



Geneva  
Health  
Forum

AIR QUALITY



Presentation

*Improving indoor  
air quality: a  
public health issue*

*International Project*

# I. Who we are

Established in 2006 by Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and the University of Geneva (UNIGE), the Geneva Health Forum (GHF) is a Swiss not-for-profit initiative that brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss and address global health challenges. The GHF plays a pivotal role in the global health landscape, as a neutral and inclusive platform fostering exchanges and collaboration among key players in the field, including policymakers, academics, civil society actors, and the private sector..

Its core mission is to facilitate constructive dialogue among these global health actors. This in turn contributes to health policy improvements and healthcare access worldwide

For more information on our mission and governance, visit: <https://genevahealthforum.com>

# II. What we do

The **GHF biennial conference** attracts over 1,700 delegates from various sectors. It provides a neutral space to present research, share best practices, and explore pathways to translate science into policy, with a focus on improving healthcare access in low- and middle-income countries.

Beyond the conference, the GHF organizes **year-round activities** such as expert panels, participatory workshops, and symposia, gathering 50 to 300 participants depending on the event type and objectives.

# III. Our partners

The Geneva Health Forum is proud to collaborate with some of the most prominent international organizations based in Geneva including:



## IV. Improving Indoor Air Quality : A Public Health Issue

### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of limiting the transmission of respiratory diseases. Airborne diseases, such as measles, COVID-19, and the flu, pose serious health threats.

Understanding their transmission mechanisms and taking action on indoor air quality (IAQ) is essential to better protect ourselves.

We spend approximately 90% of our time breathing indoor air, which can be contaminated by various harmful substances such as mold, VOCs, or radon.

Numerous scientific studies have highlighted the impact of indoor air quality on health and productivity. Yet, many public spaces (schools, healthcare facilities, public transportation, gyms, and recreation centers) still fail to provide satisfactory air quality.

Just as the safety of drinking water and food is recognized as a public health priority, indoor air quality must receive the same attention. This issue deserves a central place on the global health agenda and should be included on the agenda of the World Health Assembly (WHA), the WHO's decision-making body that brings together 194 countries.

Technical solutions to measure and improve indoor air quality exist. It is our collective responsibility to promote their widespread implementation, notably through a WHA resolution dedicated to indoor air quality.

### Project Objectives

- Demonstrate the importance of developing concrete public health strategies to combat airborne diseases and improve indoor air quality.
- Prepare plans for the adoption of a World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution to prioritize indoor air quality as a global public health issue. This Resolution can then guide evidence-based strategies and actions.

### Key issues addressed in the collaboration

- Understanding exposure to air pollutants in indoor environments
- Understanding the impact of exposure to indoor air pollutants
- Understanding the mechanisms and impact of airborne diseases
- Emphasizing the importance of improving indoor air quality to combat these diseases
- Identifying solutions for monitoring and improving indoor air quality (reducing pollutants at source, ventilation, filtration, purification)
- Developing a strategy for new construction and renovation of buildings that integrates indoor air quality, building temperature management (keeping out cold in winter and heat in summer), and building energy efficiency.
- Proposing public health strategies
- Identifying available funding
- Identifying innovations in mask technology

## **Planned activities**

### **PHASE 1**

- Forming a multidisciplinary scientific committee with experts to define scientific issues, solution pathways and terms of reference

### **PHASE 2**

- Organizing an international conference on indoor air quality to mobilize stakeholders (academic, civil society, policymakers, media) and present scientific evidence supporting the development of a policy brief on improving indoor air
- Publishing and disseminating a policy brief (5-page document with arguments and recommendations)

### **PHASE 3**

- Drawing up a first draft of the WHA Resolution
- Identifying 3–5 permanent missions willing to carry the resolution
- Carrying out advocacy and networking activities to identify and mobilize a larger group of supporting permanent missions (10–15)
- Supporting the permanent missions in their campaign to convince the WHA Executive Board to put the resolution on the WHA agenda

## **Expected deliverables**

- Scientific review on the impact of indoor air quality on health.
- Increased Indoor Air Awareness with availability of enduring materials that can be further used as part of advocacy efforts (conference, policy briefs, awareness-raising or training sessions, literature review and other key resources).
- Development of a policy brief containing concrete recommendations for improving indoor air quality. A policy brief typically describes a public health problem, reviews the scientific evidence, and suggests action strategies. Its objective is to bridge the gap between research and policy, ensuring that public health decisions are evidence-based.
- Preparation of a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution in favor of improving indoor air quality.

### **World Health Assembly Resolutions: A Powerful Instrument for Advancing Public Health**

Resolutions presented by WHO Member States at the World Health Assembly are collective decisions that set priorities, provide guidance, and commit countries to action on public health issues.

They are not legally binding, but have strong political value.

These resolutions help coordinate international efforts, mobilize resources, and spur concrete action. They provide a platform to raise awareness of often-neglected health issues. As such, they are a key lever for concerted advancing global health.

## Supporters





# First WHO Conference on Indoor Air Quality

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, BERN, SWITZERLAND

The First WHO Conference on Indoor Air Quality, held in Bern (Switzerland) in September 2023, addressed the pressing need to improve indoor environments for human health. This groundbreaking event brought together policymakers, scientists, and industry leaders to present evidence-based strategies for improving ventilation, reducing indoor pollutants, and achieving synergies between health, energy efficiency, and climate goals.

Discussions emphasized innovative solutions, regulatory frameworks, and actionable measures to create healthier indoor spaces. Supported by WHO Europe and featuring contributions from key figures such as WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge, the conference attracted over 1,000 participants (in-person and online). It marked a significant milestone in implementing science into policy dialogue on fostering resilient, sustainable, and health-focused indoor environments.

The conference highlighted five key points:

1. Indoor air quality (IAQ) is a major public health issue, far beyond the transmission of COVID-19.
2. Standards, ventilation strategies, and investments are essential to sustainably improve IAQ.
3. It is essential to translate scientific data into policies, based on evidence and transparency.
4. Cross-sectoral and international coordination is necessary to effectively address IAQ challenges.
5. Awareness-raising, occupant empowerment, and a flexible approach are key to successful implementation.

For more information: <https://genevahealthforum.com/events/conference-on-indoor-air>





**Geneva  
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