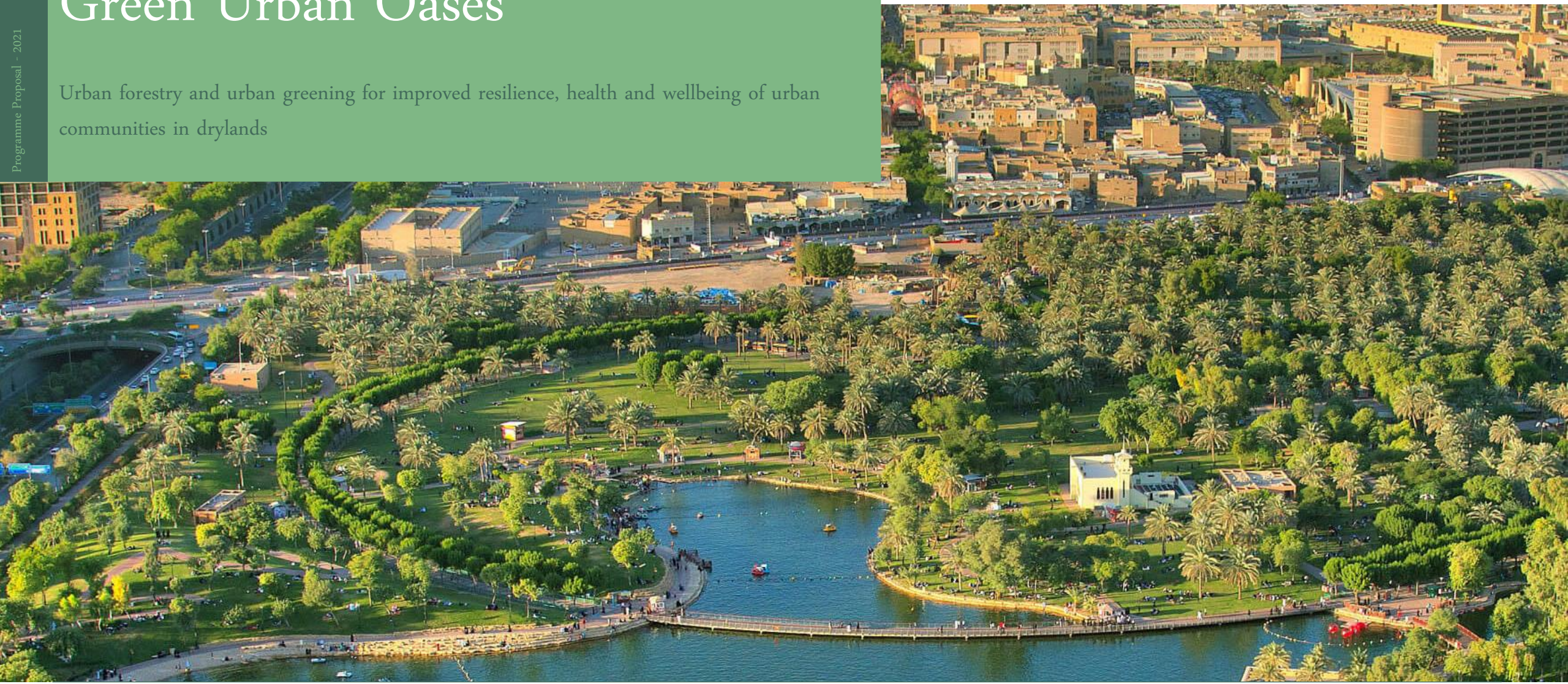
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Programme Proposal - 2021

Green Urban Oases

Urban forestry and urban greening for improved resilience, health and wellbeing of urban communities in drylands



Background

Landscape degradation and climate change are increasingly affecting urban and rural communities worldwide.

- Increased frequency of extreme climatic events risk the livelihood of millions of people, increasing their vulnerability to environmental, health and food-related crises.

- Dryland urban communities are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

- Severe droughts, heatwaves, extreme winds, floods, sand storms and landslides, coupled a fast growing urban population and city expansion, are seriously threatening drylands urban dwellers.

- They exacerbate poverty and social inequalities, and damage access to adequate water, food, energy sources and sanitation.

Sand Storm in Tehran, Iran. © Mohammad Moheimany

A way forward

Urban forestry and urban greening are increasingly recognized as one of the most promising approaches.

- They improve the resilience of dryland cities to climate change.
- “Desert cities” around the world are already integrating urban forestry and greening in their urban development plans.
- There is a growth in knowledge about conserving forest and tree cover in and around cities, and its importance.
- However there are still many barriers that prevent the adoption and upscaling of this approach.

Urban Forest in Athens, Greece. © Clairy Moustafellou

Objective of the Programme

The overall objective of the Green Urban Oases Programme is to turn dryland cities into "green urban oases" and to strengthen their overall resilience to climatic, health, food and economic crisis, as well as to reduce the impact of urbanization on biodiversity and the surrounding natural environment.

The programme will support urban communities in drylands to:

- strengthen their policy and technical capacity for urban greening.
- design and implement integrated greening strategies.
- adopt a multi-stakeholder engagement.
- optimize the use of green public spaces.
- improve the provision of ecosystem goods and services.
- create city-to-city cooperation on green agendas.

Strategies and Outcomes

To achieve the above objectives, the programme will :

- Raise public and institutional awareness
- Promote research and knowledge for evidence-based decision making
- Strengthen technical end institutional capacity at national and local levels
- Create an enabling environment
- Local implementation

Strategies and Outcomes

Expected outcomes include:

- Health and well-being of citizens enhanced.
- Urban forestry and urban greening mainstreamed.
- Local biodiversity preserved and increased.
- Urban-rural linkages strengthened.
- Local technical capacity to design, develop and implement urban forestry and greening interventions strengthened.
- Costs of preventing and addressing climate change reduced.
- Collaboration between the local governments, stakeholders and civil society enhanced.

Ghaf Trees as street trees in Abu Dhabi. © Karishma Asarpota | The National News

Alignment with international agendas

Urban forests and urban trees can support the achievement of most of the SDGs.

- SDG 11, explicitly recognizes the role of urban forests and green spaces.
- The New Urban Agenda (HABITAT III)
- The Programme will also contribute to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Partnerships

Project activities will be carried out in close collaboration with partners with proven experience and expertise in key aspects related to the implementation of urban forestry and urban greening in drylands.

Preliminary list of countries

Africa: Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Niger, Namibia, Senegal.

Asia: Afghanistan, Mongolia, Pakistan.

Near East/North Africa: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia.