

# 1. Urban Foresight: using data to predict health outcomes and guide policy and action in cities



The Urban Foresight tool helps governments use local data for better planning.

More than half of the people in the Western Pacific Region live in urban areas. Life in cities and towns has brought both health benefits and adverse health impacts. Authorities are better equipped to plan, anticipate and mitigate emerging urban health challenges when reliable data are available.

The *Regional Framework for Urban Health in the Western Pacific 2016–2020: Healthy and Resilient Cities* recommends actions for three partners: local government, national health agencies and WHO.

## The framework contains five action domains:

1. **Governance and coordination infrastructure**
2. **Programme planning, management and quality improvement**
3. **Information and surveillance systems**
4. **Health workforce and network capacities**
5. **Health systems roles and functions**

From 28 February to 1 March 2016, participants from 17 Member States attended the Meeting on the Implementation of the Regional Framework for Urban Health in Manila. They used local data and applied tools to understand the impact of health problems on other urban systems. Using the Urban Foresight tool, they explored trends and prioritized the urban health challenges of water and sanitation, informal settlements, air pollution, traffic congestion and road accidents, waste management, obesity, physical activity, food safety, health literacy, ageing populations, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), mental health and immunization, among others.

Participants acknowledged the need to move from a reactive to a proactive approach. They recognized that action for urban health occurs at the local level. Reliable local urban data are needed by national governments to steer and support intersectoral action for better urban health programmes.

Quality information is crucial to strategically respond to, anticipate, mitigate, adapt to and innovate for better health outcomes. Tools such as Urban Foresight, the Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (Urban HEART) and the Urban Impact Assessment have been used to enhance the understanding of possibilities, complexities and uncertainties, as well as the potential effects of the policies of other sectors on population health. ■