

UNEP and UN-Habitat Greener Cities Partnership



Photos: left **BIKES & BUILDING** and lower right **INDUSTRIAL WASTE DISCHARGE** courtesy of Shutterstock. Top right: **MEDELLIN COLOMBIA** courtesy of A. Padros.



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

For over two decades, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) have worked together to advocate for and promote environmental sustainability in urban development. Their most recent collaboration was under the Partnership Framework 2008-2013, where both agencies cooperated to provide better and more extensive services on urban issues to local and national governments. During this period, UNEP and UN-Habitat **developed a shared position on critical issues** such as cities and climate change. UNEP and UN-Habitat also collaborated in regional and country level activities. In Myanmar, both agencies jointly provided support to the country's environmental priorities. UNEP and UN-Habitat also worked together in the implementation of a programme to promote sustainable transport solutions in East Africa.

A recent review of the UNEP/UN-Habitat Partnership has found that the Partnership Framework has been a **useful instrument to promote dialogue and**

cooperation between the two programmes. It has also been an incubator of ideas for collaborative work and a mechanism to track progress and report back to the governing bodies of both agencies.

The **Greener Cities Partnership** is envisaged to upscale the successful collaboration between UNEP and UN-Habitat. Initially covering the period 2014-2016 leading up to the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016, "Greener Cities" is expected to continue beyond Habitat III. It **aims to strengthen synergies between the two agencies and among their partners**. Broadly, the objective of this cooperation is to mainstream the environmental perspective into urban policy-making and incorporate urban perspectives into environmental policy-making, as well as to highlight the local-global linkages of environmental issues. Priority areas include **resilient, resource efficient cities; sustainable transport and mobility; and waste and waste water management**.



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Background

Urban areas around the world are becoming not just the dominant form of habitat for humankind, but also the engine-rooms of human and economic development as a whole. Over 50 per cent of the global population now lives in cities and it is expected that by 2050 seventy per cent (70%) of humanity will be urban. Urban population growth is predominantly taking place in cities in developing countries, most notably in Africa and Asia. This growth trend is most pronounced in small to intermediate-sized cities, where infrastructural backlogs are often highest and technical and financial capacity the lowest.

Regrettably, rather than achieving greater efficiency, cities are forfeiting their potential agglomeration advantages related to concentration and connectivity and are instead losing density. **From 1990 to 2000 cities around the world grew spatially faster than their populations; those in the developing world grew 20 per cent faster.** During the next two decades the world will more than double the amount of land used for cities. As cities lose density and intensify sprawl they lock themselves into unsustainable land use patterns where jobs and people are far from one another, transportation costs and congestion are high, infrastructure runs are longer and more costly, segregation of socioeconomic groups and land use types are more pronounced and environmental impacts are greater, climate change concerns ever more exacerbated.

Unplanned and poorly managed urbanization negatively affects people and the environment. Currently there are about 1 billion slum dwellers who suffer economic, social and physical exclusion. Crime affects some 60 per cent of urban residents in developing countries. Piecemeal speculative development is largely responsible for the fragmentation, degradation and destruction of natural habitat and for undermining agricultural land and ecosystem services. Many cities are significant generators of greenhouse gas emissions and waste, and have high and inefficient resource consumption. Increasingly, cities and urban areas are exposed to geological and climate change-induced risks with the poor being the most vulnerable.

Recognizing the importance of urban development issues in the global environmental agenda, the UNEP and the UN-Habitat have combined their professional networks and technical capacity in a Greener Cities Partnership focusing mostly on three programme priorities for the period 2014-2016: (1) *resilient, resource efficient cities*, (2) *sustainable transport and mobility*; and (3) *solid waste and waste water management*. It is envisioned that the partnership will improve synergy not only between the two agencies but also among their partners.

History and results of past cooperation

With their complementary mandates in the fields of urban development and the global environment, UN-Habitat and UNEP have a history of continued cooperation spanning more than 20 years. The overall goal of the cooperation between the two programmes was and continues to be to mainstream environmental considerations into local, national, and global urban policymaking; to incorporate urban perspectives into environmental policymaking at all levels, and to highlight the linkages between local and global environmental issues.

Most recently, under the Urban Environment Partnership Framework for 2008-2013, UN-Habitat and UNEP revitalized their cooperation to provide better and more extensive services to local and national governments. Increased importance was also given under this Partnership Framework to the need to integrate urban environmental considerations into the work of both organizations. The objective was to enable cities to better assess and prioritize local environmental concerns and to have a voice in national and global environmental debates, in particular with respect to climate change. From 2008-2013, both agencies jointly supported countries and cities in implementing global standards, agreements and conventions which helped them better link global concerns to local issues.

Activities under the 2008-2013 Partnership Framework were closely linked with the UNEP and UN-Habitat programmes of work. UNEP worked in partnership with public and private stakeholders on six priority areas or sub-programmes. Likewise the workplan was anchored to the UN-Habitat

Joint Work Programme on Cities and Climate Change

UNEP, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and Cities Alliance established a joint work programme on cities and climate change which provided an effective and strong channel for joint work. Harmonization of tools, metrics, and overall knowledge was part of the main objectives of this JWP. Most importantly, it provided a venue for discussion and development of a joint position on various urban environment issues. This was invaluable in the lead up towards Rio+20 in June 2012. The JWP was viewed unanimously by all agencies involved as a success and won the World Bank Vice President Award in 2011.

medium-term strategic institutional plan for the period 2008-2013, which was defined by six focus areas .

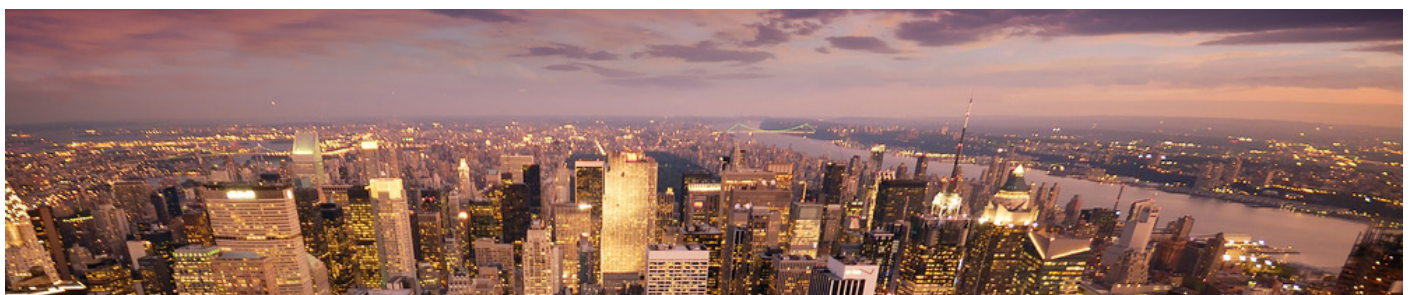
UNEP and UN-Habitat built on the complementarity of their activities under the 2008-2013 Partnership Framework. While UNEP and UN Habitat both have distinct areas of expertise, they competently advocated for each other's work on sustainable cities. Key partners referred to UNEP and UN-Habitat's relationship as a clear demonstration of the "One United Nations" principle and considered it to be an effective approach.

Programme priorities of the Greener Cities Partnership

In preparing the Greener Cities Partnership, UNEP and UN-Habitat went through a systematic review and consultation process. The process pointed to the importance of maintaining flexibility to enable the continuation of existing successful collaborative activities and the development of various types of new joint initiatives. At the same time the two Executive Directors indicated that there was a need to select two or three flagship initiatives to demonstrate the feasibility of cooperation at all levels. The need to ensure that the organizations' joint collaboration produces incremental gains and that it builds on each other's work

was stressed by both agencies. The programme priorities outlined below were agreed upon not only because of their importance in the global agenda but also because they build on complementarity, and leverages on the strengths of each organization.

As indicated in the tables below, UNEP and UN-Habitat will provide core staff time and seed funding to implement joint activities on the three priority areas. External funding is however sought to deliver on the implementation of key concepts at the regional and local levels.



NEW YORK CITY AFTER SUNSET. Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

1. Resilient, Resource Efficient Cities

The resilient, resource efficient cities priority area builds on the joint work between UNEP and UN-Habitat on cities and climate change. It recognizes that resilience and resource efficiency are two related concepts but that the link between both is currently not that apparent in the urban sphere.

Cities have historically constituted efficient settlement patterns because of the correlation between higher density and lower per-capita rates of resource use and emissions. They manage to accommodate more than 50% of the earth's people on just 3% of its surface area and generate some 80% of its wealth. Cities are concentrated nodes of permanent activity. And the agglomeration that they embody makes shared infrastructure physically and economically viable. In theory, the concentration of resources and talent should also make cities more resilient since city structures allow decision-makers to plan resource use and the consolidated wealth in cities should be able to buffer socio-economic shocks.

Urban growth, however, is trending in the opposite direction. Many cities are now forfeiting the efficiency advantages they have historically possessed. By some estimates, urban areas now consume 75% of the earth's natural resources and produce 60% of its greenhouse gas emissions and 50% of its waste. Much peri-urban development is destroying the very natural capital that would provide resilience to brace against resource scarcity and climate change.

Settlement patterns are not only important for their impact on energy use and emissions, but also for the consumption of land itself. Essential for ecosystem services such as carbon capture, nutrient recycling and food provision, land is also under short supply. When cities expand in a spontaneous, unplanned manner, much of this land is lost. The poorest frequently inhabit the most marginal areas prone to flooding and/or landslides where such land is best left undeveloped.

Resilient, Resource-Efficient Cities

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate a better understanding of how resource efficiency impacts the resilience of cities. The findings will be presented through an appropriate product (publication and/or conference) on the same topic in view of Habitat III • Build political support for the establishment of an innovative initiative for resilient, resource efficient cities with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders
Focus	Global focus with key topics including city level ecosystem based adaptation, integrated resource flows, urban sprawl and planned city extensions
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baselines measured of and city-wide resource flows monitored. • City and metropolitan legislative and planning frameworks reviewed • implemented demonstration projects that improve city-level resilience and resource efficiency through infill, densification, brownfield redevelopment, revising city-region plans • Lessons learned disseminated to the global community
Proposed Budget (2 year period) US\$2 Million	CURRENT FUNDING UNEP Contribution (US\$600,000): Global initiative for resource efficient cities (US\$300,000 for programme management, development of tools to assess city level resource efficiency); ecosystem based adaption for cities in Asia and the Pacific (\$300,000 for support of regional activities in asia and the pacific) UN-Habitat contribution (US\$200,000): preparatory phase of the proposed Beyond Urban Sprawl Programme of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption & Production.
Current Funding US\$0.8 Million To be Funded US\$1.2 Million	ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED: Support is necessary for joint piloting of UNEP and UN-Habitat at city level to integrate the concept of resilient and resource efficient cities into city plans (approximately US\$350,000 per city x 3 cities = US\$1,050,000 with the assumption that the city will also be providing counterpart funding). Another US\$150,000 is required for coordination activities in preparation for Habitat III (dialogues, conferences, etc).
Implementation Partners	Cities Alliance, Concordia University, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Global Initiative for Resource-Efficient Cities (GI-REC), ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), OECD, UN Regional Commissions, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Stockholm Resilience Centre, United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), UN Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS), World Bank and Yale University.

2. Sustainable Transport and Mobility

UNEP and UN-Habitat have worked during the last two decades on issues related to sustainable transportation in urban areas and there are several examples of successful cooperation including with the Global Environment Facility. In 2011, staff from the Urban Transport Section of UN-Habitat, and Transport Unit of UNEP developed the “Avoid-Shift-Improve” (ASI) conceptual approach to articulate the comparative advantages of each organization and develop a complementary programme of work. UNEP and UN-Habitat’s future collaboration on Sustainable Transport and Mobility is still based on the ASI framework which recognizes the comparative advantages of both organizations.

While both agencies are involved in all three areas, UN-Habitat has a stronger focus on the Avoid side, for example through integrating land-use and transport planning, while UNEP has many activities focusing on the “Improve” side

- including promoting cleaner fuels and vehicles. Both organizations work on the Shift focus area, for example through the promotion of a modal shift to non-motorized and public transport.

Under the Greener Cities Partnership, UNEP and UN-Habitat will work with the World Bank and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) in implementing the Africa Sustainable Transport Forum for which a Secretariat is currently established in UNEP with support from the World Bank and UNEP. The objective of ASTF is to establish a forum for policy dialogue and support African countries and their partners in developing an action plan for sustainable transport in Africa. Such a dialogue and action plan is expected to lead to a greater contribution of the collaborating agencies in responding to the challenges facing transport and mobility in the region.

Sustainable Transport and Mobility

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote bus rapid transport and non-motorized transport facilities in Africa Contribute to the transport component of Kenya’s climate strategy Establish a forum for promoting sustainable transport in Africa and support the development of an action plan for sustainable transport in Africa
Focus	<p>Geographical focus on Africa - African countries are often considered to be low-greenhouse gas emitters, but in the not-too-distant future the continent’s transport sector will be a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. African cities are expanding at unprecedented rates and are facing rapid population growth, higher motorization rates, rapidly worsening traffic congestion and thus decreasing mobility, and increasing health problems associated with traffic pollution .</p>
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable transport and urban mobility policy adopted by African countries Sustainable urban mobility strategies demonstrated African sustainable transport action plan adopted and implemented
Proposed Budget (3 year period) US\$7 Million	<p>CURRENT FUNDING (US\$2.9 Million from UNEP, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, Government of Kenya) Demonstration projects on bus rapid transit and non-motorized transport (US\$2,900,000); Piloting activities in Kenya (US\$200,000); Adoption and implementation of an African sustainable transport action plan (US\$400,000)</p>
Current Funding US\$2.9 Million To be Funded US\$3.1 Million	<p>ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED Additional funding is required to expand piloting activities and further develop the necessary supporting frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability. The following is the breakdown of the required additional funding: Demonstration projects on bus rapid transit and non-motorized transport (US\$3,100,000); Piloting activities in Kenya (US\$200,000); Adoption and implementation of an African sustainable transport action plan (US\$400,000)</p>
Potential Implementation Partners	World Bank, UNCRD, Gov. of Kenya, African Development Bank (AfDB)

3. Waste and Waste Water

Solid waste, wastewater and drainage were topics raised by the two Executive Directors of UNEP and UN-Habitat during a high-level meeting held last March 2013. The two EDs highlighted the topics as priorities in the agenda for UNEP and UN-Habitat, which are spearheading several related global initiatives and projects.

The world’s cities will be generating about 2.2 billion tonnes of solid waste per year in 2025 against 1.3 billion tonnes per year in 2012. Waste generation rates will be more than double in lower income countries, according to the World Bank. Wastewater management in cities is also a big challenge due to limited capacity and complexity. Bulk investments required for the conventional and centralized wastewater collection and treatment system is also a barrier to proper management.

Contaminated water, due to inadequate wastewater management, is a major threat to public health in cities. For wastewater management, in most cities, there are no comprehensive statistics available. Water and sanitation play vital roles for public health and environment in cities and these require proper solid waste and wastewater

management.

The Global Partnership on Waste Management – an open-ended partnership for international organizations, governments, businesses, academia, local authorities and NGOs – was launched by UNEP in November 2010 to enhance international cooperation, identify and fill information gaps, share information and strengthen awareness, political will, and capacity. That same year, UN-Habitat launched a report on “Solid Waste Management in the World’s Cities”. UNEP and UN-Habitat have also been collaborating in many activities on the water issue as they co-chair UN-Task Force on Wastewater and the Global Wastewater Initiative (GWI). The two agencies worked together on the “Sick Water Report” (2010) which contained controversial assertions such as, “the sheer scale of dirty water means that more people now die from contaminated and polluted water than from all forms of violence, including wars.”

The proposed waste and wastewater priority under the Greener Cities Partnership will build on UNEP and UN-Habitat’s joint work. It will be based on rigorous criteria that will determine the approach and geographical priorities.

Waste and Waste Water

Objectives	As a result of this partnership, selected cities will have integrated waste management strategies that include both solid waste and waste water management. Demonstration activities will be conducted on the ground.
Focus	Global with selected cities to be identified in consultation with key stakeholders. Identified cities will cover a range of different city types (e.g. densely populated cities to small towns with growing populations).
Expected Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated city waste management (IWM) strategies developed in at least 10 cities • At least 2 field projects implemented to demonstrate the feasibility of a comprehensive waste strategy, including capacity building activities. • Efforts coordinated and establishment of a system to disseminate knowledge produced from the strategy development and piloting.
Proposed Budget (2 year period)	CURRENT FUNDING: Funding is available for the development of the global framework to support activities on the ground.
To be Funded US\$ 2.5 Million	ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED: Joint funding is requested amounting to US\$2.5 Million broken down as follows: Development of IWM strategies (US\$1,000,000); piloting (US\$1,000,000); Coordination and knowledge management (US\$500,000)
Potential Implementation Partners	UNEP and UN-Habitat regional offices in Asia, Africa, and Latin America Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand Tongji University, China Fukuoka University, Japan Institute Venturi, Brazil

Partnership Implementation Arrangements

The Built Environment Unit | Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch of UNEP and the Urban Planning and Design Branch of UN-Habitat are the respective focal points for inter-agency cooperation between UNEP and UN-Habitat.

The Joint Operation and Coordination (JOC) Group, which gathers representatives from the two agencies (including regional office as appropriate), is the primary vehicle to plan, coordinate and support the implementation of the Partnership.

The Executive Directors of both organizations would meet regularly and would also continue to deliver joint reports to the UN-Habitat Governing Council and UNEP Environment Assembly.

The immediate next steps will consist in reaching out implementation partners, selecting pilot countries and cities and developing specific programme documents.



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