



Towards Sustainable Urban Development

Today, three billion people, half of the world's population, live in cities. One billion urban residents live in slums, condemned to a life of poverty and ill health, because they are exposed to air pollution and are denied clean water, basic sanitation and adequate shelter. There can be no social and economic development in cities without a healthy environment, especially where it concerns the urban poor. Environment and poverty are interdependent: The urban environment is a resource to reduce poverty and improve health conditions, while poverty reduction can have positive effects on the environment.

The environmental impact of cities goes beyond the impact on the health and well-being of residents. Cities have a strong influence on the environment at the national, regional and global levels. The urban dimension of climate change, water, energy, biodiversity, chemicals, wastes, trans-boundary air and river pollution, and pollution of coastal areas, is becoming more and more evident. Recognizing this, UNEP and UN-HABITAT have started an initiative to emphasise the link of local environmental issues and global policies.

We want to enable cities to better assess and prioritise their local environmental concerns and to have a voice in national and global environmental agreements, particularly in areas such as climate change, land-based sources of marine pollution, and protection of biodiversity. This initiative supports cities to implement global norms, agreements and conventions. In this way, cities will be able to link global issues with their own local issues.

Sustainable urban development, including adequate provision of water and sanitation, is inextricably linked to poverty reduction and other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). UNEP and UN-HABITAT are working together in the Coalition for Sustainable Urbanization to implement the targets of the WSSD and the MDGs.



UNEP and UN-HABITAT working together

This brochure gives a brief overview of the joint UN-HABITAT and UNEP activities in the field of sustainable urban development and directions for the future. UN-HABITAT and UNEP are requesting Governments and partners to support their collaborative efforts, join them, and share other partnership experiences, in order to help more cities achieve sustainable urbanization.

Sustainable Urban Development

- Cooperation between UNEP and UN-HABITAT on the environmental aspects of policies, planning and management of cities started in 1996 when the two agencies established a partnership in the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP). The SCP works together with the Localising Agenda 21 programme and supports the development of environmental profiles in cities. The programme offers capacity development in the field of environmental planning and management. Special attention is given to adopting global issues at the local level. The long-term goal of the SCP is to promote sustainable environmental governance at the local and national levels. The SCP is supporting city demonstrations in a growing number of countries in Africa, the Arab States, the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, which currently amount to more than 60 city and country-level initiatives.

- UNEP has developed a regional urban environmental strategy for the Asia-Pacific region, which looks at two areas, namely sustainable urban transport and environmentally sustainable cities with a special focus on eco-housing and waste management. The strategy will be implemented in close cooperation with UN-HABITAT and will include the development of a knowledge base, networks and pilot projects.

For more information:
www.unhabitat.org/scp
www.unhabitat.org/la21

Environmental Assessment

- UNEP and UN-HABITAT have been supporting the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process in cities. The process is designed to analyse the state of the local environment and the impacts of cities on the local, national and global environment. This will help cities to obtain meaningful environmental data, which can be used for decision-making and action. The Localising Agenda 21 programme is playing a major role in translating this data into action plans and demonstration projects.

- Within the Urban Environmental Strategy for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 cities have started their environmental profiling. A similar initiative is being developed for the African region.

For more information:
www.pnuma.org/dewalac
www.unhabitat.org/la21

Towards Sustainable

Water and Sanitation

- In order to achieve the MDGs, UNEP and UN-HABITAT believe it is crucial to integrate the three themes of the 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD13) water, sanitation and human settlements. This is best achieved by marrying the comparative advantages of the two organizations.
- From the time of its launch, UN-HABITAT has been one of the main partners in the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), in particular in the field of municipal wastewater. The Guidelines on Municipal Wastewater were developed by UNEP, the World Health Organization (WHO), UN-HABITAT and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC). The guidelines describe innovative management approaches, addressing environmentally sustainable technologies, financing mechanisms, private sector involvement, and community participation. Based on the guidelines, "10 Keys for Local and National Action on Municipal Wastewater" and training courses have been developed.
- UNEP and UN-HABITAT are working together on the Nairobi River Basin Programme to restore and maintain safe water quality in the Nairobi river system. UNEP, UN-HABITAT and UNDP provide technical support, conduct public awareness campaigns and set up pilot projects in neighbourhoods along the Nairobi river system, aiming at reducing the environmental health risks for the population.

For more information:
www.gpa.unep.org



Air Pollution

- Within the area of urban transport, UN-HABITAT has been participating in UNEP work in promoting better air quality in African cities. In Kisumu, Kenya, the Sustainable Cities Programme has started its first project on sustainable urban mobility. The project supports local authorities and their stakeholders to develop sustainable mobility strategies, focusing on non-motorized transportation.
- UNEP and UN-HABITAT have also prepared an urban air quality handbook and CD-Rom designed to help local authorities in building capacity to develop and implement activities to reduce air pollution.

Climate Change

- The UNEP Global Environment Facility and the Disaster Management Programme of UN-HABITAT have jointly developed a regional climate change adaptation project for Cape Verde, the Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, São Tomé and Príncipe. The objective of the project is to reduce the vulnerability of urban coastal zones to the impacts of climate change.



Cooperation with other Organizations and Partnerships

- UNEP and UN-HABITAT are both full members of the Cities Alliance and are cooperating closely at the steering and consultative group level and in developing joint projects.
- In the context of the World Urban Forum, UNEP and UN-HABITAT will continue to cooperate within a global network that links not only cities and international programmes, but also other networks from the local to global level and across geographic regions.
- The United Nations agencies working on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have formed a cluster on environment, population and urbanization. This cluster is chaired by UN-HABITAT with UNEP taking the lead on environmental issues. The objectives of the cluster are to focus on the challenges posed by population growth and movement; environmental degradation and pollution; and data gaps.

For more information:
www.citiesalliance.org

Future Perspectives

Cooperation between the two agencies will increase. Water, sanitation and human settlements are specific areas where joint activities will be developed further. UNEP and UN-HABITAT will continue to strengthen and adapt their cooperation framework to ensure that environmental considerations are an integral component of urban development worldwide, with the objective that both agencies respond optimally to the requests of Governments and partners.

UNEP and UN-HABITAT will also expand the understanding of global-local linkages in order to create a win-win situation for sustainable urban development and the global environment. However, our actions can only be effective with the enthusiastic support of partners at all levels, civil society, local governments, national governments, development agencies, in promoting these linkages and ensuring that these efforts do not remain as isolated project initiatives. Endorsement at global forums such as CSD is essential.

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