



## Air Pollution

Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental hazards that poses a risk to human health. When polluted air is inhaled, the tiny poisonous particles that it contains can penetrate deep into our lungs, bloodstream, and bodies resulting in health related issues. Records show that nearly one third of deaths from stroke, chronic respiratory disease, and lung cancer, as well as one quarter of deaths from heart attacks can be traced to air pollution. According to David Boyd, the UN's Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, air pollution is a deadly, man-made problem, responsible for the early deaths of nearly seven million people every year, around 600,000 of whom are children. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production of energy resources by industry, transport, and household sectors are some of the major causes of air pollution. Burning fossil fuels like coal and oil or using domestic cooking fires like stoves and wood are some examples of man made activities that contribute to air pollution. Women, children and the elderly in low income countries are disproportionately affected as a result of exposure to pollution from cooking with wood and kerosene. The problem is most acute in urban areas, particularly in Africa and Asia where 98 percent of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants record levels of air pollution that is higher than the threshold set by the World Health Organization air quality guidelines.

### Why should we care about Air pollution?

- 92 percent of the world's population is exposed to dangerously polluted air.
- A record 93 percent of children breathe air that contains higher concentrations of pollutants than the World Health Organization (WHO) considers safe for human health.
- Nearly 600,000 children die prematurely on an annual basis because of air pollution.
- Women and children make up about 60 percent of household air pollution-related deaths globally and more than 50 percent of all pneumonia related deaths in children under five years can be traced to indoor air pollution.
- Indoor air pollution comes mostly from fuels and high-emitting heating and cooking systems. Low-income families that cannot afford clean cooking and heating systems resort to alternatives that cause pollution. Nearly 3 billion people depend on burning solid fuels or kerosene to meet their household energy needs and 3.8 million of them will die each year from exposure to these pollutants because of a lack of awareness of the risks that it poses.
- According to the World Bank, air pollution costs the global economy more than US\$5 trillion every year in welfare costs and \$225 billion in lost income.
- The right to clean air is a human right and this is captured in the Sustainable Development Goals - the global blueprint for peace and prosperity.

### Improving Air Quality

- Programme system for monitoring air quality: ([Learn more](#))
- The World Health Organization on reducing household emissions: ([Learn more](#))
- The effort of the World Economic Forum in tackling air pollution: ([Learn more](#))