

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES



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ISBN 978 92 9061 838 6

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Suggested citation. Environmental health in selected Asian countries. Manila, Philippines. World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. 1. Asia. 2. Environmental health. I. World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific. (NLM Classification: WA30.5).

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FOREWORD

This report was prepared for the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment held on 6–8 October 2016 in Manila, Philippines. The report presents the state of the environment and health in the 14 countries of the Regional Forum, based on country profiles and United Nations and World Health Organization statistics. This updated version incorporates inputs from Member States at the Regional Forum.

The report provides a snapshot of progress among these countries on relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture); SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages); SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all); SDG 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all); SDG 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable); and SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).

All countries are making advances in key areas of human development and health. Nevertheless, the impact of environmental risks on health is large. Of the 12.6 million deaths attributable globally to modifiable environmental risks, more than 4 million occurred in the 14 Forum countries, according to data from 2012. Most of these deaths (3.35 million) were from noncommunicable diseases, with air pollution playing a significant role.

There are significant differences among Regional Forum countries. For example, the age-standardized death rate from modifiable environmental risks varies among countries from around 40 to more than 300 per 100 000. Likewise, healthy life expectancy ranges from 57.9 to 74.9 years among countries. The prevalence of wasting in children under 5 years of age ranges from 1% to 13.5%, and stunting from 2.5% to 43.8%. Access to improved water ranges from 64% to 100%, and access to improved sanitation from 42% to 100%. The population using solid fuels (biomass or coal) for cooking and heating ranges from less than 5% to greater than 95%. Implementation of the SDGs will help close these gaps.

Droughts, floods, extreme temperatures and storms have caused more than a quarter million deaths over the past three decades. These conditions have affected about 3.4 billion people and cost more than \$500 billion in Forum countries. An expected increase in the frequency of these events, coupled with climate change, will only exacerbate this trend. The commitments made under the Paris Agreement should reduce emissions, providing a major source of hope for reducing air pollution-related death and illness.

The report draws four main conclusions. First, we need to reduce inequalities within and between countries, in the spirit of leaving no one behind. Second, we are increasingly affected by climate and environmental change, which threatens our achievements, and therefore we urgently need to assess the adaptation options we have, even as we pursue decarbonization. Third, we can make good progress by focusing on the SDGs with the understanding that they all converge on health; addressing their interlinkages is a good approach to protect and promote health. Fourth, a core indicator set to monitor performance and progress is required. This report is a start in this direction.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Environment and Health: the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for South-East Asia; the WHO Office for the Western Pacific; and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment). The lead author was Carlos Corvalan with technical contributions from: Susan Mercado, Nasir Hassan, Rokho Kim, Lesley Onyon, Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida, Katrin Engelhardt, Sangjin Lee and Jungsub Yeom. WHO and UN Environment are also grateful to country representatives who attended the Regional Forum for valuable comments that improved the report.

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