

Volunteering for our Planet in Korat, Thailand

With the world's attention on Copenhagen and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNCCC), the theme of this year's International Volunteer Day on 5 December was "Volunteering for our Planet". In Thailand, this occasion coincides with His Majesty the King's birthday. In honor of volunteering and the King, UNV and UNDP Environment Unit were involved in a tree planting event in Korat (Nakhon Ratchasima) to help the municipality becoming a low carbon city.

The mayor, citizens and numerous civil society organizations of Korat joined the event. Participants were given a tag to put on their tree on which they could write their name, helping them identify the tree they were adopting.

This will be the first event of many expected planting activities in 2010.

The event was part of the greening of the city initiative that falls under the "Clean City, Clean Mind" project. So far, UNV Thailand has contributed to the partnership by providing two corporate volunteers: Mr. Paolo Montalenti (one-month biodiesel assignment) and Mr. Tsune Kawakita (three-month City Link assignment).

Following the signing of a declaration of partnership in May 2009, Nakhon Ratchasima Municipality and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have worked together to make Korat more environmentally sustainable while ensuring high standards of accountability and transparency in public policy.

Under the partnership, UNDP provides policy advice and technical support to Korat City, helping it become a model 'low carbon city'. This is achieved by increasing the city's capacity to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions through the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and solid waste management.

Korat is the first municipality working together with UNDP under this cooperation.

"It is not just by chance that Korat city was selected as the pilot city for cooperation under the 'Clean City, Clean Mind' initiative," said Mr. Yuxue Xue, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP Thailand. "As the gateway to the poorest region in the northeast of the country, Nakhon Ratchasima is an obvious target province for economic development. UNDP is proud to be able to support the city of Korat in its efforts to balance the economic development of this municipality with environmental concerns and good governance."

"Because the focus area of UNV in 2009 was environment, the partnership between UNDP and Korat municipality was the perfect opportunity for UNV Thailand to provide support and expertise. We hope to continue collaborating in 2010 as well", expressed Mr. Raymond Brandes, UNV Programme Officer in Thailand, at the tree planting event.