

2022 The Network Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) Virtual Regional Conference for Africa

Africa Holds its first ever regional TUFH conference.

The 2022 TUFH Virtual Regional Conference for Africa was hosted by The Network: TUFH, TUFH partnered with the University of the Western Cape (South Africa), Student Network Organization (SNO), African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREHealth), African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) (Uganda), University of Cape Town (South Africa), Busitema University (Uganda), Nelson Mandela University (South Africa), University of Kwazulu-Natal (South Africa) and, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya). The conference was through the ZOOM platform. The conference run from 17th May to 19th May 2022.

TUFH is an international, interprofessional, and intergenerational organization that fosters equitable community-oriented health services, education and research with the goal of improving health locally and globally.

This is the first ever regional TUFH Conference. TUFH has strategically decided to meet the needs of their members by helping them act locally and think globally. The main theme was "Building Better Together in Africa" with 4 Subthemes:

- COVID 19 Pandemic; Lessons Learned & Way Forward.
- Developing Africa's Health Workforce.
- Technology to Improve Healthcare and Education.
- Interprofessional Education and Team Based Care for Africa.

It was attended by 70 participants with the largest numbers coming from Uganda and South Africa. There were 3 keynote speeches, 2 workshops and numerous oral presentations.

At the opening ceremony Dr. Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde, the Secretary General of TUFH highlighted the fact that Africa has over the years, been well represented at TUFH through many Universities and organizations. She noted that TUFH had grown and is now not limited to annual symposium but have many other interesting activities throughout the years that are beneficial to the members. These include TUFH academies and fellowships, in partnership with TUFH 2021 Fellows and Global Content Leaders, TUFH curated and launched 16 TUFH Faculty and Student Academies in 2022 on topics such as Social Accountability, Interprofessional Education and Team Based Care, Social Determinants of Health, Innovation, Active Learning Communities, Indigenous Health to mention but a few. She also informed them that TUFH had adapted the ISAT-Institutional Self-Assessment Social Accountability Tool and in partnership with Pan American Health Organization, Beyond Flexner Alliance, THEnet, and Global Consensus for Social Accountability had launched the tool and guidelines for Institutional Self Assessments and published the profiles of the leading 9 institutions. In addition, symposium and workshops are being held on different topics. She also talked about the Education for Health (EFH)

Journal which is a peer reviewed journal for TUFH as well as the Social Innovation Journal which is mainly for sharing best practices that may not necessarily fit in EFH. She urged members to take

advantage of these activities. She informed them that this will all culminate into the TUFH 2022 conference in Vancouver, BC, Canada with a theme "Moving Forward Together: Unity for Health for All": August 16-19, 2022 and she urged them to be there.

At the end of the conference a way forward was formulated that included ensuring building on the synergy created from the conference, preparing to share mentorship across Africa, prepare to share institutional collaborative experiences from Africa. TUFH Africa was requested to promote capacity building through South-South, North-South collaboration and to specifically create collaboration with other organisations with a similar vision like The Africa Interprofessional Education Network (AfriPEN) and AFREhealth. Building on the success of SNO Africa, TUFH Africa was encouraged to develop action plans and create committees to execute /implement ideas generated from the brainstorming session and also harness the expertise from the sub regional hubs, Eastern, Western and Southern Africa. The need for strengthening evidence-based practice through collaboration was highlighted as well as creating interprofessional teams beyond medical students. Therefore, intensify efforts and advocate and enhance the capacity of faculty and students on the topic of Interprofessional Education and collaborative practice. This could be done by creating contacts through the country representatives. Break language barriers by accommodating the Franco and Lusophone countries was also put across as a way of ensuring inclusion. The need to create more awareness of the vast resources that TUFH provides and utilize them was fortified.

Lessons learnt from the conference included, the need for Africa to have a Health Workforce from and for underserved communities by having quotas specifically for students from underserved communities in Health professions education and training. The need to focus on community health workers and optimizing their training should not be neglected and they therefore should⁸ be considered as part of the health workforce. It was noted that community engagement is central to Primary Health care and Universal Health Coverage. That South to South, North to south and public private partnerships are key to better health in Africa. That TUFH Africa should work with the media, understand the Africa Union (AU) agenda 2063 and the WHO Regional office activities and devise ways of working with them.

It was noted that faculty and students perceive Interprofessional implementation in Health Profession Education differently. The need to collaborate intentionally across the different African countries so as to better understand IPECP in Africa was agreed on. The production and dissemination of Africa owned information across disciplines was emphasized.

There is a need to deal with the equity and inequality issues appropriately, this includes the asymmetries between the professions across the different professions. Health professions and institutions need a stronger presence in society through proactive engagement and partnering with social actors.

All in all it was a successful event.

Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde is the Secretary General of the Network Towards Unity For Health (TUFH).