

# POLICY BRIEF

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES IN ASIA TO ADDRESS AIR POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Project objectives, activities and outcomes for the three pilot cities

“Empowering Communities in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam to Address Air Pollution and Climate Change” is a project implemented by Clean Air Asia. The project supports identification and implementation of air quality solutions through grassroots community engagement and mobilization, with the following specific objectives:

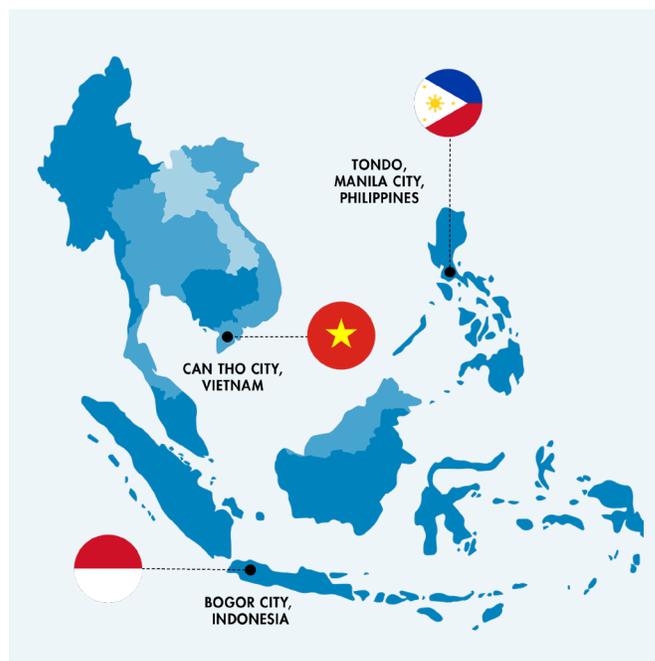
- Establish an inclusive co-innovation process that provides priority stakeholder groups, such as women and youth with opportunities for leadership and participation in decision-making.
- Build the capacity of community leaders through mechanisms that promote continuous co-learning and collaboration.
- Implement measures and organize relevant capacity building activities.
- Propose city-level policy and institutional recommendations for the pilot cities in the three countries to ensure sustainability of project outcomes.

This project is funded by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) – ASEAN.

### Background on the pilot areas

#### *Bogor City, Indonesia*

Bogor City is located 53 kilometers south of Jakarta, with a population of more than 1 million (as of 2020). Of its 68 villages, eight that are active in solid waste



management or climate change-related activities were engaged for the project. These are: TPS 3R Kayumanis, BSU Anggrek, BSU Sindara Berkah, TPS 3R Mutiara Bogor Raya, Proklim Griya Melati I, BSU Cendana, BSU Kenanga, and KSM Ceremai/TPS 3R Cipaku. The city, led by the Regional Planning Agency, developed its Clean Air Action Plan in 2018 with support from the IBAQ Programme, funded by the Ministry of Environment of Japan.



The community engagement aims to address the lack of management in sorting household waste, resulting in overflows for solid waste landfills and methane emissions. It is reported that around 600 tons of trash are produced daily in the city.

### Manila City, Philippines

Barangay 128 in Tondo, Manila, is a low-income community which houses the Smokey Mountain – a large landfill transformed into urban resettlement area for slum dwellers. The community engagement activities are a means for local implementation of the city’s Clean Air Action Plan, formulated in 2020 under the Asia Blue Skies Program supported by 3M.

Among the key air quality and climate change issues faced by the community are as follows:

 Burning of garbage and metal waste (*tanso*), the use of charcoal and wood as cooking fuel and emissions from road vehicles, and industries. It was noted that *tanso* burning is a source of income for some of the residents.

 Health concerns and cause of discomfort for residence as among the observable impacts of emissions from air pollution sources.

### Can Tho City, Vietnam

Can Tho City, the fourth largest city in Vietnam, is an industrial center with a population of 1.2 million (as of 2018). It is the first city in the country that developed its own Clean Air Action Plan, under the IBAQ

Programme in 2016. Two wards were selected for the project implementation: Tra Noc Ward (found in Binh Thuy District, an urban/industrial area) and Truong Long Ward (located in Phong Dien District, sub-urban/ agricultural area).



Community leaders identified industrial emissions and particulate matter from construction (Tra Noc Ward), as well as pesticide use and waste from pesticide packaging (Truong Long Ward), as key emission sources in the two communities.



**Project inception activities** resulted in the identification of air quality and climate change issues affecting cities and communities. Some of the issues identified revolved around the burning of garbage and metal waste, use of charcoal and wood as cooking fuel, emissions from industries and road vehicles, pesticide use, and construction activities.

Local governments shared their ongoing initiatives for air quality and climate change mitigation, ranging from policies, plans, and programs addressing emission sources (e.g. solid waste management system and mechanisms for collection and disposal). Communicating policies and plans as well as monitoring the implementation of these initiatives

## Project interventions undertaken



#### INCEPTION ACTIVITIES

Inception activities were conducted to introduce the project and gather information about local air quality and climate issues, initiatives carried out by the communities, as well as the focus of capacity building and community engagement activities.



#### COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Community stakeholder mapping enabled the identification of air quality management stakeholders and actors within the community, informing the target audience of the community sessions. This involved identifying the knowledge, skills, and experience of community leaders and members that could be leveraged to implement interventions.



#### COMMUNITY MOBILIZATIONS

Community mobilization activities ensured the buy-in and participation of the community members during the project interventions. These involve the convening of community leaders and members to conduct community engagement and learning sessions. To further institutionalize the stakeholders convened in Barangay 128, Philippines, a Community Task Force comprised of barangay government officials, local leaders, women and youth groups, and NGOs was formed to serve as the steering group for project activities.



#### CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building was at the core of community mobilization. The learning sessions allowed for the introduction of the basic concepts of air quality and air quality management, as well as interactive, breakout group discussions tackling local air quality and climate issues and opportunities for solving them. Moreover, a Regional Peer Learning Event was held towards the end of the project to share outcomes and lessons learned with ASEAN member countries.



#### COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Information and project updates were disseminated through articles and social media posts to raise awareness about the project and the community-level approach to air quality and climate action.

Pilot area	Air quality issue	Proposed solutions
TPS 3R Kayumanis, BSU Anggrek, BSU Sindara Berkah, TPS 3R Mutiara Bogor Raya, Proklam Griya Melati I, BSU Cendana, BSU Kenanga, and KSM Ceremai/TPS 3R Cipaku  (Bogor City, Indonesia)	Household waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing “Bogor without plastic” or BOTAK campaign which includes awareness-raising and capacity building on waste sorting at the household level, government offices, educational institutions and NGOs</li> </ul>
Barangay 128, Tondo  (Manila City, Philippines)	Burning of materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness-raising on air pollution sources and health impacts</li> <li>Confiscating scrap metals</li> <li>Identifying alternative socio-economic solutions to scrap metal burning</li> <li>Implementing existing barangay resolutions on burning of materials</li> <li>Conducting community monitoring and Clean Air Watch</li> </ul>
Tra Noc Ward and Truong Long Ward  (Can Tho City, Vietnam)	Emissions from industries, particulate matter from construction activities, pesticide use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community implementation of the city’s Clean Air Action Plan</li> <li>Continued community mobilization, communication activities</li> </ul>

were seen as critical gaps. Inception activities gave an opportunity for local governments and stakeholders to realize that solving such issues are crucial to rebuild their communities in the light of the global pandemic.

**Community stakeholder mapping** brought about the identification of baseline capacities and key partners within local governments and community members. Such capacities are essential to develop and implement interventions. After which, **community mobilizations** solidified the commitments of communities, particularly in Tondo, Manila, the Philippines, to pursue air quality and climate change actions. Given the limitations brought about by the pandemic, project stakeholders were engaged in fully virtual or hybrid (combination of face-to-face and virtual participants) learning sessions as a form of **capacity building**. The project ended with the Regional Peer Learning Event in 17 March 2022, participated by community and city representatives from ASEAN countries such as Cambodia and Thailand, as well as the project pilot cities in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam. The event resulted in the sharing of

experiences and insights from engaging communities in air quality and climate action. Project information and updates were disseminated by the web and through social media as a form of a **communication and awareness-raising** strategy.

## Lessons learned

**Partnership with local governments is key in engaging communities in air quality and climate change.**

Considering pandemic restrictions, partnership with local governments is crucial in engaging communities to ensure that they are able to provide support in exercising safety protocols for the conduct of project activities. More importantly, buy-in from local governments creates a community entry point and increases likelihood of acceptance by the community members. It also provides opportunities for collaborating on community-level actions, especially in identifying current and emerging air quality and climate change issues and co-creating solutions, using local counterpart funds. **Cities usually have**

greater resources than other levels of local governance and as such could be maximized for climate actions, shaped in partnership with community members.

### THE BARANGAY 128 COMMUNITY TASK FORCE IN TONDO, MANILA

*Aside from city and barangay government representatives, this task force is comprised of homeowner association presidents as well as non-government and community-based organizations. Further to this, barangay government representatives included their committees of women and children. The project specifically targeted at least 40% of task force membership to be composed of women.*

*The role of this task force is to: develop a localized, participatory Clean Air Plan with representatives from garbage scavengers; closely coordinate with the community stakeholders in the conduct of project activities and monitoring air quality and climate actions; participate in regular meetings and training; and most importantly, ensure the involvement of women and the youth in awareness-raising initiatives and interventions.*

*Local and community mechanisms composed of individuals coming from various sectors or groups can provide issues and corresponding solutions to air quality and climate change that are multisectoral. They can secure support from their own constituents in implementing solutions, which is necessary to deliver results at scale.*

### Air pollution and climate change impacts individuals, households, and communities differently.

Consultations and mapping activities should engage a broad range of stakeholders – women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, and low-income households, among others – to gather a wide range of issues and

their respective solutions, as these affect their daily lives. While considered time and resource consuming, stakeholder engagement informs the development of **nuanced solutions** that would generate lasting results and greater community support in the long-term.

### Local governments and community members have their respective initiatives on addressing air pollution and climate change.

Indeed, there are meso-level initiatives that are being undertaken by the local governments, and micro-level initiatives at the individual and household levels to address air pollution and climate change. There is a need for these initiatives to **converge** to achieve results at scale. Often, interventions developed at the local level are brought about by complying to national mandates and programs that are not tailored to the realities of households and communities. Consultations with a broad range of stakeholders at the community level need to be undertaken by local governments not just to ‘download’ or implement interventions, but to collectively understand issues and co-create sustainable solutions to air pollution and climate change.

### Communication and awareness-raising are essential to addressing air quality and climate issues.

The pandemic magnified challenges in connectivity among low-income households and communities. Often, they are left behind in accessing information and capacity-building, creating wider gaps in knowledge, skills, and participation in air quality and climate action. Innovations in communication and awareness-raising are needed, especially to reach those in the ‘fringes’ of the community, towards changing negative practices and creating roles for everyone to contribute to change. Communication needs to be adapted to the communities’ conditions – **empowering** and devoid of jargon – especially among low-income and low-education communities. Exchanging lessons and good practices within and among communities and governments is necessary to provide insights as well as to create support to reach climate goals. Critical to this is strengthening monitoring among community members and local governments.

## Recommendations for strengthening community engagement

### Maximize existing national and local policies on air quality and climate actions.

Most countries already have national laws and policies on air quality and climate change. It is crucial that these are translated and adapted at the local level, customizing strategies that are fit-for-purpose or suited to the context of the community. These national laws and policies provide handles to ensure compliance and accountability.

### Integrate air quality actions in local plans and budgets.

Local governments are required to formulate local plans and budgets, including sectoral plans and programs. Air quality issues should be included in the local situational and sectoral analyses, enabling inclusion into the local plan and involving a wide range of stakeholders in the planning process. Air quality actions are evidence-based, coming from the perspective of community members, as well as supported by political commitment and local resources. It is also possible to not just look at the environmental sector, but apply a **multisectoral** approach to planning with other sectors. This includes the social sector that provides greater community engagement and mobilization through communication and awareness-raising, and the economic sector - which is concerned with livelihood and employment opportunities for the poor and marginalized - as part of benefiting from air quality and climate initiatives.

### Maximize existing local and community mechanisms for climate actions.

Usually, local governments have existing mechanisms for environmental or disaster risk reduction and management concerns from the city level all the way down to the community level. These mechanisms usually have resources for undertaking these functions or mandates. The same is true with community mechanisms such as village councils or community-based organizations (e.g. homeowners' associations) that often operate through volunteerism.

Often community-based organizations are led and mainly composed of women. Rather than creating new mechanisms, these local mechanisms can be maximized and further capacitated towards understanding air quality and climate change issues. It is crucial that these mechanisms are revisited in terms of composition to ensure that it is **multisectoral**, covering a wide range of sectors and groups that can contribute to identifying and implementing solutions. Mechanisms should also be mindful of enabling **leadership and empowerment of the poor and the marginalized** in decision making processes.

### Use empowering language and platforms in communicating and raising awareness on air quality and climate change.

As community members are composed of individuals from various conditions and social positions, strategies for communication and awareness raising should be inclusive to enable behavioral change. Language should be simple and easy to understand, and platforms should be accessible to everyone. During the pandemic, the internet and social media are powerful platforms for climate action messaging. The poor and the marginalized however, need to be considered when using information and communication technology (ICT)-based platforms considering accessibility issues. In Indonesia for example, religious leaders as well as educational institutions were tapped as partners in communication and awareness-raising given their expansive reach to their stakeholders.

### Provide incentives to good practices.

One of the interesting suggestions that arose during the project's Regional Event was providing **incentives** to households and communities that are supporting climate actions. For example, purchase points for those using reusable bags in groceries and markets, or additional cost for not bringing reusable bags support behaviors to prevent single-use plastic usage. Aside from monetary incentives, communities with good practices could serve as models to other communities, maximizing their experiences and learnings in applying knowledge and skills to address air pollution and climate change.