



AFRICAN FORUM
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Green Horizons: Shaping the Future Resilience of African Cities through Urban Forests

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in partnership with:



Conflict Between Green Space Restoration and Urban Livelihoods: Lessons from the Greening Kuwadzana Project in Harare, Zimbabwe

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PART 1

COMMUNITY BASED EFFORTS TO GREEN COMMUNITIES



Disparities in Tree Density in Harare Suburbs

Absence of adequate tree density leads to high levels of air pollution (Gong, 2024); a sage in heat-related illnesses (Yang, 2016); lower IQ (Almeida, 2022); crime and violence (Venter, 2022)



Goals of the Greening Kuwadzana Project

Fighting for Environmental Justice:

- Empowering the community to take action against continued environmental apartheid

Improving Environmental Conditions:

- Restoring green spaces to reduce the urban heat island effect
- improve air quality, and
- increase biodiversity



Goals of the Greening Kuwadzana Project

Reducing Income-Related Health Inequalities:

- Improving public health by increasing access to green spaces,
 - reducing air pollution, and
- promoting physical activity and mental health

More than

700,000 deaths

of children under 5 were linked to air pollution in 2021.



Goals of the Greening Kuwadzana Project

Increasing Access to Green Spaces:

- Creating more green spaces and improving existing ones to provide recreational areas for the community



PART 2

THE ILLEGAL URBAN FARMING PHENOMENON



Causes of Urban Farming

Economic Collapse & the Closing Down of Companies:

- From 2000, Zimbabwe has been experiencing hyperinflation which led to the collapse of the economy, closing down of industries and leaving millions of breadwinners jobless. The Herald newspaper edition of 15 August 2015 estimated that 20000 people lost their jobs in the third quarter of 2015 (Langa and Muzulu, 2015).

Population Increase & Rural - Urban Migration

- A comparison of Zimbabwe's 2002 and 2012 census reports reveals increasing urban population. Harare, the capital city, had a 2.3% increase in urban population while Gweru and Mutare's urban populations increased by 12.4% and 10.4% respectively (ZimStat 2002 and 2012).

Climate Change & Rural - Urban Linkages

- Climate change which is threatening agricultural activities in rural areas, the main source of food for urban dwellers. This has given urban agriculture impetus as urban families look for alternative ways of survival. Urban farming presents the easiest and cheapest alternative, fuelled by availability of 'unused' council and private lands, as well as open green spaces such as parks.



Illegal Urban Farming, A Necessary Evil?

- The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), while acknowledging that urban agriculture is illegal in many countries, estimates that more than 800 million people around the world practice urban agriculture and it has helped cushion them against rising food costs and insecurity (FAO, 2013).
- In 2010 Harare Metropolitan Governor, Dr David Karimanzira announced that: “Although farming was regarded as dirty and only for the rural people, it can also be done in urban areas to supplement families’ income...Land reform should not only end in the rural areas but also come to the urban areas because we have open spaces in the province and we thank the City Fathers for allowing our farmers to grow their crops” (Herald, 2010).
- “We are aware people are farming on undesignated areas but we also must make humanitarian considerations. People need food and we know not everyone can afford mealie meal,” a Bulawayo city councillor, who himself planted maize on a vacant municipal plot, told Inter Press Service (IPS, 2014).
- “technocratic mentality of urban aesthetics (cleanliness and beauty), based on the colonial legacy of the clean city” (Burke, 1996).



Two Bulls Can't Rule One Pen

Burning the area to prepare the land for cultivation



Conflict Between Green Spaces Restoration & Urban Farming



Recommendations

- There should be areas designated for urban farming to allow for the increase of green spaces.
- Urban farmers should be educated on ecosystemic balance, i.e. the service of green spaces. This way, farming activities and green spaces can coexist in some spaces, e.g. roadsides.
- Urban farms are subsistence and help very few people, while green spaces help the whole community. Therefore green spaces should be prioritised.
- Community-based organisations such as the Greening Kuwadzana Project should continuously lobby for a balance between urban farming and green spaces and law enforcement as far as recreational parks are concerned.
- More young people should be encouraged to speak up since they are the most vulnerable population.
- The government should redistribute underutilised land to allow maximum utilisation.



Thank You.

