



## The Durban Declaration- Statement of the 2022 PHASA Conference

The Public Health Association of South (PHASA) and its annual conference delegates, meeting in Durban from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and reflecting on public health resilience and recovery as we embrace our post-COVID-19 pandemic world; call on the government, healthcare providers, non-health sectors, and health care partners, to individually and collectively commit to rebuilding our society and health system to deliver universal health care and prioritise improved health outcomes for all. We recognise the accentuation of existing global health inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the existential threat of the climate crisis to the health, and the urgent need for universal health coverage, including affordable, quality health care services for all people regardless of their ability to pay for it.

### Our call to action:

#### **1. Health equity must be at the centre of all health and intersectoral policies.**

The COVID-19 pandemic not only exposed the vulnerability of the country in terms of health, that includes health system weaknesses, fractured health service delivery, disparate vaccine outreach to localities in terms of urban versus rural, but also long-standing structural weak points in terms of high unemployment rates, and financial crises.

This re-emphasized the lessons from the HIV pandemic for COVID-19 and the post-pandemic world i.e. recognition of our shared responsibility and solidarity, and the inherent urgency for health equity to be at the centre of all health and intersectoral policies.

#### **2. Public health training must comprehensively address public health principles, health equity, and social justice competencies**

A professionally competent and socially accountable workforce is critical to appropriately address the current health system and health care challenges in the country.

Thus, investment in public health training that comprehensively addresses competencies related to proper public health principles and values, including health equity, the social determinants of health and social justice; must be prioritised and standardised throughout the country.

#### **3. Strategies to address the health impacts of climate change must be a health policy priority**

Changes to climate bring about climate hazards and increases the risk of extreme weather disasters. We remember the devastating floods in May 2022 that affected communities living in KwaZulu Natal, that left 40 000 people homeless, resulted in the loss of 435 lives with other persons reported as missing, and caused public health infrastructural damage estimated at R 200 million.

The reality is that climate change, which is mainly caused by burning fossil fuels, is a health emergency and crisis, and climate-related health risks must be mitigated across regions, sectors and communities.

#### **4. Comprehensive, integrated responses are important to address the complex determinants of health.**

Biological, psychological, behavioural, socio-economic, structural, and commercial factors are among the critical, and often intersecting, determinants of health

Health responses, including health advocacy, health activism, and health communication, are also secondary determinants of health

Responses to address the multifactorial and complex nature of risk factors for health, warrant comprehensive and multi-faceted thinking and responses