



KENYA chapter



International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals - Kenya
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Speech by Dr. Pamela Kaithuru

President, ISSUP Kenya Chapter

Mental Health Conference & Excursion – Kigali, Rwanda

Theme: Trauma Healing

Dates: 6th – 9th May 2025

Venue: Paramount Hotel, Kigali

Our Guest of Honor

Representative of the Kenyan High Commission to Rwanda

,Ambassador Janet Oben

Representatives from the Government of Rwanda,

Representatives from the Government of Kenya,

Heads of Partner Institutions and Organizations,

Respected Mental Health Professionals, Researchers, and Practitioners,

Esteemed Members of ISSUP from across the globe,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

On behalf of the International Society of Substance Use Prevention Professionals – Global and Kenya Chapter, I wish to express our deep gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this transformative Conference.

I extend our warmest appreciation to the lead organizers, ProCare Counselors and Mediators, and our co-hosts and partners: Africa College of Theology – Rwanda, Mshauri Therapy Hub, Britam Insurance, Optiven Group, and Organization of Trauma Counsellors, for convening this important conversation on mental health and trauma healing.

It is a great honour to be in the Republic of Rwanda — a country that has overcome immense adversity and emerged as a global beacon of resilience, reconciliation, and forward-looking innovation. Rwanda's journey is an inspiration to us all.

As President of ISSUP Kenya Chapter, and as a counselling psychologist, I stand here representing the Kenya Chapter. ISSUP is a global network dedicated to advancing a competent, ethical, and sustainable workforce addressing substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Our focus at ISSUP is on professionalizing the field through training, evidence-based practice, and multi-sector collaboration. In Kenya, we are driving these efforts through accredited trainings and capacity enhancement, policy advocacy and community-based support and networks.

The theme “Trauma Healing” could not be more timely. We are living in an era marked by collective and individual trauma—from war and displacement to domestic violence, childhood neglect, and the trauma born out of addiction itself.

Trauma is a silent epidemic. It takes root in the mind and body and often remains unspoken, unhealed, and misunderstood. Yet, it does not have to be permanent.

With qualified professionals, culturally sensitive interventions, and robust support systems, healing is not only possible — it is achievable.

For responsive action to psychological issues related to substance use and co-occurring issue,

ISSUP Kenya is taking a proactive approach by:

- Conducting certified trainings to build a skilled and ethical workforce for SUD prevention and treatment;
- Promoting trauma-informed care in schools, communities, health centres, and correctional facilities;
- Establishing youth peer-led initiatives and family support groups for resilience-building;
- Strengthening inter-agency collaboration between health, education, and justice sectors;
- Raising public awareness through research fora , webinars, and media outreach.

We are building a movement that places prevention at the heart of mental wellness. Because every life matters. Every story counts.

Our Call to Action

To all of you here: policymakers, practitioners, donors, civil society leaders, and community champions — let us act with urgency and compassion.

Let us invest in systems that prevent trauma and support healing. Let us equip our first responders, community health workers, and school counsellors with the tools they need. Let us fund research that informs practice. And above all, let us centre the voices of those with lived experience — not just as beneficiaries, but as co-creators of solutions.

We must create a future where substance use is not a response to pain — but where care, support, and opportunity are accessible to all.

I call us to consider ISSUP Membership – Get Involved

To those who are not yet members of ISSUP, I warmly invite you to join our global community of professionals. Membership is open to individuals and institutions committed to ethical and evidence-based approaches to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Visit our website at www.issup.net to register. Membership is free and gives you access to global training resources, networking opportunities, and professional recognition.

In closing, I reaffirm ISSUP Kenya’s unwavering commitment to work alongside you — across sectors, across countries, across disciplines — to advance healing, justice, and dignity for all.

Trauma may shape our past, but it should not define our future.

Let us be the light. Let us be the bridge. Let us be the hope.

Thank you.

Murakoze cyane.

God bless you all.