

# SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: TOWARDS COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



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**Declaration**

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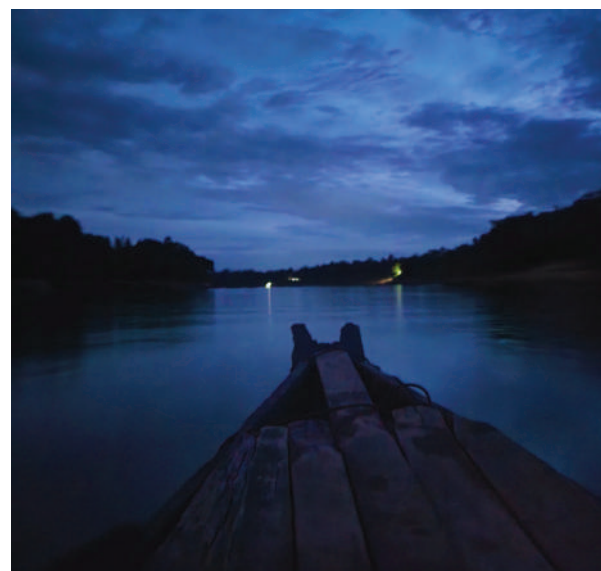
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Director	01
Meet the New Faces of 3CEH	02
Futures Rewritten: Education as a Bridge to Resilience	03
International Students Conference on Bridging the Gap: Navigating towards Environmental and Health Justice	05
Bridging Communities and Research: Noakhali Stakeholder Meeting	06



Kutubdia's Most Imperiled Enclaves	12
Brewing Insights: Discoveries from Sylhet	13
Indoor & Outdoor Tree Plantation Program	15
The CATA–Earth Consortium Meeting in Indonesia	17

Workshop on Urban Risks, Resilience, and Sustainability Workshop	07
Shining a Light on Rohingya Stories: 3CEH's Impact at K4DM Knowledge Market Place 2024 and ICBMS4 Conference in Thailand	09
Waves of Resilience: Kutubdia's Battle Against Climate Change	11



# Message from the Director



As I reflect on the journey of the Center for Climate Change and Environmental Health (3CEH), I am filled with deep pride and gratitude for the progress we have made together. Through significant projects, we have brought hope, knowledge, and solutions to vulnerable communities facing some of the world's most challenging conditions. These efforts have advanced research while improving health, safety, livelihoods, and futures for those who need it most.

While these achievements are remarkable, they also underline a critical global challenge—the disconnect between communities and universities. Addressing this gap is vital for sustainability and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At 3CEH, we are laying the foundation for transformative collaborations between students, professors, universities, and communities, ensuring research and innovation meet real-world needs.

Our current projects, such as Knowledge for Democracy Myanmar (K4DM) supported by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada and the Catalysing Transformative Change in Planetary Health Education - CATA-EARTH funded by the European Commission, exemplify this mission. By addressing the evolving needs of displaced, marginalized, and at-risk communities, we empower individuals through education and training to bring about lasting change.

At 3CEH, we believe our greatest contribution lies not only in generating knowledge but in equipping individuals and communities with the tools to create meaningful, lasting change. This newsletter highlights the critical role of university-community partnerships in advancing research, driving sustainability, and delivering impactful solutions. Together, through shared commitment, the strength of our partnerships, and relentless innovation, we are shaping a brighter and more sustainable future.

## **Dr. Sayed Mohammad Nazim Uddin**

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# Meet the New Faces of 3CEH



**Sadia Salim**



**Tahiya Tasnim**



**Sal-Sabila**

Ms. Sadia Salim began her journey with 3CEH as a dedicated volunteer in 2022 and advanced to the role of Community Development Officer in June 2024. With a double major in Environmental Sciences and Public Health from the Asian University for Women, she combines a strong academic foundation with a passion for addressing grassroots environmental and health challenges.

From organizing events and workshops to leading research teams and engaging directly with communities, Sadia demonstrates exceptional leadership, advocacy, and research skills. Known for identifying root causes of challenges and inspiring action, her work focuses on sustainable solutions, such as improving access to clean water and championing health education in underserved areas. With a clear vision for change, she is a driving force behind 3CEH's mission to create an equitable, and sustainable future for all.

Starting as a devoted volunteer in 2023, Ms. Tahiya Tasnim transitioned to a full-time role as Research Assistant (Academic) at 3CEH in June 2024. She brings in a distinguished academic record and a bold vision for creating impactful, evidence-based change. Graduating with a major in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) and a minor in Development Studies from AUW, Ms. Tahiya has built a reputation for analytical precision and a strategic approach to tackling global challenges.

Ms. Tahiya transforms complex ideas into actionable solutions, converting challenges into opportunities for progress and empowerment. With a focus on bridging academic research and real-world implementation, she spearheads initiatives to address critical environmental, health and educational disparities. Her sharp intellect, drive for innovation, and unwavering dedication to empowering vulnerable populations make her a pivotal force within 3CEH.

Ms. Sal-Sabila joined 3CEH as a committed volunteer in 2023. She advanced to the role of part-time Research Assistant (Community Development) in October 2024 and transitioned to a full-time position starting January 2025. As a graduate of AUW with a major in Environmental Sciences, she brings a focused academic background and a passion for grassroots engagement to her role.

Ms. Sal-Sabila excels in building trust-driven relationships and empowering communities to take an active role in their development. She is particularly dedicated to addressing climate issues affecting communities, with a special focus on waste management. Her work emphasizes tailoring sustainable solutions to local needs, ensuring long-term impact and inclusivity. With her ability to connect with people and translate environmental challenges into actionable strategies, Ms. Sal-Sabila plays a vital role in advancing 3CEH's mission to create resilient and thriving communities.



# Futures Rewritten: Education as a Bridge to Resilience

The Center for Climate Change and Environmental Health (3CEH) at the Asian University for Women (AUW), in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, is supporting a new generation of Myanmar ethnic minority leaders through the Knowledge for Democracy Myanmar (K4DM) fellowship. This initiative is helping young students from Myanmar's diverse ethnic backgrounds to gain the education and skills they need to not only transform their own futures but to drive lasting change for their communities.

The K4DM fellowship program provides critical educational support to three minority students pursuing Master's degrees and three Bachelor's students. Over the course of two years, these fellows have the opportunity to conduct original research on the most pressing challenges facing the Rohingya refugee community.





Three K4DM fellows are already driving change through groundbreaking research, tackling critical challenges that shape daily life in the FDMN (Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals) camps of Cox's Bazar. Ms. Parmin Fatema highlighted the devastating impact of fire accidents, emphasizing the urgent need for improved fire safety measures. Ms. Taslima Razzak focused on indoor air pollution, revealing alarming levels of PM2.5 particles and their severe health effects, calling for immediate policy action. Ms. Mosaddika Mounin examined the state of education in the camps, identifying gaps in resources, teacher's training, and curriculum, and recommending reforms to enhance learning opportunities for Rohingya refugees. Their research addresses pressing environmental, health, and educational challenges, advocating for comprehensive solutions to improve the refugees' well-being and future prospects.

The K4DM fellowship offers their fellows more than just education—it's a chance to transform their futures and uplift communities. Through their impactful research on fire safety, air pollution, and education, these students are tackling urgent issues faced by refugees and creating actionable solutions. Their work highlights the power of education to drive change, with a focus on building a more sustainable future for the Rohingya community. Supported by IDRC Canada and 3CEH, these scholars are becoming agents of change, sharing their findings to inspire meaningful, on-the-ground improvements in the camps.

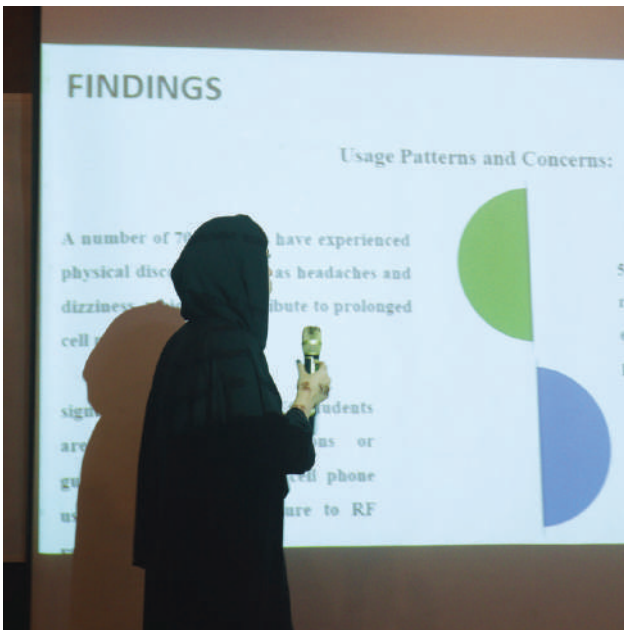
The fellowship provides essential support for these students to become future leaders who can address the most pressing challenges faced by displaced communities. As they continue their studies, they will have opportunities to collaborate with local NGOs, policymakers, and international organizations to advocate for policy changes that improve the lives of Rohingya refugees. With continued investment in education and research, the Rohingya community will be equipped to drive positive, lasting change in the camps and beyond.

# International Students Conference on Bridging the Gap: Navigating towards Environmental and Health Justice



Twenty-six student groups presented their research across three key themes: "Community Assessment on Health, Water, and Waste," "Local-Level Planning for Health, Water, and Waste Management," and "Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies." Sessions were chaired by distinguished AUW alumni, including Ms. Sadia Salim, Ms. Samiha Mannan, and Ms. Ramisa Maliyath.

The conference concluded with a crest-giving ceremony for distinguished guests and cultural performances by AUW students. Supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, the event was organized in collaboration with AUW's Research Club, Environmental Science Club, and SDGs Club.



On April 20, 2024, 3CEH at AUW hosted a conference on environmental and health justice, chaired by Dr. Sayed Mohammad Nazim Uddin, Director of 3CEH. The event brought together students, alumni, and experts to discuss urgent issues at the intersection of climate change, health, and sustainability. A highlight was the presence of Prof. Shamsul Huda, a distinguished professor at the University of Chittagong and AUW adjunct faculty specializing in water and wastewater management. His insights on sustainable resource management emphasized innovative solutions to environmental and health challenges. By offering a platform to share pioneering research and inspiring ideas, the conference ignited a renewed commitment to fostering climate resilience and advancing health equity for a more just and sustainable future.





# Bridging Communities and Research: Noakhali Stakeholder Meeting



Embarking on a transformative journey, our trip to Noakhali combined productivity with inspiration! The Center for Climate Change and Environmental Health (3CEH) at the Asian University for Women (AUW), in collaboration with Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU), Center for People and Environment (CPE), and Sustainable Research and Consultancy Ltd. (SRCL), convened a stakeholder meeting to propel the CATA-Earth Project forward. Funded by the European Commission, this pioneering initiative focuses on

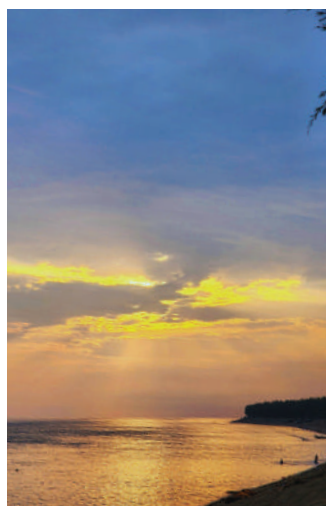


developing a community-driven "Planetary Health" curriculum for several countries.

During the meeting, we outlined our upcoming tasks, emphasizing sustainable solutions tailored to local needs. The invaluable insights from stakeholders enhanced our understanding of the unique environmental challenges and opportunities in the region.



Beyond discussions, our field visit to notable sites, including the NSTU campus and Alexander in Ramgoti, Laxmipur, highlighted the understanding of ecological significance and the livelihoods of local communities. This journey has solidified our commitment to the CATA-Earth Project and strengthened our partnerships with NSTU, CPE, and SRCL.



# Workshop

## on Urban Risks, Resilience, and Sustainability



On June 29, 2024, 3CEH hosted a workshop on urban risks, resilience, and sustainability, bringing together over 40 students from diverse backgrounds, including Afghan, Nepalese, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Bangladeshi. Dr. Hugh Hugh Martin, Martin, former Registrar and Chief Operating Officer of AUW, opened the event with an inspiring speech, followed by renowned guest Ms. Rumana Kabir, who led interactive sessions. Ms. Sadia Salim skillfully facilitated the day's activities, while Ms. Tahiya Tasnim presented 3CEH's mission and ongoing projects

Participants actively contributed valuable insights during discussions and brainstorming sessions, focusing on how urban areas can better prepare for and respond to various risks.



Cities today face significant challenges, including flooding, heatwaves, and infrastructure failures, all exacerbated by population density and socio-economic disparities. Understanding these risks is essential for developing effective mitigation strategies.

Building urban resilience involves strengthening infrastructure and fostering community engagement and social cohesion. Resilient cities leverage local knowledge to adapt to changing conditions, ensuring that vulnerable populations are protected and empowered.

Sustainability in urban development integrates economic, environmental, and social dimensions, promoting green spaces, sustainable transportation, and energy-efficient buildings while ensuring equitable access to resources.



The engaging workshop and hands-on activities challenged participants to think outside the box and inspired a sense of community, ensuring that every voice was heard and valued. The workshop concluded with a memorable speech by Md. Akib Javed, leaving attendees motivated and inspired. This initiative, funded by IDRC and Global Affairs Canada, was a great success, thanks to the dedication of 3CEH volunteers.



# Shining a Light on Rohingya Stories: 3CEH's Impact at K4DM Knowledge Market Place 2024 and ICBMS4 Conference in Thailand



The K4DM Knowledge Market Place 2024 and International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies (ICBMS4) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, convened leaders and researchers to tackle urgent climate, biodiversity, and development challenges. These events created an essential platform for collaboration, with sessions on climate adaptation, health, and education in vulnerable communities. Mr. Md. Akib Javed, the Coordinator for Research and Development at the Center for Climate Change and Environmental Health (3CEH) of the Asian University for Women (AUW), played a critical role in these discussions, emphasizing community-driven research and the importance of amplifying marginalized voices to foster resilience and sustainable solutions for impacted populations.



Photo Credit: K4DM/ Shwe Paw Mya Tin

Mr. Javed's roundtable discussion, titled "Current State of Health, Environment, and Education: Bringing the Stories of Rohingya Camps to the Light," brought together voices from across academia, civil society, and research institutions, emphasizing the complex issues faced by Rohingya communities. This session resonated deeply with participants, shedding light on the environmental and health vulnerabilities in refugee camps and inspiring collaborative strategies to support these communities.

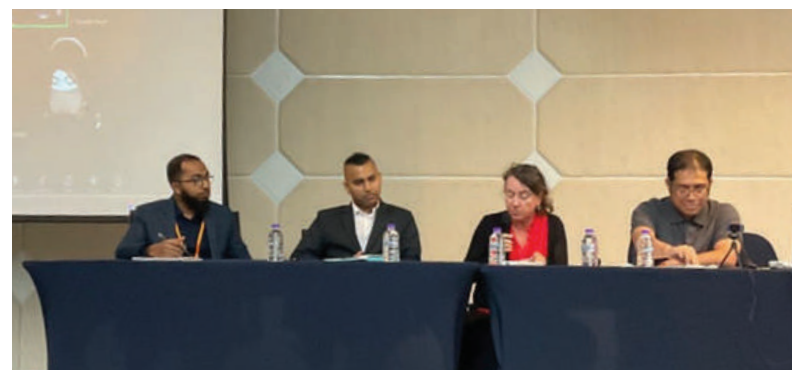


Photo Credit: Thidar, Chiang Mai University (CMU)

Additionally, three Myanmar ethnic minority students from AUW—Ms. Mosaddika Mounin, Ms. Parmin Fatema, and Ms. Taslima Razzak—represented 3CEH of AUW by presenting their research papers online.



Photo Credit: K4DM/Shwe Paw Mya Tin

Mr. Jaded actively participated in multiple sessions during the conference, passionately advocating for the critical work of 3CEH. His involvement underscored 3CEH's commitment to addressing pressing climate and environmental issues impacting vulnerable communities, especially in the context of the Rohingya crisis. His contributions fostered valuable dialogue among experts and emphasized the center's dedication to supporting those most affected by climate change. 3CEH extends heartfelt gratitude to IDRC for their invaluable support and for inviting 3CEH to these influential events. IDRC's partnership has been instrumental in advancing 3CEH's initiatives and highlights the shared commitment to creating sustainable, resilient solutions for climate-vulnerable populations. This collaboration strengthens 3CEH's resolve to continue impactful research and advocacy, addressing climate change challenges with an inclusive, community-focused approach.

The students from AUW have highlighted critical intersections of health, environment, and education within the Rohingya crisis. Ms. Mosaddika Mounin's research on educational quality in Camp 11 emphasizes the need for better resources, teacher training, and culturally relevant curricula to empower Rohingya youth with future opportunities. Ms. Parmin Fatema focused on the environmental and health impacts of frequent fires in the overcrowded camps, linking large fires to arson and smaller fires to overcrowding, and underscoring the need for urgent fire safety measures to protect camp residents from both physical and psychological harm. Ms. Taslima Razzak examined the health risks associated with indoor air pollution, finding that poor air quality contributes to respiratory issues like asthma and tuberculosis. Her work calls for coordinated action to address indoor air quality and improve healthcare and infrastructure to safeguard the health and dignity of Rohingya refugees.



# Waves of Resilience: Kutubdia's Battle Against Climate Change



Kutubdia Island, once a thriving community in the Bay of Bengal, is slowly sinking beneath the weight of a changing climate. The voices of the people of Kutubdia, their stories of loss, resilience, and survival, echo through the salty winds that now carry the tale of a disappearing world.

In August 2024, we conducted a pilot survey in vulnerable areas of Kutubdia to assess local environmental and health challenges, gathering data to inform future interventions. The survey revealed rising sea level, severe cyclones, and increasing salinity have transformed Kutubdia's lush shores into barren wastelands. Water sources have become



undrinkable, crops have withered, and biodiversity has plummeted, all threatening the island's ecosystems. As the land erodes, communities are displaced, and the island's future grows more uncertain, as its residents struggle to survive against overwhelming environmental and economic pressures.



For centuries, the people of Kutubdia have coexisted with the rhythms of the sea, their lives deeply woven into the island's coastal landscape. But in recent decades, the once-thriving island off the coast of Chattogram, Bangladesh, has been slowly overtaken by the very forces it once embraced. Kutubdia is a living testament to the planetary health challenges we face, where environmental degradation, social inequality, and economic instability intersect, making it the focal study area of our CATA Earth Project, funded by the European Commission. Our research insights of Kutubdia will guide efforts to restore fragile environments in the face of climate change, benefiting other vulnerable coastal communities worldwide.



# KUTUBDIA'S MOST IMPERILED ENCLAVES

MOGNAMA



LIGHTHOUSE



ALI AKBAR  
DAIL GHATGHOR



# BREWING INSIGHTS: DISCOVERIES FROM SYLHET

Amid the rolling hills and vibrant tea gardens of Sylhet, the 3CEH team set out on an exciting mission to explore the intersection of climate change, health, and sustainability for the CATA Earth Project funded by the European Commission. From September 12 to 15, 2024, we engaged with the resilient communities of Khadim Nagar (Ratargul), Jointapur, and Mokampung Khasia Palli of Sylhet, collecting valuable data and stories to inform our work.

We chose Sylhet as a key research area because it represents a microcosm of the challenges faced by many agricultural communities worldwide. Sylhet's tea gardens, a critical economic pillar for the region, are increasingly threatened by shifting weather patterns, water scarcity, and soil degradation. The impact of climate change is particularly pronounced here, where local farmers are already experiencing the effects of extreme weather, declining biodiversity, and water shortages, all of which affect both their livelihoods and health.

Our research, which included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and surveys, uncovered urgent issues such as flood intensity, food insecurity, and water quality concerns. The devastating floods of 2022 highlighted the growing severity of flooding events, exacerbated by both climate change and poor environmental management. Many communities also rely on contaminated water sources, leading to health problems linked to harmful substances like arsenic and iron. Furthermore, inadequate sanitation, mental health challenges, and lack of awareness about sustainable practices have become major barriers to improving community resilience.

As we analyze the collected data, our findings will help shape impactful solutions that empower communities, restore ecosystems, and inspire global action for a healthier, more sustainable planet.





ylhet



# Plant a Tree, Cool the Earth

## INDOOR & OUTDOOR TREE PLANTATION PROGRAM

On September 5th and 13th, 2024, the AUW community came together to plant seeds of change and hope, with the support of the Center for Climate Change and Environmental Health (3CEH), the AUW Environmental Sciences Club, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. With over 40 passionate students and staff, we embarked on a meaningful journey to create greener, and healthier campuses. From the delicate Champaphul to the vibrant Radhachura gracing AUW's Main Campus in Bayezid Bostami road and the Mahsa Amini Campus, our collective effort planted not just trees but a renewed commitment to caring for our planet.

This tree-planting initiative is more than just beautifying our campuses; it's a powerful reminder of our shared commitment to environmental sustainability. Each tree symbolizes growth, resilience, and a brighter future for the generations to come. With every sapling planted, we are helping to reduce our carbon footprint, enhance biodiversity, and make our campuses a sanctuary for both people and nature. The smiles of our volunteers as they worked together with shovels in hand reflected the genuine desire to make a lasting impact on the environment and inspire others to follow suit.

As we look towards the future, this event serves as a stepping stone toward creating a culture of sustainability at AUW. We hope it sparks a ripple effect that reaches beyond our campuses, encouraging students and staff to continue taking action for the planet. Together, we are building a greener, more sustainable world—one tree at a time.





# Sow, Grow, and Glow: Planting the Seeds of Change in AUW Campuses



# THE CATA-EARTH CONSORTIUM MEETING IN INDONESIA





From August 6 to 8, 2024, the Catalysing Transformative Change in Planetary Health Education (CATA – Earth) project kicked off with its first face-to-face meeting and official launch at the prestigious Indonesia Medical Education and Research Institute (IMERI) in Jakarta, Indonesia. This multi-year initiative, funded by the European Commission through the ERASMUS+ Capacity Building program, brings together seven higher education institutions: UMC Utrecht and Elevate BV (Netherlands), Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain), Asian University for Women and Noakhali Science and Technology University (Bangladesh), and Universitas Indonesia and Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia). The initiative also includes six local stakeholder organizations, with Universitair Medisch Centrum Utrecht (UMC Utrecht) serving as the project coordinator.



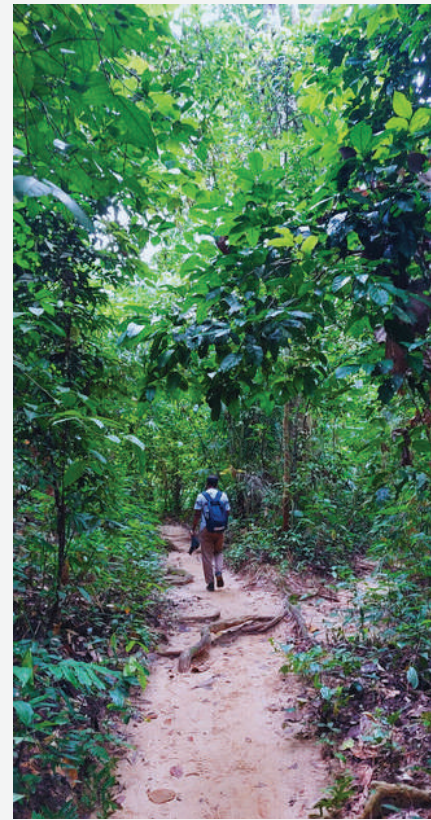


On Day 1, Prof. Diantha Soemantri from Universitas Indonesia opened the meeting, guiding the consortium members through discussions on the project's progress and work plans. Day 2 featured a co-creation activity, engaging a wide array of local stakeholders—including the Ministry of Health and Pure Earth Indonesia—in a focused group discussion about the draft planetary health framework developed by the consortium.

The highlight of the meeting was the official project launch on August 8, with Prof. Dr. Ari Fahrial Syam, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Universitas Indonesia, and Dr. Anas Ma'ruf, Director of Environmental Health at Indonesia's Ministry of Health, delivering inspiring speeches to mark the beginning of this transformative journey.



This initiative aims to deepen the understanding of planetary health and integrate it into academic curricula, preparing a new generation of health professionals to address global environmental health challenges. Bringing together over 50 representatives from partner universities, local organizations, and stakeholders, the event fostered collaboration to connect education with practical solutions, advancing planetary health education globally.



Since its launch in 2017, the Knowledge for Democracy Myanmar (K4DM) initiative has been driving positive change by empowering researchers and enhancing the role of research and higher education in shaping evidence-based public policy. Now entering its second phase, K4DM is committed to advancing inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and democratic principles through research fellowships, policy training, and cross-border capacity-building initiatives. The program is a collaborative effort between the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada.



