ENHANCING URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR **HEALTH** AND **WELL-BEING** IN SOUTH-EAST ASIAN CITIES

: REGIONAL LABORATORY, FRAMEWORK, CASES AND ASSESSMENT TOOL

Introduction

In response to rapid urbanization and support of the WHO's Triple Billion target of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW13), the WHO South-East Asia Region initiated the **Regional Laboratory on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being** (RL-UGHW) to

1 Strengthen healthy cities and good governance for health and well-being.

2 Promote and facilitate the creation of networks to scale up healthy cities with urban governance for health and well-being as the foundation.

3 Promote joint learning among mayors/governors and support local initiatives to strengthen community engagement and involvement of local stakeholders.

4 Build city capacities to generate evidence for the health of the population and its determinants (urban health and health equity profiles).

Through an examination of the national statistics of member countries of the South-East Asia Region, RL-UGHW studied the regional diversity and commonalities amongst the countries as well as the current state of urban governance in cities of the South-East Asia Region. Through the research spanning two years, RL-UGHW identified suitable indicators for cities' urban health and urban governance status - forming the SEAR Healthy Cities Network assessment framework. As an accreditation of cities under the Regional Office for South-East Asia, the assessment framework has been made to guide cities' systematic collection of data to map the city's health profile and development plan to improve UGHW based on the city's priorities, in alignment with nine action domains of WHO Healthy Cities.

Methodology

→ **Preliminary research** was conducted through a literature review on urban governance and socioeconomic determinants of health.

The RL-UGHW's research on socioeconomic determinants of health charted the correlation between livelihood and living conditions, socioeconomic and work conditions, urban infrastructure and facilities to the population's health and well-being, identifying measurable indicators to support cities' benchmarking in their achievements.

→ **In-depth research** was also conducted on the socioeconomic and political context in the South-East Asia Region to assess the relevance, feasibility, and benchmarking of healthy city indicators.

→ Through inputs from the Technical Expert Panel convened by the South-East Asia Regional Office, the RL-UGHW has **continuously refined the assessment framework** to its current state.

Assessment Criteria
CONSOLIDATION OF THE RUBRICS IN THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The urban health and governance assessment framework for the RL-UGHW is divided into **six sections**. Each section consists of detailed determining factors and their indicators.

To highlight the primary importance of urban governance, cities' achievements in governance will be assessed with double the weightage compared to other indicators. The principle of urban governance underlies all domains and will be the basis for targeted development of the cities which join the Healthy Cities Network.

As the **accreditation** is intended to motivate continuous improvement of cities, awarding will be made primarily based on a city's improvements, where assessment of improvement will be benchmarked to the city's health profile before the roll-out of the plan.

By capturing all these dimensions, the RL-UGHW seeks to shine light on critical health and well-being issues at a city level so that city governments can understand and address them accordingly. With this assessment tool, the RL-UGHW looks to draw lessons to be learnt from different cities and create best practices or models for good urban governance for health and well-being.

Furthermore, the profiles created from these dimensions of assessment will be foundational for this social laboratory to better understand what works in promoting health and addressing causes of health outcomes in the WHO South-East Asia urban context.

THE ASSESSMENT TOOL OVERVIEW

(1) SPATIAL AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
- GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
- DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

(2) LIVELIHOOD AND LIVING CONDITIONS
- LIFE EXPECTANCY (DALY)
- ACTIVE LIVING
- ACCESSIBILITY TO HEALTHY FOODS
- URBAN SAFETY
- URBAN ENVIRONMENT

(3) SOCIOECONOMIC AND WORK CONDITIONS
- INCOM EQUALITY
- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
- EMPLOYMENT INCLUSIVENESS
- WORK ENVIRONMENT

(4) URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES
- PUBLIC UTILITIES
- HOUSING ADEQUACY
- PUBLIC FACILITIES

(5) PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL SERVICES
- PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES
- SOCIAL SECURITY AND INSURANCE COVERAGE
- SOCIAL SECURITY AND INSURANCE INCLUSIVENESS
- EDUCATION SERVICES

(6) URBAN GOVERNANCE
- PARTICIPATION
- SERVICE PERFORMANCE
- OPEN DATA AND INFORMATION
- ADAPTIVENESS
- TRUST AND STRONG CIVIC NETWORK

Conclusion

Rapid urbanization, economic instability, climate change and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have put considerably more pressure and reliance on governmental capacity to address persisting and emerging issues concerning health and well-being. With high diversity in geographical, cultural, social, and economic structures among cities of Member countries in the South-East Asia Region, localization and contextualization of specific actions will be critical to the delivery of health policies and actions. Improving UGHW will be essential for the improvement of health equity and resilience of cities.

Advancement of health and well-being requires good governance. To advance health and well-being in urban settings, Member States in the South-East Asia Region need to strengthen collaborations between national and local governments, development partners and academics, the private sector, civil society groups and communities through a whole-of-society approach. Collaboration at all levels of government will be instrumental towards driving a whole-of-government approach to facilitate health-in-all policies.

RL-UGHW has been established to build and to support cities through an evidence-based approach, and facilitation of platforms for the sharing of best practices to build capacities of cities. The assessment framework designed by RL-UGHW guides city governments and actors to achieve a more holistic understanding of health and well-being and empowers cities to chart development plans in line with WHO's Healthy Cities Action Domains to improve UGHW. The work to advance health and well-being in cities in the South-East Asia Region is an ongoing process, and RL-UGHW is committed to the building the capacities of local governments, as well as the development of appropriate models in collaboration with cities in the Network to achieve and advance sustainable development of health and well-being in the Region.