

Media Release

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THE URBAN POOR SUFFER DISPROPORTIONATELY FROM A WIDE RANGE OF DISEASES AND OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS.

Health information is, on average, blurred in differences between the rich and the poor. It masks the health conditions of the urban poor. More people especially the urban population live in urban slums. Health problems of the urban poor include communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), HIV & AIDS, an increased risk for violence, and chronic diseases.

Today, the 7th of April the World Health Day is celebrated to commemorate the formation of the World Health Organization (WHO) which is commemorated annually. The World Health Day 2010 will focus on urbanization and health.

The theme of “urbanization and health” was selected by the World Health Day in recognition of the effect urbanization on health and for all individuals. Urbanization is associated with many health challenges related to water, environment, violence and injury, non-communicable diseases and their risk factors like tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol as well as the risks associated with disease outbreaks.

The Department of health wishes to commemorate this day in order to;

- To raise awareness about the health challenges associated with urbanization and the pressing need to address them through intersectoral action.

- To promote action around the health risks with the greatest impact on urbanization: (1)

increased exposure to risk factors leading to non-communicable diseases (e.g. tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, illicit drug use); (2) increased exposure to communicable diseases (e.g. HIV & AIDS, TB, pandemic influenza (H1N1)); (3) increased exposure to violence; (4) increased exposure to road traffic injuries; and 5) public health emergencies (e.g. epidemics, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises).

“Health is a human right for all citizens. It is the role and responsibility of individuals, civil society, and government (at all levels) to uphold this principle. Platforms where municipalities, civil society and individuals come together must be encouraged to protect the right to health of urban dwellers. By bringing multiple sectors of society together to actively engage in developing policies, more sustainable health outcomes will be achieved” says the MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

Health outcomes are determined by environmental, social, and physical infrastructure conditions and factors that can be positively influenced. Some of the examples of determinants include water and sanitation, quality of air, living and working conditions, access to services and resources, among others. With more and more populations living in cities, the conditions and factors that determine health outcomes become an ever more pressing challenge to address.

The myriad factors and conditions in urban settings make urbanization such a powerful force that it is, in itself, a major determinant of public health in the 21st century. Failure to address these underlying factors now can result in spiraling health costs, as well as potential health risks for underserved populations in cities.

ENDS!

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