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GSCF World Congress: The Long Road To Self-Care

by David Ridley

The opening keynote of the Global Self-Care Federation's World Congress 2022 in Cape Town, South Africa, featured the World Health Organization's Bente Mikkelsen and the association's chair-elect Manoj Raghunandanan.

“Today is truly the moment for self-care,” began Bente Mikkelsen, director of noncommunicable diseases at the World Health Organization, opening the 2022 Global Self-Care Federation World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. “There are now more self-care tools and innovation than ever before.”

However, self-care is still having to battle against constraints, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. “The journey to self-care is long,” she pointed out.

As a way forward, Mikkelsen urged conference participants to familiarize themselves with the GSCF’s Self-Care Readiness Index – which has just been updated with 10 more countries – in order to clarify the situation facing national healthcare systems. (Also see "[GSCF Self-Care Index Update Reveals 'Widespread Lack Of Understanding'](#)" - HBW Insight, 19 Oct, 2022.)

The Index “can facilitate constructive dialogue between countries in defining approaches to self-care,” she insisted.

First-Hand Experience

Mikkelsen’s introduction was followed by an emotive speech by GSCF chair-elect Manoj Raghunandanan, who recounted his experience of Cape Town since arriving, in particular a visit to the township of Khayelitsha.

Townships are underdeveloped, historically racially segregated areas on the periphery of South Africa’s urban centers. Khayelitsha is the largest and oldest township in Cape Town.



Source: GSCF

During his visit to Khayelitsha, Raghunandanan met someone who could not afford to go and see a doctor, and who therefore relied on self-care to manage their own health and that of their family.

For this individual, seeing a healthcare professional is not an option, as they would have to pay 50% of their total household income for a doctor's appointment. If they did see a doctor, they would use the opportunity to collect as much information about how use self-care products as efficiently and effectively as possible.

“She deserves better, she deserves to have the right to look after herself and her family in a responsible way,” Raghunandanan argued.

Raghunandanan – who is also president of global self-care and consumer experience organization at Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health – closed his introduction by urging participants to remember that changing healthcare systems to improve outcomes for people and families is a “collective responsibility.”

“It doesn't have to be like this,” he said. “Self-care is one of the most special and unique opportunities we have to change the healthcare ecosystem for everyone.”