

Second Bi-Annual National PHE Coordination Meeting

Date of Activity: 27th May, 2025 **Location:** Nairobi



We participated in the joint Second Bi-Annual National Coordination Meeting on Integration of Population, Health and Environment (PHE) convened by the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD). As members of the National PHE Network and Kenya's first-ever National Youth PHE Network, this was a critical moment to engage with fellow PHE practitioners, share learnings from the ground, and contribute to shaping Kenya's PHE agenda for the second half of 2025.

What We Came to Do

The meeting had three clear objectives: share and document PHE integration best practices and lessons learned across the country, develop a draft PHE National work plan aligned with the government's FY 2025/26 planning cycle, and strategize on resource mobilization for PHE programming. The goal was to walk out with a meeting report documenting outcomes and a tentative PHE workplan as key deliverables.

Key Insights and Conversations

The room was full of practitioners bringing real experiences from the field. Doreen Kerubo from the National Biosafety Authority shared her PHE journey working on GMO regulation. Jane Nyanjom presented on what the Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) initiative does in relation to PHE, highlighting their Kilifi project in Uyombo.

One presentation that stood out was the "Adopt A Fruit Tree" initiative, NCPD-led community-driven model where the government provides fruit trees to schools, engages

parents, administrators and teachers in conversations about social challenges and vices facing young people, then holds community barazas with residents and focus group discussions with primary and secondary students. In the afternoon, a Grade 4 student digs a hole and adopts the tree, taking full responsibility for nurturing it. By the time they exit to Grade 7, they pass the tree to another pupil to continue the cycle, creating nutrition security, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility all at once.

We also learned about the Lake Victoria Basin Commission's PHE journey. They had dropped PHE from their programming in 2019, but a recent meeting in Kisumu attended by NCPD's Fidelis and Ken Lwaki brought renewed momentum. EAC Cabinet Secretary nominee Beatrice Askul and Kenya's youngest CS Eric Muriithi emerged as champions for advancing the PHE conversation at the national level. Importantly, PHE is now a directive within the East African Community.

Global Connections Through the 58th UN-CPD

A significant portion of the meeting reflected on Kenya's participation in the recently concluded 58th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development in New York, where NCPD hosted a PHE side-event. The highlights were sobering but instructive: many governments had not achieved the intended outcomes of the ICPD+25 Program of Action. The 2017 call to integrate population and development issues into development programming remained largely unmet.

Panelists from Malawi, Gambia, Bangladesh, Kenya (CSA), and UNDESA shared their experiences. In Gambia, the national population commission sits under the vice president's office, which is directly in charge of promoting integration, this is a key structural advantage. Across contexts, the challenges were similar revolving around lack of significant integration between environment and health sectors, but positive CSO impact on community sensitization. Bangladesh stood out for strong government leadership by integrating climate change into the national health policy.

All participants committed to taking immediate action upon returning home to promote PHE integration. Funding partners like NEPAD and CSA were identified as key allies moving forward.

Structural Shifts and Strategic Priorities

During the meeting, NCPD proposed adjustments to the current coalition framework; collapsing existing mechanisms into a single National PHE Working Group alongside other Technical Working Groups (TWGs), with an overarching national coordination steering committee composed of senior leadership to streamline coordination, enhance accountability and reduce duplication of efforts.

The conversation kept circling back to the critical gap on the limited knowledge products and evidence from projects on the ground, essential at the PHE level. Documentation of best

practices and lived experiences needs to go out there as much as possible. The missing piece was identified as the private sector. We need to make the economic sense of PHE, not just the policy sense.

Partners shared real-world examples informed by their own work, perspectives and program experiences; Biochemical pesticides are too expensive compared to synthetic ones that are killing butterflies and bees, threatening biodiversity. Projects like "*Sowing Change*" in Kajiado by FIMBO Youth Initiative are doing the work but need visibility and support. Suggestions were made to bring Kenya Wildlife Federation (KWF) on board and align with the Medium-Term Plan 4 (MTP 4).

What This Means for Us

This meeting reinforced that PHE is not an abstract concept, it is alive in communities adopting fruit trees, youth-led organizations protecting biodiversity, farmers choosing between chemical and biological pesticides and policymakers at the UN committing to action. As the Kenya PHE Youth Coalition, we are not just observers in these conversations. We are contributing insights, challenging gaps and ensuring that young people's lived experiences inform the strategies and work plans that will shape PHE programming for the rest of 2025 and beyond.

The work continues. The partnerships deepen. And we are here, at the table, making sure PHE integration is not just policy language but our communities' reality.