**PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF THE POOR AND INORMAL SECTOR WORKERS IN NIGERIAN CITIES**

 Geoffrey I. Nwaka

Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

**Objectives:** Ideally, well managed cities should promote good health and well-being, but poverty in the cities constitutes “the largest roadblock to good health”. UN-Habitat and the ILO estimate that between 50 and 70 per cent of townspeople in sub-Saharan Africa work in the informal sector. Although critics dismiss the informal sector as “a chaotic jumble of unproductive activities”, the fact is that this sector has greatly helped to promote local entrepreneurship, employment and income, and thus to alleviate poverty and strengthen social protection.

 **Methods**: The paper is based on several years on historical and contemporary urban and environmental issues in Africa. It draws insights from the various UN-Habitat Urban Agendas, WHO’s Healthy Cities Programme, and other recent African and global initiatives that provide guidance on how to build healthy and environmentally sustainable cities.

**Results:** Almost everywhere in Nigerian cities, elite u poor live and work in appalling and health threatening conditions. Inadequate water supply and sanitation, and the poor state of public health infrastructure often led to the spread of water-borne and filth-related disease The poor workers are also more vulnerable to increasing crime and violence in the cities, as well as to the adverse health effects of climate change. They have little or no social protection, and rely largely on their own means and on traditional kin-based arrangements and other informal social security networks. Government spending tends to favour the rich; the poor are often obliged to resort to traditional and religious healing practices. We need to strengthen the institutions that provide small amounts of credits and other forms of financial and business services to the poor; programmes that promote skills training for unemployed youths; and policies that foster complementary links between the formal and informal economies. Those who work in the informal sector should be encouraged and enabled to upgrade, better organize and self-regulate themselves in order to become more productive and competitive, and engage more constructively with government and other development agencies.

**Conclusion**: How do we support and regulate this sector in a way that translates the enterprise, resourcefulness and innovation of its operators into higher productivity and income, while at the same time ensuring a safe, healthy and socially acceptable working and living environment. The challenge is to devise appropriate and well-targeted interventions to ensure the safety, health and well-being of the poor and informal sector workers. The paper underscores the need for good and more inclusive urban governance. Current research suggests that the path to urban peace and sustainability lies in building more inclusive and socially equitable cities “where everyone, regardless of their economic means, gender, age, ethnic origin or religion are enabled and empowered to participate productively in the social, economic and political opportunities that cities offer”.