



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
MakSPH

COMMEMORATING THE WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY (WEHD)

EMPOWERING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY 2024 AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH



Introduction

On September 26, 2024, Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH) commemorated World Environmental Health Day (WEHD), drawing together students, faculty, environmental health professionals, and key stakeholders from Uganda and beyond. The theme of the event, "Creating Resilient Communities through Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation," provided a critical platform for participants to exchange knowledge and explore interdisciplinary approaches to environmental health, particularly in the context of climate change. The event, which leveraged technology to include both in-person and online participants, offered opportunities for real-time engagement across different regions, broadening the reach and impact of the discussions.

Welcoming Remarks

The day's activities commenced with Nichodemus Agumenawe, Chairperson of the Makerere University Environmental Health Students' Association (MUEHSA), offering welcoming remarks. Agumenawe highlighted the significance of the event in raising awareness about the vital role environmental health plays in climate change resilience. He stated, "World Environmental Health Day provides a chance to strengthen our efforts toward safeguarding vulnerable communities, preparing them for disasters, and ensuring that the impacts of climate change are addressed comprehensively." His introduction set a collaborative tone for the event, encouraging participants to actively engage with the day's themes.

Opening Remarks

The opening remarks were delivered by Dr. David Musoke, President-Elect of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH). Dr. Musoke framed the event within a global context, emphasizing the importance of international partnerships in addressing environmental health challenges. He noted, "Environmental health professionals are on the frontlines of combating climate change. It is through global cooperation and knowledge exchange that we can build resilient communities capable of withstanding these ever-increasing challenges." His remarks underscored the importance of collective action, and he encouraged participants to foster collaborations that transcend national boundaries.

Keynote Address

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. John Bosco Isunju, a leading expert in climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR). His presentation focused on the intricate link between climate change and the increasing frequency of natural disasters. Dr. Isunju stressed the need for proactive disaster preparedness, especially at the community level. He advocated for equipping local populations with the necessary resources and knowledge to mitigate risks and adapt to climate challenges. "Communities must take ownership of their resilience," he said. "With the right tools, they can be at the forefront of disaster preparedness and climate action." His address resonated with the event's theme, providing a comprehensive framework for youth and community engagement in resilience-building initiatives.

Regional Insights

Dr. Moeti Kgware, Head of Community Studies at Durban University of Technology, presented regional insights from South Africa, focusing on youth-led disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation initiatives. Dr. Kgware shared case studies on how South African youth are taking the lead in climate resilience efforts, particularly through innovative community-based solutions. He also showcased a climate change reporting app designed to enhance disaster preparedness, demonstrating the power of technology in addressing environmental health challenges. Dr. Kgware's presentation provided a practical example of how youth involvement and digital tools can be integrated to foster resilient communities.

Institutional Briefs

The event also featured institutional briefs, where representatives from various environmental health institutions shared insights into their local efforts toward climate resilience. Bridget Ahumuza, Vice Chairperson of MUEHSA, represented Makerere University School of Public Health and highlighted the university's initiatives in promoting youth engagement in climate resilience. She emphasized the need for continuous advocacy

and sustainable behavior change within communities to combat climate change. Ahumuza's call to action underscored the power of education in empowering individuals and communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change

Following this, Ambassador Jimoh Kehinde Bashir, General Secretary of the National Association of Environmental Health Scientists of Nigeria (NAEHSON), presented Nigeria's efforts in empowering youth for sustainable practices. Ambassador Bashir called for stronger regional collaboration and encouraged youth across Africa to take a leading role in promoting environmentally friendly policies and practices. He noted, "Our young people are our greatest resource. By equipping them with the right knowledge and tools, we can turn the tide against climate change and create a sustainable future."

Mentorship and Youth Empowerment

Ms. Ruth Mubeezi, Patron of MUEHSA, took the stage to discuss the critical role of mentorship and youth empowerment in climate resilience efforts. She emphasized the need for experienced professionals to mentor young environmental health practitioners, ensuring that they are well-prepared to address the complex challenges posed by climate change. "The youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow—they are the leaders of today," Ms. Mubeezi remarked. She encouraged ongoing mentorship programs to equip young people with the skills and confidence needed to lead climate action initiatives.

Call to Action and Launch of #DoSomething

The event concluded with Mr. Nsubuga Raymond Moses delivering a powerful call to action. He urged participants to take tangible steps toward improving environmental health and disaster preparedness in their communities. In conjunction with this, he officially launched the social media campaign #DoSomething, a call to individuals and organizations alike to actively participate in environmental health initiatives. The campaign aims to mobilize action and create a global conversation around the importance of environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

MUEHSA Activities for WEHD 2024

MUEHSA marked World Environmental Health Day with a variety of activities aligned with the event's theme. These included the production of video scripts on key topics such as climate change and waste segregation and management within the School of Public Health. The videos were shared across social media platforms, contributing to a wider online advocacy campaign aimed at raising awareness of environmental health issues. This was further enhanced by a Fire Safety Drill conducted in collaboration with the Department of Fire Prevention and Rescue Services, which provided practical training in disaster preparedness for students and staff. Given the growing use of

renewable energy systems and increased fire risks associated with climate change, such training is crucial for ensuring community preparedness and safety.

Appreciations

The MUEHSA executive would like with heartfelt indebtedness, thank the Makerere University School of Public Health for hosting the event and supporting all related activities. The MUEHSA fraternity, including the alumni, is well acknowledged for her unwavering efforts in organizing and facilitating the event. Special thanks is extended to the online and in-person participants for ensuring that the event was a true hybrid celebration of environmental health. In a more special way, would like to mention the physical presence

Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences (UIAHMS) for their engagement and The Federation of Environmental Health Students of Uganda (FEHSU) for supporting the advocacy initiatives; for always being there for us.

Conclusion

World Environmental Health Day 2024 at Makerere University School of Public Health was a resounding success, bringing together diverse perspectives and fostering meaningful discussions on building resilient communities in the face of climate change. From insightful keynote addresses to practical demonstrations of community engagement and youth leadership, the event highlighted the vital role of environmental health professionals in driving sustainable change. With the launch of **#DoSomething** and the commitment to mentorship and collaboration, the event set the foundation for ongoing efforts to create a more resilient, environmentally conscious future.

Key Takeaways:

- Unity and collaboration are critical in addressing climate challenges.
- Education and mentorship play vital roles in building capacity in environmental health.
- Community-led initiatives and innovative technologies can drive climate resilience.
- Practical engagement and action are essential for preparing communities for future environmental risks.

Recommendations for Future Action.

1. Establish ongoing forums for knowledge-sharing and collaboration.
2. Develop community-based projects and initiatives.
3. Integrate environmental health education into school curricula.
4. Support research and development of innovative solutions.

Click on the links below for MUEHSA Activities for WEHD 2024

<https://x.com/maksph/status/1839637216798052427?s=46>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/YcpUxgdxRakBMjCk8>

<https://x.com/muehsa1/status/1838886060601839928?s=46>

<https://x.com/muehsa1/status/1838599463570452845?s=46>

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