

3. Environmental health leaders focus on action priorities using data

Environmental risks and threats such as climate change contribute significantly to the burden of disease in the Western Pacific Region. Risks include not only unsafe water and sanitation, but also hazards arising from economic development, such as air pollution. Protecting health involves clearly communicating risks and translating knowledge to relevant policy-makers and stakeholders outside of the health sector.

The First Regional Training on Health, Environment and Development was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 30 November to 5 December 2015. The training was part of WHO's work to build Member States' capacity on evidence-based approaches to protect communities and improve environments. One official each from the sectors of health and environment from 12 Member States attended the meeting.

The course featured in-depth discussions on environmental health issues and overcoming challenges in using information for action, as well as exercises on data management and analysis.

Two-person country teams identified priority environmental health issues and developed work plans to manage challenges in producing, collecting and analysing data, as well as using data to guide policy and interventions.

The issue of water, sanitation and hygiene was selected as the highest en-



The lack of access to safe water has severe consequences on the health of vulnerable groups.

vironmental priority by Mongolia, Viet Nam and three Pacific island countries and areas – Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau – while climate change was cited by Cambodia, Fiji and Samoa. The Philippines focused on emergencies, while the team from China named air quality as its top concern. All country teams developed strategies to commu-

nicate key messages to stakeholders to engender change in their countries.

Two publications on climate change and health were launched, namely *Climate change and health in the Western Pacific Region: Synthesis of evidence, profiles of selected countries and policy direction* and *Human health and climate change in Pacific island countries*. ■