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# NEWSLETTER

*International Federation of Environmental Health*

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January 2012 Edition

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## JANUARY EDITION OF THE IFEH NEWSLETTER

### **Happy New Year/Bonne Annee/Is-Sena t- Tajba/Feliz Ano Nuevo/selamat tahun baru/laimingu Naujuju Metu to all Members of the IFEH**

Welcome to the January 2012 IFEH Newsletter. On behalf of the Council and the Board of the Federation may I take this opportunity to wish all IFEH members around the world a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Last year brought many challenges for the environmental health profession and I am sure 2012 will be no different. The current financial problems facing many countries around the world shows no sign of improvement. Inevitably if this continues there is a danger that the financial situation will have an effect on many public health initiatives, with potentially drastic consequences. The World Health Organisation recently reported a fall of nearly 40% in the number of deaths from malaria in the last decade. A new report said that one-third of the 108 countries where malaria was endemic were on course to eradicate the disease within 10 years. Apart from the human costs the WHO estimates that malaria causes significant economic losses, and can decrease gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 1.3% in countries with high levels of transmission. In the worst-affected countries, the disease accounts for: up to 40% of public health expenditures; 30% to 50% of inpatient hospital admissions; and up to 60% of outpatient health clinic visits. It is important therefore, in these difficult times, that investment in improving public health is maintained at all costs.

The sad news reached me recently concerning the death of a stalwart of the Federation, Terry Moody in Christchurch, New Zealand at the beginning of December. Terry was a member of the New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health and one of their representatives on the Council of the IFEH. Terry had an early career in the merchant navy followed by a very long career in Environmental Health that included 44 years at the Christchurch City Council. Terry's background and roles at the Council were largely based on environmental health, including managing the Council's Environmental Health Department in the '80s and '90s. He retired only recently. Terry was known for his knowledge of environmental health and his pride in representing his profession. He will be sadly missed by colleagues and friends around the world.

## Membership News

### **The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland**

(REHIS) held their Annual Awards Ceremony and Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh on the 17 and

18 November. Paul Bradley of West Lothian Council was elected President in place of Alistair Thomson and Bernard Forteach and Colin Wallace were elected to the posts of Senior and Junior Vice President respectively.

### **Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)**

CIEH has completed a review and reorganisation of its governance arrangements and has installed a new President for the next three years. Janet Russell, formerly Director of Environment at Kirklees Council, replaces Stephen Battersby who served in the position from 2008. Bob Foster has completed his term as Chairman of Council and Andy Statham has been appointed Chair of the Interim Board of Trustees. The new Board of Trustees (Nine in number plus the President) will take up their positions in the New Year along with the newly formed Assembly of Representatives and its Boards and Committees.

There have also been a number of staff changes with the retirement of Tim Everrett, Andrew Griffiths and Dave Denton.

### **Malawi's National Annual Environmental Health review meeting**

The 2011 National Annual Environmental Health Services review meeting was held between 2 and 4 November 2011 at Chikho Hotel in the Kasungu district. Kasungu district is located to the northern part of central region of Malawi, about 180 kilometres north of the capital city, Lilongwe. The meeting was attended by over 56 Environmental Health staff from 23 of 28 districts of the country. Annual Environmental Health Services review meetings are organised to review progress made during the year in the provision of preventive health services, sharing achievements, best practices and experience on challenges and mitigation measures.



However, the 2011 review meeting, which was officially opened by the Deputy Director for Preventive Health Services responsible for Environmental Health Services took a slightly different approach. It focused mostly on bringing awareness on the National Environmental Health Policy, which awaits approval from Office of the President and Cabinet, to staff as one way of mainstreaming in the rest of preventive health services. The meeting, which was facilitated by the Environmental Health Section of the Ministry of Health in Malawi, outlined the general overview of the policy and then looked critically at each of the following thematic areas - Food Hygiene and Safety, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Disease Control and Health and Safety. Further information is available from the MEHA website [www.malawieha.org](http://www.malawieha.org).

### **Report on European Federation of Environmental Health (EFEH) Meeting Belfast – November 2011**

The meeting was hosted by the Northern Ireland Branch of the CIEH in Belfast and there were representatives from Denmark, Portugal, Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Germany, Scotland and Holland. The meeting was opened with a welcome from Jennifer Parkinson, Chair NI CIEH branch.

The meeting then received three presentations. The first presentation was from Jennifer who outlined how Environmental Health is delivered in Northern Ireland.

Jennifer covered the Local Government Framework of NI which includes 26 Local Councils with Environmental Health operating in five groups. Belfast City is large enough to be a group on its own and another four Groups cover the remaining 25 councils. This Group arrangement is required because the smaller Councils do not have the capacity to deliver an effective service locally and this arrangement allows expertise to be developed across a wider area.

The CIEH region in NI have approx 570 members for a population of 1.7 million and provide four CPD events per year plus three free CPD updates which are similar to which we provide in Scotland. Attendance at conference and courses/events is however falling due to economic climate and work/personal life pressures on individual members. The CIEH is looking to improve Chief Officer Awareness and engagement with members and support to students. They are looking next year for Chief Officers to release staff to attend training events and get them to appreciate the benefits of such attendance.

The second presentation was from Gary McFarlane on Sustainability.

Gary suggested that Sustainable Development should be at the heart of tackling health inequalities and Environmental Health should be finding ways to contribute to this agenda as sustainability is about the economy, society and the environment.

In terms of climate change it is forecast that global temperature levels should be no greater than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrialisation levels otherwise we will experience greater adverse effects within the environment. It was also suggested that China and not USA is now the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases but both countries are at a standoff on taking measures to reduce emission levels.

Climate change is now seen as the greatest public health threat of the 21st Century and food is at the heart of the sustainability challenge. Global food demand is estimated to double between now and 2050 as the world population increases and at the same time the number of farmers in the UK is decreasing and the UK is becoming more dependent on imports, therefore becoming less self sufficient. Some examples of this lack of self sufficiency were discussed including the statistic that the UK imports 44,000 tonnes of boneless chicken per year while exporting 51 tonnes of boneless chicken. Using energy and creating greenhouse gases for the “status quo” is something that needs to be addressed. It was suggested that Environmental Health act as champions both internally, on how we deliver our services, and externally in our relationship with Government, Business etc.

Our final presentation was from Kati Gruenwald on the E coli Outbreak in Germany.

Kati described the Escherichia coli (EHEC) Outbreak in Germany and gave an outline of the response to the outbreak. She outlined the sampling regime which included taking samples from private houses and kitchens. The outbreak resulted in 50 fatalities and 3,000 cases with 800 cases developing haemolytic-uraemic syndrome. The EHEC characteristics were unusual and virulent and had a higher attack rate on young females which may have been as a result of diet preferences in this part of the population. Some additional cases were initially included in the outbreak but were later found to be Norovirus



The difficulty in tracing the source was initially due to cases not remembering that they had eaten bean sprouts and it was only when the second outbreak occurred in France was the link with bean sprouts identified as the source.

Initially the source was thought to be Spanish cucumber and their trade collapsed as a result of wrong identification. It also caused Holland a major problem with exports being cancelled and cost the Dutch economy 30€ million per week.

Following the presentations which were very informative we moved to member updates. Not surprisingly the common factor was the reducing budgets due to the economic climate and the challenge to continue to provide a service with reducing resources.

At the end of the meeting ENVINA, the association of our Danish members, agreed to take over as Chair and Secretary of EFEH for the next two years. Henning Hansen was elected as Chairman and Peter Wade as Secretary.

### **Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI)**

As reported in the October issue of the IFEH Newsletter, since June 2010 CIPHI has partnered with Plan Canada to raise funds for clean water and improved health in Sierra Leone. Plan Canada is one of the world's oldest and largest international development agencies, working in partnership with millions of people around the world to end global poverty. Not for profit, independent and inclusive of all faiths and cultures, Plan Canada has only one agenda: to improve the lives of children. CIPHI's planned target was \$10,000 and this amount was passed at the end of November, one month before the appeal officially closed on 31 December 2011. Well done to all members of CIPHI whose tremendous support will provide clean water and improve the health of children residing in Sierra Leone.

### **The Africa Academy for Environmental Health holds another successful workshop to develop research capacity in female academics teaching environmental health in Africa**

The Africa Academy for Environmental Health continued in its objective to advance the science and practice of environmental health in Africa recently when it hosted 13 women from seven countries at a workshop in Blantyre, Malawi. Funded by the Association of African Universities Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiative, the Gender Parity Portfolio of the Academy is seeking to increase research capacity in environmental health. This most recent five day workshop which ran from 7th – 11th November 2011 targeted the issues specifically affecting female academics in the initiation and development of their research careers. The workshop hosted 13 academics from Kenya (Kenyatta University and Moi University), Uganda (Makerere University), Tanzania (Muhimbili University), Zambia (Lusaka Apex Medical University), Ethiopia (Jimma University), Ghana (University of Ghana) and Nigeria (University of Ibadan). An exciting week of training, networking and collaboration between academics and facilitators from the University of Malawi – Polytechnic allowed for little rest on either side. Not only did the workshop facilitate training to provide direction for research careers, but also developed collaborative research ideas for multilateral south-south partnerships, discussed good academic practice across the various participating institutions to share experience, and expanded and consolidated the African Women Environmental Health Network (AWEHN). One participant indicated that “I feel inspired to have met young academics undertaking their PhDs and now feel like pushing myself in my research career” The AWEHN has now established an electronic network for all female academics and practitioners to collaborate and share experiences. It is accessible on <http://aah-network.ning.com/group/african-womenenvironmental-health-network-aweahn>

All materials and documents developed as part of and supporting the MRCI grant are available on [www.aah.net](http://www.aah.net)



The IFEH Council will meet on Monday 21 May and the Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 22 May. The Council of the IFEH would encourage all member organisations and others interested in environment and health to attend the next World Congress in Vilnius next May. Anyone interested in presenting a paper or registering for the Congress should note the following dates:-

**Congress dates:**

22-27 May 2012

**Deadline for abstract submission:**

15 February 2012

**Early bird registration until:**

1 March 2012

**Finally** the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in April 2012. If you have any news for the Newsletter from your organisation please send this to me by the first week in March. My thanks go to Rod House, Andrew Forteath and Henning Hansen who have assisted in the production of this issue.



**If you wish to feature any news from your organisation in the next IFEH Newsletter, please contact: Bernard Forteath, Honorary Public Relations Officer, Email: [pro@ifeh.org](mailto:pro@ifeh.org)**