



**REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
THE QUADRANGLE
BANJUL**

SEVENTY-NINE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER *GENEVA 18-23 MAY 2026*

Sub-Item 4.2	Strengthening the evidence base for public health and social measures
Documents:	A79/5
Requested action	Note of the reports
Time limit	3 minutes
<u>Commission</u>	<u>A</u>

Chair, Director-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Gambia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Lesotho on behalf of the WHO African Region and thanks the Director-General for the report.

Our experience during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored a critical lesson: while public health and social measures (PHSM) are essential for controlling outbreaks, their implementation without robust, context-specific evidence can lead to unintended socioeconomic consequences and reduced public trust.

We acknowledge the progress made since the adoption of resolution WHA78.3, including the development of master study protocols, advances in research methodologies, and the establishment of the Public Health and Social Measures Knowledge Hub. These are important foundations for strengthening evidence-informed decision-making.

From The Gambia's perspective, one of the most effective investments is emergency preparedness through the advance development of master study protocols. Equally important is testing these protocols during non-emergency periods, such as seasonal influenza, to ensure operational readiness before a crisis occurs.

We urge the Secretariat to prioritize finalizing the implementation manual for cluster-randomized trials, with a strong emphasis on feasibility in low- and middle-income settings. Capacity-building and technical guidance are needed for robust study designs, data systems, and ethical research governance that address real-world operational constraints.

In addition, we request accelerated development of a core set of indicators to monitor unintended negative consequences and health equity impacts. Demonstrating that PHSM are both effective and socially responsive is essential to maintaining public adherence.

Finally, The Gambia looks forward to continued collaboration with WHO and partners, including the WHO Collaborating Centre for effectiveness research, and notes the report with appreciation.

Thank you.