



CONCEPT NOTE

9

TH EDITION

GALIEN FORUM AFRICA

Dakar – Senegal

Theme:

Mental Health in Africa: Equity and Integration into
Primary Health Care – Where Do We Stand?

I. BACKGROUND AND STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE GALIEN FORUM AFRICA

The Prix Galien, considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in pharmaceutical innovation, has been recognizing major health advances for over 50 years. In this spirit, the Galien Forum Africa, launched in 2018 in Dakar, has progressively established itself as a pan-African platform for strategic dialogue bringing together policymakers, scientists, private sector actors, and civil society around the continent's major health priorities.

Building on previous editions, the 9th edition of the Galien Forum Africa, under the general theme “Mental Health in Africa: Equity and Integration into Primary Health Care – Where Do We Stand?” aims to make a significant contribution to the agenda for transforming African health systems.

II. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

According to the WHO, primary health care (PHC) is the foundation for equitable and person-centred mental health interventions, especially in Africa, where specialists are scarce. Recognizing mental health as a strategic priority for health equity and integrating it into first-line care is often the only realistic pathway for better addressing this critical public health issue. This was reaffirmed in the Astana Declaration at the fortieth anniversary of PHC in 2018.

To date, modest progress has been made in Africa, including:

- The beginning of functional integration, which remains partial (79% of countries have trained primary care workers in mental health; integration programmes such as mental health + maternal health or child development exist);
- Mental health financing, which is slightly increasing but remains low (\$0.1 to \$0.46 per capita between 2014 and 2020);
- The inclusion of mental health in health crises and emergencies.

However, these real advances are insufficient and highly uneven across countries. Key challenges include:

- Integration that remains very incomplete, often theoretical or fragmented (only 5 out of 53 countries have comprehensive mental health services at the primary level);
- A severe shortage of human resources, unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas (very low density of psychiatrists and psychologists, heavy reliance on community or informal workers, etc.);
- Chronic underfunding (< \$0.50 per capita on average, with few dedicated budget lines);
- Stigmatization and low demand for care (significant social taboos and delays in seeking treatment);
- Weak information and research systems to effectively guide policies (limited data and few impact evaluations).

It is in this context that the 9th edition of the Galien Forum Africa 2026 proposes to bring together policymakers, researchers, health professionals, young innovators, and

community leaders to assess progress made, identify persistent obstacles, and promote innovative solutions for the equitable integration of mental health into African health systems.

III. VISION

The vision of the Galien Forum Africa is to make mental health a central pillar of African health sovereignty, by fully integrating it into primary health care, public policies, and human development strategies.

It is founded on the promotion of care models adapted to African realities, grounded in equity, innovation, community participation, and the valorization of local resources, in order to guarantee sustainable, inclusive, and quality access to mental health services for all populations.

IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE FORUM

1. GOAL

The Forum aims to contribute to the sustainable transformation of African health systems by integrating mental health as an essential component of primary health care, from a perspective of equity, resilience, and health sovereignty.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the Forum is to examine the state of mental health integration in primary health care in Africa and, above all, to identify innovative strategies to strengthen equitable access to services.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the Forum will aim to:

- Assess existing mental health policies and programmes in Africa.
- Identify gaps in the integration of mental health into primary health care.
- Promote innovative, community-based and digital approaches to improve access to care.
- Encourage the engagement of young researchers and innovators.
- Highlight women's leadership in the transformation of mental health policies.
- Foster partnerships between governments, universities, the private sector, and international organizations.

4. EXPECTED RESULTS

At the end of the Forum, the following results are expected:

- A Dakar Declaration on Mental Health and Primary Health Care in Africa;
- Policy recommendations for African governments;
- A roadmap for the integration of mental health into PHC;
- The networking of young African innovators in mental health;

- The promotion of initiatives led by women leaders in health.

V. KEY THEMES

During this Forum, the main themes to be addressed and discussed will include::

Mental health and social equity;

PHC approach and integration of mental health into health systems;

Innovation and scientific sovereignty;

Governance and financing;

Community engagement and mental health;

The role of communication and the media;

Etc.

VI. FORUM STRUCTURE

The Galien Forum Africa 2026 will comprise three complementary platforms:

- Youth Forum

- Women's Forum

- Scientific Forum

1. YOUTH FORUM

1.1. OBJECTIVE:

Mobilize young people as key actors in innovation, advocacy, and change in mental health, while fostering spaces for expression, dialogue, and experience sharing.

1.2. APPROACH:

The Youth Forum will adopt a participatory and community-based approach, encouraging open peer dialogue, the sharing of lived experiences, and the co-construction of solutions adapted to local realities.

1.3. EXPECTED RESULT:

The creation of an African network of innovation and youth engagement in mental health, built on exchange, collaboration, and community impact.

2. WOMEN'S FORUM

2.1. OBJECTIVE:

Recognize, strengthen, and valorize the role of women in the transformation of mental health systems, while creating spaces for dialogue and solidarity.

2.2. APPROACH:

The Women's Forum will integrate a social and inclusive approach, based on the sharing of experiences among women leaders and community actors, intersectoral and intergenerational dialogue, and the valorization of locally-led women's initiatives.

2.3. EXPECTED RESULT:

The establishment of an African alliance of women leaders in mental health, anchored in dynamics of collaboration, mentoring, and community impact

3. SCIENTIFIC FORUM

3.1. OBJECTIVE:

Explore scientific and operational advances for effectively integrating mental health into African health systems, while strengthening the link between research, public policy, and implementation.

3.2. APPROACH:

A pragmatic and results-oriented approach, fostering dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, as well as the valorization of African experiences.

3.3. EXPECTED RESULT:

The formulation of concrete and realistic scientific and operational recommendations for public decision-makers and field actors.

VIII. PARTICIPANTS

The Forum will bring together a multisectoral and high-level audience, including:

- Political decision-makers and government officials;
- Ministers of health and public institutions;
- International and regional organizations;
- Experts, researchers, and academics;
- Civil society organizations and NGOs;
- Private sector actors and technical and financial partners;
- Innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors;
- Young leaders and students.

IX. STRATEGIC IMPACT

This 9th edition of the Galien Forum Africa aims to contribute to systemic change by:

- Durably embedding mental health in African political and health priorities;
- Accelerating the integration of mental health into primary health care;
- Reducing inequalities in access to mental health services;
- Stimulating African innovation, particularly through community-based and digital solutions;
- Strengthening African leadership in defining models adapted to the continent's realities.

X. DATE AND VENUE

The 9th edition of the Galien Forum Africa will take place from 8 to 11 December 2026 at the King Fahd Palace Hotel, Dakar, Senegal.

XI. CONCLUSION

Through this 9th edition, the Galien Forum Africa takes a decisive step by placing mental health at the heart of the transformation of African health systems.

Beyond diagnosis, this edition is resolutely action-oriented, mobilizing key actors around concrete, adapted, and sustainable solutions.

It thus aims to make Africa not only a space for reflection, but a true laboratory of innovation for integrated, equitable, and sovereign models in mental health.