

Quezon City, Philippines

Park development: Open spaces



In many highly-urbanized cities there is a lack of public open space, green areas for biodiversity conservation, and citizens' recreation areas. Quezon City responded with a park development program through which 111 open spaces and parks were created and rehabilitated between 2003 and 2009. The newly created green spaces provide opportunities for recreation to the citizens, shelters for biodiversity, a network for wildlife movement as well as a 'green lung' for the whole city.

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Abstract

In 2003, the local government of Quezon City identified the need to recover open spaces in the city and develop them into parks to serve the recreational and communal needs of the city's and Metro Manila's residents. The local government worked together with the Parks Development and Administration Department (PDAD), the city development council and stakeholders. To date, 44 percent of the city's open spaces have been recovered and developed into parks. The Parks Development Program provides full funding or co-financing support and helps neighborhood groups to access and design their parks. The program was created to support the long-term sustainability and management of parks.

Importance of open space conservation in urban growth

Highly urbanized areas in the Philippines, like Quezon City, have gone through rapid urban growth in the last 30 years. Built-up areas have increased and public open spaces are occupied by informal settlers seeking job opportunities in the city. This has caused a fragmentation or a complete loss of green space within the city. Due to the loss of green spaces, many species of animals and plants have become now rarer. Many years of neglect have resulted in a steep decline in the overall quality and quantity of important green spaces and biological diversity.

Conventionally not seen as important, the role and recognition of accessible natural green areas in towns and cities grew in the early 1990s. Nature in the urban context is important for improving well-being and the quality of living, as well as for biological diversity. People benefit both mentally and physically from green outdoor surroundings by enjoying and relaxing in parks. Biodiversity corridors also provide functional linkages between protected areas and stimulate or allow species migration between them.



Population / Land area

~ 2,867,000 (2009) / 161 km²

Municipal budget

Approx. PHP 9.42 billion (2010)
(EUR 155.6 million)

Quezon City joined ICLEI in February 2007



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Case Study

City context

Quezon City is the largest among the 17 cities in Metropolitan Manila and the most populous of the twelve defined metropolitan areas in the Philippines. As the largest city in Metropolitan Manila, Quezon City is an important provider of open and green space; its land area is almost one-fourth the size of Metro Manila. The other 16 cities in Metro Manila have few open spaces, so that prompted Quezon

City to adopt a series of measures to recover its open spaces and to develop them into parks or accessible natural green spaces. The Quezon City government believes that everyone should be able to enjoy nature without having to make any special effort or journey. By developing the parks, wildlife will also have continuous strips of land or 'stepping stones' as patches for a suitable habitat that allow for ecological corridors.

Parks Development Program

In 2000, Quezon had 553 existing neighborhood parks, aggregating to some 2.26 km² or approximately 1.4 percent of the city's urban land area of 135.43 km². There were 132 developed open spaces and 421 undeveloped open spaces.

In Quezon City's draft three-year Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) (2010- 2013), which is a plan required by the Local Government Code of 1991 (Philippine Republic Act 7160), the environment management plan goals included: the creation of a 'clean' environment that is conducive to healthy urban living; nurturing and sustaining a 'green' environment where there is an ample and convivial space for living; and making Quezon City a 'pleasant' place where people can visit, interact, exchange ideas, renew and recreate, and realize partnerships and cooperation for environmental protection.

The environment sector of the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan sought to create an environment that is conducive to healthy city living and attract not only the local residents, but also visitors from outside the city.

The city committed to a role beyond its borders to provide the metropolis with green areas for people and biodiversity, and to a comprehensive park development program to create an integrated open space network system as part of the city's strategy to transform itself into a Garden City.

The park development program is managed and implemented by the City Parks Development and Administration Department (PDAD). Among its strategies are: transformation of Quezon City into a Garden City by continuing massive development of open spaces into parks all over the city, as adequate breathing spaces for its constituents; using the key triangle of governance: Barangays (villages), homeowners and the city government to keep parks alive and well maintained, and the development of a garden city as part of urban renewal.

The development and rehabilitation of parks has been a multi-stakeholder effort,

Photo: Quezon City government



The Quezon City Pylon: It represents the great years of the dreamer and founder of Quezon City, the late President Manuel Quezon.

with the city government in the lead, and the barangays (villages), homeowners' associations, non-government organizations, community organizations and other government agencies participating in the implementation of the program. Continuous dialogues and discussions were held with stakeholders regarding the development of parks within their areas. Stakeholder involvement resulted in a high degree of commitment to the implementation of the program.

From the existing 421 open spaces and parks, 111 were rehabilitated between 2003 and 2009. There is now one park in every community cluster. These pocket size parks are primarily open spaces which were turned over to the City Government by developers, owners and home-owners associations. The 142 barangays (villages), which are the direct beneficiaries of these parks, are the city's partners in ensuring that they are maintained in good conditions.

Aside from developing community parks, the program also had the goal to rehabilitate a portion of the La Mesa Dam, a protected watershed area. The 0.33 km² La Mesa Ecopark was developed through the partnership between the local government of Quezon City, the Bantay Kalikasan/ ABS-CBN Foundation and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System. The primary purpose of the La Mesa Ecopark is to provide opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation and to serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. The partners provided support and contribution to the reforestation and forest protection efforts in the La Mesa Dam. After the rehabilitation, the La Mesa Ecopark is now a popular local recreational area, used by some 300,000 local residents and tourists annually for picnicking, bird watching, and swimming.

Results and impacts of the project

The park development program showcased a successful government, business and NGO partnership and has contributed to the following achievements:

Rehabilitation and creation of open spaces and parks. Since 2003 the Quezon City government has recovered 111 public open spaces and rehabilitated these into parks. The city has taken the underdeveloped open spaces and transformed them into much needed spaces where people can have contact with nature.

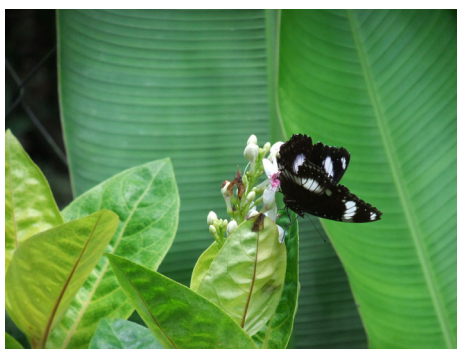
Establishment of ecological corridors. The city has started establishing biodiversity corridors to



Open space before rehabilitation.



A park after rehabilitation.



Biodiversity at the rehabilitated La Mesa Ecopark.

support wildlife habitats, exchange and migration between biodiversity areas.

Restricting open space mis-use. The parks development program has become one of the key factors that deter informal settlers from occupying open spaces as dwelling areas; and has also prevented individuals to use the open spaces for personal commercial purposes.

Education on the environment. The city has provided an alternative venue for environmental and biodiversity education. Visits from the general public to the La Mesa Ecopark are another integral component in raising public awareness. The program has raised the environmental awareness and appreciation of stakeholders in the value of biodiversity through open spaces and park developments.

Lessons learned

Leadership commitment. The commitment of local political leadership to the program has been critical. The strong support from Quezon City's previous Mayor was critical in getting the program started. The current Mayor Herbert Bautista (at time of writing) is a key advocate for the continuation and further development of the Parks Development Program.

Community participation. Community participation to the project was essential. Without active and representative participation, open space redevelopment efforts would have had little chance of being appreciated by the local community. When a community determines not only the location of the open space, but also the types of activities that will take place, they are more likely to use and maintain the space. By allowing community groups to lead the process of creating open spaces, cities may not only improve the quality of living of local residents, but also build a long-term commitment towards green spaces within the community.

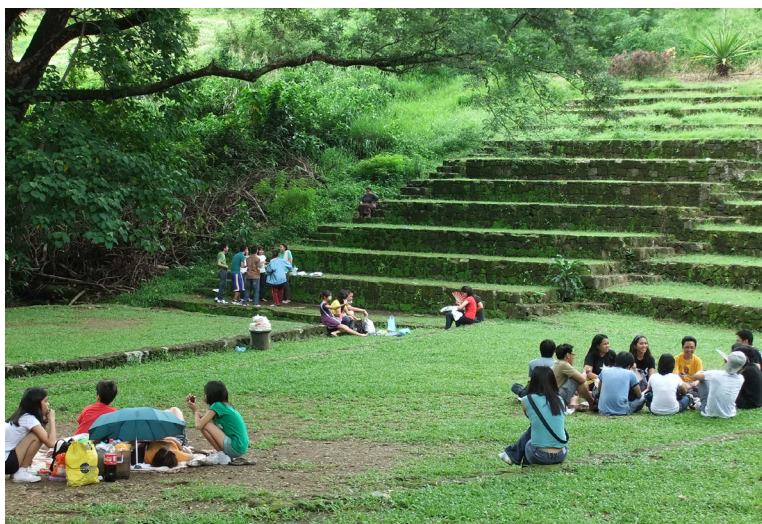
Education and awareness raising. The city also found that a strong education program was critical to success. Citizens, representatives of business, local organizations and governments have become more aware about the issue of open space.

Involvement of city staff. The active involvement and continuity of the staff at the city development council played a crucial role in maintaining institutional memory and sustaining momentum.

Development of a clear vision. The development of a clear vision of the program at the beginning of the process, one which is shared by all stakeholders,

is key to reaching consensus on operational issues, ensuring successful implementation of project objectives and increasing the probability of achieving desired impacts.

Overcoming challenges in measuring current state of biodiversity. There were difficulties encountered in determining the current state of urban biodiversity in the city because there are no local guides or handbooks for local governments on how to conduct a biodiversity inventory; the available guides for natural resources inventory were mostly from Western countries and mostly for national level inventories. In addition, there was no staff capacity to conduct an inventory, as the city staff were not trained on natural resources inventory. Also, 'urban ecosystem



People enjoying the La Mesa Ecopark.

and biodiversity' has not been included in the National Reports to the CBD; and nationally agreed upon urban biodiversity baselines, targets and indicators were missing, as well as an official definition or concept of urban biodiversity.

Replication

A positive impact of the program was that the community groups took part in the program. They brought partners in who were willing to manage the redeveloped open areas. Park development is an effective way for local governments to recover and support open spaces. The potential for replication in the Philippines is great, as there are common challenges in using underdeveloped open spaces in quickly urbanizing cities.

The signing of agreements with partners and the city mayor have helped to ensure the program is sustained. To spread the benefits of the open spaces throughout the city, the barangays are empowered to develop parks throughout their communities in a cost-sharing arrangement with the city government.

Budget and finances

The Quezon City Government financed the entire program through:

Source	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
QC General Appropriations (PDAD Fund)	1.13	1.14	0.96	1.00	1.14	1.16	1.27
Mayor's fund	0.72	1.04		1.4	1.06	4.68	2.75
Total program budget	1.86	2.18	0.96	2.4	2.19	5.84	4.02

Figures in US\$ million.

There are 308 PDAD officers and staff working on the parks development program.

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Local Action for Biodiversity

The Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) program is a global urban biodiversity program coordinated by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability's Global Biodiversity Centre, in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The LAB Pioneer program began in 2006 with a selected group of local and regional authorities from around the world, representing over 54 million citizens. The program provides an accessible and enabling platform for committed, leading local governments from around the world. This is achieved by profiling and promoting the importance of urban biodiversity and the role of local governments in its management, as well as by sharing the experiences, successes and challenges of urban biodiversity management in the participating cities and local authorities.

ICLEI provides guidance in assessment, planning and implementation; strategic networking opportunities; profiling opportunities for the participating local authorities at global and regional events; and creates a platform for local authorities to contribute to global advocacy on biodiversity issues.

www.iclei.org/biodiversity

Sources

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