





OSHAfrica

Occupational Safety & Health
Africa Foundation

 www.oshafrika.africa
 info@oshafrika.africa
 +234 (1) 454 9255,
+234 (0) 802 491 8800

OSHAFRICA PRESS RELEASE: WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK 2026

A CALL TO ACTION ON MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICA

While the African region joins the rest of the world to mark the 2026 World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2026 with the theme “Ensuring a Healthy Psychosocial Working Environment”, it has become so important to look inward Africa to examine how we have thrived positively along the line of the theme of the year’s event.

It is important to first establish contextually the keywords “Psychosocial Working Environment”, which transcends beyond physical hazards that address machineries and chemicals but addressing invisible factors that affect mental health and wellbeing of employees. This covers how work is designed, organised and managed.

According to several reports, Africa is currently facing a prevailing pandemic influenced by the new world of work which is characterised by increasing job demand such as workload, work pace and elongated working hours. Above these, also is fair treatment and clarity in roles, job autonomy, workplace violence and harassment and many more. These factors are fast heightening the mental health of employees across the African region with approximately 64% of countries in Africa lacking dedicated mental health legislations or rely of laws that are “custodial” rather than “therapeutic”. The “lunacy” legacy prescribed by the pre-colonial laws which focuses on locking patients away from people rather than protecting their rights as employees and citizens as seen still in use in countries like Sierra Leone and Gambia. While a number of African countries have updated their mental health laws with very good examples being shown by countries like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Egypt and Cape Verde, we need more countries to emulate these positive steps in the overall interest of its citizens.

Approximately, 15% of working age adult in Africa have mental health conditions at any given time with a high number of employees working even when mentally unwell. With the growth of digital exposure and the fast economic growth across many African countries, there are clear indications that this prevalence will increase proportionately in years to come. Stress, burnout, fatigue, anxiety disorders and cardiovascular diseases will steadily grow along with this prevalence. Yet, Africa currently has the world’s youngest population that has been projected to be the largest workforce in the world by 2035. If the mental health of this population is not protected, the burden of mental health conditions that will come out of this population will be too much for us all to manage.