

# UN HABITAT CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

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*The two articles in the series below, Lessons from Suwon, were written by winners of UN-Habitat's CCCI Youth Blogging and Social Media Competition that was held from 17 June to 17 July 2013. The winners of the competition won an all-expenses paid trip to attend the EcoMobility World Congress which was held in Suwon, South Korea from 1 to 5 September 2013.*

## Lessons from Suwon: Perspectives from a youth leader

The first day of September 2013 was an important day for enthusiasts of non-fossil fuel based transportation, otherwise known as ecomobility. All roads led to Suwon, an ancient city with a rich history in the Republic of Korea. In the Haengung-dong neighborhood of Suwon, a spectacular opening ceremony to usher in a month-long EcoMobility World Festival, in essence a car-free month, was held. The festival was preceded by an educative four-day congress on ecomobility that I, along with over five hundred delegates representing forty one countries, attended.

I closely followed the congress proceedings with rapt attention and captured the following valuable lessons:

### *People should be the priority.*

Many governments and urban planners plan for vehicles. The priority until now has been vehicles over people and this explains why more highways keep being built. But with the world population expected to rise by an additional three billion people by 2050, proper planning to create more cities for this population need to be put in place and urban policies should explicitly be people oriented. As Mr. Gil Penalosa, a presenter at the congress put it, "building more roads to solve traffic congestion is like adding more fuel to a fire." We should make pedestrians our priority and question the role of our streets. The solution is not increasing the roads to accommodate more cars but reducing the number of cars.

### *Involve the people in ecomobility.*

The people in the Suwon neighborhood of Haengung-dong were involved in



*The article author, Mr. Obrein Telly, 23, from Kenya (centre), presents a petition to Mr. Tae-Young Yeom (left), Mayor of Suwon, Republic of Korea @ Obrein Telly*

the planning and implementation of the ecomobility concept. As with any change, initially there was resistance from the people. Restaurant owners were afraid that they would lose business as taxis carrying customers would be unable to access their restaurants. But the leadership of Suwon continuously held dialogue with the residents to explain the concept and this persistence finally reduced the resistance wear and gained support for ecomobility. The restaurant owners actually gained more clients as more customers could park their bicycles outside the restaurants. The lesson I learned from this is that local governments must involve the people and speak to them about the benefits of ecomobility and let them see the sense in adopting it.

*EcoMobility for the youth.*

Ecomobility requires a paradigm shift from automobile-centered development towards championing and integrating walking, cycling, wheeling, passenging and car-sharing, which brings the focus back to human needs. Livable cities should be fun for the youth who consist of up to sixty percent of our population. If they adopt ecomobility and passionately embrace it as their way of life, then the battle is won. In Suwon, children were trained on how to safely ride bicycles on the roads. From such a tender age, the idea of ecomobility as the mode of transport was being ingrained in their minds.

Ecomobility is as old as the human existence on earth. Furthermore, every journey begins and ends by walking. Governments and their people - young and old can be united by ecomobility. So, let's adopt ecomobility for posterity!

# Lessons from Suwon: Perspectives from a young urban planner

In this world everyone needs space: working space, eating space, sleeping space, and spaces for other needs. More space means more freedom, freedom to express and to feel. Spaces can be individual or public. An individual space is a private space where an individual can express themselves with their own rules and limitations, while a public space is a place which everyone can use for various kinds of activities but within a set of rules and social limitations. Our rooms or homes are examples of individual spaces. City plazas, gardens, pedestrian ways and streets are example of public spaces that are created for everyone.

As one of the presenters at the 2013 Ecomobility World Congress, Mr. Gil Penalosa puts it: one of the largest public spaces is the street; which means that everyone should have the same rights in the street. Whether rich, poor, farmer, president or student; all of them have the same right and opportunity to use and share in the street space. In the past, the street was designed at the human scale for the mobility of people to move from one place to another by walking, cycling, or horsing. However, in the modern world, the street has lost its human touch and is now the home to millions of cars and motorcycles. And the bigger the street, the more the cars. In some developing countries like Indonesia where I'm from, people with cars and motorcycles occupy most of the street spaces and street vendors occupy pedestrian walkways, leaving little if any spaces for people to walk and cycle on the street like our forefathers did. Since majority of the urban poor cannot afford cars or motorcycles, their access to the street is reduced and with it the reduced availability of one the cheapest transportation modes - walking. Increased motorization is also harming our urban environment, but many people does not realize this or maybe tend to ignore it.

In Suwon as in most cities in the world we can see that we need to change from heavy motorization for the sake of future generations.



*The article author, Ms. Ratna Kusumaningrum, 22, (front centre) from Indonesia, poses with Korean youth @ Ratna Kusumaningrum*

Cars and motorcycles not only affect the environment but also people's mindset and behaviour; which in turn becomes the one of the biggest challenge for those that are working hard to introduce sustainable urban transportation. For example, the Mayor of Suwon, Mr Tae-Young Yeom, had to work hard to convince the residents of the Haengung-dong neighborhood to participate as the first ecomobility village in the world. People did not want to change! They were too comfortable living with their cars.

Social behavior is one of the main challenges to cities embracing sustainable urban transportation, not only in developed world cities like Suwon, but even in cities developing countries like my country Indonesia. Why? Because people's behaviour is linked to the issue of trust in the urban governance systems, or lack of it: trust in the local government, trust in the planning decisions, trust in the local government's performance and financing systems. I believe that regardless of how the trust issue is resolved, cities around the world still have to change! People have to start sharing public spaces; sharing

the street and pedestrian ways for walking and cycling because street is not an individual spaces. People need to change the attitude that cars and motorcycles are not as trendy as a healthy lifestyle of walking and cycling.

I am inspired by city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands that had already started the behaviour change towards ecomobility in the 1970's. In this decade, forty years later, Suwon, Kyoto, Changwon, Paris, Freiburg, Lagos Moreno, and Kaohsiung city have started to adopt the change to ecomobility. What about Jakarta? Manila? Nairobi? We can start it now! What we need are commitment and willingness of the people and their government's as the main actor in urban planning.

## UN-Habitat trains youth on energy efficiency

Some thirty young people drawn from Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 8 to 12 July 2013 for a hands-on training on energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies

The training organized by UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Climate Action Programme for Schools and Youth (CAPSAY) addressed the need to engage young people and enable them to become active proponents for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies within their communities. Empowering the youth, who constitute the majority of the African population, to participate in activities focusing on resource efficiency and renewable urban energy uptake is key to the achievement of sustainable urban development.

The youth trainees are now able to build solar lanterns, install small biogas systems, set up charcoal briquette production, build improved cook stoves and assemble and install solar bulb lights. The youth expressed optimism that they would put their newly acquired skills into use to improve the energy situation of their urban communities and potentially set up green technology businesses.

Mr. Muhammed Kisirisa of the Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFCAD) from Kampala, Uganda stated that "the young people around the world have insufficient



*Participant with self-made solar lantern  
© UN-Habitat/Gonzalez*

job skills to compete in today's labour market, which is leading to massive unemployment. Without jobs the youth don't have any hope." He added that his organization, which works in one of the most difficult slum areas in Kampala, strives to empower the young people with advocacy skills to access employment or start up their own initiatives.

Ms. Gladys Wambuku of the Climate Action Team from Naivasha, Kenya was also upbeat over the training stating that "the learning on the improved cook stove and the assembling of the solar lantern is actually amazing! I will



*Biogas - easily made © UN-Habitat/  
Gonzalez*

build more solar lanterns with my group after the training."

Mr. Alphonse Karenzi of Sustaining Rwanda Youth Organization said that after leaving the workshop he was going to 'go more green' and reduce the amount of energy he is currently using. "The innovative energy solutions that I learnt about, such as biogas and the improved cooking stove, are applicable locally in Rwanda," he said.

UN-Habitat will follow-up to see how the young trainees apply the lessons learnt in their local environments.

## Muhammed Ali recognizes CCCI youth trainee

Mr. Muhammed Kisirisa, a self-proclaimed "Slum Ambassador" and the founder of the Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFCAD), a Ugandan youth empowerment organization, has been awarded a prize by the legendary boxer Muhammad Ali.

Other winners of the 2013 Muhammad Ali Humanitarian award included former US President Jimmy Carter, singers Christina Aguilera and Michael Bolton. The award ceremony which took place on 3 October 2013 in Louisville, Kentucky, USA celebrated

individuals who have made significant contributions toward the attainment of peace and social justice.

Mr. Kisirisa, 25, formed his organization to promote self-reliance and empower young people living in the impoverished neighbourhood of Bwaise in Kampala, Uganda. In 2011 he founded a community school that educates orphans and children whose families are affected by HIV and AIDS.

Present at the award ceremony were Muhammad Ali, his wife Lonnie Ali and daughter Laila Ali. "Muhammad and I

are extremely proud of the honourees. Muhammad's spirit has always inspired me to be great, and I can only imagine that it has had the same effect on the honourees", said Lonnie Ali.

Mr. Kisirisa has participated in trainings organized by UN-Habitat's CCCI for youth on climate change adaptation and mitigation and energy efficiency and renewable energy. He was also part of a group of youth facilitated by CCCI to participate in a 'youth caravan' to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP17) that took place in Durban, South Africa in 2011.



# Mainstreaming disaster risk management and climate change in urban planning

From 12 to 16 August 2013 UN-Habitat, with funding from the European Commission's Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection Directorate General (ECHO), carried out a training workshop aimed at strengthening capacity among urban planners in Malawi to mainstream disaster risk management and climate change in urban planning.

In his address to the workshop, the President of the Malawi Institute of Physical Planners (MIPP) Mr. Mtafu Zeleza Manda stated that lack of disaster risk reduction in city and town plans of Malawi is putting lives of urban dwellers in danger. Mr. Manda observed that at the current rate of urbanization in the country, it is high time planners ensured that town and city plans are disaster proof. "Over the

past five years, more people both locally and globally have migrated from rural to urban areas where they tend to live in high risk areas", said Mr. Manda. He explained that as a country, Malawi looks at disaster as something that happens in the rural areas, thereby not making any plans to deal with human disasters in urban areas. He said that lack of mechanisms to deal with urban disasters means the country cannot respond effectively to disasters, hence the need for physical planners to find ways of making town plans that respond to climate change challenges and effects.

UN-Habitat's programme manager for Malawi, Mr. John Chome stated that rapid urbanization has led people to settle in environmentally sensitive areas that are prone to disasters such as flash

floods. "A high rate of urbanization has seen more people living in urban areas where they are concentrated in informal settlements and environmentally risky areas." He concurred with Mr. Manda that planners need to have knowledge and skills to integrate issues of disaster in town planning. "Urban planners need to come up with plans that are climate change and disaster proof. With good planning, Malawians can reduce disasters or the impacts of disasters", said Mr. Chome.

The workshop was attended by the registered physical planners from across the country. According to MIPP, the country has only 30 qualified and registered physical planners.

## ABOUT US

Headquartered at UN-Habitat in Nairobi, the Cities and Climate Change Initiative (CCCI) involves the participation of more than 40 cities worldwide. It targets medium-sized cities in developing and least-developed countries and emphasizes good governance and practical initiatives for the municipalities and their citizens. The CCCI team has adapted participatory processes developed previously by

UN-Habitat so as to specifically address climate change issues within the city. A complementary set of tools is being developed to support cities in raising awareness on the impact of climate change and support mitigation and adaptation activities. Since 2008, CCCI has been generously supported by the Government of Norway, the United Nations Development Account, the Cities Alliance and other sources

of global, regional, national and local funding.

Newsletters of the Cities and Climate Change Initiative are electronically published periodically. For more information, or to be added to our mailing list, contact [ccci@unhabitat.org](mailto:ccci@unhabitat.org) or visit [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org).

## CCCI Cities and Countries

