

HOUSING



The quality of housing has major implications for people's health. Characteristics such as living space (crowding), low or high indoor temperatures, injury hazards in the home, water quality, air quality, neighbourhood noise, asbestos, lead, tobacco smoke, radon and accessibility of housing for people with functional impairments are all of relevance. Preventive measures related to housing construction, renovation, use and maintenance can promote better overall health.

Poor housing conditions create multiple health risks.

PRIORITY SETTINGS FOR ACTION

THE PROBLEM:



828 M

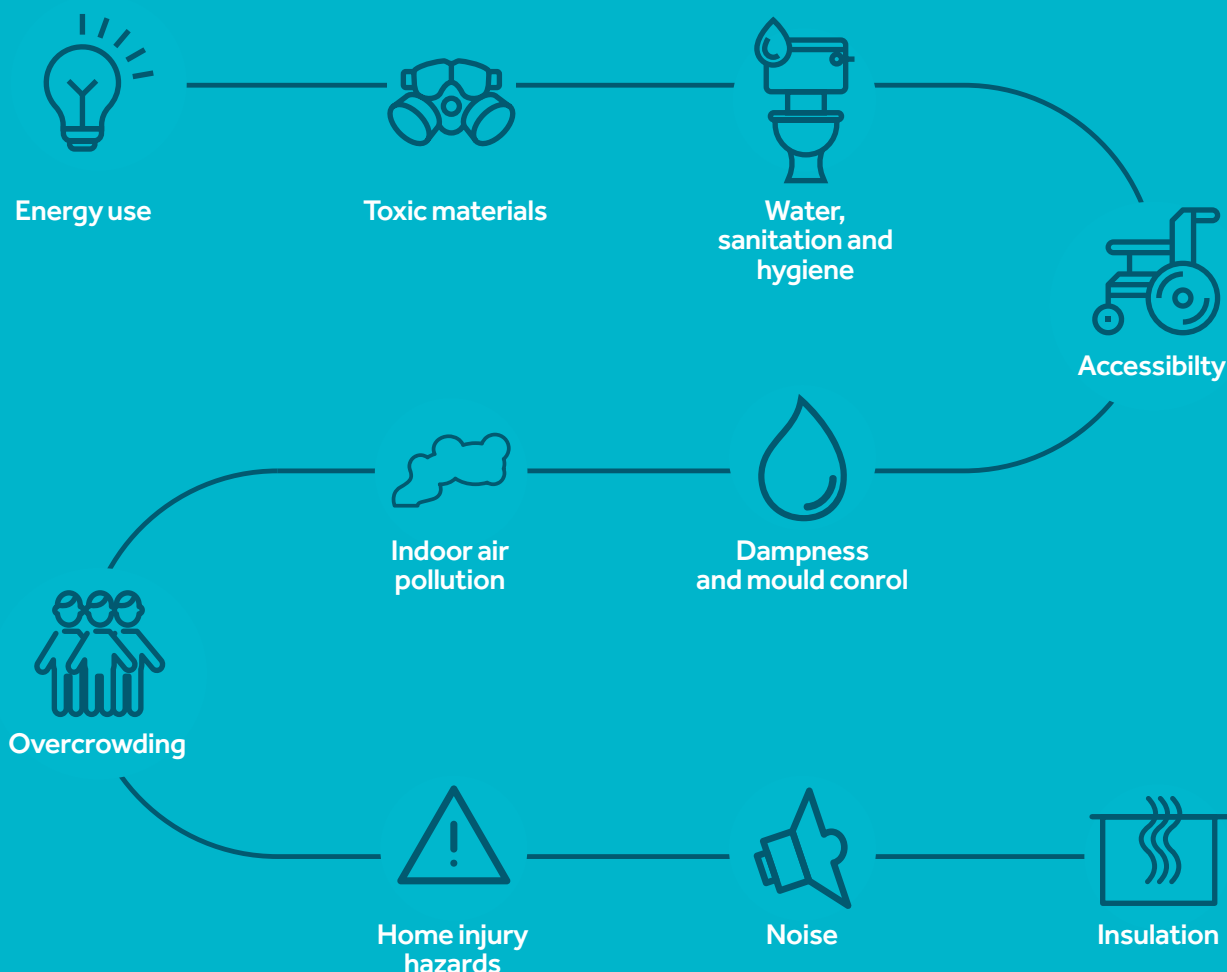
828 million people are living in slums.



The World's population will double by 2050 and will require adequate housing solutions. Poor housing conditions create multiple health risks.

Households are an entry point for a multifactorial approach to improve many housing conditions as part of the drive to create a healthier living environment.

HOUSING CAN IMPROVE WELL-BEING THROUGH ACTING ON:





Slum on the Saigon river bank, in front of modern buildings, in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

WHAT ARE KEY ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

Key actions on housing include the following:

1.

Health criteria

Incorporate health criteria in housing and construction policies.

2.

Cooperation

Facilitate cooperation between the health sector and other relevant sectors to foster implementation of those policies.

3.

Intersectoral planning

Facilitate intersectoral planning and collaboration at all levels, and allocate sufficient resources.

4.

Capacities

Develop the capacities of health professionals to better identify and prevent environmental exposure due to substandard housing conditions.

5.

Knowledge and evidence

Fill the gaps in knowledge and evidence on housing risks for health, and estimate the disease burden from housing.

6.

Slum upgrading

Promote health-based slum upgrading strategies.

MAIN WHO ACTIONS

Possible WHO actions on housing include the following:

Norms and guidance

Provide norms and guidance to address housing and health through the development of WHO housing and health guidelines.

Awareness and communication

Raise awareness and develop communication materials on key housing recommendations for health and reach out to various stakeholders, from policy-makers to users.

Implementation

Provide support for the implementation of the guidelines through the development of tools for addressing housing and health and disseminate good practices.

Housing upgrading

Synthesize evidence on major risks in slums and propose key housing upgrading interventions with documented health benefits.

Capacities

Build capacities of health workers to understand the mental and physical health impacts of housing.

Prioritized action

Advocate prioritized action on the health impacts of housing policies with other key United Nations agencies, for example UN-Habitat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

SECTORAL POLICIES INTERACTING WITH HEALTH IN HOUSEHOLDS (in addition to health authorities)

Cooperation with the following sectors may be required to sustainably reduce risks to health:



Energy



**Land use
planning**



**Water and
sanitation**



**Industry
(incl.
construction)**

Further information:

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/276001/9789241550376-eng.pdf>.

Source: Healthy environments for healthier populations: Why do they matter and what can we do? WHO, 2019.



**World Health
Organization**