

## **SUSTAINABLE CITIES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD**

The Role of FAO: Promoting Partnership for Better Livelihood

*Update on FAO initiative*

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### **Abstract**

The growth of cities in developing countries and the consequent shift from rural to urban societies is linked to a complex net of factors but it results in the so called urbanization of poverty. In fact the major causes of attraction of people from rural areas to towns are always linked to the expectation, very often a mirage, of better livelihoods and security. It is evident that the question of urban poverty is intimately linked to the access to livelihood resources and job opportunities and to the potential quality of life that can be achieved in urban areas. Characters of Urban Poverty are various and pose a wide range of effects and related priorities of action: uncertain employment, precarious housing, difficult or almost impossible access to the property of the land; high costs vs. low accessibility to primary livelihood needs; severe health and sanitation problems; shortage and discontinuity in energy supplies; lack of sense of belonging, spirit of the place, and frustrating living and working environments; limited physical, social, and environmental infrastructures, i.e. places for recreation, socialization, outdoor activities at every stage of life.

Trees, woods and other associated vegetation can have a major impact on the quality of life in towns and cities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recognises that the urban forest can have a positive effect on the lives of people in developing countries, help to combat poverty and to improve livelihood.

According to its mandate, FAO is co-ordinating international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO has focused largely on rural areas in the past. Today, it is widely recognized that cities have an impact which reaches well beyond their immediate boundaries and FAO is increasingly committed in addressing issues related to urban landscapes and urbanization. Harmonizing the development of cities with rural environment by adopting ecosystem approaches and optimizing the role of trees and forests in the landscape management is a challenge with no single blue print for success. Experience has shown that the contribution of forests and trees on landscape restoration starts from the ground up, with the people who live in the landscape and stakeholders directly affected by the management of that landscape. Each situation depends upon unique local circumstances and processes.

FAO will present an update on the recent contribution to promote tree and forest development for urban environments on national and international arenas. This includes for instance the Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010, the Urban and Periurban Forestry Programme, Decentralized Cooperation Projects, and the role of trees outside forest and planted forest regarding climate change mitigation and forests. It will pay particular attention to on-going initiatives such as the development of the Woodfuel Integrated Supply/ Demand Overview Mapping (WISDOM) methodology for Cities, support to countries (e.g. Bangui, Cent African Republic), the new interactive website on urban forestry, and the coming FAO international meeting on urban forestry (July 2008).

This presentation will give an update on some progress made by FAO recently and give the opportunity to participants to discuss the best ways to develop North-South and South-South partnership and build synergy in common areas of interest.

### **Key Words**

FAO, food security, livelihood, poverty, urban forestry, peri-urban forestry.

### **Biography**

**Michelle Gauthier** trained as a forest engineer at Laval University, Canada. She has worked for the Ministry of National Resources in Quebec and, amongst others, the NGOs CARE Canada and CIDA before joining the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, based in Rome. She is currently in the Forest Management Division, where she is forestry officer in charge of the FAO's urban and peri-urban forestry programme.

**Fabio Salbitano** trained as forest engineer at the University of Firenze, he has got a PhD in Foresy Ecology. He is professor of Urban Forestry, Forest and Landscape Ecology at the University of Firenze. The main research activities concern ecological history and landscape dynamics related to anthropogenic influences in temperate and tropical environments, participation processes and landscape perception in urban woodland planning, design and management; studies on applied ecology in arid zones towards the use of water for domestic and afforestation programmes. He has being consultant and advisor of FAO in the frame of activities on Urban and Periurban Forestry and Agriculture.

**Abstract for a poster**

**Abstract for an oral presentation**

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