

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2021

REDEFINING OUR COMMON FUTURE:
SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

February 10-12, 2021



WSDS 2021 | Thematic

‘Are we really aware about air pollution and its impacts?’

Date: February 10, 2021 (Wednesday) | Time: 03:15 – 05:00 PM (IST)

Concept Note

Background

The ambient air quality in cities of India has deteriorated considerably over the last few decades. Rapidly growing economy, persistent migration of the population towards the urban areas, and limited controls are the primary drivers of deteriorating air quality. About 70- 80% of Indian cities, where air quality is being monitored, violate the prescribed air quality standards. As per the Global Burden of Disease Report (2019), outdoor air pollution is amongst the top ten health risks in India. The Government of India has been undertaking several initiatives for control of air pollution. These include introduction of new policies, acts and regulations, setting and revising national ambient air quality standards, introduction of National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAQMP), emission norms for highly polluting industries, advanced vehicular emissions and fuel quality norms, and formulation of basic action plans by central and state governments to control air pollution in Indian cities in the past decade. However, despite interventions the levels of air pollutants have remained much above the prescribed standards or WHO guidelines. More stringent interventions are required to control pollution and more importantly for making people more aware people about the causes, impacts and mitigation of air pollution.

Awareness has a major role to play here. Firstly, we need to understand the existing levels of public perception and discourse on air pollution across various platforms in India. Secondly, the health and environmental risks of air pollution should be communicated responsibly through multiple channels without creating panic amongst the public. Thirdly, we need to promote and prioritize public engagement by making the awareness activities inclusive and participatory. Fourthly, we must plan awareness generation programs that are aimed towards influencing the perception and attitudes of general public so that sustained behavioral changes are inculcated across all age groups.

Clean Air Project in India (CAP India)

For control of pollution at national scale, the Government of India has launched the National Clean Air Program (NCAP), with a goal to meet the prescribed annual average ambient air quality standards at all locations in the country and with an interim national level target of 20-30% reduction of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ concentration by 2024. For this, the NCAP also stresses upon sharing of best practices and increased cooperation with international agencies. In view of supporting the India’s effort for improving air quality, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

initiated the long-term 'Clean Air Project in India (CAP India)'. The aim of the project is to "support India's efforts to improve people's health and well-being through better air quality, while contributing to environment and climate change mitigation".

In order to achieve the aim, the project focuses on the following outcomes:

1. Improved data measurement and analysis on clean air.
2. Enhanced capacities of city and state authorities to implement clean air policies and action plans.
3. Awareness for clean air action is raised.

The project has two components: research and implementation. A network led by Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), Switzerland leads the activities on the research fronts, while a consortium led by TERI, New Delhi is responsible for overall project management and implementation. There are several awareness and outreach programs planned in the project with an objective to make different sections of local community (such as school, colleges, general public etc.) aware about air pollution, its sources, impacts and solutions for control.

In the planned thematic event, we plan to inform the stakeholders about the CAP India and also discuss the existing perception of public on air pollution, the need for awareness campaigns, and the strategies for deeper penetration of ideas on changing behaviors for reducing pollution contributions at individual levels.

Thematic Event

The thematic event will be held on 10th February (Wednesday) between 03:15 - 05:00 PM (IST) during our annual flagship summit the 'World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)' organized from 10th to 12th February, 2021 with the following objectives:

Objectives:

- To share the progress as well as planned activities of CAP India project focused towards generating awareness for clean air action.
- To sensitize the stakeholders on the direct and indirect health impacts of air pollution.
- To discuss the public perception, awareness levels and need for behavioral change on air pollution issues in India.
- To discuss on how public demand for 'Clean air' can be further raised

The session will focus on the importance of understanding public perception as well as generating awareness regarding clean air action amongst the general public. The role of media along with other various communication channels in disseminating information regarding the health impacts of air pollution will be discussed. The panel will comprise of an interesting combination of people from different fraternities e.g. media, medical doctors, scientist, student, teachers, and sports.

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