

International Conference of Urban Health (ICUH) 2022
Organized by International Society for Urban Health (ISUH)
24-27 October 2022, Valencia and Online

Report by Dr. Suraj Bhattarai

[My Participation](#)

It was a pleasure attending the ICUH 2022 representing the Global Young Academy (Global Health Working Group). I had supported the planning of this conference in the capacity of a member of the IAP Urban Health WG), a scientific committee member of the Urban Health and Wellbeing Programme of ISC/IAP/ISUH, and a member of the Expert Advisory Council of the International Society of Urban Health (ISUH).

During the meetings with ISUH, IAP and their affiliates, I highlighted the role of GYA in advancing Urban health agenda through stakeholder engagement as well as exchange of projects and ideas through the national or regional academies/young academies. The audience appreciated the strengths of GYA, particularly the Global Health WG, its large network of early to mid-career researchers globally.

My participation in the series of meetings may motivate GYA members/ alumni to consider incorporating Urban health agenda in their current and future research/ academic projects.

[Presentation \(Parallel Session, Day 1\)](#)

Title: 'Urban advantage? Association of remoteness and reduced disease burden in Nepal'.

Presenters: Georgina Miles, Suraj Bhattarai, Sanam Aksha, Claire Keene, et al.

The main highlights of our presentation were the findings of a retrospective cross sectional, ecological-level quantitative analysis of public, de-identified, sub-national health data collected by the Nepal's Department of Health Services. Main dataset included incidence data on disease outcomes from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 fiscal years (infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases); Social determinants of health SDH from the 2011 census.



Key findings discussed at ICUH include:

- Consistent association between urban municipalities and higher disease burden; high NCD risk factors (smoking/ diet/ activity and pollution);
- Association between urban areas and reduced piped water/ health care access (could be attributed to unplanned settlements and the fact that reductions in unemployment and illiteracy do not equal increasing access to healthcare);
- Need of a strong rural health care structure in Nepal.

[Specific Contribution and Involvement \(IAP Global Webinar by Urban Health WG\)](#)

Title: 'Academies of Science and Medicine: Actions to Advance Urban Health'.

Moderator: Peter McGrath (IAP coordinator)

Presenters: Prof. Jo Boufford (IAP Urban Health Working Group); Prof. Guna Ratna Locana (National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka; Dr. Shally Fawks, Urban Health Consultant).

The main highlights of the webinar is given below.

Dr. Guna Ratna Locana from National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka, highlighted the role of small and mid-sized towns in the development of LMICs. Globally, urban development generally has been prioritized over rural development. Modernizing the metropolitan economy would leave rural regions neglected and impoverished. Therefore, the current emphasis of any country should be on a new concept of rural modernization.

Prof. Locana predicted that by 2035 all the fastest growing cities worldwide will be in LMICs. He then talked about a study which concludes that urbanization occurs more because of 'rural push' than 'urban pull'.



Likewise, **Dr. Sally Fawks**, a consultant hired by IAP-UHWG presented the findings of a scoping exercise- 'What are national academies of science and medicine doing in relation to urban health and its broad determinants?'. The exercise involved a desktop review of academy websites and interviews with academy leaders which offered insights into the diverse types and focus of activities in which the national academies in Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe were engaged between 2017 and 2021.

She highlighted the key insights of the project, including an urgent need to clarify the concepts and clearer definition of 'health' and 'urban health'; need to scale up the national academies' urban health-related activities featured publications and events; need to enhance academic partnerships which are fundamental to resourcing urban health-related activities and catalyzing action; and enhancement of the national academies' impact on urban health by adopting systems thinking and the conceptual approach of Health in All Policies.

Dr. Fawks also highlighted the key strategic opportunities to strengthen national academies' urban health related activities, which includes establishing 'health' as a core concern of all academies' activities; building leadership and capacity in strategic areas; forging connections between basic science activities and urban health; expanding academies' membership; convening urban health-focused groups; and optimizing use of digital communications.



In addition to these, I participated in most of the other sessions through Day 1-3. Some of the sessions worth mentioning include:

Day 1-

Plenary Session 1 titled 'Strengthening the Response to Improve Climate, Clean Air and Health in Urban Environments'.

Speakers: Dr. Carlos Dora (ISUH), Dr. Madeleine Thomson (Wellcome Trust), Nina Renshaw (Clean Air Fun), Dr. Maria Neira (WHO), Joanna McLean Masic (World Bank Group).

Day 2-

Plenary Session 2 titled 'Transforming Urban Environments for Health'.

Speakers: Giselle Sebag (ISUH), Dr. Nathalie Roebbel (WHO), Dr. David Erickson (New York Federal Reserve), Rowena Estwick (Impact on Urban Health), Louise Keilgast (GEHL), Sarah Skenazy (Google).

Special Panel titled 'Spotlight on Bangladesh: Examples of Community Health in Action'.

Speaker- Dr. Shamim Hayder Talukde, Eminence Bangladesh.

Day 3-

Accelerating City Equity Project (ACE), ISUH

Speaker: Giselle Sebag (ISUH).