

# UNECE/FAO Green Forest Jobs Workshop

## Nature, Health & Wellbeing Ireland

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[www.naturehealthandwellbeing.ie](http://www.naturehealthandwellbeing.ie)

# Nature, Health & Wellbeing Ireland



Designs and delivers nature based interventions to promote health and wellbeing in Ireland

# Solution

## Problem & Potential





“It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men’s hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air, that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit”

Robert Louis Stevenson (1904)

# Mental Health

- One in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem in their lifetime
- WHO predicts that depression and anxiety will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest cause of illness by 2020
- Predicted 70% of world population will live in cities by 2050
- Major link between urbanization and mental illness

# Thinking Outside the Box



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## Forest Therapy:

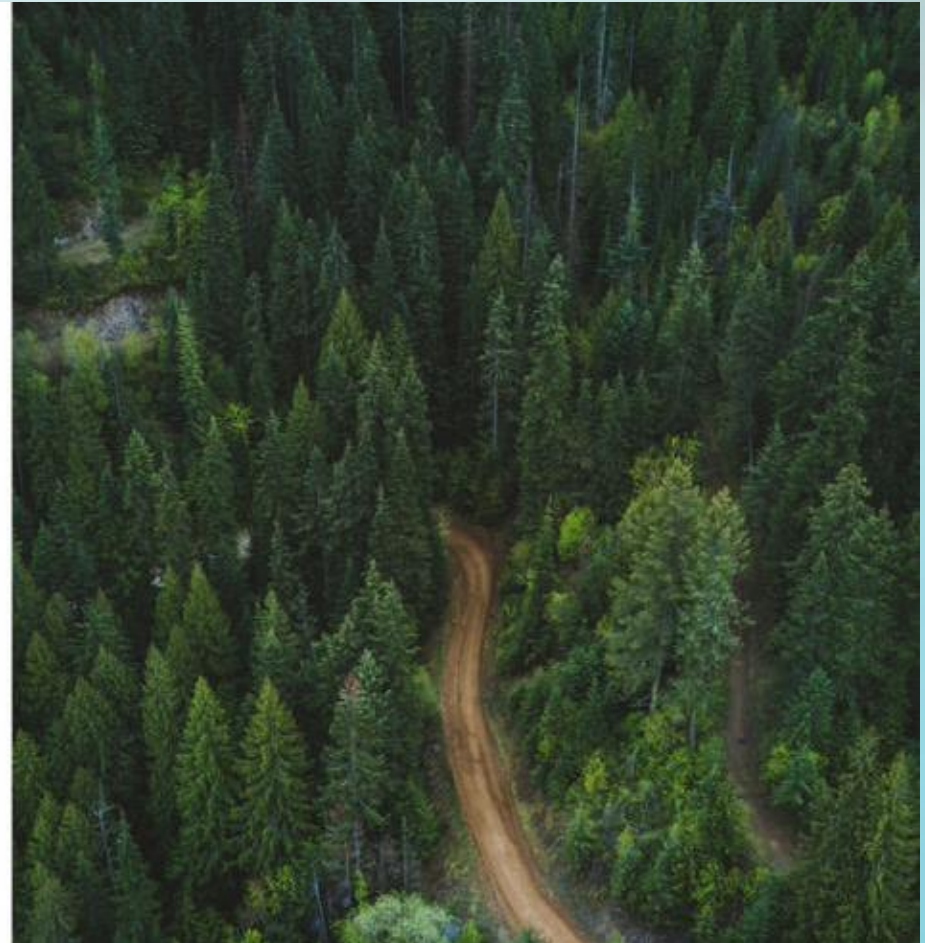
An evidence-based  
integrative wellness practice  
benefitting people and nature



# Forest Bathing/ Shinrin-Yoku

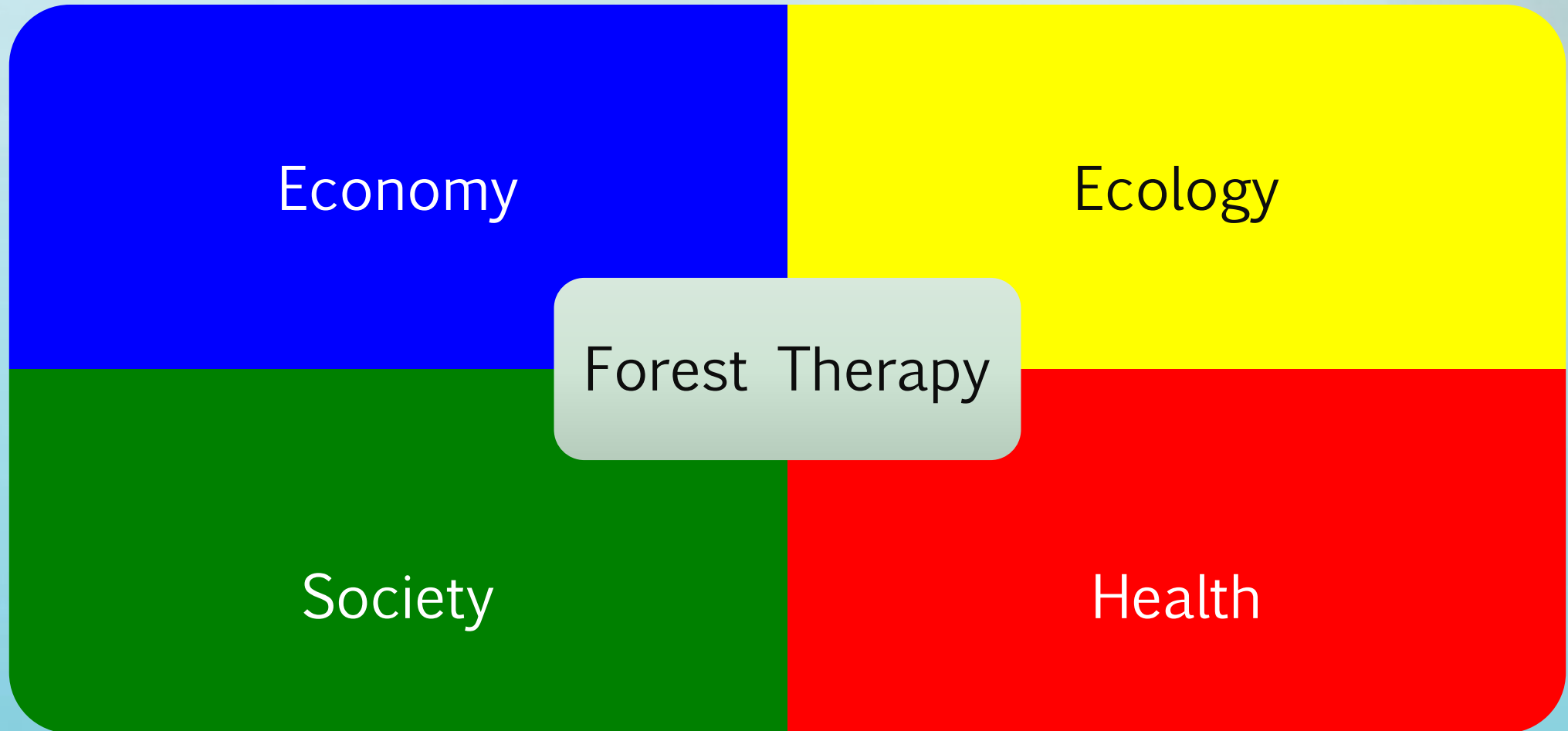
"*SHINRIN-YOKU* MEANS BATHING IN THE FOREST ATMOSPHERE, OR TAKING IN THE FOREST THROUGH OUR SENSES. THIS IS NOT EXERCISE, OR HIKING, OR JOGGING. IT IS SIMPLY BEING IN NATURE, CONNECTING WITH IT THROUGH OUR SENSE OF SIGHT, HEARING, TASTE, SMELL AND TOUCH. IT IS LIKE A BRIDGE. BY OPENING OUR SENSES, IT BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THE NATURAL WORLD."

QING LI, AUTHOR OF *THE ART AND SCIENCE OF FOREST BATHING*





# Green Forest Jobs



# Potential for Green Forest Job Creation

Health Promotion

Disease Prevention

Forests

Treatment

Rehabilitation

# Forest Therapy Wellbeing Walks



# Workplace Wellbeing



# Forest Bathing in Spas Training



# 6 Week Stress Intervention

6 Week, 2 hour sessions

Forests in Ireland



# 5 Key Components

Nature  
Connection  
Invitations

Mindfulness

Gentle  
Physical  
Activity

Solo Time  
(Reflection)

Expressive  
Arts

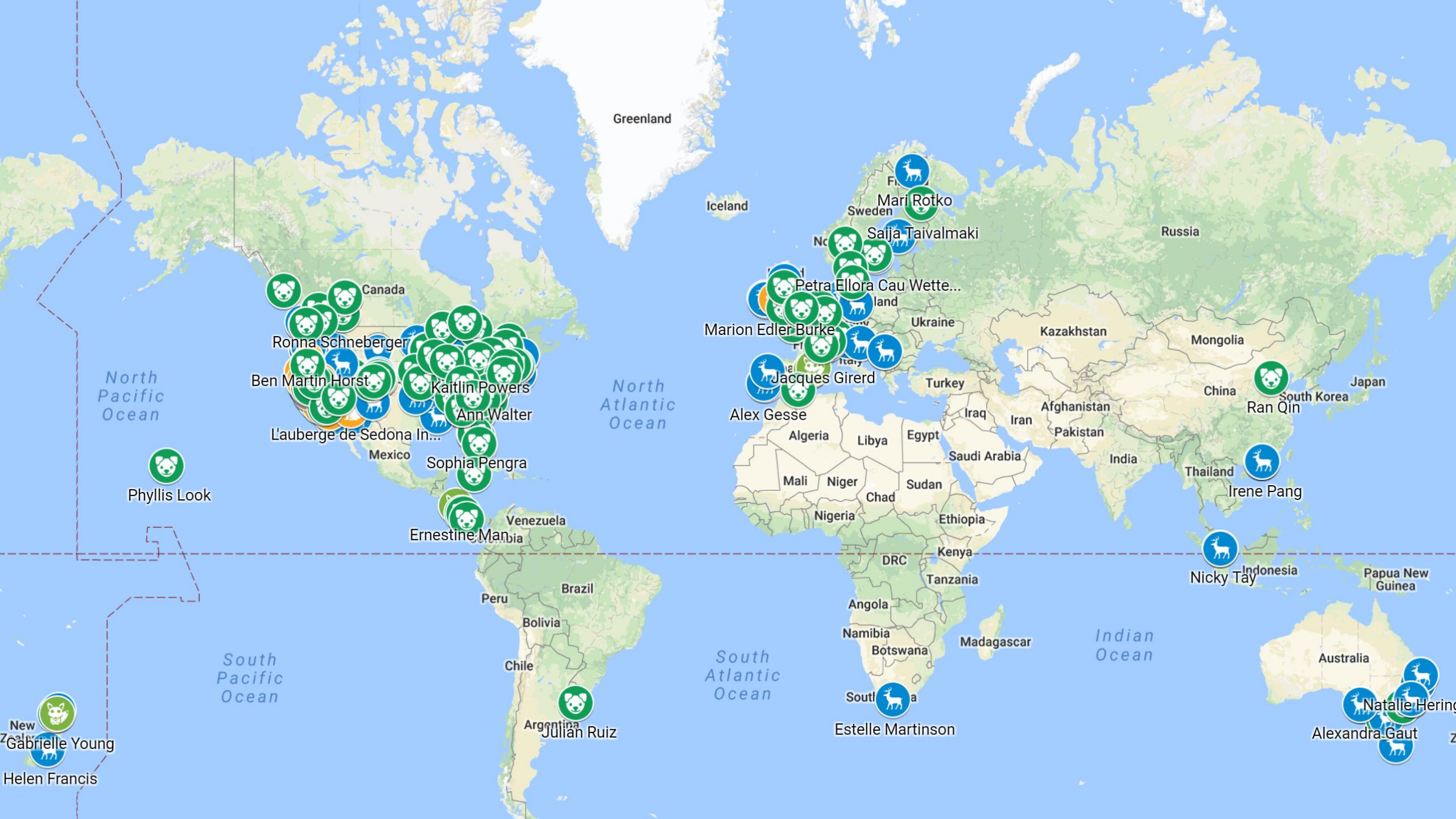
# Forest Therapy for Mental Health Recovery





# ANFT European Training





# 3 Main Pathways between Forests and Health Benefits



Directly through restorative effects



Indirectly through opportunities for social contact



Indirectly through opportunities for physical activity

# Health Benefits of Spending Time in Forests

## Physical Health

- Reduces stress & blood pressure
- Boosts immune functioning
- Improves cardiovascular health
- Reduces blood sugar levels

## Mental Health

- Improves mood
- Reduces anxiety
- Enhances cognitive functioning
- Improves concentration
- Increases vitality

## Social Wellbeing

- Enhances social cohesion
- Reduces health inequalities
- Reduces crime

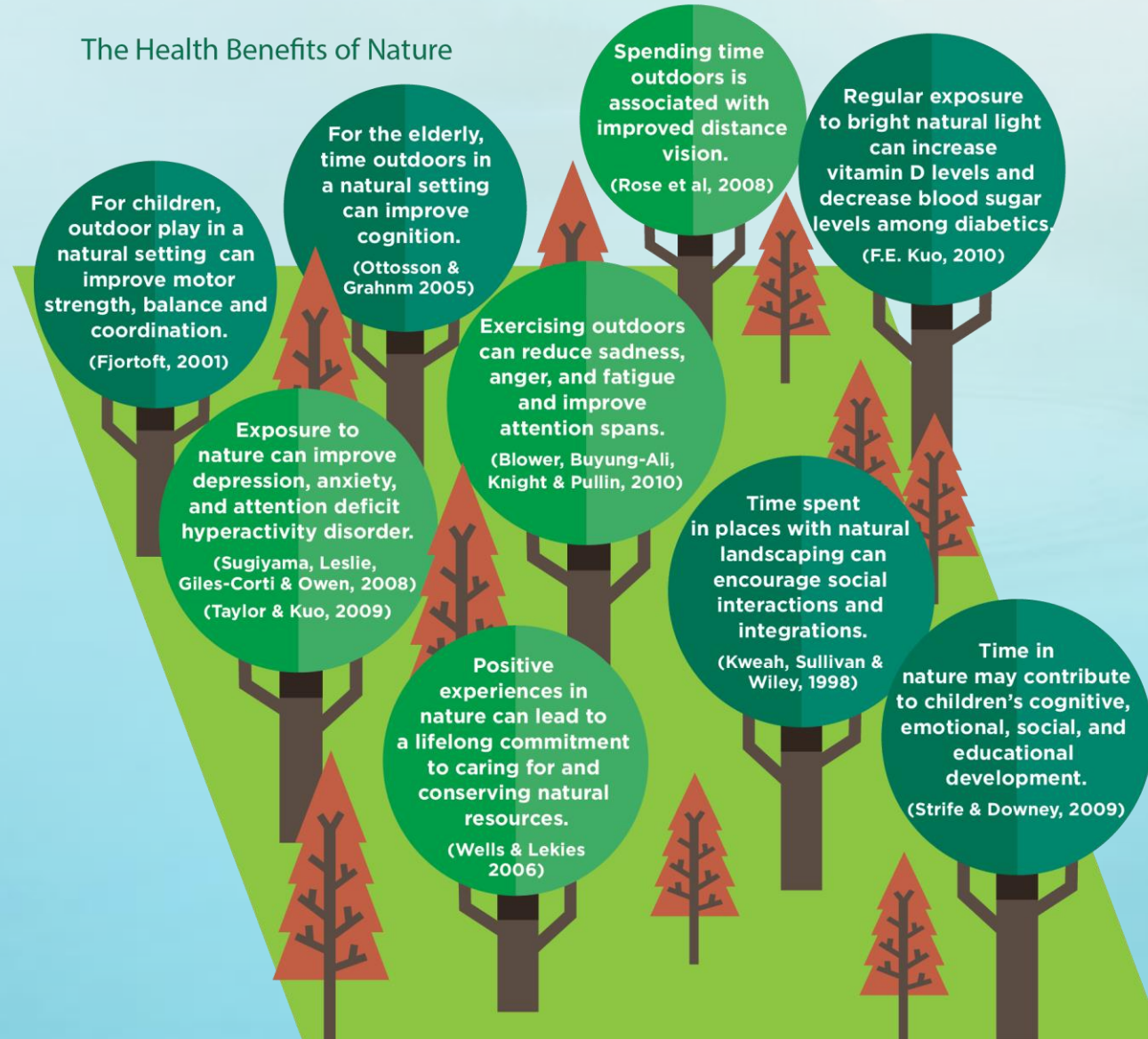


## Forest Medicine

- Restorative Environments
- Phytoncides
- Microbes
- Negative Ions (water)
- Oxygen rich clean air
- Soundscape
- Sunlight
- Optimal colour mix
- Fractal patterns

# Green Prescription

## The Health Benefits of Nature



# Optimal Forest Therapy Trails

Easy public access with  
car parking and toilet  
facilities

Access to a workshop  
space onsite

Looped trails  
approx 3-5km

Mixed woodland

Rich biodiversity

Presence of  
stream/waterfall

Natural  
soundscape

Well maintained wide  
trails

Little incline

Few tripping hazards

Forest Therapy  
signage

Rest places along  
the trails

# Forest Therapy Guide Research

- 116 ANFT Forest Therapy Guides (1/3 of all members)
- Forest Therapy Facebook Group
- 28 countries represented
- 77% female
- 86% educated to Diploma/Degree/Masters level



# Forest Therapy Guide Survey

## Skills

- Naturalist knowledge
- Forest Therapy knowledge
- Group facilitation
- Mental health awareness
- First aid
- Communication
- Mindfulness
- Nature connection
- Business and Marketing

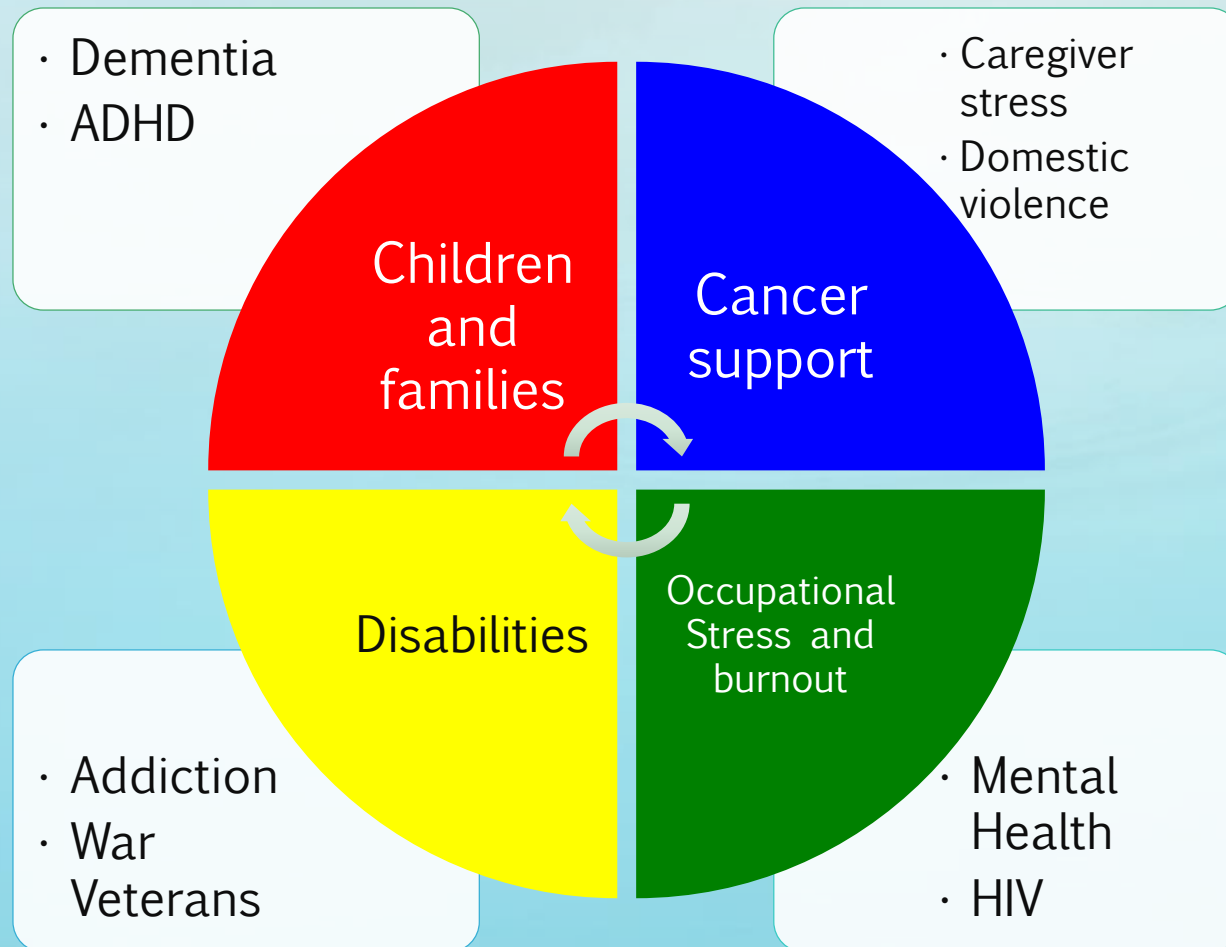
## Challenges

- Credibility and acceptability amongst healthcare professionals
- Lack of awareness amongst public
- Access to safe, quality trails for urban populations
- Severe Weather
- Limited government funding
- Gap between research and practice

## Future Needs

- Integration into healthcare systems
- Development of Forest Therapy programs within universities
- Designing specific forest therapy interventions for specific populations
- Designated forest therapy trails and bases internationally
- Guide Diversity

# Forest Therapy Groups



# UN Sustainable Development Goals

**1** NO  
POVERTY



**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**8** DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



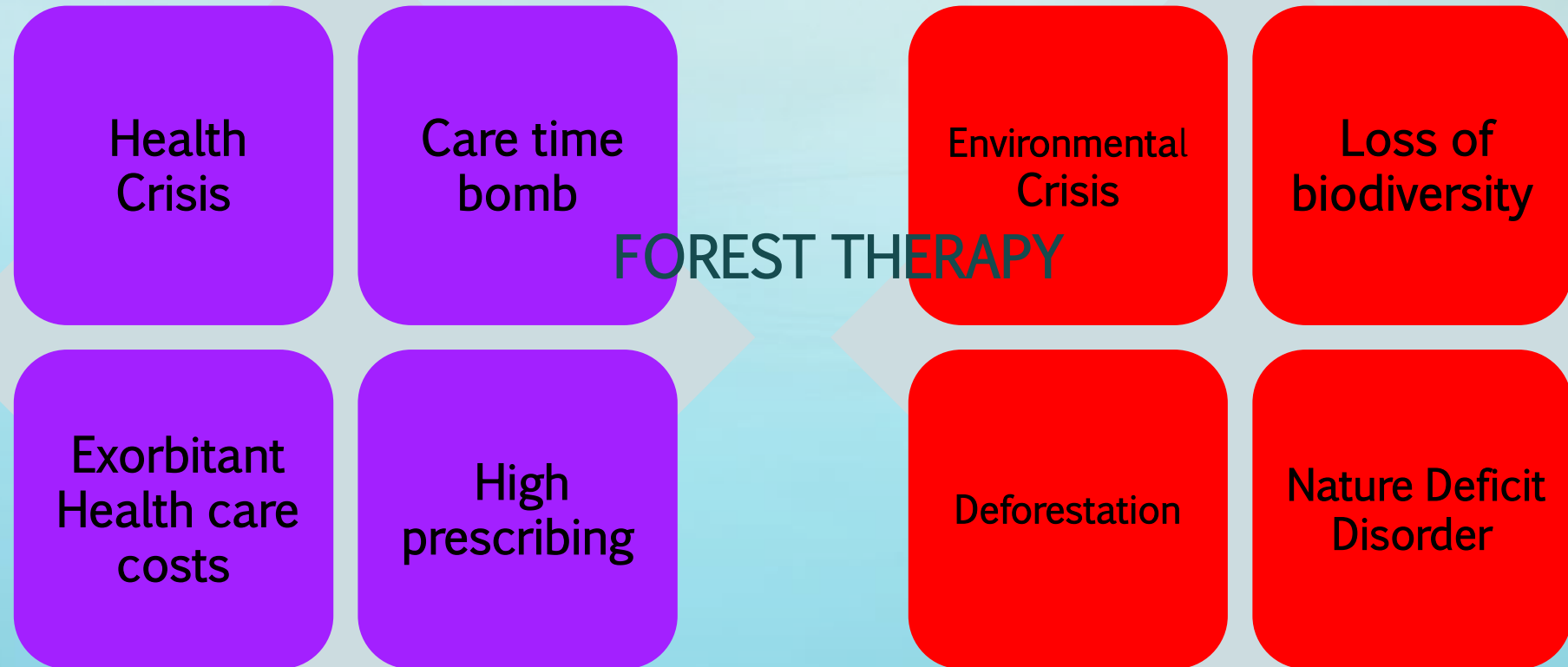
**13** CLIMATE  
ACTION



**15** LIFE  
ON LAND



# Ecosystem Services



## Conclusion

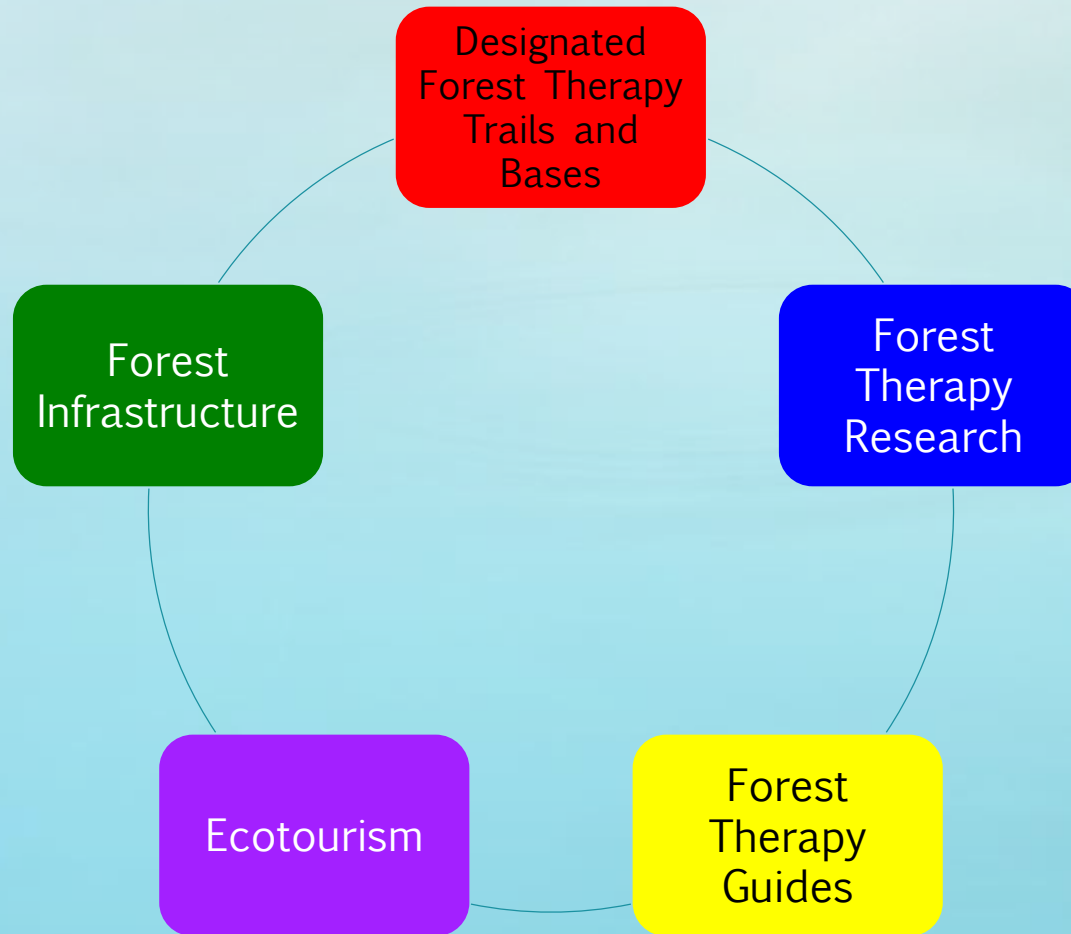


Forest Therapy  
has major  
potential for the  
development of  
Green Forest Jobs  
internationally

Cultural Services

Ecosystems Services

# Ecosystem Services





“When I lie on the forest floor, I know nature will not judge me, abandon and forsake me, expect anything of me, just lets me be there, accepting me allowing, showing my place in it all”

Forest Therapy Participant

Thank You

