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2020 WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY COMMEMORATION REPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, South Africa didn't have national face to face event like previous years.

On the 2nd of September 2020, The South African Institute of Environmental Health hosted workshop on Covid-19 Food Safety and Risk Management which was attended by 250 participants. The workshop was well organised and the participants were impressed with the standard set during the workshop.

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Bay branch of the South African Institute for Environmental Health held a seminar on Friday, 18 September 2020 to scrutinise its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The seminar took place during the month when the world commemorates World Environmental Health Day (WEHD), with this year's theme: "Environmental Health, a key Public Health Intervention in Disease Management" and was in line with the call made by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) that all Municipalities should commemorate the WEHD where possible.

During the seminar Deputy Director for Municipal Health Services, Dr. Patrick Nodwele indicated that that generation that will be left behind should be able to reflect the evidence of what we experienced during COVID-19 and how Environmental Health Practitioners overcame the deadly virus so that future generations can draw some lessons from experiences.

In support of the seminar, Mr. Sikhetho Mavundza from South African Local Government Association thanked Environmental Health Practitioners for the sterling work they have shown in containing the spread of the virus.



The Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Department of Environmental Health commemorates World Environmental Health Day every year. In 2020, the BSc and National Diploma Environmental Health students are in the process of creating videos to raise awareness about restricting the spread of COVID-19. These videos will be shared with various communities around Umlazi as soon as they are released.

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality commemorated this year's WEHD by conducting joint-inspections on Food Premises, Clean-up and other Law Enforcement activities in the area of jurisdiction. Stakeholders that participated & supported the operation include Solid Waste department team, Disaster Management, Traffic Services, Law Enforcement, South African Police Service, and community structures.

South African Local Government health held a virtual dialogue on Environmental Health Response to COVID-19 on 25 September 2020 attended Municipal officials, Environmental health practitioners, Representatives from other relevant departments, NGO's and Training institutions.

The objectives of the dialogue were broadly to:

- i. Promote a common and extensive understanding on environmental health response including the role of environmental health practitioners at different spheres of government in diseases outbreak response.
- ii. Provide a platform for discussions, inputs, sharing of knowledge and experiences on environmental health response to COVID-19
- iii. Reflect on municipal health services capacity to respond to diseases outbreak.
- iv. Share experiences on the functioning and effectiveness of the IGR structures and the structures set up to respond to COVID -19 as well of the information and reporting systems.
- v. Reflect on the relevance of the directives assigned to local government and environmental health practitioners during the current outbreak response.
- vi. Reflect on the integration of different municipal services in diseases outbreak response.
- vii. Reflect on the adequacy of the existing training programmes to respond to diseases outbreaks.
- viii. Enhance the role of local government in diseases outbreak response.



The virtual dialogue was structured in an open facilitated discussion focused on obtaining inputs and insights directed at the desired objectives.

National event was held on 29 September 2020 via virtual on Zoom Webinar with two sessions, political and technical sessions. The political session was honoured by Dr Joe Phaahla (Deputy Minister of Health) Dr Selva Mudaly (President of the International Federation of Environmental Health), Cllr Thembisile Nkadimeng President of the South African Local Government Association and Dr Zweli Mkhize (Minister of Health). The event was attended by 1500 participants and was regarded as the best ever considering that it was for the first time bringing in Minister of Health and Deputy Minister of Health in the same event of Environmental Health.

Dr. Zweli Mkhize used the opportunity to thank South Africa's Environmental Health Professionals (EHPs), saying the pandemic also reinforced the need for countries to pursue a more collaborative response.

He indicated that the science of environmental health is based on the premise that prevention is better than cure, as this profession is concerned with the key environmental factors that are at the heart of public health dynamics.

In his final remarks, he emphasized that hand hygiene, social distancing, the safe handling and sale of foodstuffs, environmental cleanliness, and the management of waste and human remains are also amongst environmental interventions government is concerned with currently in the context of COVID-19 prevention and response.

President of the International Federation of Environmental Health, Dr. Selva Mudaly says a healthy environment can increase the prevention of diseases in humans by a quarter. He called on South Africa's government to invest more resources into environmental health.

In his final remarks, Dr Selva Mudaly indicated that Environmental Health is also a section of public healthcare but it is often sidelined because as it stands, South Africa doesn't have sufficient numbers of environmental health practitioners according to international standards.





Stakeholders briefing



Piles of waste collected during the operation





MHS officials also prioritized education during the operation



Zoom Webinar Workshop on Covid-19 Food Safety and Risk Management

