

Geo Cities^S Manual

Guidelines for Integrated Environmental Assessment of Urban Areas





Totally revised and updated edition customized for the Eastern European, Central Asian and Caucasus region based on the following sources:

“GEO Cities Application Manual”, version 3 (UNEP, 2008)

“GEO Cities Adaptation for the Arab region” (UNEP, 2009)

“GEO resource book / Integrated Environmental Assessment Training manual” (UNEP, 2006)

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Preface

The future will be predominantly urban, and the immediate environmental concerns of most people will be urban ones.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987

Currently, about 75% of the European citizens live in urban areas, with a slightly increasing trend. Local governments are important actors in implementing sustainability strategies and in protecting the environment. Many local governments have started their own initiatives in developing innovative approaches towards public participation in environmental protection, as well as integrating social, economic and environmental perspective into their future development strategies.

As the EECCA region continues to face serious environmental problems to which urban areas contribute significantly, the role of local governments in improving sustainable management of environmental problems is becoming increasingly important.

Air pollution has increased by more than 10% since 2000, more waste is generated every year, while there still remains a legacy of old waste sites across the region, often hazardous and hardly managed. Water quality and supply have been deteriorating in many places, and water loss can be up to 90% from capture until its arrival at the end user.

The fundamental objective of the GEO Cities project is to promote a better understanding of the interaction between urban development and the environment, providing the region's local governments, scientists, policy-makers and the public with reliable and up-to-date information to help them improve urban environmental planning and management. The GEO Cities assessments provide information on the state of the environment, the main factors for change, and the policies affecting the environment and emerging themes.



1 Introduction

Planning and management for sustainable development require an understanding of the linkages between environmental conditions and human activities and encourage participation by all sectors of society in decision-making. The GEO cities manual is a useful tool that will help strengthen institutional capacity to prepare environmental assessments and comprehensive reports on cities in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The GEO cities process will support efforts to reach a consensus about the most critical environmental problems in a given city, by establishing a permanent dialogue between the different stakeholders, including specialists on environmental topics and the local government / administration and society.

The present manual explains how to analyse the determining factors of urban development and their relationship with ecosystems and natural resources. This will eventually lead to establishing an environmental database allowing continuous follow-up of progress made in reducing the city's environmental impacts, based on appropriate indicators.

At the end of the process, the municipalities will be able to assess the state of environment of their city, and formulate strategies and programmes to help city administrations to deal with environmental risks, improve the environmental conditions and manage their city in a more sustainable way. In the long term, the assessment will lead to better-informed decision making and enhanced environmental planning and management thus helping to improve the quality of life for the dwellers of cities and their surrounding regions.

The GEO Cities manual is divided into two distinct parts:

1. **How to run the process of an Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA)**, that is what different steps to take in a IEA, whom to involve, whom to consult, how to promote the results, and how to generate the most impact.
2. **Contents** of the Integrated Environmental Assessment on the local level: describing common issues and indicators for each stage of the assessment.

The GEO Cities Manual for Integrated Environmental Assessment of Urban Areas for the EECCA region is part of the Global Environment Outlook process of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It aims to build capacities in the EECCA region for integrated environmental assessment and reporting at local level. At the global level, the GEO process¹, which incorporates different activities including capacity building and production of a report series and other materials, aims to:

- Track yearly environmental issues and developments¹, and thus highlight for policy makers and other stakeholders in the GEO Year Book report series developments as well emerging issues and technology advances.
- Undertake, once every five years, a comprehensive and policy relevant assessment of the state of the global environment, analyzing environmental trends, their driving forces, current policies and emerging issues as well as the impacts of the changing environment on people and ecosystems.

¹ GEO is a consultative and participatory capacity building process for global environmental assessment and reporting on the state of the environment, trends and outlooks. GEO is both a *process* involving stakeholders from across the globe, as well as a *product* for environmental decision-making. The GEO process aims to facilitate the interaction between science and policy-making.



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