



Scaling up promising practice to promote healthy urban people and ecosystems in east and southern Africa

Many challenges for urban health ...

Urbanisation and the expansion of commercial activities in east and southern Africa (ESA) brings rising opportunities and wealth for some, and stress, poverty and ill health for others. Urban areas are experiencing many new health risks, including from intensively marketed ultra-processed foods, from traffic and industrial emissions, and in overcrowded housing and infrastructures. These risks are higher for poorer urban residents. Trade liberalisation and other commercial determinants of health bring new products, processes and business influences that affect health. ESA countries have a double burden of rising undernutrition (in poorer groups) and rising obesity (in wealthier groups) in urban areas; increased urban waste and ambient air pollution, gaps in provision of safe water, and poor youth mental health. These issues are affected by climate change. They also make urban communities more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.



Unhealthy urban environments and food markets. I4D, 2023 and TARSC, 2022

but also much promising practice...

At the same time, there are [initiatives in Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Uganda](#) that provide many examples of the healthy, equitable, climate-adapted urban food and waste management practices underway in the region. These practices integrate waste management, clean energy and green urban ecosystems. They demonstrate multi-sector, multi-actor collaborative planning, informed by disaggregated evidence of different forms, building coalitions that share goals, ideas and ownership, and bring diverse resources and skills to processes. They show how a holistic, circular economy links the 3Rs (reduce, recycle, reuse) to reclaim vacant land with waste dumps for gardens that enable urban agriculture; that use bio-waste for energy and that develop and use local technology innovations. These initiatives integrate equity, incomes and food security to bring sustainable benefit and improved health and nutrition for often marginalised groups. They integrate health and climate justice in reduced air and water pollution, reduce emissions from waste burning, reduce flooding from clogged drains, enrich soil through organic fertilisers, and climate-proof infrastructures. In iterative steps, they assess, review and improve practice, and in so doing strengthen social respect for healthy ecosystems as a source of economic and social benefit and reduced ill health.



The Longacres market Lusaka before the intervention, and community segregating waste in the intervention, BORDA Zambia, 2021, 2022

...so how do we share and spread what works across the region?

With so many local sites of promising practice, there is a question as to why we are seeing slow progress to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and urban health equity. What is blocking us from scaling up such practice? Put more positively, how can we scale up such initiatives to improve health equity across the region? We discussed this as an [EQUINET community of practice on urban health](#) and propose the 10 areas of action outlined in this brief, giving examples of promising practice for each. We hope to hear more from you! Please see the last page for how to contribute.

Promoting climate-responsive integrated healthy urban systems

We propose 10 recommendations on areas of practice and policy to advance climate-responsive integrated healthy urban food, waste and ecosystems in east and southern Africa.

The recommendations are shown below. In each there are examples of promising practice, guidance, methods, tools and experience to share, with [hyperlinks](#) to read further information on each example.

The proposals are organised within three main areas.



1. **Build** healthy circular economy food, waste and urban ecosystems.



2. **Enable** (and institutionalise) healthy food, waste and urban ecosystems; and



3. **Amplify** (scale-up in and across ESA countries) healthy food, waste and urban ecosystems



To **BUILD** a healthy circular economy in food, waste and urban ecosystems, we recommend to:

1. Design, plan for, incentivise, capacitate and reclaim urban spaces for urban resident food producers to implement various forms of innovative urban agriculture.

[ACTogether Uganda et al, 2024](#) describe how with support from the Sustainable Community Initiative for Empowerment (SCINE) Uganda, the Kibuye 1 Parish low income community in Kampala collected waste that is clogging drains and leading to flooding. This opened green spaces for urban agriculture, and people produced organic fertilizer from the bio-waste. Water bottles, polythene bags and old car tires are also being sorted and re-used as containers for small-scale urban farming. The expansion of vertical farming in limited urban spaces provides healthy foods for local consumption and sale, improving community incomes. SCINE Uganda trained primary school children, setting up four environmental protection clubs in schools in Kibuye 1 Parish. Children used waste plastic bottles for vertical urban farming, and produced organic fertilisers from waste for sustainable farming at their school.



A residential backyard transformed into a demonstration garden and a seedling nursery, Kibuye, Uganda, ACTogether Uganda, 2024



Urban waste dump sites are cleared creating spaces for urban agriculture in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, S Ngwenya, 2023

[City of Kwekwe et al, 2023](#) outlined how residents and the local authority in this city in central Zimbabwe cleared sites where people had illegally dumped waste, reclaiming them as spaces for community gardens. While the local authority offers a reliable solid waste collection service, ubiquitous dumping and littering in residential areas remains a problem. Clean-up campaigns involve local authority, government agencies, churches, schools, colleges, non-government organisations, companies and communities. The community convert food and animal waste into organic fertiliser and feed for goats. Urban farmers apply nutrient-rich animal waste such as chicken droppings and compost from bio-waste, enabling them to grow food in urban spaces and to sell affordable, safe and nutritious food to residents. Their initiative means that instead of burning waste, with the harmful gas emissions this leads to, waste is used to improve urban agriculture in the city. The authority mobilised the support of state and international non-state agencies to expand boreholes and solar energy to supply water pumped from boreholes for the community gardens.

[County Minders for Peoples Development \(CMPD\), 2024](#) partnered in the 2020s with the Environmental Affairs Department in Bembeke, Dedza. They converted a market town that had one of the largest waste problems in Malawi into one of the cleanest by turning waste into fertiliser for urban food production. Wearing protective equipment, residents of Bembeke segregate waste from the market. They pack organic waste into sacks and ferry it to local production sites. They load the usable organic food waste, crop and gardening residues into plastic bags, mix it with animal dung, fertiliser, urine and ash and compost it for 21 days. This yields organic compost used by local farmers to boost the productivity of urban and peri-urban agriculture. Those involved either use the compost in their own fields or sell it to local farmers. After local government advisers shared information, farmers grew to appreciate that the organic fertiliser they were producing is not only cheaper than costly commercial fertilisers, but that organic fertilisers nourish the soil. This yields healthier crops, unlike chemical fertilisers that just boost immediate plant growth. Urban farmers who had abandoned agriculture due to the high costs of chemical fertilisers resumed farming with the lower-cost compost, boosting urban food production.



Local farmers reap the benefits of a bumper harvest boosted by fertiliser from waste, Bembeke, Dedza, Malawi, CMPD, 2020



Best vendors' compliant with hygiene standards in the market receiving awards during the Food Safety Campaign, Mbale, Uganda, L Brian, 2023

In the Good Food for Cities Programme (GF4C), the [Food Rights Alliance](#) forged coalitions across vendors, businesses, consumers, producers and authorities in Uganda's Mbale city. The coalitions worked to transform urban food environments and food supply chains to make healthy, sustainable and nutritious diets more available to all. The GF4C implements a three tier intervention strategy across the food chain. The strategy aims to improve regenerative urban agriculture, promoting the local production and sale in local markets of nutritious fruits, vegetables and pulses. Farmers are trained to produce organic fertilisers from market waste and encouraged to apply these fertilisers, to minimise use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The programme uses technologies such as sack gardens to grow food where space is limited. Seventy stalls were renovated at Mbale's Central market and food vendors are being regularly trained on food handling. The vendors are incentivized by awards for those who best comply with food standards. Winning an award in turn leads to increased sales, as many consumers choose these vendors' stalls.

2. Establish through community, private, CBO and state actors 3R (reduce, recycle, reuse) waste management systems, Link these systems to urban agriculture and to interventions for improved access to quality healthy urban food, as an alternative to ultra-processed and other harmful food products.

[The Abdullah Dzinammarira Foundation Trust \(ADFT\), 2024](#) collaborated with the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) in the densely populated, low-income Rimuka suburb of Kadoma, Zimbabwe to improve urban food production and access to renewable energy. Teams implemented door-to-door campaigns, held public meetings, and educated households, businesses, education and public institutions on the benefits of recycling waste, and of connecting waste management to renewable energy and food production. ADF and YMCA established segregating centres strategically located within the community to sort and collect recyclable materials and trained community members to compost food waste to convert it into nutrient-rich fertilizer. They collaborated with technology providers to harness solar energy to pump water from boreholes to feed water tanks used by the community for urban agriculture and community gardening in water scarce areas in the city.



Solar panels used to pump water from boreholes as a clean, renewable and affordable option, Kadoma, Zimbabwe, S Nyoka, 2023.



Vegetables and fruit at Pumula market, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, P Ncube, 2023

[The Bulawayo City Council et al., 2023](#) in Zimbabwe noted a shift in diets in the city from maize meal and vegetables towards processed foods, with increasing levels of obesity, cancer and other chronic diseases. Sale of ultra-processed foods at school gates has also attracted unhealthy eating habits in young people. In addition to its routine inspections of food outlets to ensure compliance with food by-laws, the city is promoting healthy diets. Health officials enrol people for routine blood pressure checks at health facilities. Those with high blood pressure are treated and monitored, and informed on dietary changes to make, including to improve their intake of fruits and vegetables. To promote these alternatives, the City Council approved an urban agriculture policy in 2000 to expand urban agriculture and provides markets in designated areas of the city centre as a 'one-stop-shop' for all types of fresh produce.

[The Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe \(UCAZ\) in 2023](#) collected and provided evidence on the efforts underway to promote healthy food systems in Zimbabwe's local authority areas in Bulawayo, Chegutu, Harare, Kariba, Kwekwe, Masvingo and Victoria Falls. UCAZ shared the information with other local authorities at its Urban Health, Housing and Community Services Officers Forum in 2023. In many of the local authorities, biodegradable waste is being used to produce compost for urban food production. There are also innovative urban agriculture practices. For example, in Kariba aquaculture and hydroponics practices have delivered affordable and locally-produced nutritious foods in the town, as a healthier alternative to ultra-processed foods. These activities reduced food insecurity during lockdowns in the COVID-19 pandemic and improved incomes. Through UCAZ, urban councils are developing new model by-laws to promote urban agriculture and healthy alternatives to ultra-processed foods



Food production through hydroponics at Nyanhewe Primary School, Kariba, Zimbabwe, C Mutumbami, 2023



Methane producing biodigester used by Lusaka Boys Secondary School for cooking, lighting and fertilizer, Lusaka, Zambia. P Phiri, 2023.

Lusaka City Council (LCC) in partnership with the local vendor association, environment and other government agencies and with support from the Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association (BORDA Zambia) are implementing work in Longacres market Lusaka to convert waste to energy. The Zambia-based [Centre for Primary Care Research, 2023](#) describe the initiative. Waste that clogged Longacres market is now being separated at source by local vendors who are trained and encouraged by their own association to segregate the different types of waste. LCC mapped and organised stakeholders and market users to inform them how to separate organic waste at source and dispose of it in designated bins provided by the local authority at the market. The team involved provide additional training of residents, vendors and local enterprises in upstream separation, resource recovery and organic farming. The waste is carried to a nearby Material Recovery facility where it is further separated and processed for reuse or recycling. Organic waste is then transferred to a bio-digester located on land at a nearby secondary school. The bio-digester produces methane gas from the waste. The gas is used locally for cooking and lighting, while the digested bio-waste is used as fertiliser.

City of Kwekwe have had a 20-year partnership with eight registered community-based organisations to create opportunities for unemployed residents to collect, separate and sell metal and plastic waste for recycling ([City of Kwekwe et al., 2023](#)). In 2023, Kwekwe generated approximately 1 100 tonnes of solid waste monthly, or 3kg for each city resident every week. Some of this (4%) is metal waste. Waste pickers, mostly women collect aluminium cans from shopping centres and homes. The recovered materials are stockpiled, crushed and sold to small-scale smelters based in home industries in Kwekwe's suburbs. The scrap metal is then moulded into pots and dishes that are sold locally and in other areas. Together with the scrap metal, plastics and organic waste are also recovered. The waste collection helps to protect underground water from pollution and abates the emission of greenhouse gases from waste burning in dump-sites. The city is now improving infrastructures and tools for the waste-pickers, to improve their working conditions and capacities and better safeguard their health and safety. Recognising and supporting organized waste-pickers has led the local authority to engage partners to build a recovery and recycling facility at the dump site. This facility will be fenced, connected to piped water, with sheds provided to protect people from weather extremes and to store their materials before transporting them to markets.



“I have operated at this dumpsite for nearly twenty years, and I specialise in recovering plastic containers I sell in Harare. Although the prices are not very good, we have managed to sustain our families, and there has never been a day my family slept on empty stomachs. I can afford to buy all the food I want.”

Community based organisation member working at the Amaveni Dumpsite, 2023.

Local recycling converting metal waste recovered from urban dump sites into pots for food preparation sold in local markets in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe. S Ngwenya, 2023.



3. Invest domestically in technology research and development (R&D), supported by regional investment and technology transfer. Establish a supportive technology ecosystem for locally appropriate, climate-sensitive technologies and infrastructures that build and enable links between food, waste and energy systems.

Innovations for Development (I4DEV) in Bwaise III Parish, Kampala, Uganda is working with the local community to reduce the waste disposal in drains, given its role in flooding and disease risks after rains. Women in the Parish organised in saving groups are trained to make eco-friendly briquettes that provide a local source of energy from waste ([Gramsen Kizza et al, 2023](#)). University students from Makerere and Kyambo trained the groups on briquette production. The Uganda Small Scale Traders Association (USSIA) provided moulding machines, MTN Foundation provided electronic support, and Tree Adoption Uganda provided carbonising machines to convert waste into char. The women's groups sell the briquettes locally to strengthen their incomes. The Bwaise III Parish groups are now extending their operations and carrying out community workshops to train groups in other areas how to make the eco- briquettes.



Members of the Kyosimba Onany Saving group demonstrate how to make briquettes, Bwaise III Parish, Kampala, Uganda, F Kizza, 2023



Peanut butter making machine, Chegutu, Zimbabwe, I Jenje, 2023

[Chegutu Municipality, et al, 2023](#) in Zimbabwe, with support from Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the World Food Program (WFP) initiated an Urban Resilience Building Programme involving 1950 households from three urban wards. The programme strengthened community- managed poultry farming, peanut butter making and mushroom growing. In the peanut butter project, members buy peanuts from the local city fruit and vegetable market. The nuts are processed into peanut butter and the product is sold locally. The processing uses both electrical and manual machines. Processing using three electric power-driven machines was affected by ongoing national electricity load-shedding. The group thus procured two further manual machines that do not require electricity. All five machines were manufactured locally in the Chegutu Home Industrial area, enabling machine servicing and repair. Health officials regularly test the food safety. Some residents also bring their own peanuts to the group, who process this into peanut butter for a fee. With peanut butter an important contributor to healthy traditional and modern food preparations, the consistent local supply contributes to nutritious diets in the Chegutu community.

Agriculture for Wealth and Health (AWH) provided training and technology to Gayaza Parish in Kampala, Uganda, to stimulate and enable urban micro gardening of fresh produce in the limited space available for high density residents ([Loewenson et al, 2021](#)). AWH opened a model demonstration farm to mimic the features of micro gardens in small spaces. A shop at the demonstration farm sells affordable farm inputs. AWH designed a mobile application to promote easy access to agricultural information and provides an interactive website and social media for information, with educational broadcasts on radio and TV. Private sector and political leaders have been engaged to widen acknowledgement and support of the community's efforts. By 2021, 1000 Gayaza households started micro gardens, supporting nutrition and incomes for several thousand residents.



Micro-gardening in Gayaza Parish, improves food safety, nutrition and incomes, Kampala, Uganda. AWH, 2021

The Longacres market initiative in Lusaka, Zambia was described earlier. Key to this initiative was the collaboration across vendors, community members, local authority and education, environment and technology stakeholders to set up the effective waste segregation and recycling resources and technologies, including the biodigester for waste to energy and the use of waste for organic fertiliser (CPCR et al, 2024). BORDA Zambia engineers designed the decentralized organic solid waste management treatment system, and the biogas digester. A local firm based in Lusaka was contracted to construct the system. They also built a tank to supply the water required for the digester to function. The local firm refurbished the road to the market to make it easier for individuals to transport solid waste from the source to the Material Recovery Facility set up for the segregated waste. The initiative demonstrated innovation in local funding, contracting and infrastructure solutions. Locating the bio-digester at the school led to a further benefit: School teachers and pupils were also taught about separation of waste, turning resource to energy and for organic gardening.



Community members throwing waste into the Material Recovery Facility, BORDA Zambia, 2022; The school vegetable garden, P Phiri, 2022



Community members trained on how to use a bailer machine, Kariba, Zimbabwe, S Makunda, 2017. Below:



Mature compost in a tumbler drum composter in Padare garden, C Mutumbami, 2015

[Municipality of Kariba et al, 2024](#) in Zimbabwe anchored training, awareness and technology as critical drivers of the Kariba Integrated Solid Waste Management Programme. Community-based organisations and other waste project interest groups were trained by local companies to identify and separate materials for recycling, including different types of plastics, and on how to use a plastics bailer machine and beverage cane crusher machine. The municipality built a recycling shed at the Municipal dump site where land has no other competing uses to house the plastic bailer machine and beverage cane crusher machine. The two machines are used to compact recyclable plastics and crush beverage cans to reduce their volume so that the waste can be transported for further recycling in Harare, the capital city. The recycling shed, equipment and the pumping of water used in the process are powered by hydro- electricity and solar energy.



To **ENABLE** such integrated healthy urban food, waste and ecosystems, we recommend to:

4. Capacitate and institutionalise the regular generation, analysis and communication of multiple forms of disaggregated, accessible relevant evidence, integrating perspectives from multiple stake-holders and affected communities. Make active use of the evidence in decision making, monitoring and review.

The Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUHDSS) in Kenya implemented by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) gathers information not available in routine data from within urban areas, particularly from Nairobi's Korogocho and Viwandani slum areas. The information is used to assess the impacts of health policies and programmes ([Talk AB\[M\]R et al., 2024](#)). The community is actively involved in design of the assessments through a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Field interviewers also come from the local communities. After an initial census in 2002, field interviewers have since visited every dwelling, household, and individual in the surveillance areas every four months. Local stakeholders and community representatives in the CAC review the evidence gathered and raise their views, concerns and recommendations. The NUHDSS evidence and this feedback is used to initiate interventions on healthy urban food systems, green spaces, waste management and living conditions.



Korogocho, Nairobi, Kenya. Much Ado About Cities, 2021



In 2024, [the Country Minders for Peoples Development \(CMPD\)](#) 'Eye on the Environment' initiative used a photographic and video audit to gather local evidence on poorly recognised urban conditions that needed attention. CMPD community monitors implemented annual natural assets audits inspired by [EQUINET's photovoice work](#), to show visuals of and community evidence on the conditions that led to the 2012-2015 cholera and waterborne diseases outbreaks in Blantyre and Lilongwe urban informal settlements. Their audits showed poor housing, a lack of clean water, toilets, and poorly drained public spaces with rubbish piles. They shared the evidence with communities and discussed options to address the conditions, using community theatre amongst the options for this. The audits were used to alert local authorities on deficits in their obligations to ensure clean cities and to remove waste, and to motivate and lever resources for remedial measures. CMPD also contributed this evidence to the Malawi State of the Environment Annual Situation Report.



Community sensitisation through drama by the theatre group, Bembeke, CMPD, 2019.

Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) in Kenya carry out community assessments, listening to and drawing on knowledge in communities in all their urban health initiatives. This enables communities to inform the design and implementation of urban improvements ([Oranga et al, 2023](#)). For example a community assessment and dialogue was used to initiate activities to convert the Nairobi Dam dumpsite, on the fringes of the polluted and flood prone Nairobi River, into a safe green space with composting toilets and small farms. Through participatory planning workshops, the Nairobi Dam community initiated and co-designed the programme, grounding it on a community vision. Using the information gathered, partnerships were built with technical agencies and engineering firms to bring skills to support the community to build a greenhouse, a public park, a recycling plant, a multi-purpose hall and a sanitation block. The project has helped to prevent flooding during the rainy season, strengthened social cohesion and belonging, improved health and local incomes and built networks able to sustain and deepen the work.



KDI engages community members in mapping risks and assets in Nairobi, Kenya, KDI, 2024

The Kariba Integrated Solid Waste Management Programme (KISWMP) by [Municipality of Kariba 2024](#) in Zimbabwe, described earlier, made significant use of local evidence. A Solid Waste and Characterisation Study and Household Survey in 2013 provided estimates of solid waste generated, and the share that is recyclable. The survey found 92% of the waste to be recyclable, more than half biodegradable and close to 20% manageable at source. The data was used to guide policy and to plan, design and implement suitable solid waste interventions. The Municipality also mapped the various solid waste stakeholders in the town to integrate all key actors in the programme.

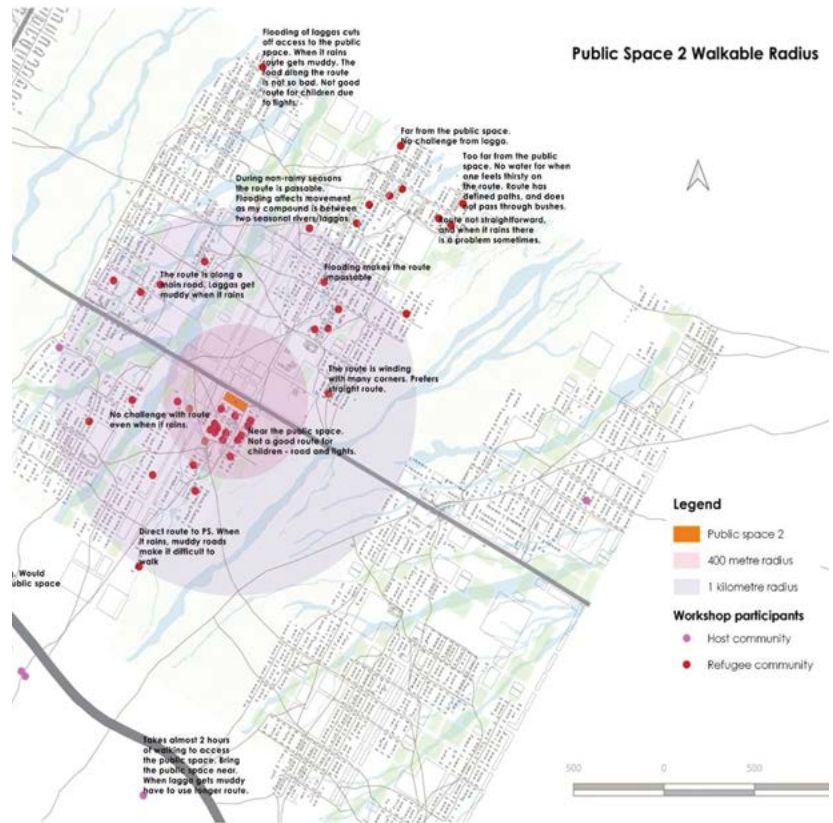
5. Institutionalise health impact assessment (HIA), linking where relevant with environment impact assessment, particularly for commercial activities and policies that have high health impact.



Screenshot of resource persons and participants in a session on the online platform, 2024

[EQUINET through TARSC and regional and international partners](#) implemented work in 2024 to provide online training to build capacities on health impact assessment (HIA) in multi-actor teams in east and southern Africa. The course built understanding of the theoretical basis of HIA, and capacities to apply the methods to implement and report HIA, and to monitor the implementation of recommendations made. The 27 ESA participants were organised in 8 teams. Each team implemented an HIA of an economic activity, policy or proposed law. The course provided mentored guidance of these HIA case studies as practical work. The HIA case studies covered areas such as urban environmental health policies/laws, alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers, and new health financing policy measures and taxes. Towards the end of the course participants discussed strategies for integrating HIA in key sectors and in public health law, to [institutionalise HIA in the region](#).

Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) have used health impact assessment to expose the pollution and health risks due to industrial and household solid and liquid waste disposed into the Ngong River, Nairobi, Kenya, and its impact on lives in the Mukuru Informal Settlement ([EQUINET; TARSC, 2024](#)). The HIA assessed a proposed Prototype County Environmental Health and Sanitation Bill, particularly in relation to its measures for pollution prevention and control, and for compliance with standards, including the fines and penalties for environmental damage. The HIA identified high levels of air and water pollution from emissions, liquid and solid waste from industries and other activities, with limited environmental enforcement and monitoring, and weak penalties for infringements. The HIA recommended actions to improve literacy and information outreach on pollution, to impose stricter penalties and allocate more public health personnel to improve compliance. KDI use GIS mapping to visually map risks and assets in the area. This gives communities a more visual and accessible tool to engage on their concerns. Using a participatory approach like this fosters ownership of the proposed interventions and changes.



KDI engages community members in mapping risks and assets in Nairobi, Kenya, KDI, 2024

Matsapha in Manzini, Eswatini used the WHO Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (Urban HEART) to inform policy decisions related to the large low-income workforce living in urban and peri-urban areas of the town ([Loewenson et al., 2022](#)). The Urban HEART tool helped to identify, assess and address equity gaps in four major policy domains: physical environment and infrastructure; social and human development; economics; and governance. The tool revealed equity gaps in a range of environmental conditions; in women and children's health; and in access to primary health care. An inclusive mechanism involving civil society and other stakeholders was used to gather and review the evidence, set priorities and plan action. This facilitated the design, planning and local ownership of a Matsapha Peri-Urban Waste Collection Programme.

The municipality of Manadriana in Antananarivo Madagascar lacks comprehensive regulations on urban waste management. In 2023, FARM Madagascar, a local organisation, implemented an assessment of the waste management practices at the urban dumpsite ([FARM Madagascar et al., 2024](#)). The dumpsite, perched on a hill, is a visible eyesore and a health risk for residents and for those on the highway next to it, especially during heavy rains. The dumpsite also contaminates local water supplies. FARM Madagascar used observation and focus group discussions with local people to identify the problems experienced and recommendations to improve the waste management system. Stakeholders in the focus group discussions called for strong penalties for prohibited activities like illegal dumping and incentives for environmentally friendly practices, like sorting at source. Stakeholders recommended that the municipality accelerate the construction of a new dump site with improved siting, security to curtail illegal waste-dumping, and safeguards to manage environmental harms and health risks for waste sorters. Having a local organisation implementing the assessment strengthens the possibility of sustained engagement on the recommendations.



The dump site at Ambatolampy, Madagascar, T Razafindratsito, 2023.

6. Set up inclusive, sustained, multi-stakeholder forums to facilitate integrated food-waste-eco systems, with local government as a key convenor, and with relevant, accessible communication with stakeholders.

The Good Food for Cities Programme (GF4C) facilitated by [Food Rights Alliance et al., 2022](#) integrated two key mechanisms for consultation, dialogue, co-production and review to improve food systems in Mbale. The first was a Good Food Council, an independent organ comprising 19 political and technical officials from Mbale City Council, and vendors, farmers, businessmen, media researchers, amongst others. The council meets monthly to provide technical guidance on food safety needs and corrective actions for various stakeholders implementing activities. It also sets the agenda for debate at the Good Food Parliament. The Good Food Parliament is a wider multi-stakeholder platform. It has a membership of over 70 food systems actors representing Mbale City Authority, the district local government, vendors, farmers, civil society organisations, schools, youth, the business community and the media community, among others. The Good Food Parliament helps to strengthen coordination and implementation of the GF4Cs interventions. It enables the sharing of experience and knowledge, and weighs different viewpoints to build consensus for action on how to improve the urban food system in Mbale City.



A Good Food Parliament session tackles issues to sustain urban food security, Mbale, Uganda, L Brian, 2023



Local contractors briefing community organisations on the Eazi-flush system in Epworth, Zimbabwe, T Mware, 2018

In 2023, the [Civic Forum for Human Development \(CFHD\)](#) built collaboration between private businesses and civil society to support innovations in the Epworth community to address contaminated water, unsafe sanitation and sewer systems. CFHD had earlier facilitated a community needs assessment and water testing that prompted the local government board, UN Habitat and other stakeholders to meet and identify sustainable, gender-sensitive, inexpensive innovations that integrated clean water supply and sanitation. A new technology involving 'easy-flush' water-conserving toilets was installed in 30 pilot households. To review the experience a local water committee was set up and young pump-minders were trained as a form of employment. The initiative increased collaboration and engagement by all actors in water, sanitation and hygiene programming. As a consequence the institutions formed a 'lending group' to widen and fund locally-driven scale up, and implemented joint monitoring activities to sustain a demand-driven uptake of the new technologies.

[Municipality of Kariba \(2024\)](#) used its mapping of various stakeholders, noted earlier, to bring key institutions, sectors and people together in a 3-day Solid Waste Management Workshop in 2016 to plan, design and adopt a KISWMP for urban waste reduction, recycling and reuse. Kariba also drew on international networks, joining the International Connective Cities Network in 2015. This platform provided a vehicle for learning, sharing of promising practices and peer-to-peer exchanges among solid waste practitioners and expertise in different countries. Connective Cities Practitioners' workshops held in Tanzania and Kenya in 2015 brought information from urban practitioners from countries in and outside the region on good practices and solutions in solid waste management, with site visits to locally operating recycling companies. These international exchanges provided useful insights that informed the locally convened stakeholder dialogues planning the Kariba programme.

7. Implement 'policy 3Rs', to Relook, Realign and Revise local, national policies and laws, and harmonise law and guidance regionally, to enable these key elements of healthy integrated urban food, waste, eco-systems. Build implementer capacities and stakeholder literacy to regularly monitor and review/revise laws and to engage in policy processes at local, national and regional levels.

The Lusaka District Health Office facilitated dialogue between health representatives of communities and health workers in frontline health services, to embed community voice and priorities into primary health care planning and action (Loewenson et al., 2022). The district office used Participatory, Reflection and Action (PRA) tools for community representatives in the health centre committees to bring evidence and issues to facility planning and budgeting, and to build partnership and trust between health services and communities. EQUINET documented and amplified the work, including online through photovoice, widening knowledge, interest and respect for the work. While a legal mandate is needed to guide and institutionalise the health centre committees, the visible and documented results from the process triggered support from the Health Minister and stimulated a nation-wide rollout of the programme.



Using participatory methods to prioritise issues, Lusaka, Zambia, Shana, 2016



SCINE initiative training community champions and trainers of trainers in agro-entrepreneurship in Kibuye, Kampala, SCINE Uganda, 2022

In Kibuye I Parish, Kampala, Uganda, SCINE Uganda engaged local leaders in 2021 to locate strategic places in the area to establish 'Community Led Agriculture Banks' as sites to demonstrate new approaches for urban agriculture in small spaces (ACTogether et al., 2024). These 'banks', many located in school vicinities, link local people, including school-age youth, with technical expertise, authorities and other farmers to obtain training and to share experiences and advice on small-scale urban farming. At the 'banks', community members and youth access free quality seeds, farming equipment and fertilizers to enable them to establish school gardens and small-scale urban farms. Those involved learn how to establish urban nursery beds and to produce organic fertilizers. The Community Led Agriculture Banks have played a key role in catalysing, facilitating and expanding healthy food systems in Kibuye.

[The Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe \(UCAZ\) et al, 2023](#), drawing on initiatives in seven local authorities are collaborating with stakeholders from commerce, industry, academia and the community to widen interventions and align national legal and policy frameworks with local efforts to provide affordable, safe, nutritious foods in 'food smart' cities. For example, [Masvingo City Council 2023](#) shared their new draft Food Hygiene by-law under Zimbabwe's 2018 Public Health Act to address gaps in current law due to changes in the food system, such as in the growth of open-air food providers. The by-law stipulates the minimum standards food traders should adhere to; the process for licensing them; and offenses related to poor food safety. [Harare City Council](#) also shared its updated by-laws to address the increase in informal food vending.

8. Develop frameworks that mobilise, harmonize and coordinate the allocation of budgets, pooled and blended funding, and other resources towards addressing risks, strengthening assets, and managing assessed costs, drawn from multi-stakeholder evidence and review.

[Harare City Council et al., 2023](#) use budget processes as a mechanism for dialogue and co-production of safe food. The council consults with vendors, resident associations, informal traders or their association through 'Service Delivery and Budget' consultation meetings, where the local authority is represented by officials from the Health Services, Housing and Finance Departments. The Harare local authority teams interact with colleagues in the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) on issues arising from these discussions, such as on water and food quality monitoring. The local authority also draws input for budget and planning and leverages contributions from wider stakeholders through its interactions with food system stakeholders in the national Food Safety Advisory Board. The Board includes representatives from MOHCC, Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, various sectors and industry. The council also leverages contributions for health priorities from different sectors through the country's 'One Health Approach' team, involving government sectors from health, lands, agriculture, fisheries, water, rural resettlement, environment, tourism, home affairs and education.



Environmental health practitioners collect water samples for analysis, Harare, Zimbabwe, C Muwombi, 2022.



A nutrition garden at Sisk township provides nutritious food, income and prevents illegal dumping, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, Masvingo City Council, 2022.

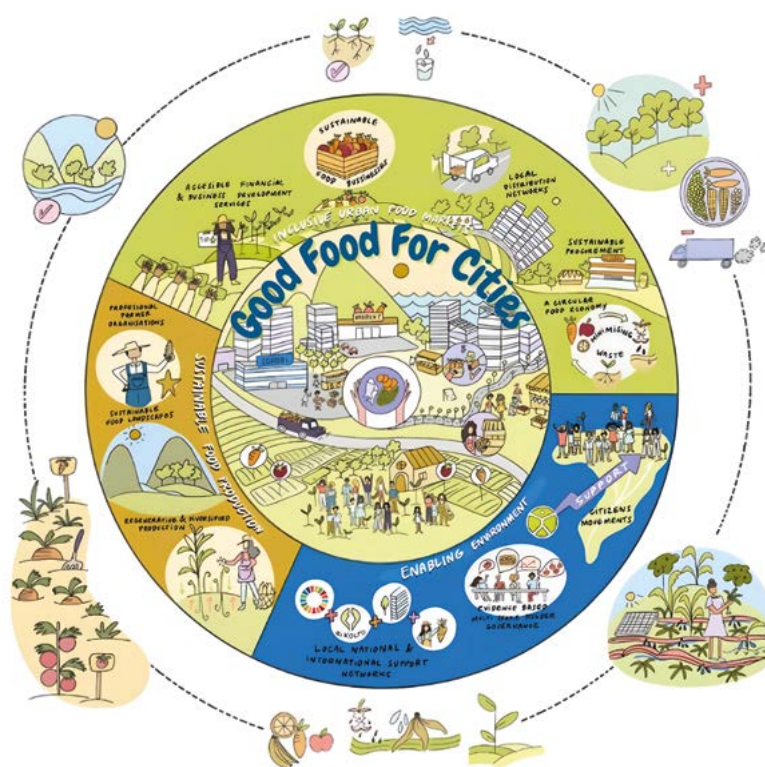
[Masvingo City Council et al., 2023](#) uses leasing agreements that are available to all residents to make land available for urban agriculture. Residents apply for agricultural land through the Council Housing department, Unused land is leased for as little as US\$30 per hectare per planting season. Making unused land available for urban agriculture has limited the space for illegal dumping, while the green spaces from community gardens have improved the urban aesthetics and reduced disease prevalence in the city. International and national non government organisations have supported access, outreach to and involvement of vulnerable groups in seven high- density suburbs in Masvingo city. These resources have also enabled the local authority to drill boreholes and provide solar energy used in watering the nutrition gardens, and to supply infrastructures for sanitation and hygiene services. Other sectors of government also bring resources to the work, such as the training implemented by extension workers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Extension to support urban farmers to increase their productivity.



To **AMPLIFY** such integrated healthy urban food, waste and ecosystems within countries and across the region we recommend to:

9. Organise and connect in networks and link across local, national, regional and international actors to exchange of knowledge and ideas.

The Good Food for Cities (GF4C) programme, currently being implemented in 16 cities in Africa, supports city-to-city exchanges, storytelling, learning journeys and training to contribute to more sustainable, fair and healthy food systems ([Food Rights Alliance, et al., 2024](#)). In East Africa, the programme is being implemented in Mbale and Kampala City (Uganda), Arusha (Tanzania), Kalemie (DR Congo) and Rubavu in Rwanda. The use by all urban sites of a common three-tier approach for regenerative urban food systems makes it possible to share experience between cities. The cities document innovative practices and bring these reports to the GF4C forums. Cities have shared learning on building local coalitions of different food system actors; and on measures to increase production and consumption of healthy, sustainable and nutritious food by all urban residents. The exchanges across cities help to identify how to leverage changes in policy and political agendas in favour of sustainable food systems, within countries, and internationally in GF4C contributions to discussions in the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs.



The Good Food for Cities 3 Tier Approach, Rikolto, 2021



Members of EQUINET’s community of practice on urban health discuss areas for integrated action, TARSC, 2024.

[EQUINET](#) working with the [ECSA Health Community](#) and a range of state, non-state, civil society, technical and regional institutions have set up a community of practice on urban health in east and southern Africa (ESA) to exchange on work underway and to discuss ways of scaling up promising, climate responsive practice to promote healthy urban food, waste and ecosystems in ESA ([EQUINET, TARSC, 2024](#)). EQUINET covers state, parliament, civil society and technical actors in 17 ESA countries. ECSA-HC is an intergovernmental organization covering nine member states. Both foster and strengthen regional cooperation and capacity to address health needs in the region. For example, a [joint EQUINET ECSA-Health Community review of food standards](#) and safety in the region found many areas of food safety to be present in law, but with gaps in emerging issues, such as in controls of marketing of ultra-processed foods as per FAO/WHO guidelines. The urban health community of practice in ESA provides a vehicle to document case studies and to share and review experience and evidence on addressing such challenges. The community of practice has developed recommendations at its regional meetings to present to and inform [the resolutions of the ECSA-HC Regional Health Ministers conferences](#).

10. Establish or engage existing regional and national research and development and training / academic centres to generate new knowledge and strengthen integration of existing knowledge focused on innovative, relevant, climate responsive approaches to healthy urban food, waste management and ecosystems.

National forums of urban councils provide an opportunity to link with technical institutions, and with national and regional partners and networks to share learning and exchange on innovations for urban health ([EQUINET](#); [TARSC, 2024](#)). In Uganda, the Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU) provides a platform to share experiences and learning on issues raised by the different local authorities affiliated to the Association, and to act collectively on these. For example, the UAAU submitted a proposal to the central government for local authorities to receive public funds for slum upgrading, with an initial grant allocated in the most recent budget. [UAAU and I4D have organised city dialogue workshops](#) with local government leaders and partners to explore links across and innovations being applied in food, energy, water and waste management systems to identify opportunities for wider scale up. In Zimbabwe, as presented earlier in this document, the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) brings its 32 urban authority members into various forums to provide a platform for integrated and coordinated urban health practice and policy among local authorities in Zimbabwe. The Association forums provide opportunities to pool expertise and to facilitate inter-city exchange of good practices. This improves accountability of service providers to resident needs and enables increased engagement with central government on priorities raised. UCAZ enables peer review by urban authorities of service level benchmarking on key areas of urban services.



Local government leaders in a joint I4D UAAU meeting on approaches to strengthening the nexus between urban food-energy –water and waste interventions for health, Uganda, J Gonza, 2024

In conclusion:

We hope these initiatives and the links to more information on them demonstrate the opportunities that exist in the region to apply the 10 recommendations to scale up healthy, equitable, climate-adapted and integrated urban food, waste management, clean energy and green eco- systems.

We welcome your feedback. Most importantly, we are sure that there is more innovative work underway, and invite you to share your work! [Email us](#) to share your actions in addressing any one of the 10 recommendations, or a number of them together. We can also assist you to document your work. We look forward to hearing from you! We will update this edition with further initiatives in 2025.

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