Beyond the Classroom:
MUEHSA and the Kalerwe Market Community Mark World Environmental Health Day

Kalerwe, Kampala, Uganda | 26 September 2026

The day began with a clean-up, but it became much more than that.

On 26th September 2026, members of the Makerere University Environmental Health Students' Association (MUEHSA), joined by students from the Mulago Environmental Health Students' Association (MEHSA), went to Kalerwe Market to commemorate World Environmental Health Day through community education, with a focus on proper solid waste management.

The day coincided with Uganda's National Cleaning Day, giving the students an opportunity to join market vendors and other community members in cleaning the market before beginning the education activities but first, came an introduction to the place they had come to visit.

Figure 1 Students of MUEHSA at Bivamuntuyo market to commemorate World Environmental Health Day 2026.

Getting to know the community

The students were welcomed by the market's leadership Hon. Suleiman, the market Chairperson who shared some of the market's history. One detail stood out: what many people refer to as Kalerwe Market is not a single market, but several markets situated within the same area. The particular market the students visited was Bivamuntuyo Market.

It was an important introduction. Before discussing environmental health with the people who work there, the students had the opportunity to learn about the place, its organisation and the people responsible for its day-to-day running.

The clean-up brought everyone into practical action. After joining the market community in collecting rubbish, the students turned their attention to one of the places central to the day's discussions: the waste collection point.

Here, conversations about solid waste management became connected to the everyday realities of running a market.

Figure 2 The students speaking to the market vendors on proper solid waste management

Conversations that went both ways

The outreach focused particularly on people who prepare and sell food. Discussions covered the separation of organic and inorganic waste, safe food handling, hygiene around cooking areas, and the dangers of using polythene bags to cook or store food. Risks like diarrhoeal diseases and cancer were highlighted.

These were not simply messages delivered to a crowd. Market users had questions of their own. They wanted to understand how they could improve their health and hygiene, and the students were ready to engage with their concerns.

Just as importantly, the students listened.

They learned about the rules already in place within the market, the measures people were taking to maintain hygiene, and the improvements the community itself believed were possible. The exchange offered an opportunity for students to share their environmental health knowledge while learning from the people whose daily work and experiences shape the market environment.

That mutual exchange was one of the most valuable parts of the visit. Environmental health education is not only about telling people what to do; it is also about understanding what they already do, the challenges they face and the solutions they see for their own community.

A clean market, a shared responsibility

One encouraging observation was that the market was not dirty as the students might have expected. After the clean-up, the environment was clean, offering a reminder that the state of a public space is shaped by the actions of the people who use and care for it.

The experience was not about students arriving to rescue a community. It was about working alongside market users, sharing knowledge and recognising the efforts already being made to maintain a healthy environment.

For MUEHSA and MEHSA, the visit brought environmental health beyond the classroom and into a space where waste management, food hygiene and everyday health practices meet. For the students, it was also an opportunity to practise community engagement, listen to local perspectives and appreciate the importance of working with communities rather than simply speaking to them.

The day concluded with a hand-hygiene activity, bringing the outreach to a close with a practical reminder of the importance of hygiene in protecting health.

Figure 3 The handwashing demonstration after the clean-up and community education in the market

Acknowledgement

MUEHSA is grateful to the Bivamuntuyo Market leadership and community for welcoming the students and sharing their experiences, and to Mulago Environmental Health Students' Association for joining the outreach, the association patron Mrs. Ruth Mubeezi and mentor Dr. David Musoke for their support.

World Environmental Health Day offered a reason to come together. The conversations, shared clean-up and willingness to learn from one another made the visit meaningful.

Clean Market, Healthy Community, Better Future!

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