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**HOW THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND POOR CAN MAKE YOU SICK:
AUSTRALIAN ON INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION SPEAKS OUT**

The toxic combination of poor social policies, unfair economic arrangements and bad politics means that a majority of people in the world do not enjoy good health, according to a new report being released today. The International Commission on the Social Determinants of Health has basically found that being poor can make you sick, no matter where you live.

“According to the Commission’s findings, social injustice is killing people on a grand scale. In cities in rich countries (such as Glasgow) life expectancy according to area can differ by as much as 28 years depending on where you live,” explained Professor Fran Baum, an Australian Commissioner who is also the Head of the Department of Public Health at Flinders University in Adelaide.

“The Commission is calling for measures to close the health gap between the world’s rich and poor citizens within a generation. For instance, investment in the early years of life provides one of greatest potentials to reduce health inequities in a generation. Women’s health and gender equity are also key issues,” said Professor Baum.

“Access to and utilisation of health care is vital to good and equitable health – the policy focus should be on providing equitable health care, regardless of an individual or community’s ability to pay. The Commission recommends a range of actions to create the conditions for more equitable distribution of determinants of health,” said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the Public Health Association of Australia.

“Governments and international organisations can and must take action to measure and monitor health inequities and the distribution of the social determinants of health, so that all the world’s children can reach their potential. Everyone should be able to live flourishing lives, no matter how poor they are or where they live,” said Mr Moore.

Professor Baum will be a keynote speaker at next month’s *From Margins to Mainstream: 5th World Conference on the Promotion of Mental Health and the Prevention of Mental and Behavioural Disorders*, being held by VicHealth in Melbourne from 10-12 September 2008. The conference is addressing the economic and social benefits of improving mental health and wellbeing in the population by preventing violence against women, discrimination, reducing health inequalities and increasing social participation for disadvantaged communities.

Following release, the report will be available at: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/

For further information/comment:

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