

RUNNING FOR CLEAN AIR

Frequently Asked Questions

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BACKGROUND

Who runs this project?

World Athletics leads this project.

Where does the funding come from?

The project is funded by the [Clean Air Fund](#) – a philanthropic initiative tackling global air pollution. It is the first time the Clean Air Fund is financing an initiative in the sports industry.

What is the overall objective of this project?

The project Running for Clean Air is dedicated to combating air pollution in urban areas. It uses marathon events as a route to engage local communities on the topic of air quality and promote outdoor physical activity participation.

What does the project look like in practice?

Air quality monitoring and engagement campaigns are used to catalyze city action and raise awareness of air quality's impact on health and exercise performance.

In each participating city, a city marathon event is selected around which this project revolves. Air quality is measured in the lead-up and during that marathon event. In the same period, a public awareness campaign features workshops, webinars, training sessions, media coverage, or social media activity.

Which cities are involved?

In 2024–2025, the Running for Clean Air initiative operates in two cities: Warsaw, Poland and Lagos, Nigeria. These cities were selected based on their successful marathon events and activities on air quality.

If other cities are interested in this project, they can express interest to World Athletics for future consideration at: anna.jilkova@external.worldathletics.org.

Who can I get in touch with about this project?

With any questions or comments, reach out to the World Athletics' Air Quality Project Manager Anna Jilkova at: anna.jilkova@external.worldathletics.org.

AIR QUALITY AND RUNNING

How does poor air quality impact exercising individuals?

Science tells us that exercise is good for us, but it also warns about the harmful effects of breathing in polluted air. In most environments, the benefits of exercising prevail over these harmful effects. However, physically active individuals, spending more time outdoors and breathing at higher rates, expose themselves to increased pollutants, adversely affecting their health and overall performance and therefore, it is important to search for the best conditions possible.

What are the main health consequences of running in poor air quality?

Air pollution affects the whole body but three main parts particularly: brain, lungs and heart.

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Running in poor air quality can adversely impact the brain, leading to reduced cognitive functions and progressive neuronal damage. Lung function is overall compromised, and the cardiovascular system faces risks, such as heart rate variability and increased diastolic blood pressure.

Does air quality matter also to the running performance?

Yes, research indicates that with every 10 microgram per cubic meter increase in PM10, running performance may decrease by 1.4%. This underscores the importance for both race organizers and athletes to take air quality into consideration.

SUPPORTING THIS PROJECT

Who can support this project?

We seek involvement from local communities in each participating city, including cooperation with local NGOs, environmental organizations, schools, sports clubs, and businesses. There are no restrictions, as long as there is an interest in the topic. We always look for more entities that can help us amplify the project's message.

Are there any financial implications from joining this project?

No. All funding and technology are provided.

What are the requirements to join this project?

To join and support Running for Clean Air, we request attendance at our meetings (approximately on a monthly basis over 9 months) and assistance with the campaign, according to your capabilities.

No formal commitment needs to be signed; just a written confirmation for our internal reporting purposes.

What are the benefits of joining? Why should we support this project?

The topic of air quality is still quite new in discussions and requires a lot of education. Participating in this project provides you with the opportunity to become a pioneer and thought leader in this field alongside World Athletics, an international sports governing body. Moreover, the project grants access to valuable and reliable air quality data, leaving a lasting and beneficial legacy in the city. Throughout the journey, you will meet diverse like-minded stakeholders, sparking cooperation for the future.

I am active in Warsaw or Lagos. How can I support?

If your organization is based in one of our participating cities, please reach out to discuss details of your involvement (anna.jilkova@external.worldathletics.org).

I am not from either of the participating cities but would be interested in supporting this project. How?

Regardless of your location, if you find this project interesting and want to help us spread the word, we would be happy to discuss possibilities.

We also always look for future cities for this project so get in touch with any ideas.

Or if you just have an idea, comment, or feedback – we look forward to hearing from you!

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URBAN CLEAN AIR TRAINING AREA (UCATA)

What is UCATA?

UCATA stands for Urban Clean Air Training Area. It is a designated space in our participating cities meant for enjoyable exercise. The area also hosts an air quality monitoring device for six months leading up to the marathon race and serves as a platform for the project to communicate the benefits of clean air to the public.

Will you build a new recreational zone for UCATA?

No, the aim of UCATA is not to construct new parks or outdoor workout playgrounds. The project utilizes existing spaces and seeks commitments from local stakeholders to promote them as areas for physical activity.

What could UCATA look like?

UCATA can be anything from a park to a promenade by a river or a school campus. The shape and size depend on the local situation. Where UCATA will be is always decided together with local stakeholders.

Does UCATA need to be along the marathon route?

Not necessarily. Although this project centers around a marathon race, UCATA can be in any suitable location in the same city.

MEASURING AIR QUALITY

How do you measure air quality?

World Athletics monitors the air quality with a static device placed in UCATA for the 6 months preceding the city marathon, and with a dynamic device to monitor air pollution during the marathon along the running route.

Which device do you use?

The device used is Kunak Air Pro manufactured by [Kunak Technologies](#). If you want to learn more about the device, please read our Device Specifications document available on the project website.

Which values do you measure?

Kunak Air Pro measures the following: CO, NO_x, NO, NO₂, O₃, and PM₁₀, PM₄, PM_{2.5} and PM₁. On top of that, the monitor also gathers information on humidity, temperature, atmospheric pressure, dew point, wind direction, and WBGT index.

Who analyses the results?

The results are analyzed by the World Athletics' Health and Science Department and published in a monthly report. This report is shared with all involved stakeholders and published on the project's website.

Where can I see the results?

All the previously published air quality reports can be found on the website. Live data is available [here](#).

WARSAW

When is the project taking place in Warsaw?

Running for Clean Air in Warsaw is connected to the 44th edition of the Warsaw Marathon (Maraton Warszawski) which takes place on September 29, 2024. The air quality measurement in Warsaw UCATA starts in late March. Follow the [project website](#) to have the latest news from Warsaw.

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Who are the main stakeholders in Warsaw?

The project in Warsaw is mainly supported by:

- [Warsaw Marathon Foundation](#) (*marathon organizer*)
- [Polish Athletics](#)
- [the City of Warsaw](#)

Other participating stakeholders can be found on the website.

Where is UCATA in Warsaw?

Pole Mokotowskie was selected as the location for UCATA in Warsaw.

What are the activities going on in Warsaw?

There is an ongoing air quality measurement and a series of events, such as training sessions, webinars, school activities. Learn more about the upcoming activities [here](#).

LAGOS

When is the project taking place in Lagos?

In Lagos, Running for Clean Air is connected to the Access Bank Lagos City Marathon 2025 taking place in February 2025. The air quality monitoring in Lagos starts in August 2024.

Who are the main stakeholders in Lagos?

The project in Lagos is mainly supported by:

- [Nilayo Sports Management](#) (*marathon organizer*)
- [UrbanBetter](#)
- [The Lagos State Office of Climate Change and Circular Economy](#)

Where is UCATA in Lagos?

The location of UCATA in Lagos is in the National Stadium Surulere.

What are the activities going on in Lagos?

The awareness campaign and measurement-related activities in Lagos start in August 2024. Follow [this page](#) to have the latest news from Lagos.