

# World Health Day “Urban Health Matters”

## 7 April 2010

The World For World Organization (WFWO) will Stand Up to increase public awareness to promote the World Health Day on 8 April 2010, Rome (Italy). The WFWO and its partners give adequate response to WHD 2010, to take action decisively on global concerns. The WFWO will act to organize a special briefing sessions, focusing on celebration of the WHD to bring attention to the new generation related to the serious global problems of health.

More people live in cities and towns than in rural areas. In a parallel trend, the burden of world poverty is also shifting from sparsely populated rural areas to densely populated cities. By mid-century, urban dwellers will count for 7 out of every 10 people. Most of this explosive growth is occurring in developing countries. Rapid, unplanned urbanization is expanding slums and informal settlements, and municipal authorities are struggling to cope.

The WHD theme 2010 is call attention to international communities to the rapid increase of people living in cities will be among the most important global health issues of the 21st century. Over half the world's population now live in cities. By 2030, six out of every 10 people will be city dwellers, rising to seven out of every 10 people by 2050. In many cases, especially in the developing world, the speed of urbanization has outpaced the ability of governments to build essential infrastructure. Unplanned urbanization can intensify an existing humanitarian crisis and has consequences for the health security and safety of all citizens in cities.

Health data is usually aggregated to provide an average of all urban residents - blurring differences between the rich and the poor. It thus masks the health conditions of the urban poor. More than one billion people – one third of the urban population – live in urban slums. World Bank estimates that by 2035, cities will become the predominant sites of poverty. Health problems of the urban poor include an increased risk for violence, chronic disease, and for some communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

Urbanization is not inherently positive or negative. Underlying drivers – also referred to as social determinants – converge in urban settings which strongly influence health status and other outcomes. These determinants include physical infrastructure, access to social and health services, local governance, and the distribution of income and educational opportunities. Communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, mental disorders, and deaths due to violence and road traffic injuries are all driven by these underlying social determinants.

Urban planning can promote healthy behaviours and safety through investment in active transport, designing areas to promote physical activity and passing regulatory controls on tobacco and food safety. Improving urban living conditions in the areas of housing, water and sanitation will go a long way to mitigating health risks. Building inclusive cities that are accessible and age-friendly will benefit all urban residents. Such actions do not necessarily require additional funding, but commitment to redirect resources to priority interventions, thereby achieving greater efficiency.

The health is a human right for all citizens. It is the role and responsibility of individuals, civil society, and governments to uphold this principle. Platforms where municipalities, civil society and individuals come together must be encouraged to protect the right to health of current and future generations of urban dwellers. By bringing multiple sectors of society together to actively engage in developing policies, more sustainable health outcomes will be achieved.

Let us take this opportunities on this World Health Day, to act to make our cities more nurturing for all ...!!

Resource from WHO

WFWO's Communications Team

