Public health and ***A***ir ***P***ollution in ***A***sia (*PAPA*)
- A CAI-Asia Initiative implemented through the Health Effects Institute-

Executive Summary

Air pollution in major cities across Asia routinely exceeds health-based guidelines established by the World Health Organization and others by significant amounts. Asian cities host some of the largest global population concentrations, concentrations that are growing rapidly as a result of in-migration. Exposure to unhealthy levels of air pollution in Asian cities is extensive and expanding on an annual basis. This has implications for both the public health and the economic well being of each country. In response, the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia) was recently launched by the Asian Development Bank and World Bank, as a multi-stakeholder alliance to assist Asian countries in their efforts to take action to reduce air pollution.

The prime information for government and industry action to address air pollution is often the availability of credible local health evidence documenting the impacts of air pollution on public health. To date, however, in Asia there have been relatively few such analyses, making it difficult to make the case with local officials who must weigh air quality actions amidst numerous other public health and economic challenges.

To address this need, CAI-Asia is supporting a new initiative – ***P***ublic Health and ***A***ir ***P***ollution in ***A***sia (or ***PAPA***) – to form alliances of Asian scientists and air quality officials, and their counterparts elsewhere in the world, to (1) produce a concise, rigorous, and understandable synthesis of all of the existing health studies in Asia, and (2) conduct and communicate the results of systematic, high-quality health analyses in four representative Asian cities. These analyses will be designed to provide specific local estimates of health impacts from air pollution that can be used in cost benefit analyses of the health and monetary benefits of reducing pollution. This information can thus inform public and private decisions on ambient air quality standards, air quality monitoring, and enhanced control programs.

Equally important, PAPA will also build Asian scientific and technical capacity to continue producing these important analyses in the decades to come by both producing these first four analyses, and building a broader network of scientists and regulators throughout Asia to inform future decisions. As a result, Asian air quality will benefit in the near term from high quality local data to guide and inform near-term decisions. And, for many years in the future, governments, industry, lending agencies, WHO, NGOs, and others will benefit from a strengthened Asian scientific community that can produce the needed science and communicate that science effectively, in understandable terms, to decision makers. The importance of such data will only increase as the first, least costly control actions are taken, and air pollution decreases, making the next step of action more expensive and challenging, and requiring cost-effectiveness to be demonstrated with high-quality local data.

PAPA is being organized under CAI-Asia as a leveraged partnership among government development agencies (U.S. AID), international lending agencies, foundations, industry, and local governments. To date, PAPA has attracted substantial commitments of support from foundations, US AID, and industry. Guided by the PAPA Advisory Committee – a multi-stakeholder technical advisory committee formed by CAI-Asia – PAPA will be managed by the Health Effects Institute, a respected international health research institute supported by both government and industry to provide high-quality, relevant, and credible science for decisions on air quality and health. Thus PAPA will draw on the extensive network of key stakeholders coming together as CAI-Asia, and the experience of HEI in conducting analyses and building scientific capacity in a number of countries, to produce targeted results and a sustainable network of Asian scientific expertise to inform decisions for the decades to come.