



ISEJ EXPLAINER SERIES

Health Belongs in Climate Law

The Harare Declaration and the climate health nexus

In October 2024, the first Climate and Health Africa Conference (CHAC) met in Harare and adopted the Harare Declaration on Climate and Health in Africa endorsed by health ministers and delegates from across the continent, with the support of the WHO-led global alliance on climate and health. Its premise is simple and overdue: climate change is a health emergency, and Africa's health systems must be built to withstand it.

What the Declaration commits to

- **Climate-resilient health systems:** health infrastructure upgraded to withstand climate shocks power, water, cold chains, supply lines and a health workforce trained for climate-informed care.
- **African-led research:** equitable research partnerships, strengthened capacity for African researchers, and better surveillance of climate-sensitive disease with funding to match.
- **Policy integration both ways:** climate considerations written into national health policy, and health prioritised in climate plans ending the fiction that the two ministries manage separate emergencies.
- **Communities at the centre:** engagement of communities and recognition of local knowledge and traditional practice in climate health action.

Why this matters for Zimbabwean women

The climate–health nexus is gendered. Heat stress in pregnancy, malaria and waterborne disease that strike hardest at pregnant women and children, drought-related malnutrition concentrated in female-headed households, and climate shocks that sever access to maternal and reproductive health services these are the Declaration's abstractions made concrete. And when health systems fail under climate stress, the unpaid care economy absorbs the load: the ward without power discharges its patients to a woman's kitchen.

The test for Zimbabwe: the Climate Change Management Bill (HB 05, 2025) is the natural vehicle for domesticating the Harare Declaration including a national climate health research and action function that generates sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, maps hotspots where climate hazards and gendered health risks overlap, and trains health workers for what is coming.

Where ISEJ stands

ISEJ urged Parliament to build exactly this climate–health architecture into HB 05, aligned to the Harare Declaration. A declaration adopted in Harare should not remain a conference document in the city of its birth. Health-inclusive climate law with disaggregated data, resourced research and community voice is how a signature becomes a system.

About ISEJ

The Institute for Sustainable Empowerment and Justice (ISEJ) is a Zimbabwe-registered Private Voluntary Organisation working at the intersection of law, public policy, gender equality, climate justice,

public health and narrative change. ISEJ translates complex legal and policy frameworks into knowledge communities can use because access to the law should not depend on access to a lawyer.

Dignity · Rights · Transformation

Sources: Harare Declaration on Climate and Health in Africa (CHAC, October 2024); WHO Regional Office for Africa; ISEJ submission on the Climate Change Management Bill HB 05 (2025); Harare Declaration references in ISEJ's published analysis.