

SKIN DISEASES: RECOGNISED AS A GLOBAL HEALTH PRIORITY



Skin diseases affect nearly **2 billion people** worldwide. They are among the top 10 causes of disability globally and they disproportionately affect people in low- and middle-income countries, where diagnosis and treatment are often unavailable or unaffordable.

Despite the huge burden of skin diseases and conditions, they have been largely overlooked in global health policy... until now.

In May 2025, the World Health Assembly (the governing body of the World Health Organization) adopted a **landmark resolution** recognizing skin diseases as a global public health priority for the first time.



Click on this icon to download & read the full text of the Resolution document adopted at WHA 78

BELOW THE SURFACE: THE FULL IMPACT BEYOND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Skin diseases carry significant consequences that extend far beyond the skin:



Mental health impact: Depression and anxiety are common among those affected



Quality of life: Affects education, employment, and social relationships



Rising severity: Climate change, emerging infections, and environmental factors are increasing skin disease frequency and severity, requiring better surveillance.



Social consequences: Stigma, discrimination, violence and social isolation



Economic burden: Lost productivity, healthcare costs, and out-of-pocket expenses

THE FULL SPECTRUM

There are over **3,000 known skin diseases**, and the resolution covers them all: common inflammatory and autoimmune conditions (like psoriasis and eczema), rare and congenital conditions (like albinism and vitiligo), infectious diseases (like leprosy and leishmaniasis), skin cancers, and climate-sensitive conditions.



The resolution was led by Côte d'Ivoire and co-sponsored by Colombia, China, Egypt, Micronesia, Nigeria, and Togo.

Extensive advocacy support was offered by patient organizations, dermatology societies, and other global skin health advocates.

#SKINDISEASESRESOLUTION



WHA SKIN DISEASES RESOLUTION



WHAT WILL THE RESOLUTION ACHIEVE?

This resolution recognizes that **skin health** is **essential for overall health** and wellbeing.

Skin is our largest organ and our first line of defense against disease. When skin health is compromised, it affects every aspect of a person's life.

This resolution provides a framework for change at regional and national levels.

While implementation will be tailored to local contexts, the universal goal remains the same: to transform how skin diseases are recognized, treated, and prioritized – no matter where you live.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Member States are called upon to:

Integrate skin health into **universal health coverage** policies and national health programs

Strengthen **primary healthcare** so local health teams can diagnose and treat common skin conditions

Strengthen surveillance, **data collection**, and **diagnostic capacity** to understand the true burden of skin diseases

Improve access to affordable medicines, diagnostics, and wound care materials

Train healthcare workers in identifying and managing skin diseases

Use **innovative approaches** like telemedicine to reach remote and underserved areas

KEY FOCUS AREAS

The resolution tackles essential issues including:



Stigma and discrimination against people with skin diseases



Mental health support through integrated services



Patient empowerment through support organizations and self-care education



Research to develop better diagnostics and treatments

WHA SKIN DISEASES RESOLUTION



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Resolutions asked the WHO to develop a **Global Action Plan (GAP)** on Skin Diseases, in consultation with Member States & Stakeholders, to be submitted to WHA80 in May 2027.

A Global Action Plan is the WHO's strategic framework that brings countries, organizations, and stakeholders together around a coordinated strategy. It sets shared targets, defines roles for countries and partners, and establishes metrics to track progress and accountability.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Global Action Plan will:

- Set **clear goals** and **targets** for improving skin health worldwide
- Guide **national strategies** and programs
- **Coordinate efforts** across countries and organizations in all WHO regions
- Ensure patient organizations **shape policies** and programs at national level
- **Track progress** through **regular reporting** to WHO

BUILDING THE PLAN TOGETHER

The GAP will be developed through **public consultations with Member States, civil society**, and all relevant stakeholders over a two-year period in line with WHO's Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.

This inclusive process ensures:

- Priorities and success indicators are influenced by lived experience and real-world needs, especially from underrepresented communities.
- Regional and national adoption is strengthened through early engagement
- The strategy advances equity and universal health coverage goals

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Member States will translate the **Global Action Plan's** strategic framework into national action, adapting global guidance to their specific contexts:

- **Develop** or revise national plans for skin disease prevention and treatment
- **Build** capacity in healthcare workforce training
- **Provide** self-care education to empower patients and families in managing their conditions
- **Strengthen** diagnostic and surveillance systems
- **Conduct** research on environmental and climate factors affecting skin health
- **Implement** sustainable prevention strategies, including access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and One Health approaches to reduce disease transmission

WHA SKIN DISEASES RESOLUTION



THE PATHWAY FORWARD

The development of the Global Action Plan has a two-year timeframe and follows a structured process led by the WHO.

Following adoption in 2027, Member States will report on their progress of implementation at regular intervals.

Oct 2025 - May 2026

Open Public Consultations & drafting to inform and define the Global Action Plan outline and strategy

June - Sept 2026

WHO & Member States consultation to finalize draft document

Jan - Feb 2027

Executive Board considers the GAP to provide guidance on next steps

Feb - April 2027

WHO & Member States further consultations to finalize the plan for submission

May 2027

WHA80
WHA considers the global action plan for adoption by Member States

2027 | 2029 | 2031

Biennial Reporting: by Member States on implementation progress

LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

Addressing skin diseases globally requires collective action. The resolution calls on governments, international organizations, healthcare professionals, civil society, research institutions, and the private sector to increase awareness of skin diseases as a public health issue, reduce stigma, improve access to care, and support innovation.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLLECTIVE ACTION

Now that skin diseases are a recognized global public health priority, the following actions can help drive progress:

- ✓ Participate in public consultations in 2026 that inform the development of the Global Action Plan
- ✓ Advocate for national implementation of the Skin Diseases Resolution directly with your local Minister of Health
- ✓ Continue to build momentum and awareness around the Resolution with policy makers and other external stakeholders