IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing X

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This briefing highlights three articles showing the impact of Covid-19 on health inequalities.

England

With talk of the current pandemic 'being a great leveller' the emerging picture is one of Covid-19 pandemic exposing health inequalities, nationally and globally. Having heard some of the impact first hand, Poppy Jaman, FRSA and Chief Executive of the City Mental Health Alliance argues for short-term measures and longer-term learning.

"The Intensive Care National Audit Research Centre report on Covid-19 in critical care contains data on all confirmed cases in NHS critical care but not those in the community, care homes or other settings. The data from this report shows 34% of UK critically ill patients with Covid-19 are from ethnic minorities; it is possible that ethnic minorities are physiologically at higher risk, but globally, non-white countries do not show greater numbers than majority-white countries.

A more likely explanation is that the poorest in our society happen to also be disproportionately ethnic minorities and that measures to protect the population from Covid-19 have failed to adequately protect those who are poorer and live in large families in smaller spaces, and have jobs that cannot be done from home. What is certain is that before this crisis, successive governments have not addressed the social determinants of health that are risking the lives of many…."

https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-comment/2020/04/covid-19-and-health-inequalities

US: Well Being Trust

Earlier this year, the Well Being Trust (WBT) launched *Healing the Nation*, a comprehensive national policy framework for mental health and addiction. The issues we highlighted in the publication have only grown more relevant during the COVID-19 crisis.

You can read the full Healing the Nation document via the link below:

https://healingthenation.wellbeingtrust.org/?_ga=2.95922012.116448468.1588620798-1616398944.1585587492

WBT are now launching a monthly webinar series that dives into pressing topics in mental health using the policy framework outlined in Healing the Nation. These webinars are open to all to join.

The first webinar, **COVID-19: The Triple Threat Against Our Well Being**, was held on April 20 and focused on the social, economic, and health impacts of COVID-19. A panel of experts engaged in conversation around the current status of the crisis and comprehensive solutions that could be put forth in response.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CERePuKHWw

World Resources Institute: Tackling Inequality in Cities is Essential for Fighting COVID-19 April 2020

In this recent article, Du, King & Chanchani argue that tackling inequality in cities is essential for fighting COVID-19.

"Social distancing is a critically important response to the pandemic, but it also assumes that residents have adequate space, services and social safety nets to survive such an order. This is simply not the reality across cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

More than 1 billion people live in slums and informal settlements globally. As much as 50-80% of employment is informal in developing cities, from street vendors to minibus drivers to migrant workers. Many of these families are essentially surviving day-to-day, living in dense neighborhoods with unreliable and often shared access to basic services like water, sanitation and electricity. Many don't have bank accounts, basic employment contracts or insurance. Their incomes and workplaces are not on any government agency's radar. In short, they lack the resources to survive without defying lockdown orders.

The shortcomings of recent social distancing orders are evident in cities like New Delhi, Bangkok, Lagos, Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, where millions of residents feel their lives have been upended with little protection or access to support. The helplessness is widespread as families prepare for the worst."

The authors note four strategies that can assist:

1. **City agencies should provide access to basic water and sanitation facilities for free.**
2. **National governments should process fiscal transfers to states/cities** so they can immediately distribute cash assistance — through more creative means than usual, if necessary — to those who need it most.
3. **Government and private health care providers must step up efforts to provide access to emergency services in cities' most under-served areas**, as well as help those who need to quarantine.
4. **City governments must work more closely with community leaders and NGOs that work in informal settlements and other at-risk communities**

https://www.wri.org/blog/2020/04/coronavirus-inequality-cities