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ACTogether Uganda and Urban Authority Association of Uganda , with Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC) in the Regional network for Equity in health in east and southern Africa (EQUINET)



Waste is wealth: Small scale urban farming challenging food insecurity in informal settlements of Kibuye I Parish in Kampala, Uganda



The photographs above show the Sustainable Community Initiative for Empowerment (SCINE) Uganda transformation of a residential back yard in into a demonstration garden for schools, community learning and for household farms to acquire food seedlings. SCINE, 2022

Key messages

- Poor waste disposal and management is an overwhelming environmental issue in Kibuye informal settlements. There are no designated communal garbage collection points, as land owners are unwilling to give land for it, citing poor maintenance of the sites.
- The littered waste clogs the existing drainage channels, gullies and wetlands exposing Kibuye slums to frequent flooding.
- The small-scale urban farming initiative by SCINE Uganda is providing an foundation for urban food security and sustainable management of the environment in Kibuye I Parish.

Produced January 2024. Written by ACTogether Uganda and Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU) with guidance, peer review and edit from Rene Loewenson, TARSC, Danny Gotto I4D and John Mwenda Gitari.. The authors thank all key respondents including head teachers at Esmen Memorial and Little Vine primary schools, Local Council I chairpersons of Waswa, Taawo and Nabisaalu zone and local community beneficiaries for their perceptions, experiences and insights on the SCINE initiative in their respective localities. Special appreciation goes to the SCINE project management and implementation team for the reception or consent to profile the current initiative in Kibuye Parish and for sharing their experiences, knowledge and expertise on the ongoing initiative. The authors appreciate all efforts of authors and co-authors representatives for working tirelessly to produce the case study. The authors acknowledge financing from OSPSC and EQUINET.

Context and challenges

Kibuye 1 Parish covers 35 acres of land in Makindye Division of the Kampala Capital City Authority, Uganda, five kilometers away from central business district. Kibuye is a low-income residential area (ACTogether Uganda, 2021). Due to its proximity to the slum in Katwe and the business suburbs of Ndeeba and Makindye, Kibuye combines both environments. It has numerous bars, pubs and nightclubs clustered in a confined area and a high crime rate.

Kibuye 1 Parish is dominated by informal residences, currently hosting socio-economic migrants, refugees and low-income slum dwellers. It has over 80 000 residential and commercial structures, both permanent and temporary, with a high density of about 120 000 people living in 30 000 households, with an average 4 people per household. The households live on average in 40 by 30 feet roomed semi and permanent houses. Waste is collected by private waste collection companies and a few locally based individuals at a negotiable price (ACTogether Uganda, 2021).

“The majority of the local people living in Kibuye1 slum area are engaged in small scale businesses, surviving on daily incomes thus insufficient to afford three meals in a day.”

Nalongo Kalongo, Parish Women Councilor 2023.

Local residents, especially women and youth, engage in community saving groups, food vending, waste collection and hawking small merchandise. The informal sector in Uganda carries out farming, light manufacturing and agro-processing, chemical processing, machinery and equipment, services, trade, information technology, art and crafts, flowers, and mobile money business (Nanfuka and Kyaddondo, 2022).

The COVID-19 lockdown led to job loss and reduced incomes for urban residents. Local businesses run by women and youth, especially food vending and hawking in the markets and along the roadsides were affected, with reduced access to affordable food, so many businesses closed. Individuals and households survived by improvising, such as adjusting expenditures and reconfiguring their livelihoods. The limited regulation in the informal sector served as both facilitator and constraint to survival, with the sector an important buffer against livelihood shocks in situations of crisis. However, its inherent limitations imply at the same time that this calls for formal and informal safety nets (Nanfuka and Kyaddondo, 2022). Government’s COVID-19 relief programmes for food and other aid were mainly directed at the 1.5 million people living in urban areas in the Kampala and Wakiso districts, but also focused on the formal sector, thus not reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people. People in the informal sector were unable to access government loans and tax benefits, generating social inequality and exacerbating poverty and vulnerability (Development Initiative, 2020).

The lockdown stimulated community attention to improving environments and livelihoods in their area. A group of local youth innovators through the Sustainable Community Initiative for Empowerment (SCINE) Uganda took up the challenge. The SCINE initiative was introduced by the group of organized youth in 2019, as a community-based organization, with support from Kibuye1 Parish and Wasswa zone LCI local leadership and with approval from the Kampala City Council Authority. SCINE aimed to provide alternative solutions to household food insecurity, local greening and urban farming practices, and to establish a well sustained and reliable supply source of foods in and around their localities. The initiative aimed to provide access to affordable seedlings and fertilizers for local residents especially for low-income households and women engaged in food vending and hawking, many of whom are single mothers. This implied sensitizing local residents on their roles in community greening through urban farming, to improve availability of affordable food, air quality and address climate change in their localities.

An [EQUINET conceptual framework](#) outlines the urban responses for food and waste management systems as key entry points to foster innovation, collaboration, accountability, literacy and system-wide change to support healthy people, healthy ecosystems and an inclusive, productive, regenerative and circular urban economy (EQUINET, 2023). This case study in Kibuye 1 Parish reflects experiences in these urban responses as part of a series in east and southern Africa.

The intervention and practices implemented

SCINE Uganda addressed these aims through a range of activities in Kibuye informal settlements.

Establishment of community led agriculture banks

Kibuye I Parish lacked demonstrational agro-based learning centers for urban agriculture posing a big challenge to household food security in Kibuye. SCINE Uganda obtained support in 2021 from the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee and engaged local leaders to locate strategic places for and establish Community Led Agriculture Banks in Kibuye I. These banks targeted local people, especially pupils, students, youth, women and school drop-outs to access information related to innovative techniques for urban farming in small spaces. The beneficiaries interface with technical and experts from the SCINE initiative, Kampala City Council Authority and other farmers to share their experiences and challenges for advice around small scale urban farming.

The initiative serves as a place for all interested. Schools, community women and youth can access free quality seeds, equipment for farming such as watering and pesticide cans, gloves, gumboots and fertilizers to enable the establishment of school gardens and small-scale urban farms at household level in the Parish.

“Primary schools have resorted to Community Led Agriculture Banks as a result of the gradual impact of demonstrational activities in other parts of the community and schools. ”

Team lead, SCINE Uganda, 2023.

Stake-holders liaison engagements

In 2022 SCINE Uganda liaised with local authorities and school managements, such as at Emen Memorial primary, Little Vine primary school to lobby for adequate, appropriate land to establish community demonstration centers for urban greening space initiatives in the Community Led Agriculture Banks.



“The school is able to acquire varied and dietary food for pupils, students and teachers at an affordable cost. The children did not know where the food is bought or coming from and how smaller scale urban farming is done. The students and pupils are now aware that it is possible to grow food using smaller spaces, and now they are familiar with various techniques for urban farming. ”

Mr. Lugonvu Daniel, Teacher, Golden Times Primary school, Kibuye, October, 2023

Engaging school children on community agriculture for nutritious food, greening and environmental management programs in Kibuye parish, SCINE Uganda, 2021.

The Kampala City Council Authority and school head teachers liked the urban farming initiative, and the school head teachers engaged education officers at Kampala City Council Authority and offered space to roll out the Community Led Agriculture Banks in the school vicinities. These banks are used as demonstration spaces for community members and schools to learn how to operationalize gardens for household farming and schools. They are also used as training centers for local people and schools on how to establish urban nursery beds and how to produce of organic fertilizers for seedlings. The SCINE team produce fertilizers out of the decomposed organic waste mixed with natural organic manures for the local people and others.

Establishment of Community Advocacy Platforms for community engagement

Community Advocacy platforms such as a Community youth parliament and women forums were established in 2022 by SCINE Uganda. A 'Ghetto Go Green' initiative involved women and young people in strategic dialogues on issues such as urban food security, commercialized waste management at household level, and mitigating impacts of climate change. The dialogue platforms created social and interactive spaces for many local people and key stakeholders such as the Kampala Capital City Authority and local leaders to discuss and prioritise solutions to ongoing community development challenges in their localities.

Innovative education and training in schools

Since 2022, SCINE Uganda has carried out a series of knowledge sharing and training sessions for children in primary schools in Kibuye using innovative Info-Graphics. These sessions build children's understanding of the advantages of urban agriculture and proper waste management in their schools and local communities. Four sessions are held in each school every quarter for five schools in Kibuye. Children's sessions are operationalized through pictorials, graffiti designing and talking cartoons. They are facilitated by school teachers for continuity and sustainability, with the teachers trained by SCINE Uganda field staff.



Youth attending Youth Community Parliaments discussing sectoral agenda items. SCINE Uganda, 2023

School environmental protection clubs

In 2022, SCINE Uganda through the heads of selected schools in Kibuye, established and trained people in four environmental protection clubs in the use of waste plastic bottles for small scale urban farming, and in mixing fertilizers for sustainable farming at school. These clubs aim to spearhead interschool competitions, and to scale-up and sustain small-scale gardens, innovative waste management and urban farming initiatives for pupils, and to instill necessary skills and knowledge for urban farming and waste management. So far, five primary schools - Emen memorials, Katwe Central, Little Vine and Mother care - in Kibuye Parish have established environmental protection clubs in their school. Each club has about 20 members identified from each class, ranging from nursery to primary grade seven class (about 12 years old). School environmental club members are able to plant food seedlings at the school gardens with guidance and support from SCINE Uganda through provision of free seedlings and fertilizers.

Sensitization of youth and women on small scale urban farming and organic waste sorting

SCINE Uganda trained youth and women on small scale urban farming to operationalize small scale urban farming and waste management initiatives at household level for 'climate-smart' agriculture and economic benefit. The sessions encouraged most households reached to establish at least one small back and front yard garden with nutritious green foods for home consumption and sale, also improving the quality of air in the community. The neighbouring schools such as Emen Memorial school in Kibuye later adopted the same initiative, starting small scale urban farms in their compounds.

Since 2021, SCINE Uganda has trained interested local people, school teachers and street food vendors how to sort organic from inorganic waste at household level for reuse as fertilizer for sale to small scale urban farmers, improving the availability of fertilizers in Kibuye. Water bottles, polythene bags and old car tires are also sorted and re-used for small scale urban farming in Kibuye.



The SCINE community initiative training community champions and trainers of trainers in agro-entrepreneurship to promote the scale-up of urban farming in Kibuye, SCINE Uganda, 2022

In March 2023, SCINE Uganda conducted awareness sessions in afternoon or evening hours and using a snow ball approach on urban agriculture, and implemented a climate change awareness campaign dubbed “caravans” to reach out to local people including refugees in eleven zones in Kibuye I Parish. This was designed to take into account the different levels of understanding and cultures in the different social groups that shape their responsiveness to community interventions.

SCINE Uganda through its field workers collaborates with heads of schools, local leaders, local people and Kampala City Council Authority to conduct community clean-ups in their localities especially desilting drainage channels to reduce waste that clogs the existing drainage channels causing flooding in Kibuye slums. These community clean-ups are done twice monthly.

“Urban farming is one of the enterprises I liked doing outside teaching, introduction of SCINE initiative in our community was a blessing in disguise that I and the school are benefiting. Trainings in small scale urban farming have changed my and pupils’ mindset on urban farming that has not only improved the dietary but also improved idea of Urban farming, the other local people are inquisitive to know the practicability of integrating waste sorting and small-scale urban farming initiatives. Now I love planting food stuff in waste plastic bottles around my home.”

Muganga Fred, Director, Emen Memorial school, 2023.

Cross community learning exchanges and interschool competitions

In 2023, SCINE Uganda carried out a series of urban farming learning exchanges, interschool competitions in local schools and capacity building sessions for the selected best-performing local households in integrating waste reuse and urban farming practices in and outside Kibuye. The community cross learning exchanges and interschool competitions exchanged local knowledge and strengthened the capacity of local beneficiaries in urban farming practices , contributing to sustaining the initiative. These activities provide a continuous technical guidance to local people especially youth and women seeking for necessary knowledge and skills, including to establish new small scale enterprises for urban farming. The learning exchanges among the best performing household beneficiaries and trainings in urban farming has built the capacity of most families to increase their home production of nutritious food.

Mechanisms for consultation, dialogue, co-production and review

Establishing the SCINE initiative and its activities involved strategic consultations with existing local leaders, opinion leaders, local residents and schools’ management to ensure ownership and inclusivity of all key stakeholders and to sustain the initiatives in Kibuye. Key actors such as Kampala City Council Authority staff, local council leaders, local artisanal experts, opinion and cultural leaders, women, youth community groups, school children were consulted through one-on-one engagement, community meetings and forums. They were thus able to collectively raise their concerns and priorities for the initiative. SCINE Uganda built a strong relationship with Kampala City Council Authority and its Division councils to register as a community-based organization, as required to work with communities in Kampala City. The collaboration with leaders and government departments enabled local groups to implement the range of activities described earlier.

SCINE Uganda and local experts, including agronomists, weather or environment consultants and trainers in financial literacy co-created the initiatives and built synergies in supporting the household and farmer activities.



Member of SCINE Uganda engaging women on priorities for establishment of the urban farming greening initiative in Kibuye, SCINE 2022

Officers at Kampala City Council Authority, including urban planners offered technical support during the identification of appropriate spaces for demonstration centers and small-scale urban farming along the roadsides. These collaborations enabled the establishment of environmental clubs and small-scale urban farmer groups and demonstration farms in the schools noted earlier.

Young men and women beneficiaries demonstrated high levels of commitment and determination to co-produce and deliver on transformation of their slum communities. In addition many interventions were supported by development partners such as the Seed Program International, a United States of America based organization, and the Dream Town organization who supported communities through the funding from Network for Active Citizens.

Outcomes and future plans

The urban greening and waste management intervention has benefited 30 households, more than the initial target of 10 household beneficiaries in Kibuye Parish. This increase was a result of continuous sensitization and engagement with the local people, especially those interested in the purpose of the initiative.

SCINE Uganda gave out over 15,500 seedlings to 253 community small-scale farmers' applicants in Kibuye. The uptake of seedlings at both individual, household and group levels for small scale urban farming increased from 2022, with approximately 15 500 green vegetable seedlings from the nursery beds given to local people free of charge (SCINE Uganda, 2023). Over 50 local people and over 6 schools have adopted the small-scale subsistence and commercial urban farming model due to increasing high market demand for the variety of nutritious food production.

As a result the initiative has significantly increased the availability of nutritious foods for home consumption and sale at household level, in the communal Kibuye market and in street vending, given the increased production of a variety of foods from the growth in small-scale gardens in schools, at Community Led Agriculture Banks and in Kibuye households. This has improved incomes for producers and has reduced dietary challenges.

The reduction in litter due to the waste collection activities described earlier has reduced the clogging of storm drains and the flooding from of storm water, particularly in the low laying slum areas of Kibuye. Through sensitization and support, the initiative has gradually changed local communities' mindsets around waste collection management and the viability of small-scale urban farming in informal settlements as an asset for improved livelihoods.

The group learning exchanges described earlier have built strategic partnership and strong networking towards solving immediate challenges and sharing opportunities for integrated small scale urban farming practices. The cross-learning exchanges and enthusiasm and skills of the schools and community members have benefited from the guidance provided by recycling and urban farming professionals, development partners and technical officials from the Kampala Capital City Authority, the private sector and civil society.

"After the establishment of our school garden in the compound close to the road side, it eventually became a community learning stop over. We usually receive passersby local community members inquisitive to find out the owner of the garden, how it was established so that they can replicate the same at their households. We have always shared contacts of SCINE Uganda with them, through these continuous referrals we have found out that some of them are currently the project beneficiaries and best performers in establishing small scale urban farms in Kibuye."

Muganga Fred, Director, Emen Memorial school, 2023.

The initiative has created employment opportunities for unemployed young men and women and improved individual and household incomes for those directly engaged in the waste collection, sorting and urban farming activities (SCINE Uganda, 2023). With one of the first urban farmer groups earning between Uganda shillings 15 000 to 25,000 (US\$4 - 7) daily, many small-scale farmers shifted from subsistence to commercialized small-scale farming in and around Kibuye Parish (SCINE Uganda, 2023).The activities have become embedded in the community. For example, beyond the activities described in the 'Wealth in Waste' campaign, community members have taken it upon themselves to collect waste materials such as waste bottles and other plastics for sale and reuse in small scale urban farming activities and re-cycling plants.

In planning for the future, SCINE Uganda and the stakeholders involved are building on the experience after 2021 to strategically expand the initiatives in and outside Kibuye I Parish in the coming years. As priorities, there are plans to lobby for urban farming projects that can eventually sustain the organization's initiatives for 2-5 more years; to scale up the best practices and techniques of urban farming from Kibuye communities to other urban, refugee and rural communities experiencing similar farming and food insecurity challenges, including due the impact of climate change in.

There are also plans to implement steps, processes and initiatives targeting marginalised communities as a comprehensive strategy to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 2: creating a world free of hunger by year 2030. For this and to expand capacities, resources and interventions, there are plans to strengthen collaboration with other development partners, local artisans, non-state organisations like ACTogether Uganda, and line Ministries such as Ministry of Agriculture.

Areas for shared learning

Capacities, challenges and responses

The success of the SCINE Uganda initiative has been slowly built through co-creation and synergies with the range of local expertise, Kampala City Council Authority technical officers, local leaders and community members and the technical and institutional and programme management capacity of staff at SCINE Uganda. The latter engages 10 active members (4 staff and 6 community field-based members) in the initiative, with a range of skills, including for project management and implementation. Despite the capacities in SCINE Uganda staff, there is still a shortfall for the scope of the initiative especially for senior or more experienced staff, due to lack of funds to recruit them. This has led the organisation recruit community-based volunteers.

Institutions such as Climate Smart Youth Network have brought their network of agronomists to provide field support and guidance to community farmers. The initiative has also gradually instilled trust, awareness and knowledge in the local community, and built on this in expanding activities in Kibuye.

SCINE Uganda also experiences administration capacity challenges, with shortages of laptops, internet connection, limited finances to support monitoring of small-scale urban farms and support to existing beneficiaries. This also constrains reporting of outcomes from activities.

“The urban farming short contracts that last 2-6 months do not cover a comprehensive programming window, thus leaving some of the initiated small scale urban farming initiatives such as continued sensitization, provision of back stopping technical support and monitoring progress with local beneficiaries in urban farming very difficult in the long run thus keeping the project sustainability assurance at higher risk “

Team leader - SCINE Uganda 2023

As noted in its Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the government understands that beyond economic growth, reducing poverty calls for a policy framework that distributes the benefit from economic growth, especially to poorer groups. The debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, along other forms of international support are thus applied to increase public expenditures on programmes for this (International Monetary Fund, et al, 1999). However, the SCINE Initiative has experienced inconsistencies and governance issues in the application of these national and urban development strategies or policies. The 2006 Land use policy, 2004 Poverty Eradication Action Plan and 2015 National Development Plan II do not explicitly provide an integrated approach on sustainable urban farming (MoH, 2004, MoLHUD, 2006, UIA, 2015).

This leaves the SCINE Initiative without a clear policy framework, despite its contribution to national goals. It also weakens investment in capacities for these activities in relevant state institutions such as the Directorate of Education and Social Services, raising bureaucratic challenges in implementing the initiative in schools. This was managed over time by convening a series of meetings with the management of targeted schools in collaboration with politicians and opinion leaders, eventually paving way for the project implementation in existing public schools.

The most pressing challenge is insufficient funds to facilitate daily implementation of project activities by the SCINE Community. Financial resources are needed to support the facilitation, strengthening, scale-up and sustainability of the ongoing urban farming and waste management initiatives, especially to buy more seedlings and conduct regular community trainings. The organization has secured some community development grants from Seed Program international under the GROW KAMPALA Project, and Dream Town organization through Network for Active Citizen under the Ghetto go green project.

Having a good relationship with and the sense of ownership of the initiative within the local people and council leaders has helped to lever referrals for new funding and supported the continuity and sustainability of the initiative in Kibuye Parish. SCINE Uganda’s community mobilisation and sensitization strategies are inclusive, engaging and flexible thus detect variances in communities’ perceptions on the project on integrated urban farming.

Features and learning for holistic, integrated approaches

Waste management is a big issue in the Kibuye slum settlements due to poor waste management. This case study experience shows how waste could be appropriately reused for organic fertilizer for urban farming and waste plastics collected for recycling, improving green environments, local incomes, reducing flooding and providing for sustainable urban development and improved access to nutritious food for those living in informal settlements, showing features of integrated, circular economy approaches for urban health and climate justice reflected in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: A graphical representation of the EQUINET conceptual framework with areas addressed in Kibuye 1 Parish

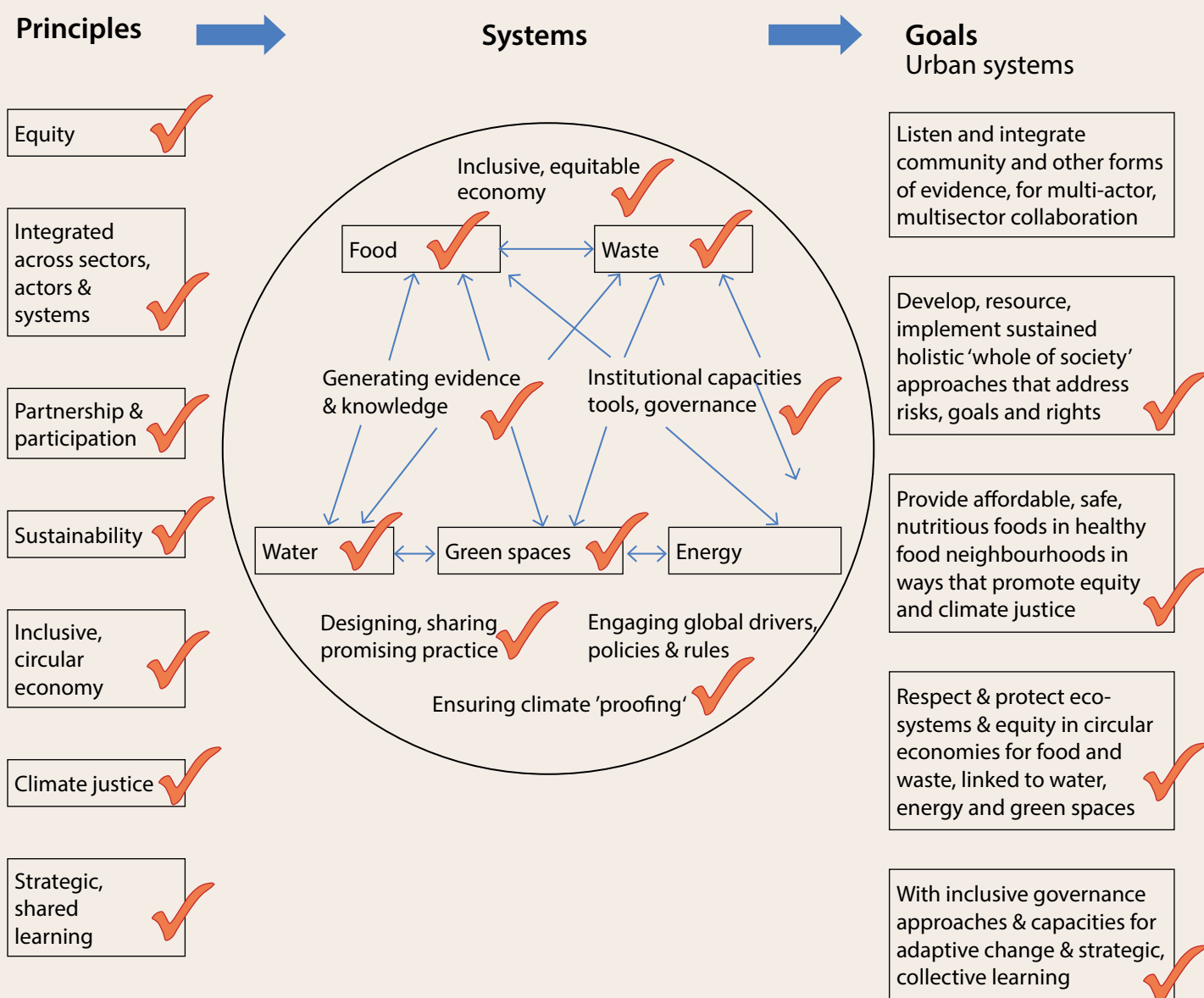


Figure source: EQUINET, 2023

Large companies operate in wetland and urban areas, regulated by the National Environment Management Authority, do not always comply with environment and climate controls and do not have adequate plans to retrieve and recycle disposed products such as plastic bottles, or engage plastic waste collectors or recyclers for extremely low prices, rather than encouraging local small scale recycling. Local small scale urban farmers especially in the informal settlements are more highly regulated on their environmental impacts and land use, even though they pose lower carbon footprints.

The SCINE initiative through an inclusive, circular economy, climate justice and shared learning shows a contrasting approach through integrated innovative alternatives to waste management and urban farming. It demonstrates how inclusive participation, collaboration and governance builds capacities for adaptive change, strategic and collective learning in schools and local people or households in Kibuye,

The experience shows that waste can be wealth. The SCINE initiative through inclusive and circular economy approaches to integrated urban farming in Kibuye has shown practical evidence of how has transformed livelihoods, environments and food security for urban poor slum dwellers through reusing waste plastics for small scale food farming, community greening, and food harvesting. The initiative has strengthened food security, and built healthier ecosystems contributing to efforts to sustainable and climate justice in Kampala City.

Such activities call for government policy, investment and technical support, but also for local grassroots organizations such as SCINE Uganda to initiate and manage community led projects, such as for urban farming and waste recycling. Collaborations across civil society, local and central government and other actors is necessary to build such integrated urban farming and waste recycling projects and to support shared learning from them. In schools, the initiative shows that children are able to share and challenge their fellow community and household members by doing what they learnt at schools in their respective communities or homes. Evidence is that children enthusiastically explore, easily grasp and further test ideas.

Such initiatives call a more strategic and collaborative approach towards creating awareness in the local urban communities, with country-wide learning exchanges and professional training on small-scale urban farming and waste recycling as an integral part of strategies for livelihoods of households and climate 'proofing in urban areas. Government through cross sectoral collaboration across line Ministries and authorities would benefit from engaging, strengthening and localizing programming and increasing financial support for such locally initiated and implemented initiatives, especially in the informal settlements. This calls for strategic integration of local urban farming and waste recycling in the land, climate and poverty-related policies noted earlier.

Preserving and improving urban environments requires a series of initiatives; planned and executed in an integrated manner. Most importantly they should engage local communities, local expertise and networks and local authorities into a collective participatory manner planning, initiation, implementation and monitoring of all activities.

Grassroot organizations with access to financial, technical support and meaningful empowerment play a key role in this. They have successfully evolved local and sustainable capacity to lead and champion transformative development processes within their local communities. These local organizations coordinate and connect well with grassroot communities; their perceptions, constellations, structural formation and problem-solving approaches resonates with the existing challenges thus providing potential alternatives and equity to community development aspirations.

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