



Urban and Peri-urban Forestry and Greening in West and Central Asia

**(in contribution to the Forestry Outlook Study
for West and Central Asia - FOWECA)**

Workshop

FAO, Rome, 5-7 April 2006

Proceedings



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Preface

Urban & peri-urban development experienced an acceleration phase in the last decade, and will continue to enhance, caused by an important urbanization process world wide. The world urban population is increasing extremely fast, and those areas will soon be the habitat for half of the world's population. The World Resource Institute (WRI) has estimated that by the year 2025, more than 85% of the population in Europe, North- and South America will be living in urban areas. In Africa, Asia and Central America the population will be 52%, 52% and 75%, respectively (WRI 2001).

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) believes that Urban and Peri-urban Forestry (UPF) can contribute significantly to achieve a better urban and peri-urban livelihood at local and national level, particularly in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Previous workshops and expert consultations on trees outside forest have clearly demonstrated numerous important contributions of those trees and shrubs to human and all other animal habitat. However, more emphasis should be given to inclusive participation, including civil society, governmental and local authorities as well as research and international community, in order to promote urban forestry at technical and decision level.

The Forestry Regional Outlook Studies for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) is one among the series of regional forestry sector outlook studies initiated by FAO in collaboration with member countries to examine the direction of development of forests and forestry. One of the important aspects addressed under FOWECA is the long-term prospect for urban and peri-urban forestry and greening (UPFG) in the region, especially in the context of urbanisation. As a result, two publications were published in the Livelihood Support Programme, giving a general overview of the current status and trends within the region: a study on experiences, constraints and prospects (Akerlund, 2006, WP 36) and on legal, policy and institutional aspects (Knuth, 2006, WP 37).

The “Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry and Greening in West and Central Asia” workshop took place at the end of the Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) process. It has been an occasion to assess some possible solutions to achieve inclusive participation to tree promotion. The present proceedings report on the discussions and results of the FOWECA workshop and can serve as basic material for foresters and professionals for collaborating in the near future to promote urban and peri-urban forestry in west and central Asia.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all participants for their dedication in the preparation and implementation of the workshop on Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry and Greening in West and Central Asia. Each of the participants has demonstrated a high interest and professionalism in the subject and was able to present and discuss related issues from various points of view. Thanks also to presenters and contributors for sharing their material, such as plans, graphics and photos, to allow the FAO to complete the actual document.

In its contribution to shared expertise and concerns, confirming the need to have a closer look at all the potential benefits (including livelihood and poverty alleviation) the workshop was a success, and it demonstrated that the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach enriches the dialogue in looking for viable solutions.

The valuable participation of the 6 country members of West and Central Asia and their participants coming from Afghanistan (Kabul), Armenia (Yerevan), Jordan (Amman), Kazakhstan (Astana), Turkey (Izmir) and United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi) has also been very appreciate.

Special recognition goes to the Workshop Chairperson, Dr. Kamel O. Mahadin, who guided us through with such a constructive ambience, and to our Workshop Secretary, Dr. Hovik Yakshibek Sayadyan, who wrap-up conclusions and recommendations from our deliberations. Thank you also to the Danish Center for Forests, Landscape and Planning colleagues, for their support as co-organizers and advisors, as well as to all colleagues from the European Urban Forestry Research and Information Centre (EUFORIC), the Florence University, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO).

Other collaboration highly appreciated from FAO colleagues, includes *inter alia* the Forest Economics Service (FOPE), Development Law service (LEGN), Environment and Natural Resources Service (SDRN), News and Multimedia Service (GIIM) and the Interdepartmental Working Group "Food for the Cities". A special acknowledgement goes to Liliana Tomagian and Francesca Gianfelici for the overall organizational matters.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACC	Afghan Conservation Corps
AGNP	Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (FAO)
DCFLP	Danish Centre of Forest, Landscape and Planning
EUROFIC	European Urban Forestry Research and Information Centre
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FOPE	Forest Products and Economics Service (FAO)
FORC	Forest Conservation Service (FAO)
FOWECA	Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
LEGN	Development Law Service (FAO)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
SDRN	Environment and Natural Resources Service (FAO)
SWOT	Analysis method of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UPA	Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture
UPFG	Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry & Greening
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
WECA	West and Central Asia
WG	Working group

Executive summary

Urban and Peri-urban Forestry & Greening (UPFG) can contribute significantly to provide to urban and peri-urban dwellers a better livelihood and prevent damages caused to cities by environmental degradation; this is particularly true in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition where urban poverty is high. In order to better understand the role of the forestry sector in response to urbanization issues, the FAO Regional Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) [initiated in 2005] considered this thematic issue in 23 countries and looked more closely to the cases of six cities. National consultants undertook the case studies in Abu Dhabi, Amman, Astana, Izmir, Kabul and Yerevan. The Danish Centre of Forest, Landscape and Planning (hereby called “The Danish Centre”) provided technical advice.

A three-day workshop on “Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry and Greening in West and Central Asia” was organized by the FAO Forest Conservation Service with assistance of the Danish Centre, and held in FAO headquarters, Rome, from 5 to 7 April 2006. The participants coming from five city case studies (all except for Astana), the Danish Centre and other organizations specialized in urban forestry discussed their needs based on the draft case-studies produced.

The workshop made it clear that UPFG has an important role to play in WECA countries which are highly urbanised and/or facing rapid urbanisation. Rural migration to cities and the occurrence of wars and conflicts in many of the region’s countries have catalysed the urbanisation process. Although ongoing urbanisation is a unifying factor for the region, its countries and cities are very different. Urbanisation rates, for example, range from 22% in Afghanistan to 85% in the United Arab Emirates. Major differences also exist for the ecosystems and land resources and the way they are managed and used.

UPFG is seldom recognised as formal land use and legislative and institutional frameworks are absent or weak. Together with urbanisation and economic development pressures, these factors pose a major threat to the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of tree systems. Threats also include the often limited recognition among decision-makers and the society about the benefits of urban vegetation. Of the highest importance is to give UPFG legal status and recognize it as a land use. UPFG needs to be incorporated in national laws, through various institutional frameworks such as those responsible for forest, agriculture and water. Specific regulations and guidelines still need to be developed at local and national level. The workshop also highlighted the need for better technologies and practices for maintenance of urban and peri-urban green space¹, with special emphasis on species selection, soil handling and water management.

Fortunately, there are many examples of how UPFG contributes to better urban livelihoods and quality of life in the region. Good practices in the planning, management and use of urban green space are implemented in cities and countries. Large-scale tree planting and protection campaigns have been set up in many cases by local and national partners, in close collaboration with international organizations.

Workshop participants formulated key recommendations. First of all, the importance of UPFG as

¹ Green space: The term “green space” includes reference to tree-based system for their productive, protective, recreational or beautification function, such as forest, agroforestry systems, and linear systems of street trees – hedgerows - windbreak, orchards and recreational parks.

contributor to urban livelihood and urban life quality has to be stressed to all stakeholders, including decision makers and beneficiaries. The many social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of UPFG need to be assessed, valorised and marketed. Moreover, UPFG should be implemented in a cross-sectoral way and in partnership between stakeholders representing national and local government, the private sectors, as well as civil society. Workshop participants stressed the need for a coordinating body for UPFG, preferably situated at municipal level.

Further networking and capacity building at regional, national and local level will be needed to meet the above recommendations. FAO in collaboration with specialized institutions in urban forestry related issues and member countries will have an important role to play, for example in raising awareness and promoting UPFG through similar workshops, supporting field projects as well as in assisting with knowledge exchange and good practices implementation.

It finally emerged from the participants that FAO could play a major role in facilitating the follow-up process. It was highly stressed the necessity of a Guidelines on Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry and Greening, for Policy and Decision-making as well as for practitioners; the lessons learned from information gathered and actions undertaken by different departments of FAO are most useful to this end. It was finally stressed the relevance of promoting UPFG in WECA countries, especially to strengthen the national and local institutional capacity. The support from the Danish Centre of Forest, Landscape and Planning (DCFLP) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) would be valuable.

The general recommendations developed during the workshop are presented under 5 categories; 1) Policy making and legal frameworks, 2) Research and education, 3) Technological and expertise transferring, 4) Communication and advocacy, and 5) UPFG in the WECA region.