

July 2014

**In Conversation with: Bjarne Pedersen**

In this second issue of “In Conversation with” we interviewed Bjarne Pedersen, Executive Director of Clean Air Asia, who shared his views on the future role and challenges of Clean Air Asia.



Bjarne Pedersen has been appointed by the Clean Air Asia Board to lead the organization as its new executive director, starting November 11, 2013.

Prior to this appointment, Bjarne was global director at Consumers International, a leading international consumer advocacy organization. He brings more than a decade of experience in senior management. Bjarne has a broad international experience, in environmental issues and sustainable development, and a proven track record of achieving meaningful impact through strategic leadership, resource mobilization and team building at all levels. As global director, he led and managed staff across four continents including directors in Africa, Latin America, Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

**Q: First, congratulations on your appointment as the new Executive Director for Clean Air Asia. Can you tell us your plans for Clean Air Asia (CAA)?**

A: Thank you indeed. Since our inception back in 2001 as the premier air quality network for Asia by the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and USAID, Clean Air Asia has gone from strength to strength. My plans are to build on those strengths ensuring that we are fit for purpose both in terms of the areas we work on and the impact we have. The twin challenges of air pollution and climate change are more evident and prominent across the region than ever before and we as Clean Air Asia are in a unique position to address those challenges.

I see CAA (Clean Air Asia) as the “go to” international civil society organisation in Asia on Air Quality issues and we will continue to strengthen and expand that position, making sure we work on the right issues, at the right time and in the right places – with focus on the impact we want to have in terms of reducing air pollution leading to healthier lives for citizens across Asia as well as a sustainable environment.

**Q: Can you describe the work of [Clean](#) Air Asia in this region?**

A: As a trusted change maker, we use knowledge and partnerships to enable Asia's 1,000 cities, the private sector and national governments to understand problems, identify solutions and implement these effectively. Our work across the region focuses on:

- Decision makers using reliable analysis, knowledge, data and effective tools to understand the problems and identify and implement solutions
- Stakeholders at the city, national and regional level cooperate better through networks and partnerships
- Policies and programs are in place that are science-based, stakeholder inclusive and effective and lead to real impact

**Q: What do you think has been the greatest challenge for Clean Air Asia? Is it the diversity or is it the politics of clean air?**

A: I see the diversity of our stakeholders as one of our key strengths as we forge partnerships that deliver change and better air quality. Yes, the politics of “clean air” is of course always a challenge but more often than not a positive one. There will always be politics to deal with at either the local, national or regional level but the hallmark of a successful non-governmental organization (NGO) like CAA is our ability to successfully navigate those politics towards a positive outcome for the environment and for the people of Asia.

**Q: Apart from transportation fuel emissions, what other aspects of air pollution does Clean Air Asia look at? And, what are the initiatives and programs here?**

A: Our work is focussed on four programmes which complement each other. Over the next two years we will focus on the following in each programme:

**Air Quality and Climate Change Program:**

1. Development and implementation of a Guidance Framework for Better Air Quality in Asian Cities.
2. Establish a regional system for knowledge management and capacity building on air quality and GHG management.
3. Deliver support to cities on air pollution and GHG management.

**Clean Fuels and Vehicles Program:**

1. Facilitate adoption of tighter standards for cleaner fuels and vehicles by Asian countries
2. Strengthen policy frameworks for effective management of in-use vehicles
3. Introduce clean fleet management programs for public and private fleet operators

**The Low Emissions Urban Development Program:**

1. Mainstream low emissions transport strategies in policy and investment decisions.
2. Knowledge management and exchange on land use, transport and energy
3. Bring “walkability” higher on the development agenda.

**Green Freight and Logistics Program:**

1. Establish regional and national green freight programs or initiatives
2. Mobilize a Green Freight Asia Network of private sector companies and association
3. Improve knowledge and data on the road freight sector to inform policies, programs, or initiatives

**Q: What more needs to be done to meet the environmental challenges in Asia? What role do governments need to play in meeting these challenges?**

A: In my opinion we have come some way in addressing the environmental challenges in Asia in a number of areas. But it is also equally clear that we have more work to do across a number of linked areas such as climate change and air pollution. On the solution side this means working harder on sustainability in key areas such as energy (consumption and production), transport and urban development to mention a few.

In terms of roles of governments I believe we need more partnerships and collaboration for change and focus on solutions. Effective action requires collaborative partnerships across civil society, industry and government. It is only through this “triangle of change” that it is possible to create the multiplier effect (and the scale) required to address the environmental challenges we face.

**Q: How do you balance economic growth (poverty eradication) with improving the environment?**

A: This is often referred to as the “sustainability challenge” for which there is no simple straight forward answer. I do not see economic growth, poverty eradication and protecting the environment as mutually exclusive but rather intrinsically linked. To make these three elements work in synergy and reinforce each in a positive manner, I believe a number of important elements need to be carefully considered including development and implementation of policies and practices on all levels (based on sound knowledge, science and data) supporting sustainable development. I am also a firm believer in increased awareness, education and capacity building as a means to addressing

this challenge and especially the way economic growth, poverty eradication and environmental protection impacts each other.

**Q: What are Clean Air Asia's plans on fuel standards for cleaner air?**

A: The recommendations from the "Road Map for Cleaner Fuels and Vehicles in the Asian Region" serve as our guiding document for planning our work under our Clean Fuels and Vehicles Program. From the health standpoint, the most important fuel parameters are sulfur content (for diesel) and lead (for gasoline). Asia is clearly moving towards Euro 4 vehicle emissions standards and higher, thus fuel quality must also improve to match this trend.

**Q: Are there any country specific plans on air quality improvements and fuel emission standards, ie. for Indonesia as the country has just emerged from gasoline lead phase-out?**

A: In Indonesia, under the "Breathe Easy Jakarta" project, Clean Air Asia together with partners such as Desert Research Institute, US Environmental Protection Agency, KPBB and Swisscontact Indonesia Foundation, provide technical assistance to strengthen DKI Jakarta's capacity for air quality management.

We facilitate stakeholder discussions towards low-sulfur fuel policies in Indonesia as well as other countries (e.g., Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka). We also provide technical expertise for baseline analysis of vehicle fuel economy in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Clean Air Asia also supports the targeted approach for Afghanistan, Myanmar and North Korea to remove lead from gasoline to achieve the worldwide goal to eliminate lead from gasoline.

At the sub-regional level, Clean Air Asia actively engages with member states of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) on fuel quality policy discussions through a biennial platform "Clean Fuels and Vehicles Forum in the ASEAN Region." The first Forum held in November 2013 was hosted by the Singapore National Environment Agency and organized with key partners like the Asian Clean Fuels Association, and a follow-up is scheduled in the last quarter of 2014. Indonesia actively participates in the Forum.

**Q: The Better Air Quality conference will take place in Sri Lanka this year. So what are we going to look forward to in this year's conference?**

A: While the conference itself will be a milestone in combating air pollution and promoting sustainable transport in the region, the integrated conference is also an opportunity to ensure a real and lasting impact. With this integrated conference, we will set a signpost for a more sustainable future for citizens across Asia – where sustainable development becomes more concrete for all with better air quality and sustainable transport systems.

The theme for the joint BAQ/EST conference, “Next Generation Solutions for Clean Air and Sustainable Transport – Towards a Livable Society in Asia,” highlights the importance of and linkage between clean air and sustainable transport as essential to having a livable society in the region. It calls for innovative and smart solutions in terms of policy, institutions, technology and financing, that significantly reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases from energy, industry, transport and area sources, and ensure a safe, equitable environment and people-friendly transport system by accelerating the shift towards more environmentally sustainable transport (EST) in Asian cities and countries.