

The African Health Systems and the Information Society*¹

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THE AFRICAN HEALTH SYSTEMS AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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SELF INTRODUCTION

- Medical Doctor for 30 years
- Psychiatrist for 22 years
- MBChB - Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
- Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene - London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, U.K.
- Masters of Medicine - Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
- Clinical Training in Forensic Psychiatry - Keel University, U.K.
- Senior Consultant Psychiatrist - Mulago National Referral Hospital, Kampala, Uganda
- Past President, Uganda Medical Association
- Past Vice-President for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, Commonwealth Medical Association
- Past Treasurer, Commonwealth Medical Association
- President, World Medical Association (2013-2014)

HEALTH SITUATION IN AFRICA

Africa's greatest asset is its one billion people.

Yet Africa has a huge disease burden.

Africa is 11% World's population but has:

- 45% World's women dying from childbirth related complications
- 50% World's children dying before age of 5 years
- 62% World's HIV/AIDS patients

HEALTH SITUATION IN AFRICA

60% - Infectious Diseases

- Malaria
- HIV/AIDS
- TB
- Diarrheal diseases

40% - Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
Increasing prevalence, nearing epidemic proportions

Common:

- Hypertension
- Cardiac diseases
- Cancer
- Depression.

*¹ This article is a list of the PPT slides which were used by the author in her Keynote Speech at the 29th CMAAO General Assembly and 50th Council Meeting, Manila, the Philippines, on September 24-26, 2014.

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WHY HUGE BURDEN OF DISEASE IN AFRICA?

1. Natural disasters
2. Political instability - wars, undemocratic governance
3. Social Determinants of Health - LIFESTYLES (alcohol, tobacco, exercise) education, employment, communication, transport, housing, Violence against Women, Climate Change, etc)
4. Weak health systems

HUGE DISEASE BURDEN IN AFRICA?

4. Weak health systems in terms of:

- ⦿ Equitable distribution
- ⦿ Efficiency
- ⦿ Effectiveness
- ⦿ Patient centred care
- ⦿ Patient safety
- ⦿ Ethical care
- ⦿ Health worker safety

Health workers:

- ⦿ Acute shortage (external, internal brain drain)
- ⦿ Inequitable distribution (More than 90% population in rural areas yet less than 5% health workers)
- ⦿ Poor access to CPD.

HEALTH SYSTEMS

- ⦿ Limited research data - socioeconomic determinants, impact of policies and services
- ⦿ Inequitably distributed sources of health information for the general public (Health Literacy)
- ⦿ Health databases - underdeveloped, poor dissemination, unprotected

HEALTH SYSTEMS

- ⦿ No African country has achieved UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE.
- ⦿ PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES are generally weak.
- ⦿ Limited integration of MENTAL HEALTH into general health services.
- ⦿ 82% Africans seek health care from TRADITIONAL PRACTITIONERS but no country has INTEGRATED traditional medicine into national health system.
- ⦿ Integration of COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS into formal health system - Only a few countries eg. Ethiopia.
- ⦿ Inadequate financing - 20-40% wastage, inadequate budgetary allocation, few countries with public health insurance schemes

POST 2015 AGENDA FOR HEALTH IN AFRICA

Growing consensus in Africa:

1. Continue with MDGs
 - improve maternal health
 - reduce child mortality
 - prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.
2. Intensify efforts on NCDs
3. Social Determinants of Health
4. Universal Health Coverage

THE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN AFRICA

- ⦿ Mid 1990s - Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) started efforts to build the Information Society in Africa.

Emphasis placed on countries to develop:

- ⦿ National Information and Communication Infrastructural Development Strategies
- ⦿ ICT Development Plans in all government sectors including Health.
- ⦿ Training of personnel in the various sectors.
- ⦿ Development of physical infrastructure - computer, mobile phone, etc

INFORMATION SOCIETY

Success?

Yes, Africa is gradually moving into the Information Era.

There has been growth and expansion in harnessing of ICT for:

1. Trade and Industry
2. Agriculture
3. Economic development
4. Education

INFORMATION SOCIETY

Contribution of Health Sector to building Information Society in Africa:

- ✓ Research and Documentation
- ✓ Telemedicine - still underdeveloped
- ✓ M-health - Some good practices but limited -
- ✓ Development of ICT based Health databases

HEALTH DATABASES

Growth with development of ICT but slow because:

1. Legal framework and Policies
2. Perceptions
4. Limited awareness of relevance
5. Cost of ICT infrastructure
6. Lack of skills

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

