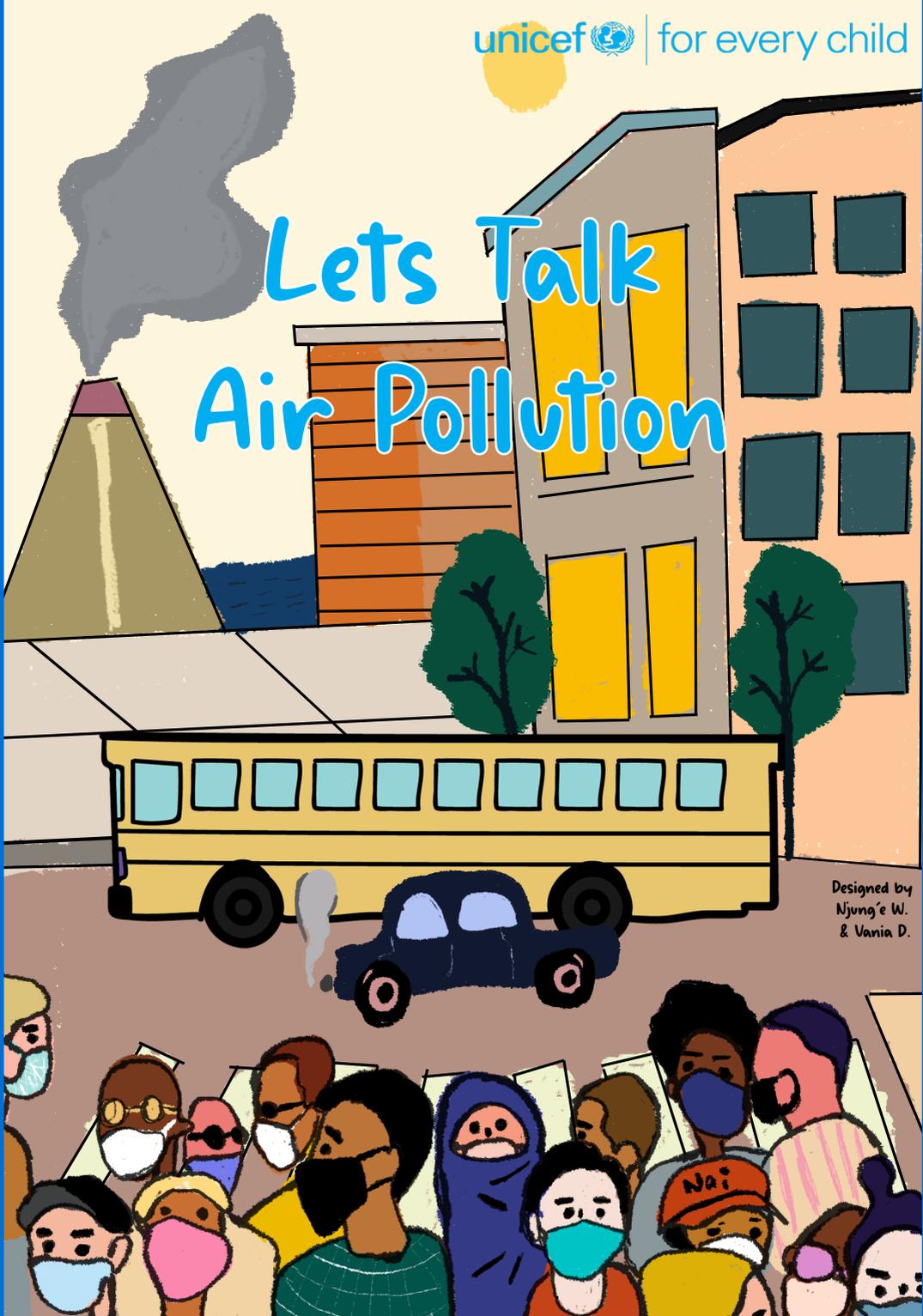


# Lets Talk Air Pollution



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# Real Life Real talk

Hi everyone!

My name is Tuguldur, I'm 17 years old, and I live with my family in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. 70% of the residents in the capital city live in the Ger district, which is around **220,000 households!** In my opinion, the main reason behind air pollution is that throughout all the seasons, **everyone burns coal, refined coal, wood, or anything material that can be burned.**



Obviously, all of these emit smoke into the air. I think we are being exposed to air pollution by the accumulation of all of these emissions. Based on my observation, young people in my generation including those younger than me and college students, can't seem to focus during exams or they seem forgetful during classes. I think air pollution has something to do with these issues...

I thought long and hard about how to solve this air pollution problem. Here in Mongolia **solar power, hydropower station, and wind power** are all sources currently being used. I think we could increase these stations and use electricity from these sources.

Since I was a baby, growing up, I've witnessed the impact of air pollution all around me. **My mom has asthma and because of air pollution,** her asthma has gotten worse, she coughs all the time. It is hard to see my mom so sick and this is why I wish I could do something to clear our air.



I decided to join this initiative and training called YouCAN. This is when I learned how air pollution negatively impacts our health and how to measure actual levels of air pollution in our community- like grocery stores, subdistricts, schools, and so on. We can see the readings on a device and right now the PM2.5 level is around 300, which is 12 times higher than the recommended national standard!

To raise awareness of this issue in our community, mostly among our friends, family, and those who are exposed to this level of air pollution, **we began to share this information and other content using social media** through the YouCAN page and other popular pages.

Aside from this social media campaign, we give information through face to face interactions as well. We also organized some training events in nearby schools. **The main message that we want to share is that air pollution is affecting our bodies negatively**, these are the impacts, and these are the methods you can use to protect yourselves against air pollution.

Of course, I want to live in an environment where there is no air pollution, rather lots of trees and greenery. To solve this problem of air pollution, we need to stop burning coal and wood to heat our homes. We do have solutions in place like solar power for our electricity and heating purposes, which have zero emissions! To adults who are listening, **I would like you to invest more in renewable energy solutions for us so that we can live healthier today and in the future.**

Farewell for now!  
Tuguldur



# KNOW the facts

## 1

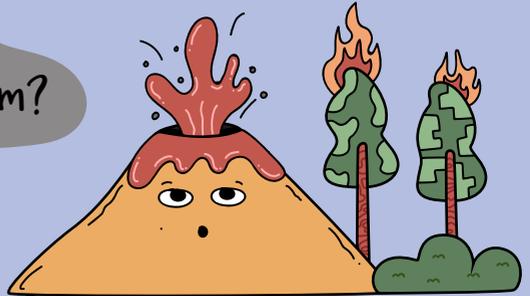
Why is the air around me important?

Air is invisible, yet it is all around us! Air is a mixture of gases, mostly oxygen and nitrogen, which plants, animals, and humans all need in order to survive.



## 2

Where does air pollution come from?



**Air pollution happens when harmful substances (pollutants) are released into the air** - inside our homes or outside. This can damage our bodies and even increase our chances of getting certain diseases.

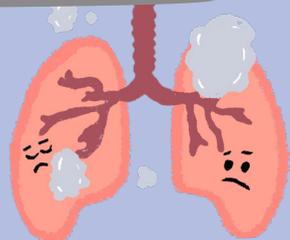
Air pollution can happen from natural sources like wildfires, dust, and volcano eruptions. **But mostly, our human actions cause pollution** from things like **power plants** that burn fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas), fertilizers and animal waste from farming, **wood burning stoves, driving cars, flying planes, and more...**

## 3

1.8 billion people under the age of 15 breathe air that is so polluted it risks their health and development.

Our actions as humans not only contribute to climate change but also directly affect our health.

Pollutants in the air can enter our lungs and blood system, which **increases our risk of heart diseases, respiratory diseases, and lung cancer.**



## Did you know?

Being exposed to air pollution over a long period of time can change our brain structure and lower our ability to do well in school and focus during exams.

# H

Since air is invisible, it may be tricky to see air pollution.

Here are 3 other signs you can look for:

Does your neighborhood have factories, cars, trucks, or power plants? If so, then you are probably exposed to high levels of air pollution.



Dryness/irritation in your eyes, headache, fatigue, allergies, or shortness of breath.



If you live with an asthmatic person, you might witness them having more severe asthmatic attacks, shortness of breath, chest pain, coughing, or wheezing.

## Did you know that children and young people are more affected by air pollution than adults?

# S



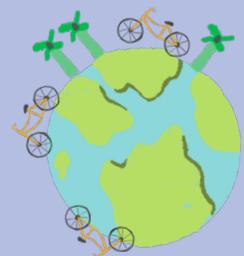
Meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement could save around 1 million lives per year worldwide by 2050, just by reducing air pollution! This means that we have a lot of work to do but it is possible to make our environment and our health better.

This is because you breathe faster than adults and take in more pollutants. Also because your brains and bodies are still developing, and these pollutants can harm you while you're still growing.



we're leaving this

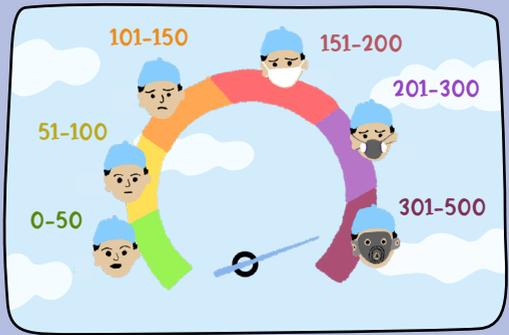
and working towards this



# 6

## So, how is the air quality around me?

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a tool that can tell us what the quality of the air around us is like. Higher AQI means worse air pollution.



# 7

## How else can we measure air pollution?

Fine Particulate Matter, also known as Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5), is a common measure of air pollution. PM2.5 is so small that it's around the same size as one thirtieth the width of a strand of human hair! Yes, it's that small!

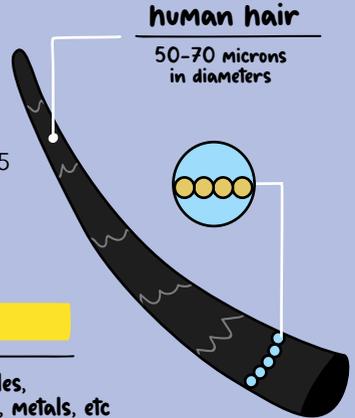
See Here !

**UNICEF Adolescent Health Dashboard**

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/adolescent-health-dashboards-country-profiles/>

**PM 2.5**

Combustion particles, organic compounds, metals, etc (<2.5 microns in diameters)



So, we can't really see PM2.5 but it is dangerous to our health. If you want to know the air quality around you, check out UNICEF's country dashboard.

# 8

## Positive progress is happening.

In 2020, the world's largest platform for air quality data was launched; this will provide the much needed data for citizens to hold their leaders accountable and encourage us all to advocate for better air quality monitoring.



Are there environmental laws such as litter laws or laws specific to burning waste in your country? If so, what are they? are there vehicle emission standards? are the laws and standards implemented?

During your day, when and where do you experience the worst air quality?

How do you think air pollution affects young people in your country on a day to day basis? What about in other countries?

What do you believe are some of the challenges cities may face in improving air quality?

How do you feel that air quality has changed since you were a child?

# think about it!

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions here- These are supposed to spark conversation and ideas!



What do you believe is the most important environmental issue today?

Who do you think is responsible for air pollution? Individual people, governments, industries?

What is a major world event that you've heard of in the past 6 months related to climate change or air pollution that shocks you?

If you could choose one alternative energy source to develop which would you choose and why?

How do you feel energy for cooking, lighting, heating or cooling, and transport is wasted in your community? what do you think can be done to avoid this?

What can you do to reduce air pollution?

# Make a Difference



Here are some ideas to help you learn more about air pollution around you so that you can educate yourself, your friends, and your family. Together, you can take action!



## Picture This!

Use your investigative skills to capture photos of anything around you that makes you concerned about the environment.

Share these images on social media and tag @voicesofyouth.

## Express Yourself

Share your thoughts about air pollution by submitting a piece to [www.voicesofyouth.org](http://www.voicesofyouth.org)



## Pass it on

Share something you've learned here with one other person and spark a conversation! These conversations can be digital through platforms such as Streamyard, Zoom, Facebook Live, Youtube or in person, while keeping everyone safe.



## Prove It!



Leave a medium size cotton ball in your street and see what color the cotton ball is after one day. Is it still completely white? If not, what do you see? This mimics the effect of air pollution on your body when you walk around outside.

Share pictures of your cotton ball on social media and invite people in your neighborhood to see the experiment! Spark a conversation and talk about the ways to improve air pollution in your community.