

# The Challenger AIR QUALITY



<b>FACTS</b>
<b>Project Title</b> Supply of project management, air quality information management, behavior change and communication services
<b>Contract no.</b> RFP / MFK /2019/ GCBS / No. 006
<b>Budget</b> 1.960.000 USD
<b>Duration</b> 24 months (01.10.2019 – 30.09.2021)
<b>Source of Funding</b> Millennium Challenge Corporation
<b>Contracting Authority</b> Millennium Foundation Kosovo
<b>Beneficiaries</b> National Institute of Public Health (NIHP) Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency (KEPA) Kosovo Hydro-Meteorological Institute (KHMI)
<b>Contractor</b> NIRAS I.C Sp. z.o.o. (Poland) in consortium with Atmterm S.A. (Poland) and Umweltbundesamt GmbH (Austria)
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## PROJECT UPDATE

The project Supply of project management, air quality information management, behavior change and communication services financed by Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) continued to achieve good progress despite the impact of COVID-19. Specifically, among the key results are:

- A robust air quality (AQ) monitoring system is operating in Kosovo – data are transmitted from monitoring stations, to a central server hosted by ASHI before being made publicly available through an Open Data Service and an easy to use Air Quality Portal (AQP) accessible through the on KHMI website, and a Smartphone Application (available on Android and IOS devices).
- Adapted health advisories and useful information regarding air quality and health are available through an AQ sub-site of the main NIHP website.
- A complete emission inventory for Kosovo has been prepared.
- Modelling of NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations for all of Kosovo is functioning.
- A short-term (3 day) forecasting system for Kosovo, for O<sub>3</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> has been developed and made available through the Air Quality Portal and Smartphone Application.
- Outreach and Behavior Change Public Campaign on Air Quality was launched at a stakeholder workshop.
- Comprehensive Health Advisories have been prepared and integrated into all project products, to increase the knowledge of the Kosovo population regarding health risks associated with poor air quality.
- On the job training for Government institutions to secure social and behavior change communication to reduce health impacts of poor air quality has been delivered.
- Three cross-governmental workshops were held for project beneficiaries (NIHP, KHMI and KEPA), Government of Kosovo officials, media, NGOs and academia.

## STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE

On November 11, 2020, an online Stakeholders Conference was held, to present the MFK/MCC project and Government of Kosovo activities related to air quality, discuss closer cooperation of all stakeholders, exchange ideas and propose specific actions. The conference was attended by AQ participants including NIHP, KHMI, MFK, NGOs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment and Planning, academia, and donors. The conference agenda included presentations by Niras on: functionalities of Air Quality Portal, Smartphone Application, AQ sub-site on NIHP website, and health advisories. Other presentations included:

- NIHP on contribution to raise environmental awareness in Kosovo.
- KEPA on the status and challenges of Air Quality Management in Kosovo.
- KHMI on Air Quality Monitoring and its role in information sharing and awareness raising.
- Municipality of Prishtina on air quality in Prishtina.
- NGO Science for Change on the role of NGOs and civil society in air pollution management, health promotion and behavior change.
- WHO and UNDP on Healthier Kosovo project.

The Conference included moderated plenary discussions on the use of Project results, NIHP and KHMI activities in public campaign, the role of the government of Kosovo in improving air quality, and the role of NGOs, civil society, academia and international agencies in air quality management.

The presence of key stakeholders and their active involvement in the Conference is an important step towards a cleaner and healthier air in Kosovo. Central and local government, institutions, academia and NGOs in Kosovo presented wide body of evidence that they put much effort into monitoring air quality, research, public health, and public information. This is a great value in the nationwide effort to better inform the public regarding human health risk of air pollution and stimulate air pollution reduction.

## OUTREACH AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

The Stakeholder Conference also marked the pre-launch of a nationwide Outreach and Behavior Change (OBC) Campaign on Air Quality. The campaign is designed to increase public awareness of air pollution and to promote the use of project products, such as Air Quality Portal and Smartphone App, which help the public access reliable AQ data and take actions in relation to air quality and forecasted AQ conditions. The AQ products are to be launched later in February 2021. The main goals of the OBC activities are:

- Explain what air pollution is (with focus on smog and particle pollution).
- Explain the main sources of air pollution in Kosovo (including domestic heating using coal and wood, transportation, and power generation).
- Explain what effects air pollution has on human health (direct effects which endanger human health and indirect by polluting the environment as sources of drinking water and food – vegetables and animals).
- Introduce health protection behavior in relation to the level of pollution.
- Educate on ways for air pollution reduction to motivate change of behavior.

The key campaign messages were developed in collaboration with NIHP and KHMI, discussed with public sector stakeholders and NGOs, and tested on selected focus groups. A range of tools and activities were developed and used during the campaign, including:

- Air Quality Portal on KHMI website, AQ sub-site of NIHP website and a smartphone app – providing information on current and forecasted AQ conditions and useful information regarding air quality and health.
- Carry on informative-educational pocket brochure.
- Informative-educational poster.
- Informative fact sheets targeted at vulnerable groups.
- Animated videos and radio clips.
- School children curriculum, designed to educate children on air pollution.
- Air Quality info-days events.

Engagement of media in the campaign is very intensive. Thirty-four media outlets published air quality information in November 2020. This includes 15 nationwide news channels (13 in Albanian and two in Serbian), and 19 local news outlets. MFK, NIHP and KHMI participated in two separate television interviews on the topic of air quality hosted by RTV21 and Klan Kosova TV. Radio station RTK (Serbian channel) reported on the Stakeholder Launch events in their morning program on November 12, 2020. NIHP and KHMI published press releases on their Facebook pages with 172,000 followers. The TV stations RTV21, Klan Kosova and RTK 2 agreed to report on current and forecasted AQ conditions and they included relevant information in their regular weather forecast programming. Air quality real-time information banners were also placed in web-portals such as Zeri.info, Kalko.com, Telegrafi, Gazeta Express.

Figure 1. RTV21 interview with Dr. Letefeta Latifi on November 13, 2020.



Figure 2. Klan Kosova TV interview with Dr. Antigona Ukehehaj on November 13, 2020.



Figure 3. Air Quality Portal draft.



Figure 4. Air Quality Smartphone App draft.

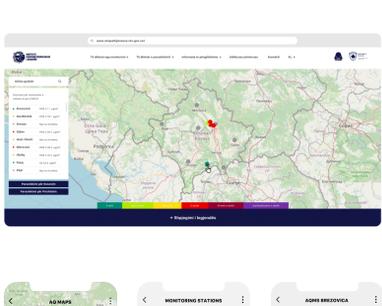
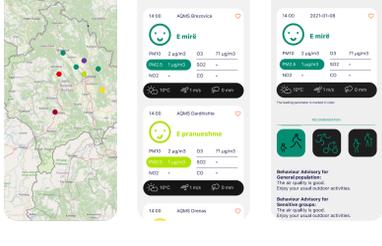


Figure 5. Illustration of Air Quality brochure.



### Cleaner air for safer health!

Check on the level of air pollution by visiting [airquality.kosovo.gov.net](http://airquality.kosovo.gov.net) and [health.kosovo.gov.net](http://health.kosovo.gov.net) for health recommendations visit [ajl.niph-ks.org](http://ajl.niph-ks.org)

**What air quality means?**  
Air quality refers to the concentration of air pollution substances in ambient air. Good air quality refers to air which is clean, clear and free from pollutants such as smoke, dust and fine particles. Air quality is determined by assessing a variety of pollution indicators.

**What is air pollution?**  
Air pollution is a complex mix of tiny particles and gases of both natural and human origin. It refers to the release of substances in the atmosphere that are harmful to humans, wildlife, vegetation, water and soil.

**How does air pollution affect on health?**  
Microscopic air pollutants enter your body, finding their way deep into the lungs and bloodstream, affecting your respiratory and cardiovascular system.

- Exposure to air pollution can increase the risk of:
  - Respiratory infections** and lung conditions that include asthma and emphysema.
  - Cardiovascular diseases** such as heart attacks and strokes, contributing risk factors such as high blood pressure.

Every year in Kosovo, thousands of people are admitted to hospital suffering from the effects of air pollution and several hundred people die prematurely due to exposure to air pollution.

**What is air pollution?**  
The main sources of air pollution in Kosovo are caused by human activities such as domestic heating, power generation, industrial processes and transport and agricultural waste.

- Particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) are both major components of urban air pollution. Particulate matter levels vary over short distances in general, but closer to the sources, the more you breathe in.

**Which groups of people are more sensitive to air pollution?**

- People with existing** health conditions such as lung disease, asthma, heart disease and diabetes.
- Older people** are at higher risk because of increased likelihood of health problems such as heart and lung disease.
- Children** are more vulnerable to air pollution because they have a less developed respiratory system and children inhale more air per kilogram of body weight than adults.
- Pregnant women** as exposure to air pollution increases the risk of low birthweight, premature birth and low birthweight.

Information on air quality can be found by visiting [airquality.kosovo.gov.net](http://airquality.kosovo.gov.net) and [health.kosovo.gov.net](http://health.kosovo.gov.net) and access on [ajl.niph-ks.org](http://ajl.niph-ks.org)

Download the free smartphone application for real-time information on air pollution.

Figure 6. Air quality signage.



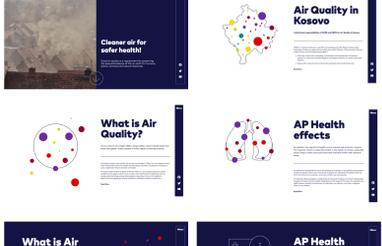
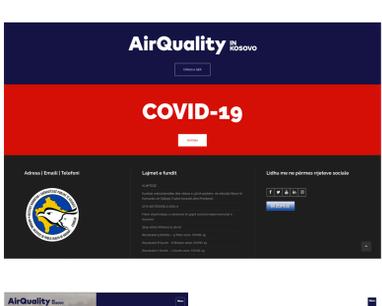
Figure 7. Air Quality Poster.



Figure 8. The AQ banner at the homepage of NIHP's website.



Figure 9. The NIHP AQ subsite in English.



## WORKSHOPS ON MODELLING AND EMISSION INVENTORY FOR KEPA AND KHMI

Selected KEPA and KHMI officials are receiving training on air quality modelling and the emission inventory. The workshops started at the end of September 2020, with 3 days of theoretical training on theory which are being supported with practical half-day sessions. Training was completed by the end of January 2021.

## ON THE JOB TRAINING FOR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

A total of 3 weeks of on the job training for staff of various Govt institutions to build capacity in affecting social and behavior change to reduce the health impacts arising from poor air quality. Following a thorough training needs assessment, this activity successfully commenced in December 2020, with a three-day session on assessing the health impacts of air pollution. The concept of air pollution Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was introduced in the daily work of the participants representing MoH, NIHP, KHMI, KEPA and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics. In broader terms, this concept explains how the health effects of outdoor air pollution and its sources are estimated, and gives an overview of the general principles for the proper conduct of a HIA study for various scenarios and purposes. The first session was completed in January 2021, with an additional two days of training tailored to institutions' needs to follow.

## GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) principles were mainstreamed into project activities through a number of recommended actions grouped under air pollution data, provision access and use, behavior change communication, and strengthening partnerships between the government institutions and the Civil Society. GSI issues were built into the awareness raising campaign and its tools. Special GSI-related sessions were delivered during workshops for Government of Kosovo officials, media, NGOs and academia.



## Upcoming activities

The project is set to continue its very intensive pace. The following key activities are planned in Q1 of 2021:

- Completion of Outreach and Behavior Change Campaign.
- Finalization of the smartphone application (phase 2).
- Delivery of multiple sessions of on-the-job training on environmental health and behavior change.
- 5th and 6th cross-governmental workshop.
- Study on the impact of Air Quality on health, with a focus on vulnerable groups.
- Donor Coordination meeting, expected February 2021.
- Steering and Technical Committee meetings.

The next issue of Donor Newsletter is expected in April 2021.

