

Building Global Health Capacity in the African Region: Leveraging the AFREhealth-CUGH Partnership



Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde reports on the AFREhealth CUGH Working Group Satellite at the CUGH 2023 Conference.

CUGH held its first in-person conference since 2019, in Washington DC, USA April 14-16, 2023. It was a unique and exciting event. The theme was “Global Health at a Crossroads: Equity, Climate Change and Microbial Threats”. There were 7 subthemes. The program included an outstanding list of sessions, addressing a wide variety of contemporary global health, environmental and development challenges, delivered in an interactive environment. It was attended by over 2,000 scientists, students and implementers from academia, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government and the private sector ready to learn and collaborate to address some of the pressing challenges our world faces. A wide range of medical and non-medical disciplines were represented throughout the virtual and in-person pre-conference satellite sessions and the conference itself. There was a superb array of speakers from across disciplines and around the world in attendance. (<https://www.cugh2023.org/>)

A virtual satellite session organized by the AFREhealth CUGH Working group (ACWG) was held on April 5 2023, 9-12am EST, the title was “Building Global Health Capacity in the African Region: Leveraging the AFREhealth-CUGH Partnership. AFREhealth is an interdisciplinary health professional group that works with CUGH and other stakeholders to improve the quality of health care in Africa through research, education, and capacity building. This interactive session was given as a series of short talks followed by a moderated panel discussion. The role of AFREHealth in promotion of global health curriculum in Africa was explored and specific examples of Global North-South collaboration and South-South collaborations were shared. The session was moderated by Kathryn Chu, Director for the Centre for Global Surgery, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde, the President of AFREhealth spoke about the history of the ACWG partnership giving a narrative of when it started and the activities that it had conducted over the years. At the end of her presentation, she asked member to discuss how African institutions can leverage this partnership to improve global health training in Africa?

David Muganzi Jolly, President of the AFREhealth Student Community presented on the role of students in promoting global health in African institutions including how African students could participate and improve global health capacity in Africa.

Francis Omaswa, Former Executive Director for the African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation gave a presentation on “Mutual Learning

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in Global Health: Leveraging our Strengths” . He noted that in Africa using clinical acumen, that is using your hands and senses to examine patients was still the main way of making a diagnosis and he noted that those in a high-tech world could learn a lot from the African clinical techniques. He also highlighted the need to advance and share the advances in digital health. He urged Africans to take ownership and responsibility for their own global health agenda.

Abebe Bekele, Dean of University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda talked about “African Collaborative Training Initiatives: The College of Surgeons of East & Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) example”. He expounded on how COSECSA had developed into a successful Africa led-Africa surgical education/ training collaborative that had trained over 790 surgeons in the East, Central and south African region. He also said that 88.85% of these were retained in areas where they were most needed and that this has contributed to the advancement of Global surgery. He pointed out that this was through a South-South and North collaboration. Indicating that these collaborations were important for improving population health.

Quentin Eichbaum, the Director of Pathology Global Health Programs, Vanderbilt University Medical Center presented work on a “Global Health survey, what does global health mean in a postcolonial world?” He noted that knowledge generated in HICs defines practices and informs thinking to the detriment of knowledge systems in LMICs. He discussed how often research partnerships benefit the better-resourced partner. He then talked about colonialism, medicine, and global health education. Lastly Andrew Dykens, an Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Illinois, Chicago gave a practical demonstration of a capacity building platform that has been developed by CUGH in collaboration with AFREhealth. The platform has four primary functions: (1) to make it easy for universities, institutions, governments, other development actors, and individuals (especially in low-income nations) to post and connect to the trainers and curricula they need across biomedical and non-biomedical disciplines; (2) to enable organizations with these training and mentoring assets to share them with institutions, universities, governments, and individuals that may need them; (3) facilitate connections between research partners in many fields, and (4) strengthen the translation of research and the field of translation and implementation research.

These presentations were followed by a discussion that was moderated by Kathryn Chu. It was a successful interactive session.