

Lake Health and Wellbeing's Feedback on the Gender Equality Forum's Communique

Lake Health and Wellbeing would like to extend its gratitude to UN Women for the opportunity to attend the Gender Equality Forum held from the 25th to 26th of May 2024. This forum provided an excellent platform for collaboration, learning, and the exploration of both the successes and challenges in the gender equality space.

We are delighted to provide feedback on the communique to be presented to SIDS leaders. While health did not feature prominently at the forum, we strongly believe it should feature more prominently in the communique. Reflecting on the theme of the SIDS4 Conference, "Charting A Course Toward Resilient Prosperity," we assert that health must be at the heart of our discussions and plans for the next decade. Without healthy individuals, resilient prosperity is unattainable, and without healthy women, gender equality remains an elusive goal. Good health is crucial for women's full participation in society, enabling them to engage effectively in education, livelihoods, and community activities, thereby contributing to sustainable development and vibrant, resilient communities.

To support healthy women, a robust gender-responsive health system is essential. Such a system should provide comprehensive care throughout a woman's life, ensuring resilience through timely, gender-sensitive services, healthcare, support, and emergency responses.

We applaud the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in the communique but encourage the recognition of the importance of menstrual health and wellbeing. From menstruation to menopause, women should be supported at home, in society, and in professional settings. They should be able to manage their menstrual health without discrimination, stigma, or loss of opportunities. Menstruation and menopause can bring challenging symptoms—debilitating pain, heavy bleeding, hot flashes, and fatigue—that require supportive measures in the workplace and beyond. Reasonable adjustments and support should be provided, rather than penalizing women for addressing these symptoms.

Additionally, the section on sexual and reproductive health should highlight chronic reproductive health conditions that are often overlooked, under-researched, and inadequately serviced. Conditions such as fibroids, endometriosis, PCOS, and other pelvic disorders need more of a global focus. Women suffering from these conditions require early diagnosis, adequate support, and appropriate treatment to prevent prolonged, unnecessary suffering.

We would like to see a holistic approach to women's health addressed in the communique, encompassing both women's physical and mental health. It should address the need for comprehensive strategies to ensure that women can achieve the best possible health outcomes. Recognizing that diseases can be gendered, it is crucial to understand that men and women may face different disease risk factors and experience the same disease differently. Therefore, health systems and disease prevention strategies must be gender-responsive to provide appropriate care, support, and prevention messages tailored to women's unique needs.

In conclusion, addressing the need for a comprehensive and gender-responsive approach to health in the communique is vital. This will prompt SIDS leaders to prioritise women's health, enabling women's full participation in society and contributing to the resilient prosperity we all

strive for. We look forward to seeing these crucial aspects reflected in the final communique and to continuing our collaborative efforts towards gender equality and health for all.

More Information

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