



Oral Statement
40th session of the Human Right Council

Item 3
Clustered Interactive Dialog - Issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment

We at Make Mothers Matter thanks the Special Rapporteur for his excellent report on the right to a healthy environment, with a focus on the right to breathe clean air.

Air pollution contributes to 7 million premature deaths annually. It is also responsible for negative birth outcomes.

Air pollution has a greater impact on certain vulnerable populations, especially children. In developing countries, women suffer the most from household air pollution because of their primary role in cooking.

The recognition and realization of the right to breathe clean air is of critical importance to the realization of many SDGs, and MMM fully supports the report's recommendations: addressing the issue of air pollution will require action at every level: household, local, national and international.

At the household and local levels, women, especially mothers, must not be considered only as victims: they can also be vectors of transformation, provided they are recognized as such, educated and supported in their multiple roles.

In developing countries, mothers can drive communities to adopt clean cooking technologies introduced by State programs. Around the world, countries that are engaging women in local communities and local governance¹ are seeing positive results for the development of the communities.

In developed countries, where air pollution is mainly ambient, one English mother might set a precedent that could inspire the world. Her nine-year-old daughter, Ila, died in 2013 from asthma attacks. The family lived near London's South Circular road, filled with diesel fumes. When she found out that her daughter's attacks were correlated to air pollution peaks, she engaged in a battle to put air pollution on her daughter's death certificate. The attorney general has backed her application and the High Court is being petitioned to authorize it. Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah is now running for London Assembly. She is just one mother who could change the course of air pollution.

What about empowering other women to make the air cleaner ?

¹ Since 1993, in India, 1/3 of of all community council seats must be occupied by women.