



To

Date : 22/06/2020

Shri.Goutham Kumar, Mayor of Bengaluru

And

T.M. Vijay Bhaskar, Chief Secretary Karnataka

Call for a healthy recovery with improved air quality

Health professionals and The Healthy Air Coalition Bengaluru stand united in support of an effective, science-based approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same spirit, we also stand united in support of a #HealthyRecovery from this crisis.

India is experiencing an unprecedented crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic and the cases have been rising across the country and in the city of Bengaluru on a day-to-day basis. The state and the central government together have been addressing this issue on a war footing and the city administration, led by you, has made tremendous efforts to contain the cases. We, as a group, recognise your efforts and the terrible human tragedy wrought by the pandemic. However, we would also like to suggest that the pandemic presents an opportunity to re-prioritise and redesign public health in the city.

Globally, the pandemic has affected the vulnerable and poor communities the most, their health, food security and freedom to work have been interrupted. The layers of this ongoing tragedy are many, and magnified by inequality and underinvestment in public health systems. We have witnessed death, disease and mental distress at levels not seen for decades.

It is crucial that there is increased investment into pandemic preparedness and disease prevention, to strengthen the overall resilience of Bengaluru's population. One of the factors determining the health and quality of life in the city are environmental factors.

Before COVID-19, air pollution – primarily from traffic, inefficient residential energy use for cooking and heating, the burning of solid waste, and dust from road works and rampant construction – was already causing a range of serious health effects. Air pollution increases the risk of developing, and the severity of: pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, heart disease and strokes, leading to [seven million premature deaths each year globally](#).

New analysis by the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) for the Healthy Air Coalition done for the period of 90 days in February to May shows a 28% drop in the PM2.5 levels in 45 days during the lockdown, compared to 45 days before the lockdown. The decrease in pollution levels varied for locations across the city, ranging from lowest 14% reduction in pollution at Halasuru hospital to the largest cut of 75% reduction at the monitoring station near Bellandur lake.

Bengaluru as frontrunner for healthy recovery in cities

A truly healthy recovery will not allow pollution to continue to cloud the air we breathe and the water we drink. It will not permit unabated climate change and deforestation, potentially unleashing new health threats upon vulnerable populations.

To achieve and sustain a healthy recovery that aims at reducing the air pollution levels, we must use smarter incentives and disincentives in the service of a healthier, more resilient society.

Cities across the globe have been frontrunners for a healthy recovery, recognising the need to improve public health and environmental conditions to ensure a safe and healthy living. In London, Milan, Brussels, Berlin, Manchester, San Francisco, active mobility schemes with walking and cycling have been extended.

We encourage you to make Bengaluru the frontrunner for healthy recovery in India, building on your technology driven solutions such as Yulu bikes and in implementation of the FAME policy.

We urge that your recovery agenda includes a robust plan to implement active and sustainable transport, with walking and cycling (through the provision of dedicated cycling lanes), promotion of electric vehicles and its necessary infrastructure, a curb on burning of solid waste, and implementation of construction and debris laws in full force, which will help to clean up Bengaluru's air in the short and long term.

What the world and our city of Bengaluru needs now is a #HealthyRecovery. The Healthy Air Coalition Bengaluru is ready to provide our public health expertise in which measures will provide the best protection of people's health in Bengaluru.

We hope to meet with you and discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Healthy Air Coalition

The healthy air coalition Bengaluru is a health sector led initiative, calling for immediate action on air pollution to prevent further short and long-term impacts on people's health. The coalition comes together to collaborate on air monitoring initiatives with different communities in the city; to share information and communicate about air pollution & health; to build the capacity of fellow health professionals; and to provide expertise input for air pollution control and reduction measures.

Members include:

Dr.H.Paramesh, Pediatric Pulmonologist

Dr.Prahallad, pediatrician, IGICH

Dr.Bharat Kumar Reddy, Sishuka Children's Home

Dr.Patil, Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Research

Rickey Kej, Grammy Awardee

Indian Pediatric Association

St.John's Research Institute

Ashish Verma, IISC

Janaagraha

Naresh V Narasimhan, Urban Planner

Co Media Lab

WhiteField Rising

BTM Layouts Association

HSR Layout Association

The World Resource Institute, Bangalore

Center for Science Technology and Policy

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