ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INEQUALITIES

BASIC SERVICE CHALLENGES IN OUR COMMUNITIES, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CPUT TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (IFEH), at their council meeting in Indonesia, during 2011, declared the 26th of September as World Environmental Health Day (WEHD)

At the World Congress in Lithuania (May 2012) both the ‘out-going’ and ‘in-coming’ Presidents of the IFEH challenged members of the IFEH International Faculty Forum (IFEH IFF) to encourage students studying environmental health in different continents of the world to generate a series of video clips portraying environment and health related issues pertinent to their respective countries. In Africa this challenge was relayed to academic institutions through the Africa Academy for Environmental Health (AAEH). The AAEH, subsequently also encourages greater interaction between environmental health students throughout the continent and beyond.

Every year the IFEH suggest a theme for the specific years WEHD and the theme for 2014 is “Addressing Environmental Health Inequalities”, because it is argued that while environmental health may be concerned primarily with the impacts of environmental stressors on health, these in turn are heavily influenced and frequently reflect economic and social factors. For example those with more economic power are able to purchase safe water, have easier access to more nutritional food or live in housing located well away from obvious emissions from industrial plants. It is further said that the ongoing and worsening climate change challenges affects the whole World, which will surely affect environmental health inequalities, if we do nothing (IFEH, WEHD, 2014).

Therefore, it sets the scene for the initiative by the CPUT THIRD YEAR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STUDENTS to make our valuable contribution to this noble request. In support of this approach by CPUT, the Chairperson of the Professional Board for Environmental Health (PB for EH), Mr. Jerry Chaka, who was also previous president of the IFEH and the SAIEH, respectively, indicated that the initiative from the CPUTs’ environmental health unit, will be the first for a tertiary institution in South Africa to partake in this international event.