



Gaya Gamhewage

Challenges in Responding to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa

Biography

Gaya Gamhewage, a medical doctor by training, currently leads Communications Capacity Building at the World Health Organization headquarters based in Geneva, Switzerland. She is responsible for supporting governments across the world build sustainable risk communications capacity as legally required by the International health regulations (2005), the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, and for training WHO staff in 155 countries. She is a public health expert and focuses on risk, emergency and crisis communications.

For the international response to the Ebola Virus disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa, Dr Gamhewage was assigned to Coordinate all Ebola-related training for WHO.

In addition to her public health expertise and experience, Gaya has experience working as a journalist, a medical doctor, university lecturer in public health, community health director, child rights expert, in humanitarian emergency response, and as a trainer and facilitator. She was recently awarded an Executive Master in International Negotiation and Policy-Making by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies of Geneva.

Born in Sri Lanka, Gaya spent most her childhood in England. She spent 8 years in China studying and practicing medicine, and has carried out assignments in over 40

countries. She speaks English, Chinese and Sinhalese and is learning Russian. Gaya also runs a “Global Citizen Camp” for European and American teenagers to participate in community development projects in Sri Lanka. Gaya lives with her two children in Geneva.

Summary of the conference

The conference will recap the events and context of the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, examine the evolution of the Ebola response by international organizations and look at how perception and communication have influenced this emergency, the response and reputation of international organizations like WHO. In other words, Dr. Gamhewage’s presentation will present the views on the effect of the Ebola outbreak response on WHO as an institution.