ABSTRACTS FOR ST. PAUL'S UNIVESITY RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON 23rd & 24th NOVEMBER 2017

THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

Vulnerability of Slum Dwellers to the Negative Health Effects Associated with Climate Change: The Case of Mathare, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Urban populations living in informal settlements (Slum) are inherently vulnerable to climate change. This is due to their contexts which are characterized by overcrowding, poor-quality housing, lack of basic infrastructure, and poverty. Studies have shown that common main needs of slum dwellers as decent job, housing, toilets and clean water. Lack of the four exposes them to more health vulnerability. The ever growing population in developing countries continues to swell in urban slum despite high health vulnerability associated to climate change. This may be due to climate change induced rural-urban migration of majorly young people who are in their reproduction age in addition to early reproduction age of those raised in the slum. Huge population exerts pressure on health facilities and resources. High congestion, improper housing and poor or lack of safe water and sanitation raises risk on health living through increase of communicable and non- communicable diseases. Climate change, though affecting entire world, slum context and living conditions makes slum dwellers more vulnerable in terms of health than other people in rural or urban non-slum areas. This study was guided by the following objectives: 1) To examine health risks in urban slum associated to climate change; 2)To establish approaches used to minimize health vulnerability in urban slum associated to climate change; 3) To encourage incorporation of climate change policies in urban city planning to enhance health in urban slums. The increasing population and congestion in urban informal settlement makes achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) goals 1, 3, 6, 11, 13 on good health and well-being of all beyond reach by many people living in urban informal settlement context. This goal aims at reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and end epidemics of HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis and malaria plus providing vaccines and safe affordable medicines. Results from reviewed literature have pointed out that though there are many organizations and government agencies working in urban informal settlement to reduce health and vulnerability, these efforts are challenges hugely by an ever growing unplanned population in the urban informal settlements. It also suggests that there are no standalone policies on health vulnerability of urban slum associated to climate change and thus, their development is long overdue.

Key words: Urban informal settlements (slum), climate change, health effects, vulnerability, Kenya