Urbanization and Health: challenges and promises

Wilson Centre Seminar on Capitol Hill
“Improving Health Outcomes for the Slum Dwellers and the Urban Poor
20 July 2010

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This year...

- **1 billion people** will wake up in an urban slum.

- **170 million urban residents** will not have access to a latrine.

- nearly **1.2 million people** will die from urban air pollution.
Urbanization trends

- Over half the world’s population now lives in cities

- By 2030, six out of 10 people will live in cities, rising to 7 out of 10 by 2050

- Today, a moral and political imperative: addressing urbanization and health is vital to ensure equity and reduce poverty
Urbanization trends and projections

Urban population, millions

- More developed countries
- Less developed countries

- 1950
- 1970
- 1990
- 2010
- 2030
One billion people live in slums

Urban Slum Incidence, 2001

Source: UN-Habitat, 2003b.
In Sub-Saharan Africa 67% of the urban population lives in slums...

...while in the Eastern Mediterranean and South Asia nearly 50% do

Urban settings and health

Cities confronted by a triple threat:

– **infectious diseases** exacerbated by poor living conditions;

– **noncommunicable diseases** and conditions fueled by tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol; and

– **injuries, road accidents, violence and crime.**
Higher Burden of TB in Urban India

Death from urban air pollution
Nutrition, urban settings, and health

- Changes in food supply and demand resulting in changes to dietary patterns and lifestyles:
  - Energy-dense diets
  - Less active lifestyle

- Access and availability of healthy foods:
  - Forced reliance on local corner stores
  - Overreliance on fast food restaurants
Transport

- Physical inactivity → 1.9 million deaths per year and a loss of 19 million years of healthy life
- Traffic injuries → 1.2 million deaths per year
Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults

**BRFSS, 1986**
(*BMI ≥ 30, or ~ 30 lbs overweight for 5’ 4” person*)

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Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults

**BRFSS, 2007**
(*BMI ≥ 30, or ~ 30 lbs overweight for 5’ 4” person*)
Unfair differences in people’s health

Intra-urban health differences exist in all cities:

– Male life expectancy in Calton is 82; in Lenzie it is 54. These are two wards in Glasgow, Scotland only 15 kilometres apart.

– In Nairobi, a child born in a slum is four times more likely to die before the age of 5 than his compatriot born kilometres away.
Urban inequities are significant

Under five mortality per 1,000 live births

Source: DHS 2003-2005
Health equity analysis

Prevalence of child stunting (height-for-age < 2 sd)

Urban Poorest 20%
Urban Richest 20%
Urban average

AFRICA
AMERICAS
ASIA
EUROPE
Inter-city health differentials: concern in developed countries

Mortality rate per 100,000 population

Source: US Big Cities Health Inventory, NACCHO 2007
New York City

Population living in poverty (quartiles)  
AIDS deaths per 100,000 population (quartiles)

Urban TB, Japan 2006

Source: Research Institute of Tuberculosis, Kiyose, Japan
2010 Year for urbanization and health

World Health Day
Awareness

Global Report
How-to-guide

Global Forum
Policy Commitment
World Health Day 2010
More than 1500 cities participating
25 cities in the US signed up
US support for urbanization and health
Conclusion

- Virtually all population growth will be in urban areas over the next 30 years.
- Global poverty is concentrating in cities.
- Urbanization can have positive and negative impacts on health.
- Action is needed now to ensure cities are safe and healthy.