11th Better Air Quality Conference (BAQ2023)

DAY 2: 16 November, 9.00 – 10.30am
Morning plenary: Sectors working together to achieve clean air for health and the climate – Main Auditorium

PANELIST TALKING POINTS

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Q1. Why is it important for sectors to work together to address air pollution and climate change? Could you please give an example of a successful case?

Answer: Advised by moderator to focus on link between transport, energy and health in urban development.

- The urban space is a great platform for providing integrated solutions and address multiple challenges such as climate change, air pollution and health at the same time. The population density is much higher in urban settings, there is much more traffic and the intensity of energy use is also much higher. All of this means that highly dense urban population is much more vulnerable to health impacts from environmental pollution caused by multiple sources such as vehicles, burning coal of wood for cooking and heating, industries such as brick kilns which is very common in South Asia and others.
- Therefore, we will never have clean air or mitigate climate change if we focus only on one sector at a time. For example if there are many electric vehicles in a city, the city will have less air pollution because of that – which would be great – but if the source of electricity for running the electric vehicles is coming from a coal fired power plant, then we are not solving the issue of climate change. Therefore we need to work towards ensuring that the source of electricity is also clean and coming from renewable sources.
- In terms of an example of a successful case I would like to mention the Peshawar BRT project, which is one of the projects that DG Bruno referred to in his speech. Under the project. The BRT introduced in the city under the project was the first of its kind. It's scope included the construction of a 27km BRT corridor with 31 BRT stations and procurement of over 200 diesel-hybrid buses. All construction and procurement activities were completed by 2019 and the BRT became operational in August 2020.
- Preliminary air quality and carbon emission studies show that increase in BRT ridership co-relates with lower levels of ambient PM10. Based on the data on fuel consumption and passenger capacity the particulate matter emissions per passenger per year are found to be lowest from the BRT in comparison to other

modes of transport such as taxi, normal public buses, personal car. Similarly the carbon emissions per passenger per year are found to be lowest for the BRT in comparison to other modes. Hence, the BRT has been found to be the cleanest mode of travelling for passengers. While these are early findings, I think the results are promising and a good example of an urban transport project which is reducing air pollution and greenhouse gases at the same time.

Q2. Is this approach mainstreamed in the sector you work actively in? What do you think is needed in order for inter-sector work to become the accepted approach?

Currently, amongst the issues of climate change, air pollution and health – it is climate change which has been well mainstreamed in ADB financed projects. However, this is not the case for air quality and health. We have had successful air quality programs mainly in the PRC and Mongolia where we financed a series of projects with air quality as the main objective. We need to have similar programs in other regions and countries such as in the Central West and South Asia region where air pollution is severe problem.

Having said this we are actually financing many major transport projects with air quality benefits such as the Delhi – Meerut Rail Project, Chennai metro project, Bengaluru metro project in India. These projects are currently not counted as air quality projects.

Under the Asia Clean Blue Skies Program mentioned by DG Bruno in his keynote speech, we are working to expand our work to other regions and also better account for projects that generate air quality benefits.

For better inter-sectoral coordination I think it is necessary for us to break the silos and people working in different sectors such as energy, transport, agriculture etc. need to sit together and identify common solutions that will meet everyone's objectives. As mentioned by DG Bruno, within ADB we have started working under a new model which is intended for different sectors to work more closely in a coordinated manner.