

SPEAKERS' BIO

#HealthToo



ELIZABETH IRO

WHO Chief Nursing Officer

Mrs Iro is the chief nurse of the WHO, appointed by WHO director-general Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus in 2017. She is from the Cook Islands, where she worked as secretary of health (2012-2017). She was the first woman and nurse/midwife appointed to this position in this country. Her top goals in this role were legislative reforms to enhance the country's health system and the development of national health strategic plans (2012-2016, 2017-2021) and a national health road map (2017-2036).

Mrs Iro has an MHS in nursing and an MBA and was educated as a nurse and midwife in New Zealand. She worked as a nurse in different capacities, including chief nursing officer (2011-2012), registrar of the nursing council (2000-2007), and president of the Cook Islands Nurses' Association (2002-2010).



DR GAYA GAMHEWAGE

Director of Prevention & Response to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment - WHO

Dr Gaya Gamhewage is the Director of Prevention & Response to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment at the World Health Organization. She is a public health leader with more than 2 decades of international experience in health capacity building, training & learning, strategy, policy and programme implementation and leadership development. She is a Medical Doctor with Master Degree in International Policy Making & Negotiation and a second Master Degree in International Health (Public Health); and a certified coach. Dr Gaya has proven expertise in strategy development, change management and programme management. She is highly skilled at strategic communication, corporate communication, health communication, risk communication, conflict management, negotiation, partner and network management, facilitation and health programming in public health and has extensive experience in health emergency response and capacity building during epidemics and pandemics.



SIMONE SHERIDAN

Simone Sheridan (she/they) is a passionate nurse educator and social-justice advocate who thrives in roles where difficult conversations are required. Simone's clinical background is in Intensive Care, and she has completed postgraduate studies in critical care and clinical teaching. Over her diverse career, she has been part of a family violence project team, designed LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice resources, and worked as a sexual health nurse consultant. For many years, Simone has spoken out about the issue of sexual harassment in healthcare. In 2019 she co-authored a piece called "Not our job; A nurse's story of sexual harassment by patients" which was published in an Australian anthology of #MeToo stories, as well as on the national broadcaster of Australia. Simone and her work were also the subjects of a 2021 book, "The Care Factor" by author Ailsa Wild. Simone has recently commenced a new role at The Royal Melbourne Hospital as the first Sexual Safety Nurse Consultant.



DR KALKIDAN LAKEW

Medical Doctor

Dr Kalkidan Lakew is a medical doctor and public health professional based in Ethiopia. She serves as a Policy Associate for Women in Global Health and supports the organisation's work on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment. She received her medical degree from Addis Ababa University and her MSc in Public Health (Health Economics) from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She has worked as a lecturer at Addis Ababa University and also worked as a Medical Director of Jamma Primary Hospital.

She is the former Deputy Director-General for System Strengthening at the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Supply Agency, overseeing various flagship supply chain transformation initiatives and system-strengthening activities. Dr Lakew studied public management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow. She is the 2019 Obama Leaders: African Leader and was also selected as one of the 2019 100 Most Influential Young Africans by African Youth Awards.

She is a 2020/2021 Chevening Scholar. She is part of a cohort of 4 Fellows of the International Program in Public Health Leadership (IPPHL) at the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Washington. She is passionate about women's health and has experience in advocacy around various public health issues, including preventing sexual harassment and creating safe spaces in healthcare settings.

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