

Dangerous air pollution levels threaten the health of tens of millions of Indians living in cities across the country – with unprecedented levels reached in November 2016. Rising temperatures fueled by climate change can further increase the concentrations of key pollutants in the air. While awareness about air pollution and its effects is increasing, major gaps remain on protecting public health and implementation toward cleaner air.

By adapting the framework of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC)'s successful Heat Action Plan, which has since its Ahmedabad launch in 2013 now been scaled to dozens of cities and states in India, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is working with the AMC and partners on launching the local Air Quality Index (AQI) and response plan for a city of over 7 million. The use of AQI has been applied globally in more than a dozen countries as a powerful means to communicate air pollution levels and associated health risks to the public and serves to provide a central source of daily air quality monitoring data. Starting with health and people, we plan to translate increased monitoring and growing public awareness into usable health advisories and impactful policy and regulatory changes that target some of the key sources of air pollution. We also plan to coordinate with key leaders in New Delhi to work toward broader transformative change, as well as leverage our 40 years of experience working on air pollution in the United States, China and elsewhere.

The Ahmedabad AIR (Air Information & Response) Plan is collaboration among Ministry of Earth Sciences' System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) through the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), which has developed a new AQI for Ahmedabad with 12 new monitoring stations. In 2016, NRDC and partners, the Indian Institute of Public Health-Gandhinagar (IIPH-G), had several discussions and workshops with IITM and the city of Ahmedabad on rolling out the new AQI and response plan. We also engaged with several experts, including the Gujarat State Pollution Control Board (GPCB), who is developing an implementation plan for pollution control for Ahmedabad.

Our objective is to galvanize public support towards action to reduce air pollution sources through public health and clean energy strategies that create healthier and prosperous communities and limit the worst effects of climate change for the future, with strategies focused in Ahmedabad that can be scaled to the state and national level. Our objective for the first year is to work with the city of Ahmedabad and partners to launch the AQI, and support its implementation for healthier communities and open avenues to cleaner air.

By continuing to build the local evidence base on the health effects of air pollution, the project team can lay the foundation for a longer-term strategy that advances healthy air, healthy climate and healthy citizens in India over the next five years.