

# ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center: Solutions for Local Governments for Global Biodiversity Results

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Local governments, or LGs, rely on biodiversity and the ecosystem services that it provides for survival and quality of life (See pages 148 to 151, by Georgina Langdale, for definitions of “biodiversity” and “ecosystem services”). In fact, urban biodiversity offers many essential ecosystem services to LGs, which refer collectively to cities, local authorities, and subnational governments smaller than states. These services include:

- Reduction of temperatures (combating the urban heat island effect)
- Improvement of stormwater management and reduction of flooding
- Reduction of the impacts of coastal wave action and extreme events
- Prevention of soil erosion
- Purification of the air and removal of pollutants
- Increasing food security and agricultural stability
- Filtration and purification of water (e.g., wetlands)
- Provision of additional habitats for important species (e.g., pollinators)

These ecosystem services underpin LG functioning by supporting service deliveries, boosting local economies, enhancing the quality of life, and securing livelihoods. LGs rely on local ecosystem services, not only within their own boundaries but at a global scale. LGs consume 75 percent of the world's resources, therefore playing a critical role in biodiversity conservation worldwide. As the rate of urbanisation increases, so does the need for improved planning and sustainable design in the LG context. A healthy natural environment that continuously supplies a range of benefits supports a healthy society, and this must be serviced by a green economy, both of which will improve resilience to global changes, such as climate change impacts, increased population, and urbanisation.

Incorporating ecosystem services and biodiversity into LG design, planning, and management allows LGs to make some very positive changes, including saving on municipal costs through better informed decision making and highlighting the opportunities and trade-offs

between various policy options, planning proposals, or infrastructure choices. Ecosystems need to be factored into city planning, management, and budgets to outline the costs and benefits of different policies and decisions. Increasing the sustainability of LGs requires a holistic approach, which integrates policies and concentrates on implementing positive city-wide changes.

ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability is an international organisation based on the premise that positive changes can be made at the global level through cumulative local actions ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)). With over 1,220 LG members and LG associations, ICLEI's extensive global network provides a very powerful mechanism for collating and sharing the experiences of LGs worldwide and providing a platform for the voices of LGs to be heard around the world and fed collectively into global policy and processes.

ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center is ICLEI's global biodiversity headquarters and is



ABOVE The ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center is hosted by the beautiful and biodiverse City of Cape Town, South Africa, a leader in urban biodiversity management (Photo: Kate Berrisford).

hosted by the beautiful city of Cape Town. It is fitting that a city with such a high level of biodiversity, being in one of the global biodiversity hotspots, plays such a significant role in this stream of ICLEI's work. The Cities Biodiversity Center coordinates a variety of projects, with Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Pioneer being ICLEI's flagship biodiversity project, run in partnership with the International Union of Conservation (IUCN). LAB Pioneer was piloted by 21 LGs, selected for their biodiversity management leadership, who were led through a three-year stepwise process from 2006 to 2009. After this initial pilot phase, LAB Pioneer expanded to include projects that focus on the links between biodiversity and climate change, as well as CEPA (communication, education, and public awareness), the priorities identified by the 21 participating LGs as the next steps necessary for furthering their biodiversity work ([www.iclei.org/biodiversity](http://www.iclei.org/biodiversity)).

BiodiverCities is the Cities Biodiversity Center's overarching programme that was

recently launched in Bonn, Germany, another LAB Pioneer LG. BiodiverCities is based on the tried and trusted LAB Pioneer project, but is a little less intensive and of shorter duration, and can be tailored to meet the specific requirements of each LG and region. The focus of BiodiverCities is on planning for biodiversity, mainstreaming these biodiversity plans throughout the LG, and integrating them into the city master plan.

Recent advocacy work that ICLEI and other international organisations like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IUCN, and cities themselves are undertaking have resulted in the growing recognition of the important role that LGs play as implementers of the CBD in executing actions at the local level to conserve biodiversity, utilise biodiversity sustainably, and share the benefits equitably and fairly. A momentous decision affecting LGs took place at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-10) in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in October 2010. The Plan of Action on



**ABOVE** The City of Nagoya, a LAB Pioneer city, hosted the previous CBD COP-10, where the momentous Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity was endorsed (Photo: City of Nagoya).

**RIGHT** The Montreal Biosphere—*The TEEB Manual for Cities: Ecosystem Services for Urban Management* was launched in Montreal, Canada, another LAB Pioneer LG (Photo: Leanne Raymond).



Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2010-2020) was a groundbreaking decision, as countries endorsed the critical roles that LGs play in reducing biodiversity loss and improving ecosystem management for the first time ([www.cbd.int/authorities/planofaction.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/authorities/planofaction.shtml)). The plan of action encourages countries to support and mobilise local actions on biodiversity and promotes mechanisms of aligning national and local objectives.

One of Cities Biodiversity Center's core functions is to provide a platform to link research and policy and to provide technical resources and expertise, founded on solid science and based on LG experiences and good practice. As a result of this combination, ICLEI has produced some key resources to assist LGs in improving the management of local biodiversity and ecosystem services. The ICLEI *Local Action for Biodiversity Guidebook: Biodiversity Management for Local Governments* (LAB Guidebook) was written based on the extensive experience and expertise obtained through the LAB Pioneer project. The guidebook is a practical guide

for LGs to improve biodiversity management and is richly illustrated with case examples of good practices and experiences of the LAB Pioneer LGs. *TEEB Manual for Cities: Ecosystem Services for Urban Management* was recently launched at the Liveable Cities and EcoCities conferences in Montreal, Canada, in partnership between the Cities Biodiversity Center and the TEEB Report for Local and Regional Policymakers teams. The manual is a practical guide for cities and provides an easily understood introduction to the subject of ecosystem services, how to determine their value, and how to incorporate a consideration of ecosystem services into municipal functioning as a long-term investment to enhance existing municipal management.

Through a focus on partnerships, collaboration, and an integrated approach to advancing biodiversity and ecosystem service management at the local level, ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center endeavours to support and coordinate with LGs worldwide to reduce biodiversity loss and secure the provision of ecosystem services for LGs worldwide. 

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