Rapid and unplanned urbanization, poverty and urban health

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What is the biggest health problem of cities?
Cities are engines of growth and development
Sao Paolo, Brazil
Becker, 2nd Meeting of the Knowledge Network on Urban Settings, WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2006
Urban population, millions

- More developed countries
- Less developed countries

Urbanization trends and projections
Global patterns of urbanization, 1995

Source: Based on United Nations, 2014b.
Global patterns of urbanization, 2015

Source: Based on United Nations, 2014b.
Rapid and unplanned urbanization creates inequity
# Table 3.4: Urban slum population at mid-year by region (thousands)

Source: UN-Habitat, Global Urban Observatory Urban Indicators Database 2015.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing Regions</td>
<td>689,044</td>
<td>748,758</td>
<td>791,679</td>
<td>830,022</td>
<td>845,291</td>
<td>871,939</td>
<td><strong>881,080</strong></td>
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<td>Northern Africa</td>
<td>22,045</td>
<td>20,993</td>
<td>16,892</td>
<td>12,534</td>
<td>13,119.1</td>
<td>14,058.3</td>
<td>11,418</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>93,203</td>
<td>110,559</td>
<td>128,435</td>
<td>152,223</td>
<td>163,788</td>
<td>183,199</td>
<td>200,677</td>
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<td>Latin America &amp; the Caribbean</td>
<td>106,054</td>
<td>112,470</td>
<td>116,941</td>
<td>112,149</td>
<td>112,547</td>
<td>112,742</td>
<td>104,847</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Asia</td>
<td>204,539</td>
<td>224,312</td>
<td>238,366</td>
<td>249,884</td>
<td>250,873</td>
<td>249,591</td>
<td>251,593</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Asia</td>
<td>180,960</td>
<td>189,931</td>
<td>193,893</td>
<td>195,828</td>
<td>196,336</td>
<td>195,749</td>
<td>190,876</td>
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<tr>
<td>South-eastern Asia</td>
<td>69,567</td>
<td>75,559</td>
<td>79,727</td>
<td>80,254</td>
<td>79,568</td>
<td>84,063</td>
<td>83,528</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Asia</td>
<td>12,294</td>
<td>14,508</td>
<td>16,957</td>
<td>26,636</td>
<td>28,527</td>
<td>31,974</td>
<td>37,550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall decline in populations living in slums, but variable across regions.
Urban Population in Developing Countries by City Size Class, 1975-2015  (UN, 1995)

Urban population in developing countries
How long does it take for a city to grow from one million to eight million people?

- Seoul: 25 years
- Dhaka: 37 years
- Bangkok: 45 years
- London: 130 years
Earth’s temperature record

Source: https://climate.nasa.gov/climate_resources/9/graphic-earths-temperature-record/
If things were to continue as they are, temperatures could spike by as much as **4.0 centigrade** – a scenario where only **reptiles** would be able to survive.
Figure 5.3: Comparison between individual city and national carbon footprints per capita

Source: Sovacool and Brown, 2010.
Melting of icebergs
Storm surges, tsunami, floods
Disasters in densely populated urban areas are more severe because they affect more people and debilitate centralized systems.
Problems of the urban poor are invisible because intra-urban differentials are not systematically mapped by national health authorities.
- Higher rates of unintended pregnancy
- Higher fertility
- Too early, too many, to closely spaced pregnancies
- Poorer maternal health outcomes
- Higher risk for sexually transmitted diseases
- Higher exposure to domestic violence and abuse
- Higher need for limiting rather than spacing pregnancies
- Higher co-morbidities for diabetes, hypertension, tuberculosis, depression, occupational risks and exposures
The conditions, safety and well-being of adolescent girls is of paramount importance.
Healthy City
1) Constantly improving itself
2) Uses “healthy settings” – schools, markets, churches
3) Citizens participation

Resilient City
1) Prepared to adapt to changing conditions
2) Can withstand extreme stress
The Urban Advantage

1) Easier decision-making by mayors
2) Population density, concentration of people in communities
3) Access to modern health facilities (if social determinants can be overcome)
4) Ability to use secondary schools for health
5) Greater desire to control their lives and health
The Healthy Cities Interface

1) City-to-city learning
2) Mapping of intra-urban differentials
3) Urban Health Equity And Response Tool (Urban HEART)
4) Secondary education: Health-Promoting Schools
5) Adolescent services rolled in with other needs e.g. dental care, nutrition, hygiene, wellness
6) Overall safety: street lights, public transport, clean water
What is the biggest health problem of cities?
The biggest problem is health inequity.
Focus on interventions to reduce inequity
• Failure to anticipate a problem before it has arrived.
• Failure to perceive a problem that has already arrived.
• Failure to attempt to solve a problem that has arrived.
• Failed solutions.
Failure to anticipate a problem before it has arrived.

Failure to perceive a problem that has already arrived.

Failure to attempt to solve a problem that has arrived.

Failed solutions.
The Challenge Initiative: Action Points

- Strong Partnerships with Mayors
- FP embedded in other networked health services
- Health promoting schools Secondary education
- Strategic Communication

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