Chairperson’s Statement 2017

26 April 2017

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Dr. Brighton Chizhande, ZADHR Chairperson

The year 2017 marks 15 years since ZADHR was founded. It also marks the first year of the new Board elected in November 2016. The organization was founded on the background of an immense crisis in Zimbabwe where organized violence and torture incidences were on the increase and a deafening silence from medical associations that existed at the time.

Since then, the organization has moved from strength to strength under the stewardship of able and competent leaders who believed in the sanctity of human rights and who also understood and wished to enhance the role of health professionals in defending the health and human rights of Zimbabweans. To that end, ZADHR has existed recognizing health professionals as frontline witnesses of the achievement or lack thereof of the right to health in Zimbabwe.

ZADHR doctors have over the years provided care and support to victims of organized violence and torture particularly during elections in Zimbabwe. Coupled with that is the advocacy work that has been carried out to expose the growing challenges of incidences of
organized violence and torture. Victims were assisted in accessing medical treatment and counseled to come to terms with the trail of damage left behind in their lives. Thus the impeding elections provide an opportunity for ZADHR members to coalesce and moot a response strategy to rising incidents of politically motivated violence as we go towards 2018.

Apart from OVT, ZADHR has also worked on numerous projects and this includes but not limited to projects on monitoring of the right to health in Zimbabwe particularly around communicable diseases, water and sanitation projects in Epworth and Porta Farm, adolescent reproductive and health rights, HIV/AIDS and on women’s health and human rights. ZADHR has also worked tirelessly throughout the country to capacitate communities to demand their right to health and channels through which to claim the right.

Further, as the Board we will seek to build upon the gains made to date and rectify any areas of weakness, the new board commits to continually engage the medical cadres so that we not only increase the membership but to continue the legacy of ZADHR.

In pursuit of the mission and vision of ZADHR, the board under my leadership will further seek to entrench relationships that have been cultivated to date as these will provide the board with a spring board to catapult our advocacy initiatives. These institutions include but not limited to the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Care, development partners and fellow civil society organisations.

To this end, the new executive includes young vibrant members who have served ZADHR and other doctors organizations including the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association as well as at various levels in the profession. These individuals are very aware of the mammoth task ahead of them and have already delved into crucial health rights issues as well as crisis interventions since the inception of the Board. The board is composed of doctors from various levels of practice and specialties including Mental Health; Public Health; Cancer alleviation and treatment and general practice.

A new Board strategic agenda has been developed which will enhance areas previously worked on as well as to initiate interventions into new areas that ZADHR has not previously worked on but have been issues of major concern.
The Strategic Agenda will focus on;

1. Membership Engagement and Recruitment

2. Organized Violence and Torture

3. Reproductive Health

4. Health Rights of Marginalized Groups e.g. LGBTI, commercial sex workers, the disabled

5. Litigating for the Right to Health

6. Right to health monitoring

7. Voter education amongst health professionals to enhance their participation in national key issues

We wish to pay tribute to those who have come before us and those who saw the wisdom in consummating a vehicle through which health professionals would contribute to the promotion, protection and respect of human rights in general and right to health in particular.

Allow me to welcome the new board and to wish them success in their endeavors.

I salute you!!!
Dr. Brighton T. Chizhande

ZADHR Chairperson