

Side benefits of climate action may save millions of lives in Africa

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A truck emits a cloud of pollution while driving in Cameroon. Credit: Photokadaffi/Wikimedia, CC-BY-SA-4.0

Moving from fossil fuels to clean energy sources comes with many side benefits, including a reduction in air pollution, which is responsible for premature deaths of 8–10 million people around the world.

In a new study, Shindell et al. model the impacts that cleaner air and

sustainable growth would have on Africa under a scenario in which Earth warms by about 2°C by 2100. The researchers predict that levels of many pollutants in Africa, including carbonaceous aerosols, sulfur dioxide, and ammonia, would drop substantially, but the magnitudes of the drops would vary across different regions. East and West Africa, for example, would be expected to see large drops in carbonaceous aerosols, whereas northern, central, and southern Africa would see levels largely unchanged.

Despite these differences, the researchers predict that all regions of Africa will experience massive benefits if climate action results in cleaner air. By around 2050, the annual number of [premature deaths](#) could drop by around 45,000 in southern Africa and 175,000 in West Africa, with other regions of the continent experiencing intermediate declines. Cumulatively, cleaner air could prevent about 3 million premature deaths on the continent by 2050 and more than 10 million by the end of the century, according to the authors.

More information: D. Shindell et al, Premature Deaths in Africa Due To Particulate Matter Under High and Low Warming Scenarios, *GeoHealth* (2022). [DOI: 10.1029/2022GH000601](https://doi.org/10.1029/2022GH000601)

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