

17 March 2015 - The WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (WHO/CEHA) with Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) convened a workshop on Health and Climate Change at JUST in Irbid on 11 March, 2015. The workshop was held under the patronage of the Vice President, Professor Ahmed M. Elbetieha and was organized by a research team led by Dr Yousef Khader, Dean of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences. WHO was represented by Dr A. Basel Al-Yousfi, Director of CEHA; Mr Hamed Bakir, Coordinator of Environmental Health Interventions; Mr Mazen Malkawi, Advisor for Environmental Health Exposure; and Dr Rola Al-Emam and Engineer Sanad Nawar, project specialists.

The objective of the workshop aimed at raising awareness of and stimulate discussion on the adverse health impacts of climate change and air pollution among staff and students in the schools of applied medical sciences, medicine and pharmacy.

The workshop programme included introductory presentations on health and climate change, air quality and health, the effects of climate change on allergies, health representation in the National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by countries of the Region, and results of a survey conducted by the team to assess knowledge and awareness of medical students at JUST on the health impacts of climate change.

Key messages of the workshop included:

- Climate change is a reality that has been observed and will worsen in the future.
- Climate change has many adverse effects, including on health that must be managed through:

Management of the environmental determinants of health: e.g. ensuring clean water and sanitation despite water stress, and combating air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions

Climate-informed disease control programmes: e.g. using meteorological services to target vector control in time and space.

- Emergency and disaster risk management e.g. strengthening disaster preparedness and response for more frequent floods and storms.
- The health community can and should protect health from climate change by: increasing its knowledge, engaging in action to mobilize support to health protection, and incorporating climate change early warning in management of diseases and health services.
- Although our contributions to greenhouse gas emissions are limited, national programmes on vulnerability assessment, adaptation and mitigation are to be fortified to combat climate change.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Khader noted that students lack adequate knowledge on the adverse health impacts of climate change. As a result, the training curriculum of public health courses in the School of Medicine will be revised to include climate change and health. In addition, he emphasized the need to increase research on the subject in the Region.

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