



From Data to Policy Action: How UNEP and Partners Helped Elevate Air Pollution on Bishkek's Political Agenda

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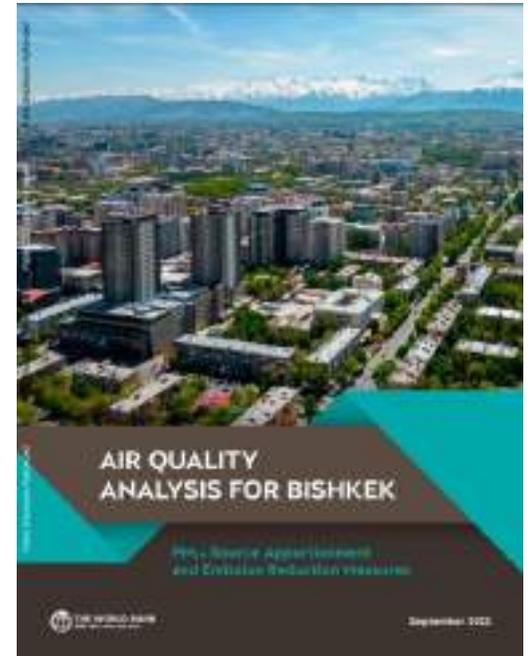
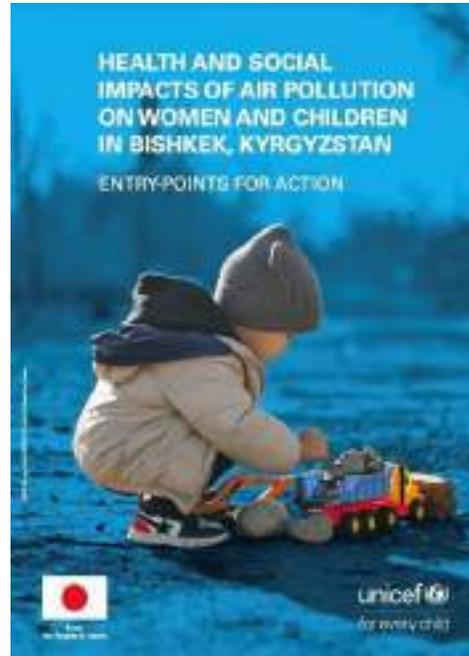
From Data to Policy Action: How UNEP and Partners Helped Elevate Air Pollution on Bishkek's Political Agenda

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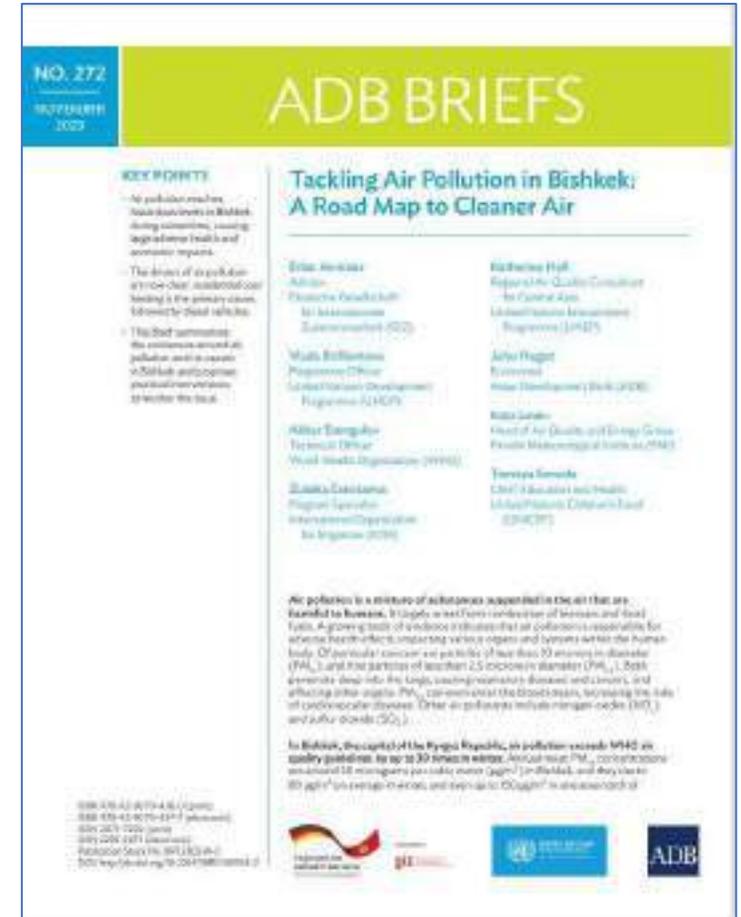
2021-2022: Strengthening evidence on air pollution in Bishkek

- Bishkek (1.322 million) faces **severe winter air pollution**, frequently ranking among the most polluted cities globally
- **Fragmented understanding** of pollution sources and limited coordinated government response
- Growing **public concern and civil society action**, including deployment of low-cost sensors
- Increasing attention from the **UN system and development partners**
- **2021: UNEP and UNDP initiated the first [science-based assessment of air quality in Bishkek](#)**
- 2022: Findings received **high-level political attention**
- Evidence clearly identified domestic coal-based heating as a priority source
- 2023: Additional sectoral assessments and political recommendations by UNICEF, IOM, ADB and World Bank, all pointing to domestic heating as the key source, leading to public consensus
- Shifted the public and policy debate toward the need for a comprehensive city-level air quality plan



2023-2024: Strengthening coordination and governance

- Establishment of an Interministerial Commission on Air Pollution under the leadership of Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision (MNRETS). Later in 2024, Bishkek Mayor's Office was appointed co-chair, strengthening city-level ownership.
- Many development partners started engaging in air quality. **Under the initiative of UNEP and with support of UN Resident Coordinator, a working group on air quality was established under the Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC)** for better coordination and synergies. The group has been co-chaired by UNEP and ADB and now includes 28 member organizations, including (UNEP, CCAC, IOM, OHCHR, RCO, UNICEF, UNECE Air Convention, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNOSD and WHO)
- The World Bank secured a USD 50M loan for a major air quality project that included significant expansion of air quality monitoring network and subsidized loans for clean heating. Other partners start developing multi-million projects on air quality in Bishkek and beyond.
- Development partners jointly put together a policy brief on priority measures for tackling air pollution in Bishkek.
- **The Cabinet of Ministers approved the Plan of Priority Measures on Air Quality for 2024-2025 as the first ever multi-sectoral government plan on tackling air pollution**, based on policy advice provided jointly by development partners.
- Bishkek Mayor's Office's mandate and responsibility on air pollution was extended. One of Bishkek Vice Mayor's is directly responsible for handling air quality issues.
- UNEP coordinates development partners to ensure consolidated response.



2025 onwards: Accelerating clean air action in Bishkek: policy and finance

- The Interministerial Commission on Air Pollution is actively working on delivering the 2024-2025 Plan of Priority Actions on Air Quality. **The new plan for 2026-2027 is developed.** The Commission's membership and mandate has extended to other cities, recognizing the problem is not only in the capital.
- More development partners get on board. ADB is implementing a USD 10m clean heating pilot in schools of Bishkek. KOICA comes in with USD 10m project on air quality in Bishkek and its region. UNOSD engages with policy advice.
- **UNEP, with support of UN Resident Coordinators, convenes two major national multi-stakeholder policy dialogues on clean air action in February and October 2025.** Both receive a lot of attention and provide the government with an opportunity to report progress.
- UNEP and RC's leadership was **acknowledged by DCO and UNOSSC**

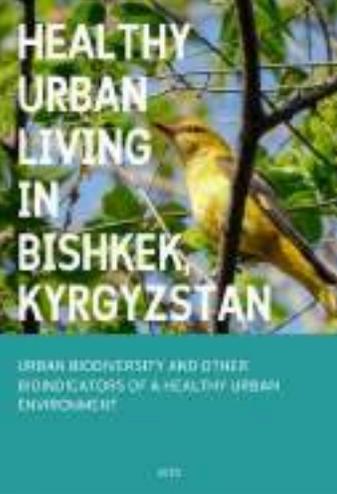
• **RESULT: in 4 years, UNEP and other partners, were able to mobilize the government on clean air action. Thanks to that, in Bishkek we now have:**

- Strong scientific evidence on air pollution and its sources
- Expansion of the automatic air quality monitoring network
- A whole-of-government approach and clear responsibility of Mayor's Office
- An official government plan of action
- A set of international partners with USD 70+ investment in clean air action
- Government that is not afraid to speak about the issue and uses multiple channels to do so
- Better awareness of citizens on air pollution and its impacts
- Air pollution as the key issue on urban development agenda
- New Master Plan that takes air pollution risks into account



UNEP's interventions to improve air quality management in Bishkek

- Significantly enhanced availability of evidence on air pollution through a dedicated assessment
- Organized a series of capacity building activities for the government on monitoring air quality, and enhanced capacities for civil monitoring
- Initiated a working group of development partners for consolidated and coordinated response of the international community. Engaged several UN agencies and UN RC(O)
- Facilitated organization of major national multi-stakeholder policy dialogues
- Enhanced capacities of the Ministry of Natural Resources to strategically communicate on air pollution issues to the population
- Improved school children's awareness on air quality
- Tested the urban NbS (green walls) for improved citizen engagement and trained local urban activists on applying NbS for improved air quality and urban wellbeing
- Promoted clean air action within the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies



Thank you!

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