



HEALTHY AIR COALITION BENGALURU CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION ON AIR POLLUTION (5 April 2019)

Globally, India ranks among the top most polluted countries. According to the World Health Organisation, 14 out of the 15 most polluted cities can be found in India¹. In India's capital New Delhi, and its neighbouring states in the National Capital Region, hazardous concentrations of air pollution have been recorded for several years in a row.

According to the Lancet Planetary Health, air Pollution in India leads to at least 1.2 mio premature deaths each year². The 2018 study attributed one in eight deaths that occurred in India in 2017 to poor air quality and exposure to ultra-fine particulate matter. The study further concluded that the average life expectancy could have been 1.7 years higher if air quality remained within the prescribed safety norms³.

According to the Lancet study, India has one of the world's highest exposure levels to Particulate Matter 2.5, with an annual exposure level of 90 ug/m³⁴. More than 77% of India's population is exposed to air pollution levels that are higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards⁵.

In comparison to the cities in the Northern part of India or to the Indo-Gangetic Plain region, little has been done about the air quality crisis and its associated impacts on people living in the Southern part of the country.

Residents in our city Bengaluru suffer from a looming air pollution crisis. The problem of poor air quality in the city is much more localised and concentrated at a certain height resulting in high personalised exposure levels. The sources of air pollution in Bengaluru include emissions from transport, waste Burning and road dust from construction activities⁶.

Recent datasets from cardiologists and chest physicians at the Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and The Lakeside Hospital suggest that cases of asthma in children, bronchial infections, sleep disorder breathing, middle ear infections, pneumonia and COPD, as well as heart attacks in young

¹<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/14-worlds-most-polluted-15-cities-india-kanpur-tops-who-list-1224730-2018-05-02>

² <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2542-5196%2818%2930261-4>

³<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/pollution/around-12-4-lakh-deaths-in-india-in-2017-attributable-to-air-pollution-study/articleshow/66972970.cms>

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⁵ Annual limits set by CPCB for PM_{2.4} is 40ug/m³

⁶ UrbanEmissions 2015

people have all been on the rise. Their observations and additional research point to the elevated and unhealthy air pollution levels as a key cause for concern⁷.

Monitoring of air quality in our city is inadequate, with only 10 official monitoring stations⁸ operating in real-time; the installed stations do not measure air quality at people's breathing height and therefore does not provide information about pollution hotspots and individual exposure levels.

We – the undersigned health sector representatives including health researchers, heart and lung doctors, public health institutes, asthma patients and individuals concerned about their health – express our grave concern about the poor state of air quality in our city, and call for immediate action on air pollution to prevent further short-term and long-term impacts on people's health.

We, the health sector representatives are ready and committed to working for cleaner air through the following:

- Collaboration to carry out both fixed and mobile air quality monitoring initiatives with different communities in the city, including with groups most at risk from air pollution
- Information-sharing and communication with the general public and the media, including issuing of advisories for pollution peaks and hotspots
- Engagement and capacity building of fellow health professionals on air pollution and health, through events, articles in specialised publications, exchanges on good practice etc.
- Expertise input into the design and framing of measures for air pollution control and reduction.

As a first step, we urge the State Pollution Control Board to publish the city-action plan on air pollution on its website, and hold a consultation with the key stakeholders from state departments of public health, environment, pollution control along with the relevant authorities at the corporation level, including those responsible for implementing activities in the public health and welfare division, as well as health professionals and concerned citizens.

With our activities we're also hoping to change people's awareness, so that they identify in their immediate environment (home, work, commute) ways in which the pollution burden can be reduced, and each make changes to their lifestyle as well as influence others to do the same.

The time to act on healthy air for Bengaluru is now!

As concerned health professionals and public health experts, we will be working together with citizen groups and environmentalists, in order to ensure air quality in the city of Bengaluru remains within the safety limits prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board and the World Health Organisation.

⁷ Bengaluru's rising air quality crisis, 2017

⁸ https://www.kspcb.gov.in/AQI-dec_2018.pdf