

Editorial

Urban areas in South Africa are growing rapidly. This growth is partially a result of the continuing movement of people from the rural areas, into the cities but also the result of the natural population increase. While many people come to the metropolises to escape rural poverty, life in the cities and their surrounding areas can be harsh. Increasing urban populations are cause for concern but much of the problem has to do with apartheid and the segregation of facilities.

Historically, the state has refused to acknowledge the permanence of black urban dwellers, despite the need for their labour. This has resulted in the lack of facilities provided for blacks in urban areas. For example, there is an underutilization of many white health facilities while those reserved for black South Africans are overcrowded. Although all hospitals are underfinanced by the state, it is the black facilities that receive the least attention.

This issue of Critical Health examines the health impact of apartheid's response to the settlement of black South Africans in urban areas. The edition begins with an historical background to urbanisation and examines some of the present solutions being posed by the state.

Removals have long been part of the state's response to black urbanisation and the plan to remove the settled community of Oukasie, is a more recent example. In the face of increasing national and international concern at the inhumanity of removal policies, an attempt has been made to legitimise the removal by using unhealthy conditions as a pretext. The article on the case of Oukasie illustrates how health has been used to legitimise repression. Another article illustrates the way repressive action which affects health has been used as a weapon to break a community's resolve; the article on environmental health services in townships focuses on the situation in Soweto where, in an attempt to break the rent boycott, essential services were cut off. The repercussions of this action on the health of the community is examined and basic standards for infrastructure in townships are suggested.

Actstop has highlighted some of the problems faced by people living in the "grey area" of Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and the impact of segregated facilities on their lives.

The Mass Democratic Movement's defiance campaign publicised the problems of segregation and in effect declared the cities open to all. The campaign was launched with black patients arriving at the white hospitals for treatment. The aims and achievements of this campaign are evaluated in an article by NAMDA, one of the health organisations involved in the co-ordination of the campaign.

While apartheid has had an impact on both the physical and mental well being of South Africa, the defiance campaign and the numerous community organisations

formed to resist apartheid are testimony to people's resilience. The article on the Manenberg Research project on mental health, stresses the importance of working through community structures in the research process, and the importance of empowering the community when investigating the effects of apartheid on mental health. The article examines what is meant by progressive participatory research.

The edition also raises aspects of city life that are not usually highlighted but nonetheless have a major impact on health; pollution in urban areas, interpersonal violence and marketing strategies used to promote harmful products are discussed in three separate articles.

This edition of *Critical Health* has explored some aspects of urban health care as well as community responses to specific problems. While we have focussed on certain areas, this does not detract from the importance of those not covered such as urban primary health care, child care and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Finally, this edition illustrates the importance of health as an area of struggle, inseparable from other factors (ranging from wages to water supplies) making up the fabric of our lives.



Health as an area of struggle - a patient is admitted to the "whites only" Addington Hospital in Durban during the Mass Democratic Movement's defiance campaign.