

# Urban health and well-being



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## SEI Asia fact sheet June 2021

More than half of the Asian population is now living in urban areas. We must therefore take the opportunity to address the challenges presented by rapid, inequitable and un-managed development, and unsustainable levels of consumption.

SEI Asia's urban research seeks to help cities and towns achieve an equitable, inclusive and sustainable development pathway, with respect to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 (as well as SDGs 3 and 12) and international commitments including the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Supporting cities and towns in becoming equitable, resilient, healthy and livable requires integrated, cross-sectoral action from all stakeholders, from knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, to co-developing solutions and implementing them together on the ground. Our collaborative research aims to introduce innovative ideas that can inform policymakers, the private sector and civil society on sustainable urban development practices.

## Areas of work and projects

A central theme across all our work is ensuring that urban areas promote inclusion and equity while fostering environmental sustainability. Our projects are centred around three key impact areas, but many work across these areas:

- Improved health and well-being in urban centres
- Ensuring sustainable consumption and production in urban areas
- Building more resilient and inclusive urban communities

Some of our projects are outlined below:

- **City Health and Well-being (CHeW).** This SEI initiative focuses on the cities of Udon Thani in North East Thailand and Nakuru in Kenya. By both working with local communities to understand their interactions with the urban environment and engaging with the municipalities, we seek to understand how to achieve more equitable urban development while delivering more liveable and environmentally sustainable cities.

Image (above):

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**Published by:**

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Our approach is highly collaborative: stakeholder involvement is at the heart of our efforts to build capacity, strengthen institutions, and equip partners for the long term.

Our work spans climate, water, air, and land-use issues, and integrates evidence and perspectives on governance, the economy, gender and human health.

Across our eight centres in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, we engage with policy processes, development action and business practice throughout the world.



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- **Towards inclusive urban waste systems:** integrating informal waste workers for a circular economy. This research project focuses on the informal waste economy in Bangkok, paying particular attention to plastic recycling. As part of this work, we are investigating the contribution of informal waste collectors to the promotion of recycling in the city, household consumption and waste generation behaviour, and the role of waste dealers, using a range of methodologies.
- **The impact of air pollution on the world of work for women and youth in East and South East Asia.** This study reviews the existing evidence and knowledge about how air pollution affects workers, both directly and indirectly. Moving forward in this work, we will carry out case studies to identify evidence-based recommendations for improving air quality, as well as the quality and quantity of employment in a context of just transition towards a low-carbon economy.
- **Transdisciplinary research towards SDG achievements on air pollution.** In this research collaboration with Chulalongkorn University, we are studying air pollution incidence and exposure at the local district level. SEI will be assessing the exposure of local outdoor workers, their awareness of air pollution, and their health, in order to inform policy dialogues with local decision-makers about tackling air pollution.

Other projects in which the urban work theme is engaged include:

- Advancing inclusive and resilient development, targeted at the urban poor
- Implementing subregional clean air and climate solutions in ASEAN
- Identifying the gaps in sustainable garment manufacturing supply chains (India-Europe collaboration)
- Studying the transition to a circular economy for enterprises in South East Asia
- Entrepreneurial urbanization and masculine identities in Khon Kaen, Thailand.