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**MAKERERE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION (MUEHSA), UGANDA: REPORT ON WORLD
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT ON 26TH
SEPTEMBER 2025 AT KOMAMBOGA HEALTH CENTRE III, KAMPALA**

Theme: "Empowering Kampala for a Breathable Tomorrow"



*The Komamboga Health Centre III staff, Ms. Sylvia, the Forestry Officer at KCCA,
Tree Adoption Uganda team, students of MUEHSA and MEHSA after the tree planting
and health education sessions at Komamboga Health Centre III.*

Introduction

As part of the Breathe Kampala Campaign and in commemoration of the 2025 World Environmental Health Day, students from the Makerere University Environmental Health Students' Association (MUEHSA), joined by the Mulago Environmental Health Students' Association (MEHSA), conducted a community outreach at Komamboga



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Health Centre III on Friday, 26th September 2025. These were joined by Ms. Sylvia, the Forestry Officer at Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and a team from Tree Adoption Uganda (TAU). The entire team was warmly received by Dr. Daphne Akoth, the in-charge of Komamboga Health Centre III who consented to procession of the activities while offering guidance. The day's activities focused on health education and tree planting, aimed at raising awareness about air pollution and promoting environmental stewardship within the community.

The event followed a pre-World Environmental Health Day webinar held on 25th September, where experts and students reflected on the theme "Breathe Kampala, Breathe Africa: Youth, Science, and Health in the Fight for Clean Air." The outreach served as a practical follow-up to translate discussion into community action.

Objectives

- To sensitize the community about air pollution, its health impacts, and preventive measures.
- To demonstrate practical steps towards improving air quality through tree planting.
- To strengthen collaboration between students, KCCA, and community partners in promoting a cleaner, healthier Kampala.

Activities Conducted

1. Health Education Session

The health education session took place within the outpatient department (OPD) (20 both male and female), the postnatal ward, the Essential Programme on Immunization (EPI) which mothers and caretakers that had brought children for immunization (30 majority being female), first time mothers receiving antenatal services (50 prospective mothers) and a few health workers, at Komamboga Health Centre III.

Using the AirQo mobile application, students demonstrated how to measure air quality. The reading recorded that morning showed PM2.5 levels at 42.97 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, a figure nearly three times the World Health Organization's recommended limit of 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. This data

provided a strong foundation for discussion, emphasizing the real-time nature of air pollution exposure in the area.



Dr. Daphne Akoth, the in-charge of Komamboga Health Centre III (in clinical coat, introducing the team of students to mothers and caretakers in the EPI department prior to health education.

During the session, community members were educated on:

- The sources of air pollution such as open waste burning, use of charcoal and firewood, vehicle emissions, and nearby construction activities.
- The health effects of polluted air including respiratory infections, asthma, reduced lung function, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers like lung cancer.
- Vulnerable groups most affected particularly children, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic illnesses.



Ms. Jean Peace Achola of MUEHSA, sensitizing mothers and caretakers in the postnatal ward on Air Quality.

Participants were also guided on practical measures to minimize exposure and protect their families, including:

- Using cleaner cooking methods (improved stoves or gas instead of charcoal).
- Avoiding waste burning and promoting proper waste disposal.
- Ventilating homes and reducing time spent near busy roads especially when with children.
- Better cooking practices in well ventilated rooms with doors and windows open or cooking in the open.
- Participating in community greening efforts such as tree planting.



MUEHSA and MEHSA students sensitizing prospective mothers on Air Quality.

The session was highly interactive, with community members asking relevant questions with one of the most notable being, “How can we protect newborns from outdoor pollution?” This reflected genuine concern and engagement, particularly among mothers.

2. Tree Planting Activity

Another team of students together with representatives from Tree Adoption Uganda, under the guidance of the KCCA’s Landscape Unit’s Forestry Officer, planted trees

around Komamboga Health Centre III compound. The activity ran under the slogan “Planting Hope, Resilience, and a Healthier Future.”



Ms. Racheal Cynthia Mutuwa, MUEHSA chairperson (holding a tree seedling), Ms. Sylvia, Forestry Officer at KCCA (holding the hoe), Ms. Nisha from TAU (left) and the Publicity secretary of MEHSA (right), planting resilience, hope and a healthier tomorrow.

Together, the team planted 30 indigenous and ornamental trees within the facility’s premises for the start. The planted trees are expected to:

- Improve local air quality by reducing pollutant levels as health centres are designed to be places of healing.
- Provide shade for patients and health workers.
- Enhance the beauty and environmental resilience of the health facility.

Students actively participated in digging and planting, symbolizing a lasting contribution to both the health centre and the wider community especially in the fight against air pollution.



MUEHSA and MEHSA students during the tree planting session.

Key Partners and Support

The success of the day's activities was made possible through support from:

- Makerere University School of Public Health faculty and mentors including the MUEHSA Patron, Ms. Ruth Mubeezi, Prof. David Musoke, Dr. Samuel Etajak and Prof. Lynn Atuyambe.
- The Dean, Makerere University School of Public Health, Prof. Rhoda Wanyenze.
- Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) – Public Health and Landscape Units
- Tree Adoption Uganda
- Mulago Environmental Health Students' Association (MEHSA)
- The Community Environment Network (TCEN)
- Komamboga Health Centre III Administration and Staff

Observations and Reflections

The community members showed great enthusiasm and willingness to learn about the health risks of air pollution. Many appreciated the student-led approach, as it made scientific information relatable and actionable. The partnership with KCCA and Tree Adoption Uganda ensured that the environmental component was well-supported and sustainable.

This activity demonstrated that environmental health is not just learned in classrooms but it is experienced and practiced in communities. By integrating education, research, and action, the event embodied the true spirit of public health promotion.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Similar community outreaches be extended to other health facilities, schools around Kampala.
- Follow-up visits be conducted to monitor the growth and survival of the planted trees.

- Continuous air quality monitoring and community education be integrated into routine environmental health programs.
- Such outreaches should be designed in a way that more males are involved so that they get to benefit by acquiring the critical information shared during these sessions.
- Students should be supported more to carry out such activities as they not only contribute to community well-being and health promotion but also build their confidence and experience in working within communities.

Conclusion

The World Environmental Health Day activities held at Komamboga Health Centre III were a success, blending knowledge dissemination with tangible environmental action. Through health education and tree planting, students reinforced the message that clean air is a basic human right and a shared responsibility.



Dr. Daphne Akoth, the in-charge of Komamboga Health Centre III (in clinical coat), students from MUEHSA and MEHSA after the tree planting and health education sessions.

