

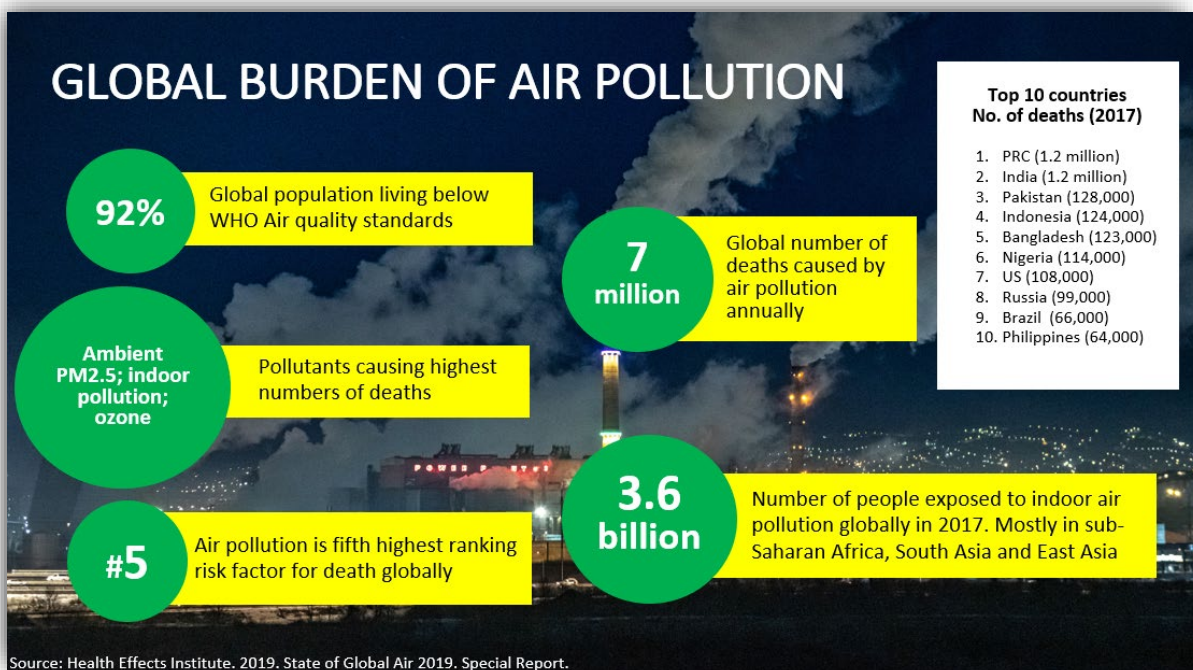
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES 2020
Clean Air - For a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Society
Monday, 7 September 2020, 10.00 – 11.30 am

Opening Remarks by VPKM



Good morning.

A very warm welcome to this webinar on “Clean Air – For a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Society” and special thanks to our 4 panelists. Today, we commemorate the very first *International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies*. To mark this day, we are launching a series of six knowledge events on air quality that will be conducted over the next 2 months.



I would like to begin my remarks by highlighting some key figures on air pollution.

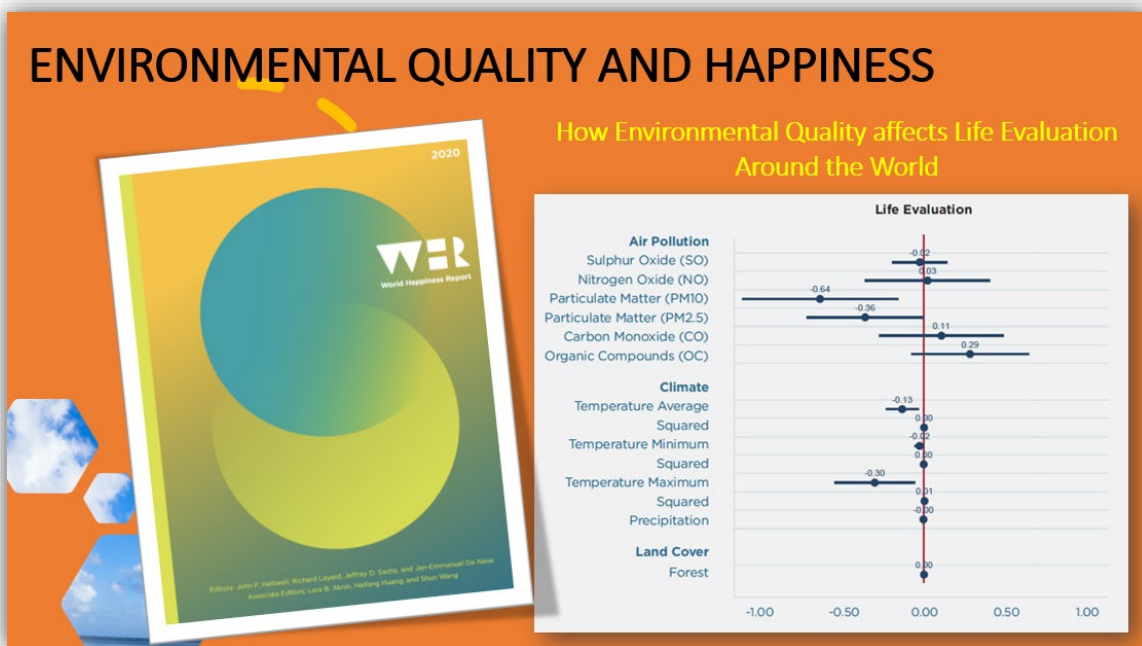
According to the report, *State of Global Air*, published by the Health Effects Institute in 2019, as much as 92% of the global population lives in areas where the WHO air quality guidelines are exceeded. The main pollutants causing the highest number of air pollution-related deaths are:

- **ambient air pollutants**, including small particulate matter (PM) of 2.5 microns or less in diameter,
- **indoor air pollution**, and
- **ozone**.

There are about 7 million deaths caused by air pollution every year globally, making it the fifth highest ranking risk factor for death. Of the top 10 countries with the highest number of deaths from air pollution in 2017, 6 were in Asia, with People's Republic of China (PRC) and India recording more than 1 million deaths each.

As we can see, the problem of air pollution is most severe in Asia. Within this problem, it is the **indoor air pollution** which has been found to have more serious socio-economic and gender implications. In 2017, 3.6 billion people were exposed to indoor air pollution, and most of this occurred in South Asia, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2019 UNEP report, *Air Pollution in Asia and the Pacific*, found that indoor air pollution affects women more severely than men. This is related to the fact that women and young girls tend to spend more time indoors, cooking and performing household chores. The problem is more acute among the low-income groups that do not have access to clean energy and alternate fuels for cooking and heating. Also, a 2012 WHO report¹ found that women and children comprised 60% of premature deaths, caused by indoor air pollution globally. These studies show that while air pollution affects everybody, it is people from the low-income groups and women that are affected the most.



Let me ask you one question: Do you think your wellbeing is affected by good environment?


¹ WHO. 2016. *Burning Opportunity: Clean Household Energy for Health, Sustainable Development, and Wellbeing of Women and Children*. Luxembourg

On this very topic, the 2020 World Happiness Report² added a new chapter called “How environmental quality affects our happiness.” It shows the increasing importance of nature and environment for the wellbeing and happiness of people.

As shown on the screen, this figure, which was taken from the report, shows that people evaluate their life to be more negative, when the levels of air pollutants are high – particularly PM10 and PM2.5. This is mainly because people can easily see or feel **particulate matters**, unlike other pollutants.

We already know, from the global ranking on the number of deaths from air pollution, that we in Asia are less healthy and dying more. Now, this study is showing that because of air pollution, we are also less happy.

What can we do to change this trajectory?



ADB PROJECTS ON AIR QUALITY

1. Beijing – Tianjin – Hebei Air quality Improvement Program, PRC (includes several TAs linked to this program)
2. Ulaanbaatar Air Quality Improvement Program, Mongolia
3. Regional TA on Low Carbon Development in the CAREC Region
4. TA on Strengthening Knowledge and Actions for Air Quality Improvement

Over the past few years, ADB has been working on several initiatives to improve air quality, such as:

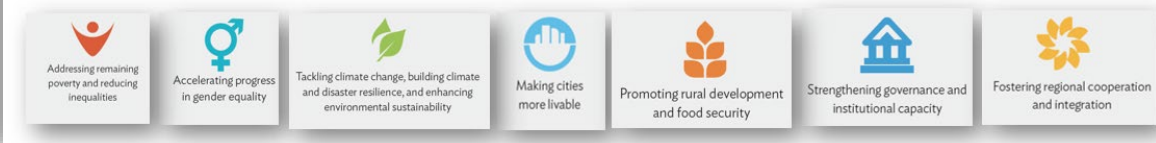
1. the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei Air Quality Improvement Program in PRC;
2. a Policy Based Loan to improve indoor and outdoor air quality in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia; and
3. a regional technical assistance project to develop road maps for low carbon and green growth for our Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) countries.

We also have a technical assistance to develop city-level Clean Air Action Plans in 7 cities in 5 countries (Bangladesh, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Viet Nam).

² The report started in 2012 and is prepared by a group of universities across the world.



7 Operational Priorities



Going forward, let me briefly talk about ADB’s Strategy 2030. Under the strategy, ADB will continue its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and expand its vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific.

Of the Strategy’s seven (7) operational priorities shown on the screen, I would like to draw your attention to the third priority on addressing climate change and enhancing environmental sustainability. This will be delivered by supporting ADB’s developing member countries with climate resilient and environment-friendly development, including improving air quality. In fact, air quality is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be addressed in a holistic manner. I have already touched on the gender dimension of air quality. This is a subject that requires collaboration and integration between all the operational priorities.

KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) What does the data tell us about the main sources of air pollution? What are the key challenges?
- 2) What solutions do we have? How do we prioritize them?
- 3) What would be the most effective way for development organizations like ADB to influence air quality improvement?



In today’s webinar, I invite the panelists to focus on the following questions:

1. What does the data tell us about the main sources of air pollution? What are the key challenges?
2. What solutions do we have? How do we prioritize them?
3. What would be the most effective way for development organizations like ADB to influence air quality improvements?

In closing, I thank our panelists for being here today. I also wish everyone a successful knowledge series on this pressing topic of Air Quality. And finally and most importantly, I would like to challenge you all to turn the knowledge you learned in this series into viable actions for the region.

Thank you very much!

The image is a collage with a background of a modern city building under a blue sky with clouds. In the top left, a blue banner reads "Some ADB knowledge pieces on Air Quality:". Below this, there are three overlapping images of ADB publications: a webpage snippet with the headline "We need to do whatever it takes to improve air quality", another webpage snippet with the headline "Crystal clear: Asia's cities are finding innovative ways to clean their skies", and a document titled "ADB BRIEFS Making Urban Asia's Air Cleaner". In the top right, the text "Thank you!" is written in a large, blue, sans-serif font. In the bottom right, a white box contains the text "For free access to ADB knowledge products, reports, data and information, visit the following sites:" followed by the ADB logo, the website "WWW.ADB.ORG", and icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.