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Benefits and Costs of the Informal Sector: The Case of Brick Kilns in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries, the informal sector—brick kilns, leather tanning, food processing factories—is often highly polluting, causing countless deaths and illnesses. This paper presents the case of brick kilns in Dhaka, one of the most polluted cities in Asia. Five months per year, brick kilns are the city's main source of fine particulate pollution, accounting for 38 percent of total fine particulate mass. The paper values the impacts of existing and alternative brick kiln technologies in Dhaka city. Through a Cost-Benefit Analysis, it estimates the net returns for the entrepreneur, and the social costs, such as health impacts from air pollution and damages due to carbon emissions from kilns. It shows that cleaner technologies are more attractive than traditional technologies both from the private and social perspective, and provides concrete recommendations for a cleaner brick sector in Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS

Cost-Benefit Analysis; Air Pollution

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