



Item 2: Urban forests in context

The business case for public investment in urban forests

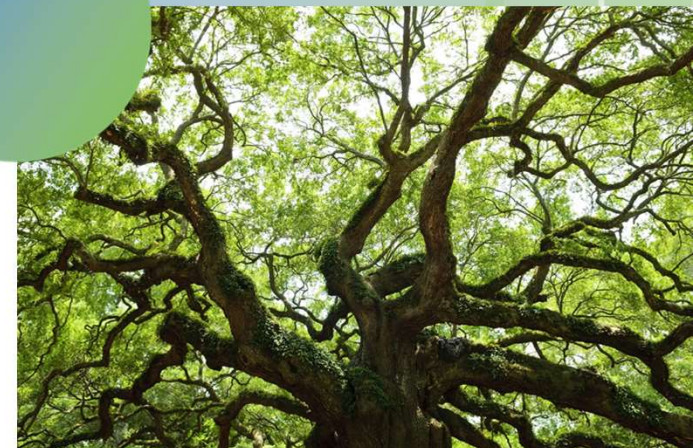
Ms. Sharon Gil

Head a.i. Cities Unit, UNEP

UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

80th session

Geneva, 2-4 November 2022



United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

Our focus is on the TRIPLE CRISIS of

- Biodiversity loss
- Climate Change
- Pollution

CITIES are at the nexus of all three

Source: <https://forobs.jrc.ec.europa.eu/TMF/explorer.php>

URBANISATION DRIVES DEFORESTATION

436 million hectares of total global tree cover loss between 2000-2021 from urbanization, leading to ecosystems' destruction and fragmentation.

Cities' impacts on forests:

- **Direct:** land use change to make space for urban infrastructure, displacing agricultural and industrial areas into forests
- **Indirect:** increasing resources consumption leading to exploitation of forest resources

Manaus, Brazil 2000



Manaus, Brazil 2021



Source: <https://forobs.jrc.ec.europa.eu/TMF/explorer.php>

CITIES ARE KEY ACTORS IN THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF FORESTS



Source: <https://renewablecities.ca/>

- **Cities have authority** on land use planning policies and programs
- **Cities have the imperative to urgently act to become more resilient**, while reducing their environmental footprint, to serve their citizens.
- **Cities are committing to environmental sustainability.**

The maintenance, creation, restoration of **urban forests helps cities to make peace with nature** and deliver on essential services to citizens.

URBAN FORESTS - BENEFITS FOR CITIES

ECOSYSTEMS BENEFITS OF FORESTS FOR CITIES



Cooling/Urban heat reduction 

Improve air and water quality 

Water runoff and soil erosion 

Food security 

Mental and physical health 

Lower energy costs 

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR CITIES

Increased shading, evapotranspiration, insulation help deliver thermal comfort

Trees and plants capture and air and water pollutants

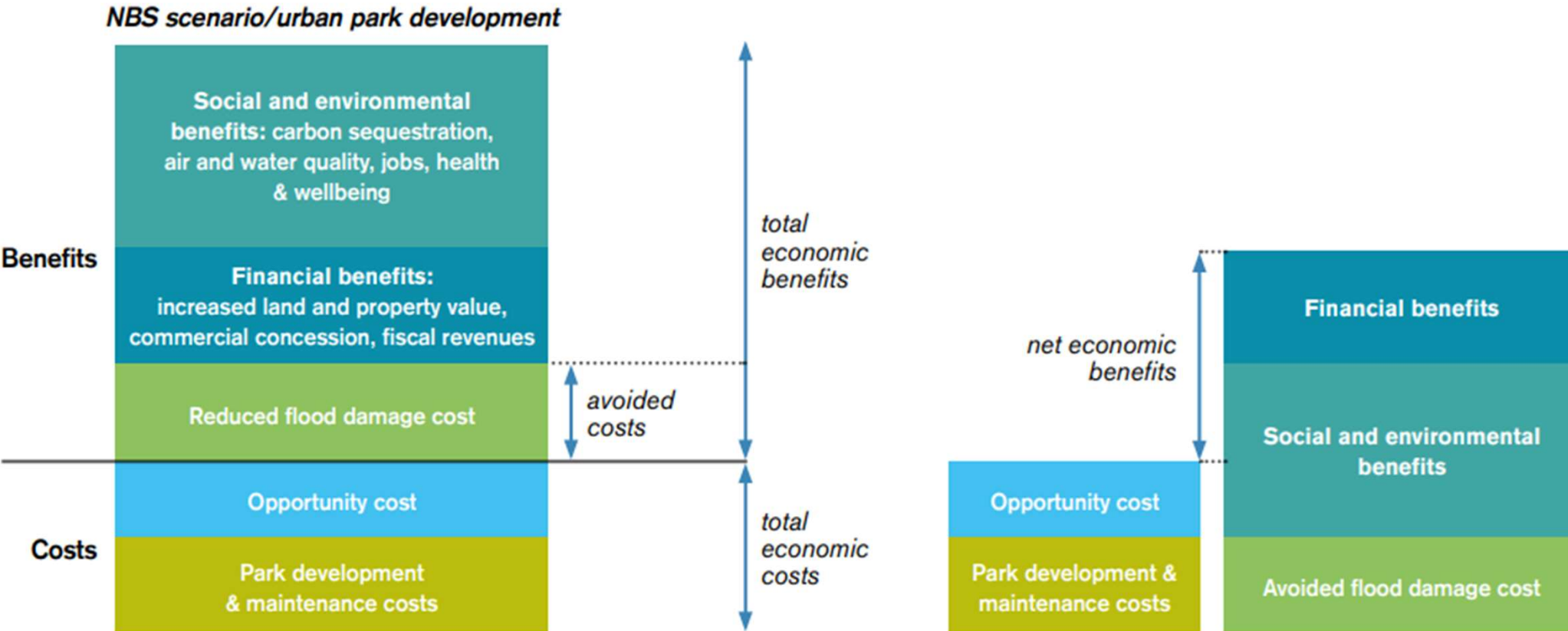
Increase permeability of terrain and reduce runoff/floodings risks

Can support local food systems by supporting local production

Green spaces support active living, use of public space, social cohesion

Temperature control leads to increased active transport, reduced energy consumption and emissions.

URBAN FORESTS DELIVER ON ECOSYSTEM SERVICES COST-EFFECTIVELY



source: UNEP, 2022

CITIES ARE ALREADY TURNING TO URBAN FOREST

MEDELLÍN, Colombia

Green corridors



- 2°C urban heat island reduction
- Reduction of PM10 and PM2.5 concentration in air
- Around 160 000 kg of CO2 absorbed per year
- Improved water management
- Increased biodiversity

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone

Tree planting campaign



- Reduced air pollution
- Increased resilience of poor and vulnerable population against extreme heat and heatwaves
- Reduced risk of flooding, landslide and soil erosion
- CO2 capture / carbon sink

SINGAPORE

Greening program



- Improved microclimate
- Mitigated stormwater flows
- Improved visual quality of urbanscape
- Increased human mental and physical well-being
- Supported biodiversity
- Attracted real estate investments and multinationals in the city.

OBSTACLES FOR LARGE SCALE ROLL OUT

A lot of obstacles are still standing...

- Lack of data, tracking metrics, effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Lack of enabling policies and programs
- Lack of cross-departmental coordination within cities
- Lack of sustainable business models
- Lack of alignment with national governments
- Lack of access to finance
- Poor perception of NbS
- Timing difference

...but more and more tools are available.



Under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, UNEP, and FAO are joining hands to rebuild the relationship between cities and forests, to demonstrate how urban planning and management can bring forests back into cities



Thank you!

Ms. Sharon Gil

Head of Cities Unit, UNEP

sharon.gil@un.org

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