



## **Brief from the Webinar: Climate and Ecosocial justice in urban health in East and Southern Africa**



### **Regional Network for Equity in Health in east and southern Africa (EQUINET) through Innovations for Development (I4D) with Training and Research Support Centre September 2023**

#### **Background:**

Climate justice, as an urgent issue for communities, countries, and the region, intersects with, impacts on and is intensified by other areas of inequality that EQUINET is focused on. Given this EQUINET in 2023 – 24 aims to strengthen knowledge, understanding of experiences and impacts of climate from community, local, national and regional levels, and what this implies for action to expose, prevent and identify responses to climate impacts that are intensifying inequities. To support this, in 2023 – 24 EQUINET is organising a series of online dialogues to share knowledge and perspectives from community/local, national and international levels on the impact of climate trends, the intersection with the other drivers/ determinants of inequity, the implications for policy and action that links climate to health equity and vice versa, and the proposals for policy, practice, research, and action.

This brief reports on the evidence and issues raised in the second webinar on Climate and Ecosocial justice in urban health in East and Southern Africa (ESA), convened by Innovations for Development (I4DEV) a non-profit organisation in Uganda working to champion innovations that solve society's most intractable health challenges. The webinar was held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023, with 50 participants from 10 countries. It was moderated by Dr. Danny Gotto, the executive director of I4DEV and technical support was provided by Belinda Ncube, consultant to Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC). The three speakers were Mr Tavengwa Mazhambe, Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations; Mr Kabanda David, Executive Director, Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT) Uganda; Mr Erastus Ooko, Mobilisation Officer, Green-Peace Africa, Kenya and Dr Carlos Dora, President, International Society for Urban Health ISUH. The presentations were followed by participant discussions and interaction with presenters in and out of the chat. The webinar video is available on the EQUINET website at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF7z\\_QgG8s8&t=5109s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF7z_QgG8s8&t=5109s)

This brief summarises key points raised by speakers and participants on:

- The nexus between climate justice, urban food and waste management systems in urban and peri-urban areas of the ESA region.
- Local experiences of the impact of climate change on urban food and waste management systems in local areas, and solutions/innovations to address these impacts
- National and or municipal government interventions to strengthen efforts for low carbon, inclusive, food secure, waste-free cities with adequate energy, water and green spaces for urban health equity

## **Climate impacts raised on health in urban food and waste systems**

- Informal sector workers face disproportionate challenges due to climate change, such as irregular rainfall and high temperatures impacting food security and waste management.
- Adverse climate-induced impacts such as irregular rainfall, unpredictable seasons, droughts, and high temperatures lead to food insecurity, increased food costs, reduced food shelf life, and damage to crops, ultimately resulting in poor yields and higher food prices. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities are particularly affected by low rainfall, which impacts water supply for irrigation, clean water, and clean energy.
- Climate change disrupts the entire food supply chain, affecting pre-production, production, harvesting, and post-harvest practices. Extreme weather events and shifting climate patterns have led to crop failures, reduced yields, and food scarcity, interacting with intensive agricultural practices and use of chemicals in farming by farmers and in large food industries. Extreme heat affects the ability of low income urban residents to store food and can lead to food wastage, despite the high food costs in urban areas.
- Food is poorly recognised as a legal right and issue in many ESA communities and food-related laws inadequately address the full spectrum of activities in food related systems, rights and standards. Urban agriculture is not well integrated in policy and biomass from food production poorly used for energy and other inputs. Legal frameworks thus inadequately address climate-related challenges arising in the food system, leaving gaps in protections for food security and health and weakening accountability on these protections.
- Urban areas greatly contribute to emissions, with a high volume of emissions in ESA countries originating from cities and large mining and industrial activities. However, urban environments within large cities and particularly in informal settlements also face significant vulnerability as a result of climate impacts, with those in the most insecure jobs and living conditions more vulnerable to the impacts.
- The management of solid waste in informal areas is a pressing issue for both health equity and climate. Inadequate waste services by local authorities lead to waste dumping and waste burning, often in illegal urban sites, posing both health and environmental risks, including through pollutants that contribute to climate change. Waste pickers, who play a vital role in urban waste management, have precarious incomes and face injury and illness from infection and exposure to chemicals.
- The challenges related to climate change, urban food systems, and waste management are complex and interconnected, and have greatest impact on the lowest income urban residents including those in informal work and settlements. While urban areas are key sites of challenges and impact, cities and their residents have no direct voice in member state global negotiations on climate and health.

## **Actions proposed to address climate impacts on health in urban food and waste systems**

- The response to these challenges calls for innovation, collaboration, local leadership, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable practice. In tackling these issues we not only manage climate, but create more equitable urban environments that benefit all members of society.
- The approach to ensuring food environments and systems in ESA countries that promote health and manage climate needs to integrate action across all stages of the food system, from pre-production to post-harvest practices, and to marketing, distribution, consumption and use of food waste, linking food to urban circular economies.
- The approach to the intersect between climate and food systems needs to apply a human rights-based approach, making clear the universal right to available, adequate and quality health-promoting food and the responsibilities and obligations of local governments, urban and town councils and of private actors in the food system to ensuring this.

- Legal standards and accountability systems and measures should be in place to ensure that food industry players, advertisers, those selling unsafe, poorly labelled foods that are harmful to health and environment do not implement practices or promote products that are harmful to health, environment and climate, and conversely to ensure explicit co-benefit between health, environment and climate in policies and practices.
- ESA countries and communities are developing alternative approaches to the synthetic chemical use, natural resource depleting forms of food production, including to substitute the growing urban consumption of ultra-processed foods, and this needs greater support. It means supporting organic forms of urban agriculture and agroecology in policy and practice; to provide space for and use scientifically proven agroecology methods in urban agriculture to ensure environmentally friendly, health promoting and climate-resilient food production, and to link waste, including bio-waste from food markets to clean energy.
- The alternatives in urban economies need to be more inclusive: The key role and contribution of urban waste pickers should be recognized and supported through initiatives to enhance their working conditions and safety and through incentives for them to enhance waste management. Urban councils should engage with rural local governments on sustainable food practices. Different sectors, community and other organizations, and stakeholders should collaborate on cross sectoral activities to link and ensure sustainability, holistic approaches and co-benefit in climate change, waste management, and food systems.
- Public awareness campaigns and education programs are important to change mindsets on the harms and alternatives to current practices on food, waste, and climate issues. We are documenting and should continue to share promising urban practice from the region.
- Inclusive policies also call for inclusive governance mechanisms that involve civil society organizations, local communities, and that integrate health and equity evidence and considerations in decision-making processes. In this states and governments play a key role and should provide the leadership, goodwill and support for actions.
- The region is deeply affected by transnational and global stakeholders in the food and waste industries. We should collect international experiences and models on what other urban areas, countries and regions are doing to develop climate-resilient and equitable urban food systems.
- We also need to engage as urban residents, and cities in global forums, Informal workers and residents need a more direct voice in climate discussions, which are often technologically focused and distant from social and development processes. Networking among and between cities, as exemplified by the FAO's Cities' Region Food System Program, can bridge this gap, with the support of social media as a powerful tool.

## **Issues raised to carry forward to and discuss in future webinars**

- What practical joint collaboration can we undertake to scale-up of solutions within urban spaces?
- More discussion is needed on how we transition from linear to circular economies within urban spaces and nationally, and how we build the options, awareness, information exchange for this, including in school curricula from an early age.
- Bringing all actors and voices to the table: How do we ensure that the voices of local communities, especially more marginalized groups, and decentralized authorities such as urban/rural local authorities are included in global negotiations on climate justice?
- Can we be clearer on the equity dimension and the specific inequities that intersect with climate.
- Strengthening global south self-determination and influence in international policies to avoid a dominance of technological and financial fixes controlled from the global North. In doing so ensuring that debates, opportunities, solutions do not stop at elite/ high levels in our countries in ESA and are accessible to and involve all, especially those most affected.
- Ensuring that global funding on climate does not financialize the crises, generate power in high income polluting countries and strengthens networks and local communities and municipalities to access resources and scale up initiatives for meaningful change.