

**BEING THE TEXT OF THE CONCERNED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GRADUATES DURING THE
CELEBRATION OF WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY (WEHD) ON 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2013 AT THE
COLLEGE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY, YABA, LAGOS.**

We join the rest of the world in celebrating the World Environmental Health Day (WEHD) with the theme 'Emerging Environmental Health Risks and Challenges for Tomorrow. The World Environmental Health Day (WEHD) was declared by the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) in 2010 to inculcate and promote the culture of environmental consciousness and friendliness amongst every age group, children and adolescents, and to inform and educate the public on the significance of a clean and healthy environment in the spirit of promoting the adoption of practices that are environmentally compatible.

Besides the advice of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) encouraging the celebration of World Environmental Health Day (WEHD) worldwide, the increased number of avoidable undesirable incidents attributable to poor sanitation makes this celebration compelling and essential.

According to World Health Organization, Environmental Health addresses all environmental (physical, chemical and biological) factors external to a person, and all the related factors impacting behaviors. It encompasses the assessment and control of those environmental factors that can potentially affect health and its targeted towards preventing diseases and creation of health-supportive environments.

Environmental Health Risks and Challenges are wide spread environmental health hazards resulting from inaction or/and action of man, potentially degenerating environmental media with attendant long and short term public health effects. Such effects can be localized, regional or global with serious socio-economic drawbacks.

Therefore, emerging environmental health risks and challenges are those that are coming into existence because of changes in the environment, thus increase their prevalence across various eco-systems.

While most countries especially those in the developing world like Nigeria are still struggling to address the existing environmental health problems, new challenges and risks are emerging which require complex solutions. The causes of these can be traced to:

1. Advances in technology.
2. Population growth.
3. Increase in industrialization.
4. Climate change.

Lagos State being the most populous in Nigeria with over 18 million people and the commercial nerve of the federation with huge industrial investments is expected to experience the following challenges:

- Climate change.
- Pollution of water resources, air and soil.
- Poor sanitation and personal hygiene.
- Inefficient waste management.
- Proliferation of second hand (used) electronic products.
- Chemical misuse.
- Food poisoning.
- Fouled indoor air/ indoor smoke.
- Sick building syndrome.

- Malaria.
- Flooding.
- Building collapse.

The Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency Mr Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) has however done exceedingly well to ensure environmental sustainability.

Rapid development of Lagos can be traced to the welcoming of ideas from stakeholders by those at the helms of affairs. We hereby suggest the following solutions to the aforementioned challenges:

FLOODING

The state government has done commendably well on construction of roads, drainages and canals. Many existing drainages are mostly accumulated with silt, with reduced water carrying capacity. This is attributable to absence of man-hole on concrete drive-in into some estates and communities. This further disallows willing and well meaning citizens access to carry out cleanliness and desilting in drainages desirably. Drainage maintenance is jointly the responsibility of the government and the public. It is therefore advised that reasonably sized man-hole with removable slabs be provided on concrete drive-in into estates and communities for easy removal of silt and rubbish, and ensuring optimum performance of drainages.

INCESSANT BUILDING COLLAPSE

Collapse of houses/building both existing and those under construction are gradually becoming an epidemicity in Lagos State. The first storey building in our country is still in Badagry sound and strong. Records of avoidable building collapse, killing people and damaging properties within the state are due to deviation from standard practices. To nib this menace in the bud, there should be a re-introduction of professional synergy amongst the Environmental Health Officers, Civil Engineers and the Town Planners to ensure strict adherence to various buildings laws/regulations and there should be constant monitoring of manufacturers of building materials, e.g block moulding industries should comply with the standard sand –cement ratio 1:2 -1:3

LAYING OF WATER PIPES ALONG DRAINAGES

The recent move by the state government to ensure safe delivery of adequate potable water is well thought and timely. In attaining this objective, water conduit pipes should be laid away from drainages and other areas of potential health risks. This will go a long way in reducing the incidence rate of water borne diseases such as cholera, poliomyelitis, dysentery, typhoid etc

VACANT/UNDEVELOPED LANDS

Undeveloped lands around the state had encouraged insanitary habits such as indiscriminate dumping, burning of refuse and open defecation, consequently reduces the aesthetics of the state. All land owners should therefore be advised to do proper environmental maintenance of their properties.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL INTO WATER BODIES

Sewage dislodgers were recently disallowed from disposing sewage into water bodies across the state ,this we are sure is not unconnected to increased cholera incidence rate and its obvious contradiction to the principles of water sanitation. It will be in order if we infer that there is disequilibrium in the ecosystem of the affected water bodies ,altering biological activities ,owning to increased organic matter ,biochemical oxygen demand(BOD),chemical oxygen demand(COD),turbidity, microorganisms, and

reduced dissolved oxygen(DO).While we advise that status –quo be maintained in sewage disposal due to its localized nature ,we implore the state government to provide central sewage treatment plant for safer disposal of sewage.

ROLL BACK MOSQUITO

Mosquito had remained a perennial enemy of the people, we should wage a very serious war against mosquitoes in Lagos state, we should fall back to the basis, rolling back malaria had not been effective and in fact it's not encompassing, mosquito is also the biological vector for other diseases like filariasis, dengue fever, yellow fever etc whose management require huge capital from our limited resources hence there is recourse that the state government should provide all necessities in altering all the potential breeding sites of mosquitoes.

PROLIFERATION OF USED ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

Lagos has the highest ports ,through which copious electrical and electronic items find their way in, these imported scraps soon end up in various dumpsites, where they are picked and crudely recycled by scavengers, a recent research on this by Professor Osibanjo of the department of chemistry, Olabisi Onabanjo University, explained that the environmental media(Air, land, water, food) of lagos are laden with heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium, arsenic, with potential toxicity on public health .We advise that the state government should not relent in its campaign in regulating the influx of these electronic junks and mitigating its attendant public health effects .

RECENT RESETTLEMENT OF SOME PEOPLE BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT

The recent resettlement by the lagos state government of some people back to their respective states is a welcoming idea from environmental health perspective. People without a place of abode pose serious environmental health risks viz avis open defecation, indiscriminate dumping and burning of refuse, illegal construction of slums along water courses, of which these activities have been found to be the causers of emerging environmental health risks and challenges

RECRUITMENT

It is no longer news that Environmental health challenges are escalating and every government is preparing for tomorrow by protecting its territory from deterioration through formulation of relevant environmental policies. Having best policies in place without provision for practical implementation is tantamount to having none. Government at all levels are evidently in dearth of Environmental Health Officers, hence, we advise the massive recruitment of qualified Environmental Health Officers, who are the change agents needed in providing and maintaining the desired health-supportive environment through various actions in detecting public health nuisances via:

- House-to-house inspection
- Surveillance of diseases
- Inspection of water treatment plant
- Effective waste management
- Food hygiene and safety
- Approval of building in line with building laws/regulation specifications
- Integrated pest management and many more.

Thanks for listening.

Signed:

JAMES ABRAHAM OLAMILEKAN

BASHORUN NURENI OLADIMEJI

LASISI MURITALA ADEMOLA

AYOADE SAHEED ADELEKE

FRIDAY ISAAC JEREMIAH

WAHAB AREMU JAMIU

AND OTHERS