

Research recommends COVID-19 path forward in informal settlements

April 23 2020



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In early April, Professor of Nursing and Ph.D. Program Director David Vlahov, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, coauthored "Slum Health: Arresting COVID-19 & Improving Well-Being in Urban Informal Settlements."

Vlahov is also the founding president of the International Society for Urban Health, a multi-disciplinary global organization of scholars, practitioners, community groups and policymakers devoted to issues of health equity in urban settings.

Concentrating on the Global South region, Vlahov and the team of coauthors make a series of recommendations for how to best protect migrants, people living in slums, the homeless, and other vulnerable populations from the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) virus. Unlike other communities with more [physical space](#), one of the most common [best practices](#) can't be successfully implemented.

Informal settlements tend to have people crowded together," Vlahov said. "The whole idea of social distancing becomes difficult, if not impossible."

Instead, the paper encourages immediate measures that include: a moratorium on evictions, a guarantee of payments to the poor, and food assistance. Best practices that would take longer to implement include meeting Sphere Humanitarian standards for water, sanitation, and hygiene, and implementing a solid waste collection strategy.

These suggestions aim to slow the spread of virus, make inroads toward healthcare for the urban poor, and ultimately improve the long-term well-being of these populations. The paper points out that slum communities contain strong assets despite widespread deprivation. Strong social networks, for example, can foster empowerment among residents and result in better outcomes and stronger partnerships with NGOs.

More information: Slum Health: Arresting COVID-19 & Improving Well-Being in Urban Informal Settlements: medicine.yale.edu/news-article/23734/

Provided by Yale University

Citation: Research recommends COVID-19 path forward in informal settlements (2020, April 23) retrieved 21 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-covid-path-settlements.html>

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