

Research on household air pollution must be a global health priority

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Addressing the burden of household air pollution from solid fuel combustion—the leading environmental cause of death and disability in the world—has led to the implementation of many important interventions to promote access to improved stoves and clean fuels, but there is little demonstrated evidence of health benefits from most of these programs or technologies. Such are the conclusions of a new Policy Forum article published in this week's *PLOS Medicine* by authors who also outline a set of research priorities for addressing household air pollution.

A group of international researchers, led by William J. Martin II from the National Institutes of Health in the US and funded by several US government sponsors, identified research gaps and priorities related to the health effects of household air pollution and unsafe stoves in seven areas: cancer; infections; cardiovascular disease; maternal, neonatal, and child health; respiratory disease; burns; and [ocular disorders](#) and gaps in four cross-cutting areas that are relevant to research on HAP (exposure and biomarker assessment, women's empowerment, behavioral approaches, and program evaluation).

The authors conclude: "It is vital that researchers partner with implementing organizations and governments to evaluate the impacts of improved stove and fuel programs to identify and share evidence regarding the outcomes of the many implementation programs underway, including the socio-behavioral aspects of household energy use."

More information: Martin WJ II, Glass RI, Araj H, Balbus J, Collins FS, et al. (2013) Household Air Pollution in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Health Risks and Research Priorities. PLoS Med 10(6): e1001455. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001455](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001455)

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