



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2023

MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

February 22-24, 2023
New Delhi



**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

Progress made under National Clean Air Program: National and International Perspective

THEMATIC TRACK SUMMARY

Venue: Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

Date: 23rd February 2023

Time: 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM (IST)

Suggested Citation

World Sustainable Development Summit (2023), Progress made under National Clean Air Program: National and International Perspective, Thematic Track (Rapporteurs: Sourosree Lahiri and Shivani Sharma), New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

Actionable Messages

Message 1: Air pollution is still not a public concern of highest priority. There are challenges that have been hampering the effective control of air pollution in India. Inadequate ambient air quality monitoring network, data analysis and dissemination, and lack of stakeholder participation are some of the key areas of scrutiny.

Message 2: Capacity limitations must be overcome in the best way possible. Another aspect that needs to be dealt with utmost priority is the use of technological interventions in air pollution control, which means actions should be guided by science.

Message 3: Sustainable actions and development go hand-in-hand in solving pollution-related issues. Strengthening of existing SPCBs and CPCB is required for better enforcement of the environmental laws.

Message 4: Development of India's clean air initiatives and national strategies is important. Sub-regional initiatives like the air-shed approach and the implementation of well-coordinated air-shed actions throughout the country could be beneficial. The development of air-shed management planning can facilitate scientific research. There is a necessity of a solid framework to institutionalize, oversee, and carry out air-shed-based clean air actions.

Message 5: The challenges in Bihar are different compared to other states, mainly because of its position on the Indo-Gangetic Plain. As far as air pollution is concerned, 90% of Bihar's soil is alluvium and any anthropogenic activity aggravates the situation. The wind velocity is very low in Bihar as compared to Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Monitoring stations in Bihar could facilitate in understanding the air pollution dynamics and its key sources.

Message 6: The current 1% of the funding from philanthropists, which is dedicated to air quality, is likely to increase. The creation of green barriers and landscaping can help reduce air pollution.

Message 7: The CAP Project is managed by TERI in Lucknow and Kanpur, and pilot projects are being carried out by MoEFCC, A-PAG, and TERI on utilizing Integrated Command and Control Centers for air pollution control monitoring.

Narrative

Air pollution is a major problem that affects millions worldwide. Nine out of ten people in the world breathe polluted air, which is causing about 7 million premature deaths annually, globally. Rapid economic growth, population migration towards urban areas, and inadequate controls have led to the degradation of ambient air quality, particularly in the cities of developing countries like India. More than 75-80% of Indian cities violate the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS); 122 cities are classified as non-attainment cities. In order to address the issue of air pollution, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, launched the National Clean Air Program (NCAP) in January 2019, with the intent of 20-30% reduction in PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ concentrations by 2024 with the base year as 2017. The 2020-21 report of the finance commission recommended the grant of ₹4,400 crore to initiate actions listed in the NCAP. However, despite several initiatives by the central, state, and city governments, air pollution has remained a major challenge in India.

In view of the enormity of the issue and latest actions being taken, a thematic session at the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2023 was organized with the support from Bloomberg Philanthropies to discuss future air quality scenarios for developing countries like India. The session had speakers of national and international repute discussing the key bottlenecks in effectively managing air quality in different cities.

The thematic track session titled, “Progress made under National Clean Air Program: National and International Perspective” was conducted as part of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) - the annual flagship initiative of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

The aim of the session was to explore if India could customize solutions from the perspective of international experiences, and discuss the challenges being faced in implementing the NCAP and how the program could be strengthened. It also discussed ways to ensure effective utilization of allocated funds to control air pollution and the plans for phase-2 of NCAP. The key success stories and best practices that can be replicated in other Indian cities were also highlighted along with the issue of funds allocation in XV finance commissions. The state planning actions for air-shed management were amongst the highlights of the discussion along with the key policy wins at the state and central levels. Also, considering contradiction of growth in one hand, and pollution control plans in the other, the future air quality in developing countries like India was an essential aspect of discussion.

The session started with the keynote address by **Dr Prashant Gargava, Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board**, who focused on the important aspects of NCAP and its implementation pathways. Dr Gargava explained the challenges that have been hampering the effective control of air pollution in India. Inadequate ambient air quality monitoring network, data analysis and dissemination, and lack of stakeholder participation were some of the examples he cited during his address. He further added that air pollution is still not a public concern of highest priority. In order to fill in these gaps, it is required that capacity limitations are overcome in the best way possible. Another aspect that needs to be dealt with utmost priority is the use of technological interventions in air pollution control, which means, actions should be guided by science, he added. He stated that sustainable actions and development go hand-in-hand in solving pollution-related issues. He gave a brief overview of the CAP Project, which is managed by TERI in Lucknow and Kanpur, and emphasized the pilot projects being carried out by MoEFCC, A-PAG, and TERI on utilizing Integrated Command and Control Centres for air pollution control monitoring. He also emphasized the need for prioritization of sources which are more critical and to chalk out an action plan to address them with appropriate actions. Delhi's real-time source apportionment 'supersite' and Mobile Air Quality Monitoring Station can identify pollution sources on an hourly basis, he added. He stated that strengthening of the existing SPCB and CPCB will be required for better enforcement of the environmental laws.

Shri. Ashish Tiwari, Secretary, Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, UP moderated the panel discussion that foregrounded important concerns in the development of India's clean air initiatives, as well as the national strategies to address them. He also praised sub-regional initiatives like the air-shed approach and the implementation of well-coordinated air-shed actions throughout the country. He also suggested that the development of an air-shed management planning can facilitate scientific research. He underlined the necessity of a solid framework to institutionalize, oversee, and carry out air-shed-based clean air actions.

Taking the discussion forward, **Dr Ashok Ghosh, Chairman, Bihar Pollution Control Board**, said, "The main challenge in Bihar is due to the alluvial plain on the Indo-Gangetic Plain; any minute, anthropogenic activities can severely affect the climate, mainly the air quality. Air quality monitoring stations in Bihar have increased from 3 to 35, thereby enabling in understanding and addressing areas which are polluted. The problem of air pollution can be resolved through community participation."

Ms Jane Burston, Executive Director, Clean Air Fund, pointed out, "Though only 1% of the funding is currently going to air quality, good news is that this is gradually increasing. Building green barriers improves the air quality of the area to a certain degree."

Dr Jonathan Demenge, Head of Co-operation, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, remarked, “Action must be carried out in three aspects – technology, developing capabilities and enforcement including public participation. Knowledge needs to be translated into policies and policies have to be implemented into actions.”

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“	<p>Optimization of pollutant emissions through air-shed management approach can help in tackling air pollution. Enhancing public awareness and capacity building measures for inclusive public participation and for ensuring trained manpower and infrastructure on air pollution is essential.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Shri. Ashish Tiwari Secretary, Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, UP</p>
“	<p>Sustainable actions and development go hand-in-hand in solving pollution-related issues. Air pollution is not a localized phenomenon; coordinated efforts across the regions are required along with trans-boundary conventions and international cooperation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Dr Prashant Gargava Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board</p>
“	<p>The main challenge in Bihar is due to the alluvial plain on the Indo-Gangetic Plains; any minute, anthropogenic activities can severely affect the climate, mainly the air quality. Air quality monitoring stations in Bihar have increased from 3 to 35, thereby enabling in understanding pollution dynamics in affected areas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Dr Ashok Ghosh Chairman, Bihar Pollution Control Board</p>
“	<p>Though only 1% of the funding is currently going to air quality, good news is, this is gradually increasing. Building green barriers improves the air quality of the area to a certain degree.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ms Jane Burston Executive Director, Clean Air Fund</p>
“	<p>Action must intervene in three aspects – technology, developing capabilities and enforcement including public participation. Knowledge needs to be translated into policies and policies must be implemented into actions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Dr Jonathan Demenge Head of Co-operation, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</p>