# Urban Health Initiative
## a model process for catalysing change

## Making health a priority in the design of air pollution-free cities

The Urban Health Initiative (UHI) goes beyond improving access to health care and promoting healthy behaviours, and focuses on how to build cities that enable and encourage good health.

## Air pollution – a health issue

Air pollution is a health issue with real health costs. It causes 7 million deaths each year, exerts an economic burden of between billions and trillions of dollars, and is responsible for over one third of deaths from lung cancer, stroke and pulmonary disease.[1]

## Urban planning – a health issue

Health is an urban planning issue. An estimated 91% of people living in urban areas are exposed to polluted air. The sectors that are the biggest causes of urban air pollution – transport, energy, waste and industry – also contribute to other major health risks, including traffic injuries, noise stressors, barriers to physical activity and sanitation risks. Policies and investments supporting cleaner transport, energy-efficient housing, power generation, industry and better municipal waste management are therefore essential to creating healthy cities.

[1] Ambient (outdoor) air pollution: key facts. WHO, 2018 (https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health, accessed 22 February 2021).

## Bringing health to the policy-making table

The health sector is integral to the policy-making process. Health impacts, costs and benefits are significant and need to be modelled, included and anticipated in generating accurate economic cost–benefit analyses. Health arguments, incentives and linkages could be more effectively used to propel action for clean air and counter climate change. For example in:

- providing better access to relevant evidence on the linkages between air and climate pollutants and health;
- enabling and encouraging health actors to support sector policies that prevent diseases and pollution;
- strengthening the capacity to analyse, evaluate and communicate health co-benefit opportunities from policies and interventions to mitigate air and climate pollutants; and
- helping bridge sectoral decision-making silos, thus enhancing intersectoral cooperation.

**Reducing air pollution makes sense health-wise, now and as an investment in a clean and liveable future.**

## Urban Health Initiative – enabling cities to include health in policy-making

The Urban Health Initiative aims to reduce the deaths and diseases caused by air and climate pollutants and to help cities reap the benefits of policies and measures that tackle air and climate pollution. It aims to equip the health sector with the data, tools and capacity to demonstrate to the public and decision-makers the full range of health and climate benefits that can be achieved from implementing local emission reduction policies and strategies.

The Initiative works with governments and partners to change the trajectory of a city's health impacts from air pollution, by:

- arming decision-makers with **health-based tools to assess the impacts** of air pollution and unsustainable urban policies;
- supporting the **mapping of health impacts** in transport, land-use, energy and housing scenarios;
- helping health and development sectors **calculate the health costs** and benefits of choices;
- through improving communications, nudging the health sector, urban leaders and the public to **rally around healthier development choices**.

### Healthy cities – key to SDG attainment

Action in cities can drive progress towards multiple SDGs

- ✔ ✔ Reduce air pollution (SDGs 3.9 and 11.6)
- ✔ Combat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and related risks like obesity (SDG 3.4)
- ✔ Access to public transport with special attention to women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons (SDG 11.2)
- ✔ ✔ Sanitation and waste management (SDGs 3.9 and 11.6)
- ✔ Equity (SDG 10)
- ✔ Access to safe public and green spaces, particularly for women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons (SDG 11.7)
- ✔ Climate action – climate resilience (SDG 13)

## HEALTH EVIDENCE
## HEALTH COMPETENCY
## HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS

## The UHI model process for integrating health into policy-making:

### Mapping the current situation, policies and decision-making processes

- Assess air quality, climate and air pollutant emissions, sources and related policies.
- Identify expected health impacts and gaps in ability to collect comprehensive data that support policy action.
- Map all relevant stakeholders. Consider needs, perceptions and socio-economic realities of impacted communities.

### Building capacity to engage effectively

- Train health actors at policy, programme and service delivery levels to engage in cross-sector policy-making processes.
- Conduct relevant health analyses and communicate effectively with the public on links between climate and air pollutants and health.

### Adapting and applying health and economic tools in the local context

- Adapt and apply available tools to assess the health and economic impacts of policies

### Developing and testing scenarios

- Test alternative scenarios based on policy options locally to estimate the potential health and economic impacts.
- Identify preferred policy scenarios and interventions.
- Measure health impacts, co-benefits, and the costs of inaction and interventions. Conduct cost–effectiveness and cost–benefit analyses.
- Develop city-level action plans, strategies and roadmaps.

### Communication and outreach to mobilize and sustain support

- Engage urban leaders and champions to communicate the costs of inaction, including through citywide #BreatheLife communications campaigns, media training, outreach, workshops and social marketing – intensifying demand for action.
- Provide health and economic arguments to spur policy-makers to act.
- Engage health care workers to advise patients, workers and communities on the need for interventions.

### Monitoring results and refining policy

- Develop a monitoring framework/tracking mechanism to measure policy change impacts and the results from city initiatives to address air pollution and associated health outcomes.

**World Health Organization**

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