

Steering Sustainable Urbanization in Africa



Modern cities are generally associated with vibrant economies that have opportunities for investments and development. In both developed and developing countries, cities generate a share of gross domestic product (GDP) and provide many economic opportunities according to information in UN-HABITAT's current edition of the 'State of the World's Cities.

However, evidence suggests that despite the enormous potential of cities to bring about prosperity, the wealth generated by cities does not automatically lead to poverty reduction. The publication states that in many cities inequalities between the rich and the poor have grown as have the sizes and proportions of slum populations.

Disparities between the rich and the poor means inequality in access to services, housing, land, education, health care, and employment opportunities resulting in socio-economic, environmental and even political repercussions which threaten gains in poverty reduction. It is the urban poor who are adversely affected by such inequalities. The inability to provide services such as water and energy to a growing urban population leads city residents to draw these vital resources from the ecosystems surrounding them. Logging

forests to harvest fire wood and building materials, for example, not only leads to a loss of flora and fauna, but also destroys the foundation a city depends on for its water provision. It is especially the urban poor who are affected by the health risks and reduced economic opportunities resulting from poor environmental services, further limiting their escape from poverty.

But Africa is experiencing an unprecedented new wave of urban initiatives seeking to improve the living conditions of the urban citizens. In collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), more than 30 cities and a dozen national governments have embarked on a deliberate effort to steer urbanisation through policies that focus increasingly on sustainable urban management. Through new programmes such as the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation Initiative, the National Framework for Urban Environment Management, the Rapid Urban Sector Profiling for Sustainability and GEO Cities environmental assessments, and the local-global linkages approach, to mention just a few, UN-HABITAT and UNEP are supporting the rethinking of Urban Africa.

The Africities Summit, which will take place in Nairobi from 18-22 September 2006, presents an opportunity for UNEP and UN-HABITAT to discuss urban environmental issues with key players in local governments in Africa. A joint event of UNEP and UN-HABITAT on Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - Ensuring environmental sustainability - will review the status of MDG 7 Targets 9, 10 and 11 in African cities. Jointly with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), UNEP will organize a symposium on Cities and Climate Change. The aim will be to demonstrate that climate protection is possible and economically beneficial. The outcome of this event will form an input from African Mayors to the UN Climate Change Conference in Nairobi in November 2006. A workshop on Cities and Biodiversity will be organised by UNEP together with The World Conservation Union, the Government of Brazil and the Kenya Wildlife Service.

Sub-Saharan Africa has both the highest annual urban growth rate (4.58 per cent) and the highest slum growth rate (4.53 per cent) in the world. Urban unemployment rates in Africa are the highest in the developing world, with the informal sector accounting for 20 per cent of Africa's GDP and 60 per cent of the urban labour force. Among the manifestations of poor urban planning has been a deteriorating environment in and around the city and the proliferation of slums. It is estimated that 72 per cent of Africa's urban population lives in slums.

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Our Future: Sustainable cities - Turning ideas into action. Urban Environment highlighted during WUF III

In June 2006, more than 10,000 participants attended the World Urban Forum (WUF) in Vancouver, Canada. The overall theme, 'Sustainable Cities' covered many aspects of socio-economic development, urban planning and environmental concerns. The need to take environmental aspects into account when dealing with urban planning, finances, and economic development was a recurring theme. Among the major findings were: Cities need to be part of a network to exchange good practices and lessons learnt; cities require effective tools and guidelines to monitor environmental degradation and they need capacity building at all levels to be able to use and analyse the findings; stronger linkages between the cities and national governments are vital. Cities are not only major contributors to but also suffer from environmental degradation. They need support from national and regional authorities to tackle this challenge.

More information: www.unhabitat.org/Events/WUFIII

September 2006

Urban Environment



How can we Sustain our Support to Cities?

Cities facing urban environmental challenges such as providing clean water and waste disposal facilities to their residents welcome the direct support that is provided by the Localising Agenda 21 (LA21) and Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP). Support from UN-HABITAT and UNEP can make a difference over a 5 to 10 year period. The experience of cities like Kotte, Sri Lanka, which has integrated environmental management information systems (EMIS) in the decision-making process of the city's operation; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, that has formulated and is implementing issue specific strategic actions plans; or Ibadan, Nigeria, where new waste management approaches that mobilize community resources, information and knowledge have been introduced are excellent demonstrations of what can be achieved in terms of improving environmental planning and management in the developing world.



But neither UN-HABITAT nor UNEP can provide and sustain such direct support to all the cities that require it. It would be resource intensive, centralised and disconnected from cultural realities of each specific context. The strategy of both Programmes is therefore to sustain environmental planning and management by engaging regional and national urban institutions. "Anchoring institutions" of the Programmes typically include entities such as universities, educational institutes, local authorities associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on urban environmental issues. Through the provision of training, the mobilisation of specialised knowledge, documentation of experiences and the adaptation, translation and development of tools, the main role of the SCP and LA21 anchoring institutions is not only to provide support to the local authority, but also to contribute to the improvement of urban environmental policies at the national and global levels.

Practical Implementation in Latin America

In July 2006, the capacity-building centre of Santa Clara (Cuba) welcomed participants from Latin America to the Second Session of Training of Trainers organised by the LA21 programme. This one-week training focused on Action Plans and Institutionalisation.

The overall objective is to provide trainers or training institutions related to LA21 and SCP with the necessary tools and methods to enable them to establish courses on environmental urban planning and management in their own institutions, cities and countries.

The beneficiaries of this training are local and national support institutions of the LA21/SCP programmes in Latin America, as well as members of local LA21/SCP teams. Represented countries were Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, with participants coming from universities, NGOs and national institutions whose main mission is to build the capacities of municipal staff in matters related to urban planning and environment. After a first session held in September 2005 that focused on City Consultation and Working Groups, the main purpose of this second session was to give methodological elements and tools to design Actions Plans and Institutionalisation. The session was a mix of practical exercises, plenary discussions and sharing of experiences in order to design, manage and implement action plans and institutionalise them.



More information:

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Better Air Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa



Poor air quality is emerging as a major health and environmental problem in Sub-Saharan African cities. Preliminary studies in some of the larger cities in the region show that pollution levels are comparable to some of the worst polluted cities in the world. However, by initiating air quality management measures at an early stage of development, countries can avoid the severity of air pollution impacts and their related costs. This statement was underlined by the 200 participants at the regional workshop on Better Air Quality in Sub-Saharan African cities held from 25-28 July 2006 at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference delegates noted that apart from lack of legal and regulatory frameworks to address air pollution, the region also lacks the capacity to assess and monitor pollution levels and impacts.

Air pollution is also not prioritised as a key input to the region's development goals. It is against this background that the conference resolved to mainstream better air quality into poverty reduction and growth strategies. Some of the key areas highlighted at the conference that would need to be addressed in the preparation of an air quality management strategy for the region include cleaner fuels and vehicles, mass transport and town planning, solid waste and plastic waste management, and industrial and mining pollution.

More information:

UNEP, Urban Environment Unit, urban.environment@unep.org, <http://www.unep.org/pcfv/main/main.htm>

The City as the Solution?

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is one of the largest cities in Africa: its population will double to about 8 million people in the next decade. Through an innovative cooperation with another large city in Africa, Johannesburg, Addis Ababa is starting to grapple with its urbanization challenges. The Sister City Partnership programme, supported by Cities Alliance through the World Bank and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) aims at improving good governance, economic, social and cultural linkages. The partnership focused on – among other issues - enhancing improved municipal management through executive management training, improving financial management, developing land and housing policies, and improving service delivery approaches. The programme has influenced the Ethiopian government's decision to give priority to urban development. This includes strategizing to prevent the creation of new slums; promoting economic development while ensuring that the social neighbourhood networks are kept intact; financing the necessary infrastructure and services such as education and health facilities, efficient public transport and waste management, and access to clean water and proper sanitation.

This is just one example of the dramatic demographic changes and challenges facing cities in Africa. How this urban expansion takes place has extremely significant implications, both for reducing the negative impacts on health and the built environment as well as safeguarding the natural resource base upon which cities are built.

While some see cities as threats to the global and local environment, the world's urban areas may actually offer the greatest hope for achieving a sustainable future – as Achim Steiner, UNEP's newly appointed Executive Director has noted, "... the quest for sustainability will be increasingly won or lost in our urban areas." It is imperative, therefore, that cities – and the Mayors who run them – be viewed as essential allies in the struggle against urban environmental decay and poverty, and not as their cause. The immediate policy challenge is to place the urban environment on the city's agenda, and to design development strategies that target the linkages between urban poverty, urban environmental degradation and poor policy frameworks.

Amongst the most urgent issues requiring political leadership and vision, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, is to take urgent proactive steps to prevent the formation of the next generation of slums.

More information:

<http://www.citiesalliance.org/index.html>. An example of the CDS in Addis Ababa is provided in the document available at <http://www.citiesalliance.org/cdsdb.nsf/>

What can Cities Alliance do?

The Cities Alliance is a global coalition of cities and their development partners financing actions in the areas of City Development Strategies (CDS) and city-wide and nation-wide Slum Upgrading. Cities Alliance works through its members to provide support to cities by extending grants of up to US\$500,000.

Africa

Partner

Managing Air Quality in Your City

UNEP/ UN-HABITAT Interactive Air Quality Management CD-ROM

UNEP and UN-HABITAT launched the interactive Urban Air Quality Management Toolbook CD-ROM (inset) at a training session during the recent World Urban Forum III held in Vancouver in June 2006. This tool is adapted to the needs of cities in developing countries and will help urban practitioners

More information: To obtain a CD-ROM please contact urban.environment@unep.org. PDF versions of the handbook and toolkit can be downloaded from http://www.unep.org/dpdl/urban_environment/

gather data, assess the health impacts of air pollution in their city and devise ways to address these problems.



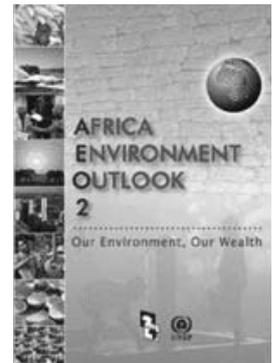
Launch of UNEP's Africa Environment Outlook 2

Our Environment, Our Wealth

Poverty in Africa can be reduced if the region's wealth of natural resources is effectively, fairly and sustainably harnessed, according to a new report by UNEP. Issues like rapid rates of deforestation, high levels of land degradation, wasteful water use in agriculture and climate change need to be urgently addressed. Other challenges are emerging. These range from genetically modified organisms and the costs of alien invasive species to a switch of chemical manufacturing from the developed to the developing world, says the Africa Environment Outlook-2. The report highlights the opportunities presented by Africa's natural resource base to support development.

More information:

The report can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.unep.org/DEWA/Africa/AEO2%5FLaunch/> More information: The report can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.unep.org/DEWA/Africa/AEO2%5FLaunch/> - localizing agenda 21



Havana Report

The final report of the Sixth Global Meeting of the Sustainable Cities and Localizing Agenda 21 Programme Partners (Havana 2005) is available. The report, including a CD-ROM, covers all the presentations and the outcomes of the separate working groups.



More information: You can order the Havana report by sending an email to scp@unhabitat.org.

Upcoming events:

United Nations Climate Change Conference
Nairobi,
6-17 November 2006
More at:
www.unfccc.org

Cities Alliance Public Policy Forum
Bangkok,
27-29 November 2006
More at:
www.citiesalliance.org

The 24th Session of the UNEP Governing Council
Nairobi,
5-9 February 2007
More at: www.unep.org

Programme des Cités Durables et des Agendas 21 Locaux

Approche et mode d'emploi

This document is the French version of the English "Snapshot". It provides Francophone SCP/LA21 countries with a synthesis of the five phases of the Environmental Planning and Management (EPM) process. It is a process-oriented framework, which permits different stakeholders to negotiate strategies, to seek solutions collectively, to prioritise issues of common concern, to prepare action plans, and to implement them while embedding the process into existing anchoring institutions.

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