Conserving old trees of Mogadishu-Somalia

In this article I will present about old tress in Mogadishu, their benefits to the environment, biodiversity and ecosystem.

Mogadishu, is a city where more than four million people live in, the urbanization of the city is as it was done in the 1974, when the central government of Somalia established the urbanization of this city. Nowadays, this city is experiencing the “urban heat” effect, wherein urban areas become significantly warmer than surrounding rural regions due to human activities and construction developments. Mogadishu is a developing city with no modern urban system or building regulations, the trees have been cut down, and there is no law enforcement presence.

According to a Climate Risk Profile by the consultancy Weathering Risk, temperatures in Somalia will rise between 1.4 – 1.9 °C by 2030 compared to pre-industrial levels. This phenomenon has dire consequences, including increased energy consumption, heat-related health issues, and the exacerbation of climate change.

Mogadishu’s old trees, some of which are century old, serve as living witnesses to the countries’ history and evolution. They provide a tangible connection to the past, acting as living monuments that remind us of the Mogadishu’s rich heritage. One such remarkable tree is the **Gob tree** as Somali name, Botanical name is **Ziziphus mauritiana** and English name is **Chinese date**. Up to 15 meter in height, 50 cm in diameter, requiring 500-2,500mm of rainfall, with 20(^{0}C)-28(^{0}C) in temperature, planted as a shade tree and a shelterbelt species. Growth and Regarded; as fast growing for arid sites. Fruit varies yields much in size and taste (rich in Vitamin C). Can be expected to fruit after 4 years, after 10 years is fruiting to its maximum.

It would be prudent to establish comprehensive documentation and historical archives for such trees, detailing their ages, historical contexts, and significance in Mogadishu’s history. This information could be made publicly accessible, allowing residents and scholars to gain a deeper appreciation for the Mogadishu’s historical roots. Beyond their historical significance, old trees in Mogadishu play a pivotal role in preserving biodiversity.

As urbanization relentlessly encroaches upon natural habitats, these trees provide essential refuges for various species of birds and insects. Their large canopies offer shade, shelter, and sustenance to countless creatures, creating a microcosm of biodiversity within the territory.

To emphasize their role in biodiversity conservation, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change MoECC with the cooperation of Banadir Regional Administration could establish urban wildlife corridors and green belts, connecting pockets of greenery through which wildlife can move. These corridors would promote genetic diversity among species, reducing the risk of inbreeding and enhancing the overall health of local ecosystems.

Old trees also contribute significantly to air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen through photosynthesis. This process helps combat air pollution, making the City a healthier place to live. Moreover, their root systems help prevent soil erosion and filter rainwater, ensuring the water resources remain clean and sustainable.

Banadir Regional Urban planners should integrate these ecological services into the Mogadishu city's environmental policies and sustainability goals with the support of MoECC.

Terminalia catappa (Indian almond) in Somali **Beydaan**, Tamarindus indica (Tamarind) in Somali **Raqay**, and also Cordia sinensis in Somali **Mareer**; these old trees serve as natural air conditioners for the city. Their dense foliage provides shade and reduces surface temperatures, making urban areas more habitable. This cooling effect can lower energy consumption, reduce the demand for air conditioning, and alleviate the strain on the city's power grid during scorching summer months.

In essence, conserving old trees is a sustainable strategy to combat the urban heat effect, making Mogadishu more livable and eco-friendly. To further address this issue, urban planners should incorporate green infrastructure into the city's development plans.

This includes the strategic planting of trees in urban areas and the creation of green spaces that facilitate cooling through shade and evaporative cooling.

Recently, the Ministry of Environment and climate change of Somalia implemented the Green Somali Project, which was to plant ten million trees in Somalia, and the city of Mogadishu was allocated to plant hundreds of thousands of trees, unfortunately, after a year, it does not appear that a city has been planted and having with such much of trees.

Mogadishu could also explore innovative solutions such as green roofs and vertical gardens to maximize the benefits of greenery in densely populated areas.

The cultural importance of old trees in Mogadishu cannot be overstated. The old trees are not merely biological entities but are deeply intertwined with the city's traditions, rituals, and folklore.

Terminalia catappa (Indian almond) in Somali **Beydaan,** Tamarindus indica (Tamarind) in Somali **Raqay,** and also Cordia sinensis in Somali **Mareer**; these trees have become integral parts of the city's identity and are essential in maintaining its cultural heritage. To promote cultural preservation through tree conservation, the ministry of environment could organize cultural festivals and events at these significant tree sites.

Educational programs and guided tours can also be offered to residents to increase awareness of value of these trees to the environment. Old trees contribute significantly to Mogadishu's aesthetics, making the cityscape more attractive and inviting.

Their majestic presence softens the harsh urban environment, providing a sense of tranquility amidst the hustle and bustle. Moreover, these trees offer recreational opportunities. Parks and green spaces adorned with old trees provide residents with places to relax, exercise, and connect with nature.

Mogadishu could invest in the creation and maintenance of urban parks that showcase the city's old trees. These parks can serve as green lungs within the city, offering residents a respite from urban stressors.

Additionally, integrating walking and cycling paths within these parks would promote a healthier and more sustainable mode of transportation.

Through collective efforts, public awareness, responsible urban planning, and community engagement, we can ensure that Mogadishu's old trees continue to thrive, enriching the city's heritage and environment for years to come.

In their shade, we find solace, in their presence, we find a connection to our past, and in their conservation, we secure a brighter future for Mogadishu.

With concerted efforts, Mogadishu can set an example for the world in preserving its natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that its ancient trees remain standing as living testaments to the city's history and progress.

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