



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة · 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT · PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

UNEP's Contribution to the Cities Alliance

Background and Rationale

Rapid urban growth has severe impacts on the environment and on human health. This affects first and foremost the urban residents themselves, but increasingly also residents in peri-urban areas and at the national, regional and global levels. For example, it is now estimated that 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions originate from cities. The contribution of cities to national, regional and global environmental problems is increasing. Furthermore, many decisions to actually implement mitigating measures, or to enhance service delivery to citizens, are taken at the level of municipalities. Therefore, UNEP is integrating in its work the role of cities and municipalities to make meaningful progress in key areas that UNEP is promoting, such as climate change, coastal pollution, air pollution etc. There are win-win situations for both levels. For example, when addressing air quality or sewerage at the local level, global issues such as mitigating climate change and protecting marine resources can benefit.

The following issues are of specific interest to UNEP:

- Urban environmental issues: UNEP's priority areas for its urban work include urban environmental assessments, water and sanitation, air pollution, life-cycle economy, 3-R approach, sustainable production and consumption, energy efficiency, and waste.
- "Urbanization of poverty": The poor depend on the environment for their basic needs, such as water, food, shelter. When environmental degradation occurs, the poor are affected directly in their well-being. On the other hand, because they are often forced to use the natural resources in an unsustainable way, the poor also contribute to the degradation of the environment. Promoting local sustainable development therefore provides an opportunity to integrate poverty alleviation and environmental issues at the local level.
- The interrelation between cities and their surroundings: Cities extract water, fuel, food and other resources from their hinterlands. This phenomenon, generally known as the "urban footprint", creates environmental problems in the rural areas, such as erosion and deforestation.
- The contribution of cities to environmental issues at the national, regional and global levels: Production and consumption habits in cities can cause environmental problems of a global scale. Climate change, air pollution, biodiversity loss, and coastal pollution are among the most prominent causes of unsustainable energy and resource use. But cities are also part of the solution in addressing issues of sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels.

To make a significant impact on these issues, UNEP is teaming up with local authorities and governments, donors, multilateral organisations, NGOs and stakeholders. Organisations and programmes that are active *globally* to address urban environmental issues *locally* are an important mechanism for this cooperation. Examples are ICLEI (International Centre for Local Environmental Initiatives), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the joint UNEP/UN-Habitat Sustainable Cities Programme, and the Cities Alliance.

Role of the Environment in the Cities Alliance

Despite playing a key role for sustainable development, environmental considerations have not always been taken into account in the activities and projects of the CA. However, many urban development issues are directly linked to the environment. For example, land planning, water and sanitation, urban health issues, poverty reduction, slum upgrading, planning and management of city growth all have a strong environmental component and cannot be addressed without an environmental analysis. The CA Secretariat has recognized that the environmental considerations need more attention, as indicated in the independent evaluation of the CA in 2002.

UNEP's Contributions to the Cities Alliance

The main objective of UNEP's contribution to the CA is to ensure that the environmental component is strengthened in CA activities, the CA mandate and in urban development in general. Toward this end, UNEP proposes to work with the Secretariat and other CA members to:

1. **Provide environmental inputs to CA projects:** UNEP will review CA project proposals and provide advice and support to promote the inclusion of environmental considerations into the proposals. In the long term, environment and sustainable development should be an underlying concept and be considered in all stages of project design. UNEP will therefore take the lead in formulating actions that can be operationalized into guidelines and tools for city development and slum upgrading.
2. **Develop projects with an environmental component:** In close cooperation and sponsorship with other CA members UNEP will develop proposals on key areas of interest to the CA and its partners. Among these are water and sanitation, air quality, urban environmental planning, poverty reduction. UNEP will also promote issues that have not been central to CA projects such as life-cycle economy, "3-R" approach, energy efficiency, and the ecosystem services approach for poverty alleviation. When developing projects UNEP will ensure that environmental data and assessment will be considered from the beginning of project design. Ongoing UNEP programmes, such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, the GEO for Cities process and other activities such as the joint UNEP - UN-HABITAT Sustainable Cities Programme will be integrated in UNEP's contribution to the CA, where applicable.
3. **Underline local-global linkages in sustainable urban development:** UNEP will highlight the need for cities to address environmental issues at the national, regional and global levels. For example, cities can reduce waste disposal to coastal areas, thereby protecting the coastal and marine environment; more efficient and renewable energy sources will reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and improved natural resource management in cities will preserve biodiversity.
4. **Strengthen the environment in the CA mandate:** UNEP will give normative inputs by formally submitting policy papers to the CA, for example on ecosystem services and cities, urban sustainable development, and the link between urban environment and urban poverty reduction. UNEP will assist the CA Secretariat in organising the annual CA Public Policy Forum in 2006 to focus on environmental sustainability of cities.
5. **Strengthen cooperation with CA members:** Through its work with the CA, UNEP will increase cooperation with bilateral donors and multilateral organisations, especially The World Bank and UN-HABITAT.

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