



## Mainstreaming Urban Nature-Based Solutions

# Provide a Public Mandate

**Providing a public mandate** for nature-based solutions in urban development establishes clear direction and requirements, and enables private investment. Public policy agendas and related funding streams that support nature-based solutions tend to promote a diffusion and awareness of the concept and its potential to provide multiple benefits. Options for establishing a public mandate include tender and procurement policies, broader policy instruments, or mandatory regulation. *Spain's* Public Procurement Law encourages municipalities to consider additional environmental and social criteria in procurement processes, and allows them to offer long-term contracts to large companies, which has facilitated higher private investment in urban nature-based solutions. *Germany* published 'how-to' guides for local decision makers to develop urban green infrastructure and to target economic incentives.



**Green Space Factor** has been an influential tool for nature-based solutions in urban development in Europe. Originally developed in Germany, and now used in Malmö and Stockholm in Sweden, Green Space Factor is a planning tool that assigns weights to different types of green infrastructure for the social and environmental features they offer, and awards points accordingly. Local governments have used it to require that developers meet a particular threshold for urban greenery when they develop land owned by the municipality, while allowing some flexibility in how exactly that threshold is achieved. The tool incentivises quality green space that offers important functions to cities, such as heat island effect mitigation, biodiversity, or space for play activities.



# Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions

Promising Pathways for Sustainability Goals



## Climate Change

With the race to reach 'net zero' targets and build back resilience, nature-based solutions are increasingly seen as a critical tool for responding to climate change. Whether by cooling cities and reducing energy demand or providing new ways of managing flooding, nature-based solutions are gaining support globally. We identify four pathways through which mainstreaming is taking place: recognising their potential as a climate solution; investing to reduce climate risk; integrating climate action with other sustainability goals; and learning through practical experience on the ground.

## Biodiversity

As the world seeks to develop a transformative agenda for biodiversity over the next decade, we explore how mainstreaming nature-based solutions can enable cities to conserve, restore and thrive with nature. Four pathways are identified based on regulating for 'no net loss' of biodiversity, developing co-governance arrangements for public-private finance, integrating biodiversity with existing sustainability priorities, and integrating biodiversity into urban development and the built environment.

## Social Inclusion

Nature-based solutions such as new parks, rooftop gardens, and tree-lined streets play an important role in improving wellbeing and enhancing community spaces. However, the potential for gentrification and displacement of lower income groups means that these solutions must actively foster social inclusion and tackle inequalities. We identify three pathways that strengthen social inclusion: broadening community participation, securing genuine political commitment and policies that support social inclusion, and pursuing social inclusion measures as a way of achieving health and wellbeing.

## Economic Regeneration

Nature-based solutions can create economic regeneration through increasing economic activity and employment and by improving the quality of life. Nature-based solutions both directly contribute to economic vitality and well-being, and leverage new forms of economic activity in cities that generate opportunities. Mainstreaming for economic regeneration takes place through developing partnerships for investment, increasing our knowledge of their economic value, seizing opportunities emerging from other sustainability initiatives, and stimulating market demand for nature-based solutions.

## Sustainable Development Goals

To achieve the SDGs, urban development must prepare for growing populations while also creating sustainable and inclusive cities. Nature-based solutions can address a range of sustainability goals from climate resilience to health to economic development. For example, green space provides cooling, reduces pollutants, and encourages physical activity. Pathways that engage urban nature-based solutions to address SDGs include: involving diverse actors, strengthening local engagement, addressing multiple sustainability objectives simultaneously, establishing institutional arrangements that integrate sustainable development, and monitoring and assessing sustainable urban transformation.