

Ushering a new era of urban Planning and Management

Karin Buhren

To today's hard-pressed urban managers, urban development and environmental sustainability can seem like two opposing concepts. In successful cities, however, the two objectives merge as sustainable urban development, a concept underpinned by carefully thought out Environmental Planning and Management (EPM).

Deteriorating environment had been recognized as a problem in the early 1990s and put at the center stage during the Rio Earth Summit. And while awareness, understanding and knowledge have grown over the last two decades, so have the problems multiplied by an ever accelerating urbanization.

In the early 1990s, UN-HABITAT (then called United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) started the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) - followed a little later by the Localising Agenda 21 Programme (LA21) - in an attempt to find answers and solutions to these problems. Some initial ten cities started to systematically look into the inter-linkages between their development activities and the environmental resources, getting institutions and people around the table to identify and negotiate solutions for the most pressing issues. Soon UNEP joined in and, over the years, the number of partner cities increased to today's 120 cities in 33 countries. Many regional and international partner institutions are also using the approach pioneered by SCP/LA21.

While the problems are as individual as the cities themselves, it was soon realized, that a common approach brought solutions applicable in different cities. Issues tackled by the cities started with the provision of basic urban services, road construction, and managing urban growth and went all the way to open spaces, coastal protection and other environmental objectives.

The aim of SCP/LA21 was to change how things were done – to make urban governance more participatory, more transparent and more strategic. This needed change could only be achieved after many little steps of trust-building. Therefore most SCP/LA21 projects lasted longer than the anticipated three years. In Tanzania, it took a decade to reach the stage, where the Urban Authority Support Unit is facilitating the replication of the approach countrywide.

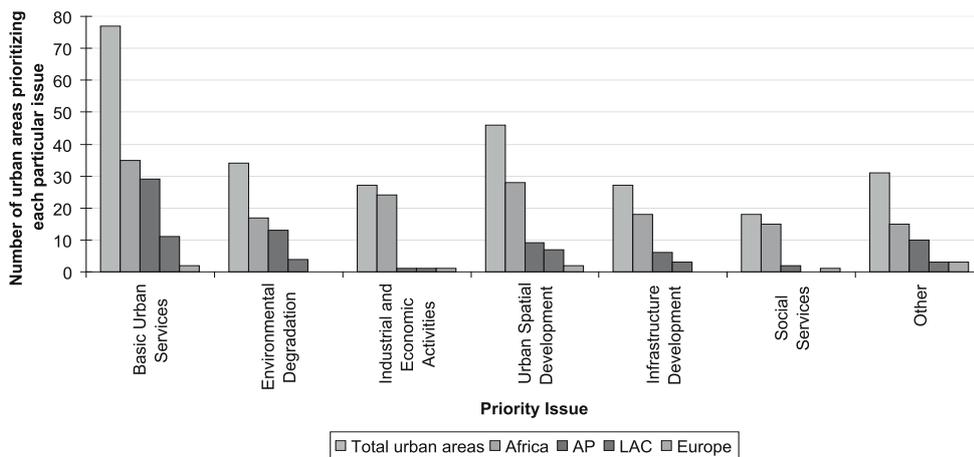
Demo-projects important for motivation

The demonstration projects at city level were supposed to test the applicability of potential solutions. According to the documentation of experience from various countries (see article on page 4 on the documentation series), one desirable side effect was a boost of motivation for SCP/LA21 working group members.

Link the local and global levels

For a better implementation of international treaties, but also for better implementable treaties, the local and global levels in the field of urban environment need to be connected. The programmes facilitated this exchange. UN-HABITAT's long standing experience dealing with sustainable urban development and the organization's tried and tested capacity-building tools will benefit the global Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net) and the Cities in Climate Change Initiative (CCCI). SUD-Net further develops an understanding and application of the principles of

Priority Issues in Urban Areas of the SCP and LA21 programmes



18 years later, what have we learned?

Work at the local level as well as national level

SCP started working at city level. Soon it became obvious, however that to scale up the results, the national government had to recognize and approve the approach. It is the national level that valuable lessons learned can trickle down to other municipalities as experienced in Oyo State, Nigeria.

sustainable urbanization, at global, regional, national and city level. CCCI will develop, adapt and make available the necessary methodologies that will provide city managers and practitioners with guidelines on how to best cope with climate change.

More information: UN-HABITAT, Urban Environmental Planning Branch, uepb@unhabitat.org, <http://www.unhabitat.org/scp>

Urban Environment Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Urban Environment Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean, jointly developed by the regional offices of UNEP and UN-HABITAT, has provided a solid support framework that has strengthened the reach and relevance of the Global Environment Outlook Cities (GEO Cities) initiative of UNEP and the Sustainable Cities Programme / Localising Agenda 21 of UN-HABITAT in the region.

Joint urban environmental assessments are prepared to be followed by Local Agenda 21 Action Plans and proposal for response projects on selected themes. As a result of this collaboration, the local team in Cuba has successfully replicated Bayamo's experience in three other cities: Holguín, Santa Clara and Cienfuegos.

Loja and Esmeraldas in Ecuador use their GEO report as an important tool for environmental planning and decision-making. In Peru, the team developed action plans and an environmental information system for the city of Arequipa, while in Chiclayo the GEO resulted in a Solid Waste, Water and Sanitation Action Plan. Additional GEO Cities reports were launched in Lima-Callao, Peru, and the Great Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica and are on-going in five more cities in Brazil as well as Cartagena in Colombia.

UNEP and UN-HABITAT regional offices are discussing new initiatives to incorporate issues of vulnerability, adaptation, and mitigation to climate change in the preparation of urban environmental profiles and action plans for cities.



More Information:
GEO City reports can be downloaded at <http://www.pnuma.org/geociudades/>

Philippines: Strengthening institutional capacity to adapt to Climate Change

In 2008, UN-HABITAT started a pilot project in Sorsogon City in the Philippines on building climate-resilient human settlements. By "designing and building with nature" - so the project title - possibilities of climate change adaptation for coastal cities will be explored. As a first step, a climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessment was conducted and presented at city-wide stakeholder meetings. As a response, the Mayor of Sorsogon set up a technical working group comprising of municipal staff across key municipal departments. Based on the vulnerability assessment, this team will develop a comprehensive climate change action plan over the next couple of months. This action plan will deal with numerous aspects to adequately adapt a coastal city to the consequences of climate change: from the adaptation of land use plans and zoning regulations over the development of appropriate shelter plans to disaster risk reduction through, for instance, the set-up of early warning systems.



The low-income settlements in Sorsogon City, Philippines reach right up to the seawall.

This MDG-Fund Joint Programme in the Philippines is one example of the "UN delivering as One" to combat climate change: Jointly with UN-HABITAT, UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organization aim to mainstream measures for climate risk reductions into key national and local development plans.

More information:
<http://www.unhabitat.org/ccci>

New Mediterranean initiative for Eco Cities



The Government of Jordan invited to a 'Eco Cities of the Mediterranean' regional Forum from 18 to 20 October 2008 at the Dead Sea, Jordan. The Forum was intended to promote the adoption of environment friendly practices in metropolitan cities across the Mediterranean region and the world. It attracted about 450 participants from across the region.

In a session on Green Transportation, discussions centered on the ongoing urbanization and the growing need for transportation, where vehicle ownership growth is amplified in traffic congestion, air and noise pollution. UNEP-based Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) stressed that efficient vehicles and new technologies are particularly necessary in developing and transition countries where secondhand cars have the biggest market share.

The transport sector is emitting one-quarter of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A stabilization of GHG emissions, as recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, could be achieved through a global fuel economy drive. This is particularly important as the world's light duty vehicle fleet is set to triple by 2050, of which two-thirds will be found in non-OECD countries.

The Forum concluded with an 'Amman Call' for Eco-Cities. The document urges governments to develop and enforce legislation promoting actions and projects to reduce air and noise pollution and to increase open green spaces. In addition, it calls on governments to enhance and support efforts by the private sector to develop alternative transport modes, greener buildings, energy efficiency and renewable energy use.

More information:

<http://www.unep.org/pcfV>,
<http://www.eco-cities.net>

Africa

'Cities and Climate Change' takes WUF by storm



Anna Tibajuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, at the fourth session of the World Urban Forum

The fourth session of the World Urban Forum from 3-6 November 2008 in Nanjing, China attracted approximately 7800 participants from some 155 countries. Under the theme "Harmonious Urbanization", discussions in over 20 sessions focused on how cities respond and will be affected by a changing climate. Climate change requires attention at various levels – particularly at the city level.

One of the six dialogue sessions entitled "Harmonizing the Built and Natural Environments" shared experiences of selected cities to showcase

innovative ways of preventing and mitigating adverse effects of climate change and biodiversity loss in a way that includes the urban poor. Panelists underlined that people on the ground should be provided with tools and financial resources rather than with ready-made solutions.

UNEP and UN-HABITAT jointly organized an event on "Cities and Climate Change: the road from Bali to Copenhagen". In this well attended event participants discussed a Local Government Climate Roadmap process from Bali to Copenhagen with the objective of strengthening the role of local governments in the post-2012 climate agreement. There were also lively discussions on practical measures to address climate change through urban environmental planning, innovative ways of mobilizing finance and technological solutions.

More information:

<http://www.unhabitat.org/wuf>
<http://www.unhabitat.org/ccci>

Events

Poznan COP 14: significant outcomes for local governments

A Local Government Climate Session was held parallel to the COP 14 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland from 9 to 11 December 2008. This session was organized by the Local Government Climate Roadmap partners – a core group of global local government associations including ICLEI, UCLG, C40, World Mayors Council on Climate Change and Metropolis.

The Climate Change Conference commenced to negotiate towards a post-Kyoto international climate agreement which is to be agreed during the next COP in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Climate Roadmap Partners used this international conference to promote the role of local governments and cities as integral actors in this future climate regime. The Local Government Session served as a forum to discuss a draft text for a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP Decision on

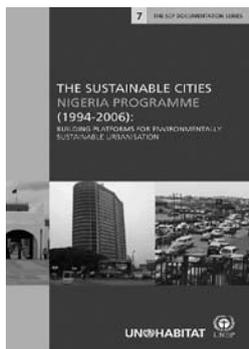


UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon calls for UN delivering as one in the fight of climate change.

“Cities, Local Governments and Climate Change”. This text will be further developed over the coming months with the aim of presenting it for adoption as a COP15 decision in Copenhagen in December 2009. UNEP and UN-HABITAT supported this three-day event.

More information:
<http://www.unfccc.org>, <http://www.cop14.gov.pl>

The SCP Documentation Series: Nigeria - Building platforms for environmentally sustainable urbanization



Following the oil boom of the 1970s, Nigeria experienced a high growth rate in urban areas – resulting in progressively complicated and exacerbated problems of human settlements growth and development, particularly the provision of adequate housing and supporting services; environmental deterioration; as well as the growth of urban poverty. Seeking a new approach to address these problems, four cities participated in the Sustainable Cities Programme, namely, Ibadan, Kano, Enugu and Karu. This publication is a review of the Sustainable Cities Programme’s experience and impact on Nigeria in the period 1993 to 2005.

More information: The report will be available on-line soon at <http://www.unhabitat.org/scp>

The State of African Cities Report

By 2030 the majority of Africans will be urban residents, and the majority of them will live in slums and informal settlements unless radical corrective measures are taken. To leverage Africa’s options in an environment that is simultaneously global and local, it is important for its leaders at all levels to develop forward-looking visions based on analyses of where Africa is now and where it wants to be in the future. This publication aims to provide focus and encouragement to African governments at the central and local level as well as to other key actors in the broad area of sustainable human settlements development.



More information:
The report is available at <http://www.unhabitat.org/prmss/getpage.asp?page=download&alt=1&publicationID=2574>

Upcoming events:

UNEP 25th Session of the Governing Council
16-20 February 2009
Nairobi, Kenya

International Workshop & Launch of Cities and Climate Change
17 March 2009
Oslo, Norway

UN-HABITAT 22nd Session of the Governing Council
1-3 April 2009
Nairobi, Kenya

World Environment Day
“UNite to combat Climate Change”
5 June 2009
Mexico City, Mexico and worldwide

Produced by: Urban Environment Unit, DTIE, UNEP, PO Box 30522, Nairobi 00100, Kenya, in collaboration with Urban Environmental Planning Branch, UN-HABITAT
Tel.: +254-20-7624184. Email: urban.environment@unep.org
Articles by: Bernhard Barth, Karin Buhren, Maike Christiansen, Rayne Ferretti, Mary M’Mukindia, Ndinda Mwongo
Photos by: Helen Andreasson, Bernhard Barth, Rayne Ferretti, Rafael Tuts