

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE: THE CHALLENGE OF URBAN IMMUNIZATION

CHALLENGES FROM URBAN GROWTH

Crowding in urban slums will bring with it disastrous health consequences if ignored. By 2050, 66% of the world's population will be urban dwellers—90% of this increase will occur in Africa and Asia. It is imperative to employ strategies today to ensure that all children, no matter where they live or who they are, can lead healthy and productive lives, free from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Since the late 1970s, when vaccines first became widely used in developing countries, vaccination programs have focused on reaching rural populations. The recent and projected growth in urban populations has not been adequately factored into the planning and implementation of strategies—leaving the poor living in urban and peri-urban areas unevenly protected, at risk for disease outbreaks. Outbreaks in urban areas carry the potential to rapidly spread to the general population nationwide and globally, especially in light of frequent population movement and transport networks originating from cities.

Families move in and out of urban areas for many different reasons, often fairly frequently, creating a barrier to continuity of care and placing children at risk when they do not receive a complete and timely course of vaccinations. Many urban families may even live minutes from a health center offering vaccination services, but due to socioeconomic, cultural and health systems barriers may not access them at all. Working parents may not be able to take time off to bring their children for immunization and other health services.

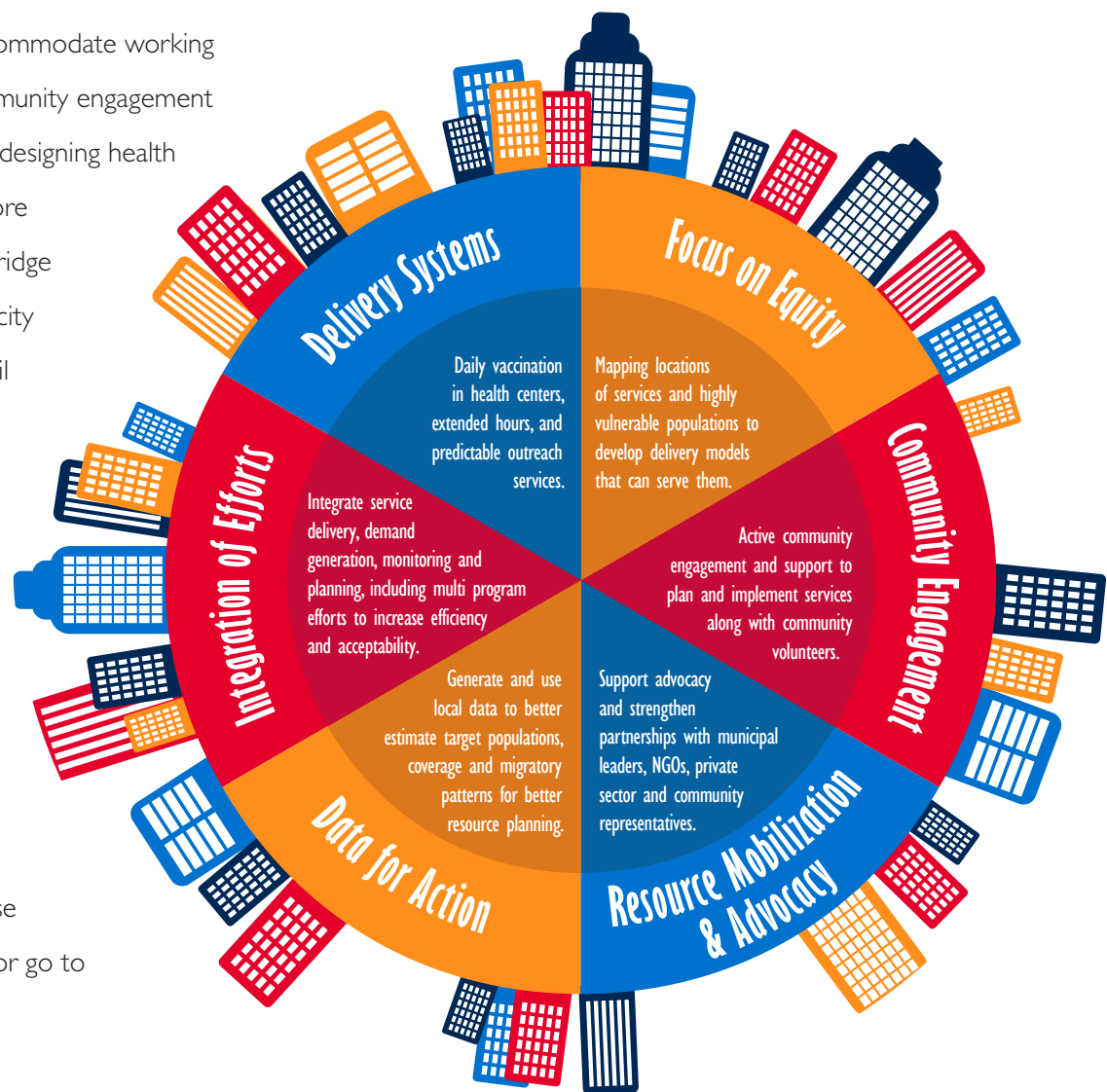
JSI aims to address this challenge head-on, through practical solutions to meet the health needs of the growing population of urban poor.



CREATING CHANGE THROUGH PROVEN SOLUTIONS

JSI has worked in urban settings in countries throughout the world, gaining a nuanced understanding of demand for and barriers to access/use, while building sustainable solutions to meet these pressing needs. Based on in-depth analyses and “social mapping” activities, JSI seeks to understand priorities, preferences, concerns and attitudes of urban families and those who influence provision of services. Interventions such as extended hours for health centers to accommodate working parents and strengthening community engagement for planning, implementing, and designing health outreach services which are more culturally acceptable can help bridge the gaps. JSI seeks to build capacity and strong coalitions among civil society and government health stakeholders, as well as engage civic authorities to strengthen immunization systems for sustainable and equitable vaccination of the urban poor.

To learn more about JSI and our work in immunization, please contact immunization@jsi.com or go to www.jsi.com/immunization.



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