

#OURENVIRONMENTOURHEALTH

PUBLIC EVENT

13 DECEMBER, NEW DELHI



REPORT

As part of the ongoing "Voices for Health" public engagement series, the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance in partnership with [Centre for Environmental Health](#) (CEH, Public Health Foundation of India), [Happy Hands Foundation](#) and [Salaam Baalak Trust](#) organized a public event around the problem of air pollution on 13 December. The event that was held at a popular public venue in Delhi, highlighted the problem of air pollution and provided solutions through informational pamphlets, exhibits and creatively through display of traditional Indian paintings made by school students, street theatre performance by children from Salaam Baalak Trust, and puppet show performed by the women of *Kathputli* colony in Delhi. The central plaza at Select City Walk where the event was held also had stalls with interesting hands-on-activities and plenty of information on how to protect oneself from air pollution. During the event, many curious school students surrounded "ask-the-expert" table with basic yet very pertinent questions such as how do we measure air pollution, what is the effect of air pollution on our lung function, how can we clean the air, what could they do at an individual level to tackle this problem and many more. The experts on the table were India Alliance Senior Fellow at CSIR Institute of Genomics & Integrative Biology, New Delhi, Dr Anurag Agrawal, Dr Bhargav Krishna from the CEH, Mr Barun Agarwal, Founder, Breathe Easy and Dr Nitish Dogra, Community Activist. Many flocked around the home-made instrument to measure their lung capacity.

This event was preceded by a series of school workshops organized by Happy Hands Foundation, where they used traditional Indian arts, such as puppetry and *Patua* or scroll art to engage with students about the broader issue of environmental health. Many of the students from these workshops also attended the public event and their art was on display. Women from the *Kathputli* colony and young kids from Salam Baalak Trust prepared a puppet show and a street theater piece, respectively,

around air pollution, which they performed every hour during the event. Researchers and health communication experts from PHFI took active part in preparing the script of these performances along with the performers to ensure accurate health information was disseminated through these acts. After every presentation, the performers also shared their views and personal stories about how air pollution impacts their lives and what they plan to do to alleviate this problem in their communities.

Prior to this event, researchers from PHFI also held environmental health sensitisation workshops at St Stephen's college and IIIT Delhi, where they debated and discussed various environmental issues impacting human health and deliberated on solutions that would require both innovative technologies and social change.

The aim of the event and the workshops was not limited to increasing awareness on air pollution and environmental health issues but it also explored innovative ways in which important health research and information can be shared and discussed with the public.

Voices for Health is an effort aimed at engaging people and communities to better understand public health and to educate them about key determinants of emergent health issues. This initiative is planned as a series of public engagement events that will bring together biomedical researchers with policy makers, social scientists, health workers, media and other stakeholders to talk about important health issues. Each event will focus on a public health topic of contemporary interest. The series will aim to demystify science and myths, disseminate latest health research and share perspectives of experts and people. The series has so far explored antibiotic resistance, cancer, mental health and environmental health issues in different cities.