

Reinventing Healthy and Sustainable Communities: Reconnecting Public Health and Urban Planning.

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Abstract

The world has an unprecedented opportunity to improve the health and lives of billions of people by adopting practical approaches to meeting the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. The Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers has identified strategies for managing a projected near doubling of the urban population over the next three decades. We contend that this challenge can be met if local authorities and national governments work closely with the urban poor through open and participatory processes that give them a voice in decisions about the infrastructure and public services that affect their lives. Building upon earlier work that aims to reconnect public health and urban planning, we identify four core themes that we consider as transferable best principles which will be essential in bringing programs and policies up to scale to meet the twenty-first century health challenge of slums and cities: interdisciplinary engagement, gender equality, sustainable development, and democratic institution building. By developing programs and policies that are pro-poor, the health and lives of all of us stand to improve. Indeed, our best hope for reinventing healthy and sustainable communities is to place the urban poor at the very center of policy formation and investment processes. In this way, the outcomes—healthy populations and sustainable communities—will take care of themselves.

Keywords: task force, slum dwellers, millennium, sustainable, urban planning

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