The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised alarms over the serious health consequences of loneliness and social isolation, warning that an estimated 100 people die every hour around the world due to related health conditions.

In a report released Monday, WHO's Commission on Social Connection revealed that one in six people globally are affected by loneliness. The report also highlights that about one-third of older adults and one-quarter of adolescents live in social isolation.

"Loneliness is the painful feeling that results when there is a gap between the social connections we want and those we have," said Dr. Vivek Murthy, co-chair of the commission. "Social isolation, on the other hand, is the actual lack of social contacts."

According to the report, loneliness and isolation significantly raise the risk of serious health problems such as stroke, heart disease, diabetes, cognitive decline, and even early death. Mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are also closely linked to social disconnection.

The report identifies several factors contributing to loneliness and isolation. These include poor health, low income and education levels, living alone, inadequate community infrastructure, and certain public policies. The misuse of digital technologies has also been noted as a growing concern.

The WHO is urging governments and communities around the world, including in Africa, to take action by investing in stronger social support systems and designing policies that promote meaningful social interaction.