

Category: Determinants of Health

Metatags: Women and poverty; Feminization of poverty; Economic determinants

Women and Poverty

At the 2001 Global Health Council Conference in Washington D.C., U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the status of women's health was critical not only to communities but also to countries. "When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: Families are healthier, they are better fed, their income, savings and reinvestment[s] go up. Conversely, when women suffer ill health, the whole of society pays a higher price," he said. ("Global Statistics on Women's Health are Chilling", Women's e-News June 7, 2001)(LINK

TO:<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/575/context/archive>)

Poverty is one of the primary contributors to the global crisis in women's health.

The link between poverty and poor health is well established and makes common sense. There are many ways in which poverty can lead to ill health, including lack of access to affordable housing, transportation, food and non-insured health benefits, such as medications. (Women, Income and Health in Manitoba: An Overview and Ideas for Action)(LINK TO: <http://www.womenshealthclinic.org/resources/wih/wih.html>)

In "Women and Poverty," (LINK TO: http://www.criaw-icref.ca/Poverty_fact_sheet.htm) Marika Morris notes that the cost of poverty to women is a litany of health concerns:

- ~~✍~~ acute and chronic ill health;
- ~~✍~~ susceptibility to infectious and other disease;
- ~~✍~~ increased risk of heart disease, arthritis, stomach ulcers, migraines, clinical depression, stress, and breakdown;
- ~~✍~~ vulnerability to mental illness and self-destructive coping behaviours; and
- ~~✍~~ increased vulnerability to violence and abuse, as poverty traps women and limits their choices.

In relation, the impact of women's poverty on society is child poverty, death and disability among children, decreased reproductive health, an increased reliance on the health care system, an increased crime rate, and an eroded democracy where women's perspectives on issues are lost when they are kept from participating in the same numbers as men in decision-making structures because of family care responsibilities and lack of funds.

For more information on women and poverty, please see the following sites:

Poverty is hazardous to women's health – and we can do something about it!

<http://www.cwhn.ca/network-reseau/4-5/4-5pg8.html>

Exposing the ugly truth about poverty in Canada

<http://www.cwhn.ca/network-reseau/2-1/unitednations.html>

A full measure: women's occupational status and health

<http://www.cewh-cesf.ca/bulletin/v2n3/page2.html>

Empowerment in the context of poverty: low-income mothers in Saskatoon

<http://www.cewh-cesf.ca/bulletin/v2n2/page8.html>

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