

Emmanuel Athanase Rubuga

Primary Health Care Dental School,
United Republic of Tanzania

Nalumino Sayela

Levy Mwanawasa Medical University, Zambia

Ayid Patrick Shepard

Curative and Medical Rehabilitation Services
– Oral Health. Ministry of Health, Lilongwe

Gloria Uzoigwe

Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria

Beth Winkelstein

University of Pennsylvania, USA

Mark Wolff

Penn Dental Medicine, USA