



Rural Water Initiative for Climate Action, Ltd (RWICA)

UN 2023 Water Conference Virtual Side Event

Citizen Science for Improving Water Quality and Public Health: A Holistic Approach



26 March 2023

RWICA is doing its part to build awareness of WASH and One Health from the grassroots to the international policy level.

Achievement UNSDG6 requires a global commitment to water quality for water and health. By establishing and implementing standards and guidelines, promoting research and innovation, and supporting community-based solutions, we can improve access to clean and safe water for all. Collaborations and partnerships among different sectors are essential to support the implementation of water quality improvement efforts and to achieve the goal of sustainable water management for all.

As part of the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York City, USA, RWICA presented on Thursday 23 March in a Virtual Side Event entitled, "*Citizen science for improving water quality and public health: A holistic approach*" that was open to a world audience. The event put forward the voices of least developed countries--last mile communities--with the goal of connecting citizens to scientists at the forefront of water quality testing and monitoring to translate citizen-generated data into action.

These scientists are also implementing innovative and sustainable solutions related to water resource management--grounded in research, local knowledge and vast experience to overcome and plan to avert, minimize and address negative public health outcomes associated with water pollution.

This event was co-organized with World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA), Earth Watch, Watch Europe, GEMs Water, Roddenberry Foundation, UWASNET, Water for People, and other leaders in the WASH sector. As a local water forum of WWQA, RWICA is working towards interventions in community empowerment with scientific knowledge on water quality testing, monitoring, and reporting.

The *Citizen Science* discussion at the UN conference centered around the importance of citizen science and the concept of One Health in ensuring the availability and accessibility of clean water, as well as promoting public health. We also had great deliberations from Earth Watch Europe and the implementing team in Sierra Leone, AMREF-Uganda.

The interactive nature of the session allowed for valuable exchanges and discussions. The questions, comments, and suggestions added depth and richness to the conversation and made it a truly collaborative effort. The key recommendations from the discussion can be the start of a blueprint for future collaborative endeavors.

"I believe that our side event has helped raise awareness and understanding of the role of citizen science in promoting water quality and public health. It is our hope that we can build on this momentum and continue to collaborate and share our knowledge and experience going forward."

Aisha Nankanja, RWICA Executive Director

UN 2023 Water Conference Virtual Side Event
***Citizen Science for Improving Water Quality and
Public Health: A Holistic Approach***

Key recommendations:

1. Water borne disease reduction and mitigation through behaviour change and community empowerment interventions are accomplished through technology skills and knowledge dissemination.
2. Commitments to take advantage of the opportunities by citizen science by using new participatory models to collaborate with community members and key stakeholders in conducting scientific research with a One Health approach.
3. Efforts are needed to bring together interdisciplinary researchers and members of the public to identify and mitigate threats to aquatic life.
4. Citizen science to instill a sense of ownership of the policy and regulatory measures to tackle current and future public health emergencies.
5. Women, who bear the burden of water collection, must be empowered as water stewards and mentored as leaders.
6. Achieving ambient water quality by 2030 will call for a focus on interdisciplinary design-based research, with support at every level - from local to international.