

Why Asia Needs Co-benefits



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Professor Katsunori Suzuki, the co-chair of the Asian Co-benefits Partnership, provided the following insights into the possibilities and challenges for co-benefits in Asia.

1. What do you see as the strength of a co-benefits approach as opposed to a more conventional approach to environmental or climate policymaking?

Funding is a critical issue for implementing climate change policies. In developing countries, though climate change is gaining in importance, it is difficult to justify moving funds from more immediate priorities (i.e. poverty alleviation or local air pollution) to address climate change. One of the strengths of co-benefits is it offers a way to fund both climate change and other developmental priorities in tandem. Similarly, since there is a growing amount of carbon finance internationally, co-benefits can ensure these funds not only help with climate change but also support development. Yet third strength of a co-benefits approach is that it can draw more attention to species of air pollutants known as short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs) such as tropospheric ozone (O₃) and black carbon. SLCFs have shorter atmospheric residences than longer-lived greenhouse gases (GHGs) (i.e. carbon dioxide (CO₂)). Mitigating SLCFs can mitigate climate change in the short term, while CO₂ mitigation is needed in the longer term. In sum, co-benefits promises to achieve multiple objectives with one action, saving money and time in the process.

2. How would you characterise the status of co-benefits in Asia right now?

In one word: "confusion." A few years ago, the term co-benefits was used exclusively in the climate change community. But the situation has begun to change with a growing number of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds now using the term. However, the problem is that the term is understood differently from person to person, group to group. The challenge in Asia is to be clear on these differences and work toward a consensus definition.



3. What are the main things that need to be done to mainstream co-benefits in decision-making processes in Asia?

First, a better and shared understanding of the concept of co-benefits is critical, especially in relation to national development processes. Second, a consistent and accepted methodology for quantifying co-benefits should be shared among relevant stakeholders. This will take a conscious effort to agree upon and then promote those methods. Third, a sustained training program for policymakers and practical experts on how these methods can be applied to the policymaking process.

4. What are the main things that need to be done to mainstream co-benefits into "air pollution policymaking processes" in Asia?

Co-benefits are still a relatively new concept in Asia. The concept has been gradually shared in Asia's air pollution community. But "how" and "what" should be applied to actual decisions needs to be clarified and better understood. This could be achieved, for instance, with detailed case studies that feature SLCFs.

5. In what ways can the Asian Co-benefits Partnership support those efforts?

In my view, the Asian Co-benefits Partnership (ACP) has two core goals. First, information sharing and awareness raising for Asia's decision makers, including those in the air pollution and climate change community. Second, promoting capacity building on relevant concepts and tools, particularly for senior-level policy makers and practical experts. This could involve sharing experiences at training workshops, case studies, and developing pertinent learning materials.

The Work of the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum (GAP Forum) on Short Lived Climate Forcers



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The GAP Forum has helped raise the profile of species of air pollutants with near-term local, regional, and global impacts known as short-lived climate forcers. Below Dr. Kevin Hicks discusses how the GAP Forum has made the issue policy relevant.

■ Please summarize the work you have done on co-benefits and short lived climate forcers (SLCFs)—e.g. black carbon?

I work with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) centre based in the Environment Department of the University of York, UK. Along with the International Union of Air Pollution Prevention and Environmental Protection Associations (IUAPPA), SEI serves as the secretariat for the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum (GAP Forum). The GAP Forum was established in 2004 to work on atmospheric pollution at varying spatial and temporal scales. In 2008, the GAP Forum organized an international workshop entitled 'Air Pollution and Climate Change: Developing a Framework for Integrated Co-benefits Strategies'. At the time, we were not speaking directly about short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs). However, during the meeting Professor Veerabhadran Ramanathan (Scripps Institution of Oceanography, USA) presented research on the cloud of pollution hanging over Asia known as an Atmospheric Brown Cloud (ABC). The presentation underlined that some of the particles in the ABC were reflecting radiation and causing cooling, while some particles were absorbing radiation and causing warming. After the meeting, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) requested that SEI coordinate the development of an *Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone*. The *Integrated Assessment* summarized knowledge on the species of air pollutants with near-term warming and cooling properties. Following the completion of that report, UNEP asked SEI to coordinate a follow-up report entitled *Near-term Climate Protection and Clean Air Benefits: Actions for Controlling Short-Lived Climate Forcers*. The reports recommended 16 priority SLCF mitigation measures that could be adapted to different region's needs. The GAP Forum, and its partners, including IGES, are presently working with the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' (OES), Office of Global Change and Office of Environmental Policy at the Department of State, USA, on a project entitled 'Facilitating Action on SLCFs in Developing Countries'.

■ How has the work you have done on SLCFs been reflected in policy in Europe?

The GAP Forum has taken the results of the workshop held in Stockholm in 2008 and the subsequent results of the UNEP-related work and presented them to the Executive Body of the Long Range Transboundary of Air Pollution (LRTAP) Convention, which convenes each December in Geneva. These activities and others, such as the results of the LRTAP Convention own Ad-Hoc Expert Group on Black Carbon (see: <http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/executivebody/welcome.28.html>), have resulted in recommendations from the LRTAP EB to include SLCFs in the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol. This year we have also seen the release of an official document from the European Parliament referencing SLCFs and their co-benefits. The heightened attention to these issues could prove particularly timely because the Europe Union is currently revising its air quality strategy and could draw upon the findings from the aforementioned UNEP reports.

■ What are the key barriers to bridging science and policy on SLCFs in Europe? And how can they be overcome?

In addition to uncertainties in the science (e.g. there is still debate over the magnitude of black carbon's climate forcing properties in various contexts) and unregulated sources, there also needs to be greater clarity over what the UNFCCC and air pollution agreements can do to control SLCFs. For some in the climate community, the air pollution issue is a distraction to carbon; others in the air community hold the opposite view. We need to make sure that the climate and air pollution communities see the benefits of working together. Last but not least, we also want to make sure that science from both communities informs policy. We have seen in Europe that building trust is critical to bridging science and policy divides. In the case of the LRTAP Convention, cooperation between European scientists from different countries served as strong foundation for further policy developments. In Asia, the accumulation of knowledge through the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET); the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia; and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution are potentially promising developments in this regard.

Publications

- ACP COP17 Tool Kit
- Relevant Publications

- [Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone](#)
- [Near-term Climate Protection and Clean Air Benefits: Actions for Controlling Short-Lived Climate Forcers](#)

Find out more at our website: <http://www.cobenefit.org/>

Activities

- International Workshop on a Co-Benefits Approach: A Dialogue between Policy Makers and Researchers (13-14 February, 2012)
- 2012 AECEN Regional Forum: Climate Change and Environmental Compliance in Asia: Identifying Opportunities for Sharing Best Practices in Transitioning to a Green Economy (28-30 March, 2012)