

## Annex 7

# Bangkok Declaration on Urbanization and Health

We, the Health Ministers of Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region participating in the Twenty-eighth Health Ministers' Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, appreciate the efforts being made by Member States and partners in the South-East Asia Region to adopt a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to ensure planned urbanization that would improve public health. We also recognize that it is imperative that national governments invest in pro-poor policies and strategies in order to reduce the urban equity gap.

Concerned that globally by 2030, six out of every 10 people will be living in cities, and that unplanned urbanization is one of the major threats to public health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, affecting all urban dwellers, irrespective of socio-economic status, but more so the poor;

Aware that rapid urbanization is due to natural growth in populations, and due to migration as a result of people searching for better opportunities for education, jobs, social mobility and services in cities;

Recognizing that many people who move to cities are trapped in marginal situations as a significant proportion of them are poor, have large families and are not well educated;

Considering that the health of the urban poor suffers most both because of their living conditions and because of the high and sometimes prohibitive cost of health services;

Acknowledging that urban people, especially the poor, face illnesses and premature death from preventable diseases due to lack of safe drinking water, sanitation, health facilities, safety, security and health information;

Noting that closing the urban equity gap and promoting healthy cities requires urgent actions including efforts from both the rich and the poor;

We, the Health Ministers, commit ourselves to:

- (1) acknowledge unplanned urbanization as a major public health concern;
- (2) assess the public health impact of major development projects, particularly in urban and suburban areas;
- (3) advocate for a holistic and multidisciplinary approach by all sectors of the government, including local government, and industry and the community;
- (4) promote investment in pro-poor policies and strategies in order to reduce the health equity gap among urban dwellers;
- (5) extend resources and coverage of services to all urban populations particularly the urban poor to improve health outcomes and reduce the social costs of inequity;
- (6) promote improved transportation, infrastructure and greener technologies that enhance the urban quality of life, including fewer respiratory ailments and accidents and better health for all;
- (7) build increased capacity in all systems, infrastructure and service delivery in view of inevitable urban growth, in order to reduce the risk of further damage to health;
- (8) advocate to governments and municipalities to invest in health-promoting cities and to take actions that encourage social connectedness among city dwellers irrespective of their social status;
- (9) foster among all urban dwellers an understanding of the negative effects of unplanned urbanization and the shared responsibility for balancing resources and services;

- (10) work in collaboration with all other sectors and stakeholders to reduce and close the urban equity gap and promote healthy cities;
- (11) while planning for urban health, in addition to physical health, address social, psychological and mental health; and
- (12) take appropriate steps to address the causes of rural urban migration and alleviate the pressures driving such migration.

We, the Health Ministers of Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region, urge all other WHO Member States as well as the Director-General and the Regional Director to continue to provide leadership and technical support in building partnerships between governments, the United Nations agencies and the relevant global health initiatives and with academia, professional bodies, nongovernmental organizations, related sectors, the media and civil society, to jointly advocate and effectively follow up on all aspects of this Bangkok Declaration on Urbanization and Health.

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