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GSCF World Congress: Re-Defining The Global Self-Care Agenda

by [David Ridley](#)

Building the political will for self-care and its socio-economic value were among the topics covered during the first full session on day one of the Global Self-Care Federation's World Congress 2022.

"Self-care will play an even more critical role now," predicted Global Self Care Federation past chair Alan Main at the beginning of the first full session of the 2022 GSCF World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa.

"The pandemic has intensified the challenges faced by healthcare systems everywhere," noted Main, who was formerly head of Sanofi's Consumer Healthcare division.

"We need to educate people about self-care," added Main's panel co-chair Skhumbuzo Ngozwana, who is CEO of South African firm Kiara Health. "We also need to strengthen and harmonize regulatory systems so that consumers can have confidence in self-care products."

Overcoming Obstacles

A tool for overcoming some of these obstacles and building the necessary foundations for self-care is the GSCF's Self-Care Readiness Index, suggested the association's director general Judy Stenmark.

With the launch of the second edition of the Index, delegates have access to a powerful policy-making tool exploring key enablers of self-care, Stenmark explained. (Also see "[GSCF Self-Care Index Update Reveals 'Widespread Lack Of Understanding'](#)" - HBW Insight, 19 Oct, 2022.)

However, for the GSCF, the ultimate goal is to have a World Health Organization resolution on self-care, towards which the work of the association has been building, Stenmark said. (Also see "[GSCF Calls For WHO-Backed Global Self-Care Agreement](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Oct, 2021.)

“If WHO were to pass a resolution, self-care will start to get embedded in policy and things will really start to change in health systems and in governments around the world,” she insisted.

Digging deeper into the methodology of the Index, Mario Ottiglio, managing director of the High-Lantern Group consultancy emphasized the inclusivity of the two reports.

The 20 countries now included in the Index were selected to represent all six WHO regions: Africa, the Americas, South-East Asia, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Pacific.

A Mixed Picture

“Together, they paint a very interesting picture of self-care,” Ottiglio said. For example, high levels of education are not necessarily correlated with higher levels of health literacy – a finding that Ottiglio said may surprise many people in the congress audience.

Support for self-care on the part of healthcare professionals is also higher in Australia, Germany, Indonesia, Kenya and India, he noted.

Meanwhile, the environment for Rx-to-OTC switch – a key mechanism for innovation and widening access in self-care – is “quietest” in Latin America and Indonesia, he added.

Next up, Manoj Raghunandan returned to the stage to present insights from GSCF’s recently published Economic & Social Value of Self-Care Report. (Also see "[Self-Care Saving Taxpayers \\$120bn Per Year, Could Increase To \\$180bn By 2030](#)" - HBW Insight, 14 Jul, 2022.)

Describing it as a “landmark study,” the final report covers 155 different countries, including developed and under-developed markets.

“We wanted to quantify the impact self-care can have,” Raghunandan explained.

Self-Care Savings

Self-care is currently saving healthcare systems globally about \$120bn a year, according to the report. This figure could rise to roughly \$180bn if self-care’s significant further potential is realized, he pointed out.

Linking to his earlier speech about the dire situation facing many people trying to self-care despite being held back by poverty, Raghunandan noted the distinction made in the report between Group A and Group C countries. (Also see "[GSCF World Congress: The Long Road To Self-Care](#)" - HBW Insight, 20 Oct, 2022.)

In Group A countries, self-care is seen as a first treatment option, with consumers knowing that they can fall back on other forms of healthcare if they need.

In Group C countries, by contrast, self-care is often the only treatment option for people needing medical help.

“Think for a moment, if self-care is your only treatment option, what would you need from consumer healthcare products?” Raghunandan asked.

What the GSCF report clarifies, he concluded, is where to concentrate collective effort to embed self-care in different parts of the world.