

Stowelink News

ABOUT US

Since 2016, we've worked with 80+ partners to deliver practical, community-first programs across 10 African countries through grassroots public health campaigns, health innovation and research, and policy advocacy across Africa maximizing impact with minimal cost, ensuring lasting change.

We focus on tackling the most pressing health challenges affecting youth and communities across Africa through evidence-based, youth-led interventions.

We focus on the major health priorities, including Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), sexual and reproductive health AND social behavior change. In achieving this objective we will address meaningful youth engagement in; health, and social inclusion; research learning and development; and health systems strengthening.



WHAT'S IN THIS QUARTER'S ISSUE:

- MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE
- STOWELINK NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS
- HEALTH DIVISION UPDATES
- ADVOCACY DIVISION UPDATES
- RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATES
- CONNECTING TO THE WORLD
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OUR MISSION

To transform public health across Africa by equipping youth to lead powerful, innovative initiatives that promote health equity, prevent noncommunicable diseases and related public health challenges., and uplift entire communities.

OUR VISION

A global model for youth-led public health transformation in Africa and beyond.

Message From The Executive

Dear Partners, Colleagues, and Friends,
The first quarter of 2026 has marked a strong and deliberate start for Stowelink Foundation, building on the momentum of our 2025 achievements and setting the tone for a year defined by influence, innovation, and youth leadership.

We began the year reflecting on our journey through the release of our Annual Report and Fourth Quarter Highlights, reaffirming our commitment to shaping the future of public health. This foundation has guided our continued engagement across research, policy, and community-driven programming.

In this quarter, we deepened our role in global health conversations. From contributing to the global push for an obesity patient charter to joining Kenya's newly established Obesity and Metabolic Disease Society during World Obesity Day 2026, we have strengthened our commitment to advancing inclusive, evidence-based approaches to non-communicable diseases.

Our tobacco control work has also gained significant traction. Through participation in the Kenya Tobacco Industry Monitoring Team and engagement with the Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025 launch, we continue to support efforts that protect public health policy from commercial influence. Our emerging research on digital tobacco marketing further reinforces the urgency of addressing evolving industry tactics targeting young people.

At the same time, we have continued to invest in knowledge and capacity building through initiatives such as the NCDs for Public Health course and our contribution to planning the 3rd Global Sickle Cell Disease Conference.

As we move forward, our focus remains clear. We will continue to bridge research, innovation, and advocacy while centering youth voices and lived experience in everything we do.



Stephen Ogweno- Founder and CEO

BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

FROM MONTREAL TO THE WORLD: STOWELINK JOINS THE GLOBAL PUSH FOR AN OBESITY PATIENT CHARTER

At Stowelink Foundation, we believe that health systems must reflect the realities of the people they serve. This principle guided our participation at the 2026 Canadian Obesity Summit in Montreal, convened by Obesity Canada, where our Founder and CEO, Ogweno Stephen, joined global leaders in shaping a Global Patient Charter for Obesity.



Notable Achievements Of The Quarter



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Our presence in Montreal was rooted in a clear objective: to ensure that African realities are meaningfully represented in global health frameworks. In many of the communities we work with, obesity is still misunderstood, underdiagnosed, and insufficiently integrated into national health priorities

STOWELINK FOUNDATION CPO, ODUOR KEVIN JOINING THE PRESTIGIOUS ASCEND PROGRAM BY IGTC

We are proud to share that our Chief Programs Officer, Oduor Kevin, has been selected to join Ascend: Leadership Development for the Future of Tobacco Control, a flagship program by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.



Health Division Updates

ABOUT THE DIVISION

Under this division, our primary focus is to implement relevant health programs to serve our community. We primarily aim at making information and diagnostic services on non-communicable diseases available to ALL at ALL times in RELEVANT formats but also focus on the other components in our behavior change communication that include Mental Health, Drugs and Substance Abuse and Sexual and Reproductive Health.

We mainly focus on preventive primary healthcare by providing health education and diagnostic services. Our vision in this division is to ensure that the communities we serve live a healthy and productive life.

WHAT'S IN THIS SEGMENT

- UNMASK THE TACTICS PROJECT UPDATE
- BEYOND THE SCALE OBESITY PROJECT UPDATE

BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

STRENGTHENING TOBACCO CONTROL AT THE KENYA TIM TEAM'S FIRST MEETING OF 2026

The Kenya Tobacco Industry Monitoring Team convened its first meeting of 2026 to review progress in documenting and responding to tobacco industry interference across the country. The meeting brought together policy advocates who are working collectively to safeguard Kenya's tobacco control policies from commercial influence. Stowelink Foundation was represented at the meeting by Oduor Kevin and Oduor Stephen, who shared insights from the organization's ongoing work to monitor and expose tobacco industry tactics targeting young people and policymakers.

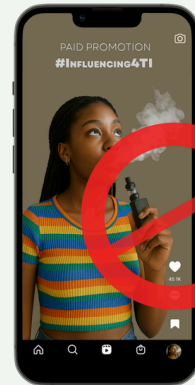


UNMASK THE TACTICS KE TOBACCO PROJECT

The Stowelink Foundation is proud to join a nationwide four-week digital campaign focused on tobacco industry monitoring and control in Kenya. The campaign, coordinated by the Kenyan Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Control Group, brings together public health experts, youth advocates, and civil society organizations committed to exposing harmful industry tactics and empowering young people with accurate, evidence-based information.

As part of Stowelink's long-standing commitment to preventing NCDs and combating harmful commercial determinants of health, our team—led by Founder Ogweno Stephen—is actively contributing to this national effort. This campaign aligns strongly with our mission to protect youth health, strengthen public awareness, and advocate for healthier environments.

Running under the hashtag #UnmaskTheTacticsKE, the campaign disseminates daily educational posters, videos, and youth-friendly content across social media. Each week culminates in a video summary co-hosted by Stowelink's Ogweno Stephen and fellow advocate Oduor Kevin, breaking down the week's findings in simple, engaging language.



**NOT EVERY
TREND
IS YOUR
FRIEND**

Say No to Industry Tricks, Protect Your Future.

#UnmaskTheTacticsKe

TiMR_{KE}

Tobacco Industry Monitoring & Response-Kenya



TiMR_{KE}

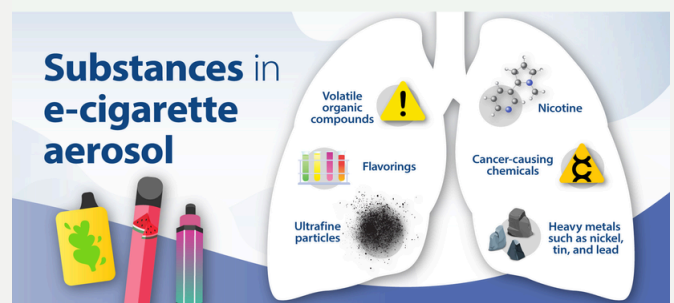
Tobacco Industry Monitoring & Response-Kenya



TiMR_{KE}

Tobacco Industry Monitoring & Response-Kenya

TOBACCO -FREE? Think again



Source: CDC

#UnmaskTheTacticsKe

TiMR_{KE}

Tobacco Industry Monitoring & Response-Kenya

WEEK 1: THE TRUTH ABOUT TOBACCO & NEW NICOTINE PRODUCTS

The first week sheds light on traditional tobacco products as well as the rapid rise of vapes, nicotine pouches, and heated tobacco devices among Kenyan youth. Key messages include:

- Health harms associated with all nicotine products
- Debunking “safer alternative” myths
- Exposing how new products are aggressively pushed into African markets

Stowelink emphasizes that nicotine addiction—whether smoked or vaped—poses a major risk to adolescent health.

The fight continues...



WEEK 2: INDUSTRY TRICKS & TARGETED MARKETING

This week uncovers manipulative tactics used to hook young people, including:

- Influencer partnerships
- Colorful, flavor-focused branding
- Youth-driven cultural marketing strategies
- Stowelink continues to warn that these tactics often bypass regulation and fuel long-term addiction.

WEEK 3: SPOT IT, STOP IT — YOUTH AGAINST MANIPULATION

This week equips young people to identify, question, and report harmful marketing. Themes include:

- Recognizing digital misinformation
- Understanding advertising loopholes
- Empowering youth leadership in tobacco control
- The goal is to build a nationwide youth movement against tobacco industry interference.



WEEK 4: THE FUTURE WE CHOOSE

The final week focuses on solutions and youth-led action:

- What individuals and families can do
- What schools and teachers can implement
- How youth groups and communities can stay vigilant

FINDINGS AND DISSEMINATION

The #UnmaskTheTacticsKE project is a nationwide tobacco control advocacy campaign in Kenya, primarily driven by the Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Response Team (TIMR-Kenya) and being implemented by the Stowelink Foundation amongst other partners.

Launched in early December 2025 and ending in January 2026, the project was designed to counter the evolving digital marketing strategies of the tobacco industry and to safeguard public health policies from commercial interference.

1. REACH OF THE PROJECT

The campaign leveraged a digital-first approach to mobilize youth and civil society. Based on reported metrics from Stowelink and its partners:

- **Digital Footprint:** The initiative successfully reached over 200,000 people online through social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, youtube and X).
- **Target Audience:** It specifically focused on adolescents and young adults, who are increasingly targeted by the tobacco industry via influencer marketing and "aspirational lifestyle" content.
- **Engagement:** High interaction rates driven by the weekly video summaries, which simplified complex policy interference into youth-friendly content.
- **Industry Interference:** We also saw significant industry interference from tobacco actors commenting on posts. This was countered with facts during the campaign



POLICY IMPACT:

Interference Index: Contributed to the data for the 2025 Kenya Tobacco Industry Interference Index, where Kenya's score improved from 48 to 46, signaling a slight reduction in industry influence due to increased civil society monitoring.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PROJECT

- The campaign's impact was solidified by a research report released in March 2026, which "unmasked" the following data:
- 86% of Kenyan youth reported encountering tobacco or nicotine advertisements multiple times a day on social media.
- 79% of respondents under 35 had seen nicotine products marketed as "modern" or "less harmful" through influencers.
- The project successfully identified that most industry "CSR" activities were being used to gain political legitimacy and delay graphic health warning implementations



BEYOND THE SCALE OBESITY PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The Beyond the Scale Project represents a strategic evolution in how Stowelink Foundation approaches obesity prevention, treatment literacy, and policy advocacy in Kenya and across Africa. Moving beyond conventional awareness campaigns, the initiative is designed as a multi-phase, systems-oriented intervention that places lived experience, youth leadership, and evidence-based engagement at the center of national and regional responses to obesity.

As obesity continues to drive the burden of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, and metabolic disorders, the need for integrated, stigma-free, and policy-aligned interventions has become increasingly urgent. Beyond the Scale responds to this need by bridging community engagement, digital innovation, and high-level advocacy.

STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The overarching goal of Beyond the Scale is to strengthen Kenya's obesity response ecosystem through coordinated, youth-led, and evidence-informed interventions. The project seeks to shift public understanding of obesity from a narrow focus on body weight to a broader recognition of its biological, social, and systemic determinants.

Key objectives include increasing public literacy on obesity prevention and treatment, reducing stigma and misinformation, and elevating lived-experience voices in national and global health conversations. A central pillar of the initiative is ensuring that individuals directly affected by obesity are not only beneficiaries of interventions but active leaders in shaping solutions and influencing policy.

The project is also designed to contribute to long-term systems change by informing national health strategies, supporting universal health coverage priorities, and aligning with global frameworks on non-communicable diseases

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

Beyond the Scale is structured as a phased intervention, with each phase building on the previous to create a coherent pathway from awareness to sustained policy impact.

The first phase focuses on community education through culturally relevant tools and participatory engagement methods aimed at reducing stigma and improving foundational knowledge. This is followed by a national storytelling and media phase, which amplifies lived experiences and normalizes public dialogue around obesity.

Subsequent phases introduce structured treatment literacy initiatives, including education on lifestyle interventions and emerging medical options. This is complemented by the establishment of a Lived-Experience Advocacy Academy, which equips youth and community members with the skills to engage policymakers and participate in national health discourse.

The final phase integrates digital platforms and mobile engagement tools to sustain participation, generate real-time insights, and support adaptive programming. This design ensures that the project is not only impactful in the short term but also scalable and sustainable over time.



LIVED EXPERIENCE AND GLOBAL ALIGNMENT

A defining feature of Beyond the Scale is its emphasis on lived-experience leadership, guided by the expertise and advocacy of Ogweno Stephen. Through his role as a trustee at the World Obesity Federation and participation in technical processes linked to the World Health Organization, the project is anchored in both global best practice and local relevance.

This dual positioning enables Stowelink to translate global guidance into contextually appropriate interventions while ensuring that African perspectives and experiences are represented in international policy spaces.

QUARTER ONE MILESTONES

FROM MONTREAL TO THE WORLD: CONTRIBUTING TO THE GLOBAL OBESITY PATIENT CHARTER

In the first quarter of 2026, Stowelink strengthened its global engagement by contributing to ongoing efforts to advance an international obesity patient charter. This engagement reflects a growing recognition of the need to center patient voices in policy and program design.

Participation in these discussions provided an opportunity to advocate for inclusive, rights-based approaches to obesity care, while also ensuring that perspectives from African communities inform global frameworks. This milestone reinforces Stowelink's role as a bridge between local lived experience and global health governance.



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP: JOINING KENYA'S OBESITY AND METABOLIC DISEASE SOCIETY

On March 4, 2026, during World Obesity Day 2026, Stowelink formally joined the newly established Kenya Obesity and Metabolic Disease Society. Represented by Ogweno Stephen, this engagement marked a significant step in strengthening national coordination on obesity and metabolic health.

The formation of the society signals a growing institutional recognition of obesity as a critical public health issue in Kenya. Stowelink's involvement ensures that youth perspectives, community insights, and lived-experience advocacy are integrated into the society's agenda from the outset.

This platform also creates new opportunities for collaboration with clinicians, researchers, and policymakers, enhancing the potential for coordinated and evidence-based responses to obesity.



CONCLUSION

Beyond the Scale is not simply a project but a strategic platform for transforming how obesity is understood and addressed in Kenya and beyond. By integrating community-driven approaches, digital engagement, and policy advocacy, the initiative offers a comprehensive model for tackling one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time.

With strong foundations established in quarter one and a clear roadmap for implementation, Stowelink Foundation is well positioned to drive meaningful change. The focus now shifts to execution, scaling impact, and ensuring that the voices of those most affected continue to shape the future of obesity policy and practice across Africa.



Advocacy Division Updates

ABOUT THE DIVISION

The Stowelink advocacy division focuses all issues advocacy. This division aims at addressing and contributing actively to the key advocacy asks that are in line with our organizations values and missions. More than that ,the advocacy division is also responsible for the media and communication features of the organization ensuring that the organization is positioned correctly in the public.

WHAT'S IN THIS SEGMENT

- ADVOCACY FOCUS ON TOBACCO CONTROL

NEW RESEARCH ALERT: EMERGING DIGITAL TOBACCO MARKETING TACTICS IN KENYA

Stowelink Foundation participated in the release of new research by the Kenya Tobacco Industry Monitoring & Response (TIMR) Team examining how the tobacco industry is leveraging social media and influencers to promote tobacco and nicotine products. The findings were presented by Oduor Kevin, Chief Programs Officer at Stowelink Foundation, on behalf of the lead researchers, Dr. Nyambura Salome and Winnie Ivayo.



STRENGTHENING TOBACCO CONTROL AT THE KENYA TIM TEAM'S FIRST MEETING OF 2026

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Stowelink Foundation was represented at the meeting by Oduor Kevin and Oduor Stephen, who shared insights from the organization's ongoing work to monitor and expose tobacco industry tactics targeting young people and policymakers.

Through digital advocacy campaigns and research based communication strategies, Stowelink has helped raise awareness about industry interference while promoting stronger accountability in tobacco governance.

As part of the broader monitoring ecosystem, Stowelink continues to support efforts that document industry activities, strengthen evidence based advocacy, and empower young people to challenge harmful narratives around tobacco use.



KENYA TOBACCO INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE INDEX 2025 LAUNCH SIGNALS URGENT NEED FOR ACTION

The launch of the Kenya Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025 provided a sobering assessment of the challenges facing tobacco control in the country. The report, presented by the Kenya Tobacco Control and Health Promotion Alliance, revealed that Kenya ranks nineteenth out of one hundred countries globally in the 2025 index.

The report outlines several ways in which the tobacco industry continues to exert influence on public health policy. These include lobbying against stronger health warning regulations, pushing for extended transition periods that delay implementation of regulations, and promoting corporate social responsibility activities that blur the lines between public health partnerships and corporate interests. Stowelink Foundation participated in the launch alongside other civil society organizations, researchers, and policymakers working to strengthen tobacco governance in Kenya.

For Stowelink, the findings reinforce the importance of independent monitoring, public accountability, and youth engagement in protecting health policies from commercial interference.



NEW RESEARCH ALERT: EMERGING DIGITAL TOBACCO MARKETING TACTICS IN KENYA

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The study comes at a critical time when Kenya has made notable progress in tobacco control through the Tobacco Control Act (2007) and the Tobacco Control Regulations (2014). While these frameworks have successfully limited tobacco advertising in traditional media, they did not fully anticipate the rapid growth of digital platforms. As a result, social media has emerged as a new frontier for tobacco marketing, often operating beyond the scope of existing regulations.

The findings highlight the scale and urgency of the problem. Tobacco-related diseases continue to cause approximately 12,000 deaths annually in Kenya. At the same time, the study reveals widespread exposure to tobacco-related content online, with a majority of respondents encountering such content through social media platforms. This demonstrates how digital environments are being used to normalize and promote tobacco use, particularly among young people.

A key contribution of the study is its analysis of influencer marketing strategies used by the tobacco industry. Influencers are deliberately selected based on their ability to reach youth audiences, promote aspirational lifestyles, and subtly integrate tobacco products into their content. In many cases, sponsorship arrangements are not disclosed, creating challenges for accountability and regulation.

The research further identifies critical policy and enforcement gaps. These include the lack of explicit provisions on digital tobacco marketing, limited oversight of influencer-driven promotions, challenges in regulating cross-border content, and weak age-verification systems for online sales. The use of disappearing content adds another layer of complexity to monitoring and enforcement efforts.



Research & Development Division Updates

ABOUT THE DIVISION

Stowelink Research and Innovation Segment showcase research work, innovative activities and publications that have been conducted by Stowelink or its executive that is related to the work that we do

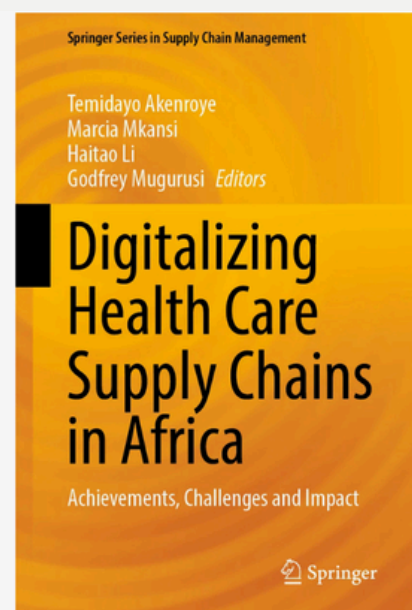
WHAT'S IN THIS SEGMENT

- NEW BOOK CHAPTER CONTRIBUTION TO SPRINGER.

BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

NEW BOOK CHAPTER CONTRIBUTION TO SPRINGER NOW AVAILABLE FOR PRE- ORDER

Stowelink has contributed a book chapter to the forthcoming publication *Digitalizing Health Care Supply Chains in Africa: Achievements, Challenges and Impact*, published by Springer.



NEW BOOK CHAPTER CONTRIBUTION TO SPRINGER NOW AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDER

This upcoming book brings together leading scholars and practitioners to explore how digital and innovative technologies are transforming health supply chains across Africa. While digital health systems have significantly improved efficiency and visibility in high-income countries, this publication critically examines what it takes to successfully adapt, implement, and scale these solutions within African health systems.

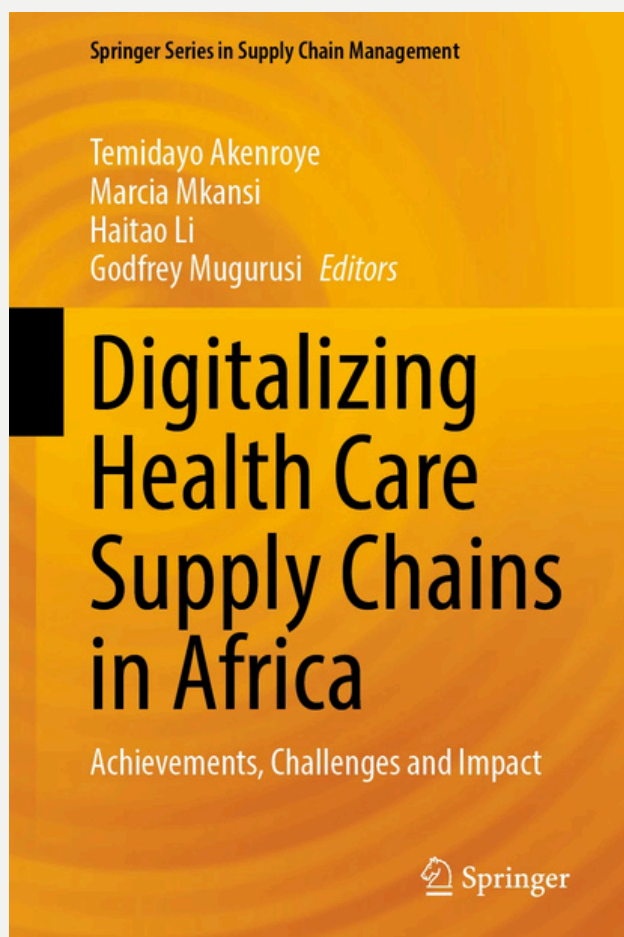
Through real-world case studies and cross-country insights, the book highlights both the successes and challenges of digital transformation, offering practical lessons on what works, what fails, and why. It provides a comprehensive resource for policymakers, researchers, NGOs, and health system leaders working to strengthen healthcare delivery across the continent.

Our contribution reflects this growing role at the intersection of health systems, innovation, and policy in Africa. Full details of his chapter will be shared upon the book's official release.

The book is scheduled for release on 24 May 2026 and is now available for pre-order:

<https://link.springer.com/book/9783032205001>

This marks an important milestone in advancing African-led thought leadership on digital health systems and equitable healthcare transformation.



Stowelink Connecting to the world

ABOUT THE DIVISION

This segment demonstrate our passion to connect with the world while promoting NCDs Advocacy. Our team is keen on reaching the world audience with active NCDs work that aims at promoting NCDs Literacy and contributing to the NCDs knowledge gap across the globe. We leverage the strength of social media and our networks to work with world advocates and leaders to have maximum impact on the community that we endeavor to serve.

WHAT'S IN THIS SEGMENT

- PLANNING OF THE 3RD GLOBAL SICKLE CELL DISEASE CONFERENCE
- FROM MONTREAL TO THE WORLD: STOWELINK JOINS THE GLOBAL PUSH FOR AN OBESITY PATIENT CHARTER

BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

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PLANNING OF THE 3RD GLOBAL SICKLE CELL DISEASE CONFERENCE

Stowelink Foundation recently participated in the planning meetings for the upcoming 3rd Global Sickle Cell Disease Conference, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya from May 8 to May 10.

The conference will bring together global experts, researchers, clinicians, advocates, and policymakers under the theme Global Standards, Local Impact: Advancing Sickle Cell Care Across Systems and Communities.

Ogweno Stephen represented Stowelink Foundation during the planning discussions, contributing to conversations on how the conference can strengthen collaboration across health systems while improving community level awareness and care for people living with sickle cell disease.



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Our presence in Montreal was rooted in a clear objective: to ensure that African realities are meaningfully represented in global health frameworks. In many of the communities we work with, obesity is still misunderstood, underdiagnosed, and insufficiently integrated into national health priorities. Through this engagement, we brought forward lived experiences, system-level insights, and the urgent need for equitable access to care.

The proposed Global Patient Charter for Obesity is a critical step toward addressing these gaps. It seeks to move beyond high-level commitments and define practical, actionable standards for care.

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks To:

THE STOWELINK INC EXECUTIVE TEAM

- Stephen Ogweno
- Oduor Kevin
- Naila Chebet
- Ongola Otieno
- Harrizon Ayallo



We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to transform and empower lives.

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