

COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP ON HEALTH



Press Statement

May 1, 2024

Workers' Day Statement: CWGH Welcomes New Health Service Commission

As the world celebrates Workers' Day today, the Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) applauds the Government of Zimbabwe for setting up a Health Service Commission that, among other tasks, is mandated to look into the welfare of health workers in the country.

The new Health Services Commission must address the glaring management and governance issues in health, and ensure that the employer of choice for all health workers is central government as was the case in the past. Managing a professional workforce requires technical skill and capacity, but also humane traits and compassion that we find missing in the public health sector. This largely accounts for the mass exodus of our highly trained health workers to offer their young productive lives elsewhere. Furthermore, these workers require the tools of the trade, which in turn must be effectively and efficiently managed, be they infrastructure, medicines, equipment, ambulances, service vehicles, and new technologies to make their work less tedious and in line with current best practices than it currently is.

We hope that the new Health Services Commission will tackle the huge elephant in the room of convincing treasury to increase allocation and timely disbursements to health so that they stem the accelerated brain hemorrhage of expensively trained health care workers. The health care workforce which is the bedrock of effective and efficient health care systems has continued to suffer significant disturbances, yet they remain invisible and suffer vulnerabilities including the chronic high inflation impact on them, their workmates and close family members.

The country has failed to stabilize the brain drain for a number of decades. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists have left and continue to leave the country to destinations like United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia to name just a few. In fact, Zimbabwean health professionals are found in nearly all countries, including the non-traditional destinations such as Dubai and Poland. Health care workers (HCWs) continue to be trained but fail to fill the posts established in the 1980s, let alone the posts and establishment required to deal with the current population, disease epidemiology and health and development targets. They have continued to enrich other establishments and countries while the gap they leave in the country's institutions continues to glare.

All Village Health Workers must be employed by the Ministry of Health and Child Care, their allowances and training must be standardized and paid by the government with donors only coming in to compliment the government efforts.

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