

# 59. BUILDING BACK RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA: THE UBUNTU PATHWAY

ACTION AREA	UNIVERSAL FOOD ACCESS TO BUILD RESILIENCE
SOLUTION CLUSTER	PANDEMIC-RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS
THEMATIC AREA	PANDEMIC-RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS
SUBMITTED BY	AFRICAN POPULATION AND HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE

## SUMMARY

This solution builds on the EU funded Horizon 2020 Healthy Food Africa Project (<https://healthyfoodafrica.eu/>) which has 17 partners in Europe and Africa. The solution also builds on our Rockefeller Foundation promoted 2050 Food System Vision for Nairobi and other African. The solution could also be scaled through the Transformation Leaders Network supported by the World Economic Forum and the Rockefeller Foundation, in which APHRC food system team is part of. The Healthy Food Africa Project establishes food system labs in 10 cities in 6 African countries. At the center of the food system labs is local food production, food loss reduction, food safety promotion, and economic empowerment of women. At the center of the 2050 Food System Vision is promotion of universal food access through promoting food as a common good – in the spirit of “Ubuntu” – *I am because we are* – and putting in place structures to support this through innovative agroecological, local food production and edible landscaping in Nairobi (and other African Cities), Food rescue system; right to food/universal food access movement; & economic empowerment of women & youth in the cities through agribusiness.

The Transformation Leaders Network was relaunched in 2021 with an objective of supporting the objectives of the UN Food System Summit 2021, and also serve as a dynamic and agile community of systems leaders with a passion to accelerate the food system transformation towards a more nutritious, sustainable, and equitable food system.

**For the proposed solution, we envisage working in about 30 African cities, in about 15 Countries in sub-Saharan Africa including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso & Cameroon.**

The solution promotes innovative agroecological, local food production and edible landscaping with fruit trees for local use at the household level across the socio-economic divide in the cities, and at the community spaces and institutions including schools. This aims to promote universal food access and contribute to food systems’ resilience. By Universal we mean ensuring that every household can produce some food, every community and city space including parks can be used to produce food, every institution including schools, and every landscape can be edible through dual/multipurpose vegetation. By local we mean that food is produced and consumed where people are, thereby ensuring food access for all at all times despite shocks like COVID19 pandemic or economic shocks where people may not always have the capacity to purchase food, and reducing barriers to food access and environmental degradation related to transportation of food. By agroecological we mean food production system that takes care of the ecosystem and the people. At the center of this is making healthy food a common good. We will promote safe production of food through for example organic urban farming. We will work with grassroots

organizations including women and youth groups to support them to promote local food production in their communities and to create agribusiness in the food system for their economic empowerment in the food chain including in food production, value addition and trade. By innovative we mean using Water-Energy-Food approaches that maximize yield and adapt to the situation in the context, including vertical gardening to maximize yield, wall and rooftop gardening where space and water is limited.

We will also promote a food rescue system that promotes food sharing in the African spirit of “Ubuntu” – *I am because we are*- in each City to ensure that any excess food produced or in the markets is rescued, redistributed to those who do not have enough food or repurposed to stable forms for future use. This will reduce food loss and carbon emissions in landfills, and promote equity and food justice. It will use technology including applications for efficient food rescue and redistribution. The initiative will be modelled around ongoing food rescue systems such as FoodForward SA <https://foodforwardsa.org/> & Food Rescue Canada - <https://www.foodrescue.ca/>.

The main outcome of our solution is strengthening food systems resilience and catalyzing recovery from the impacts of COVID19 especially for the most vulnerable in the African Cities. Specifically, the solution will result in: (i) promotion of universal food access and the right to food for all in African Cities; (ii) promotion of the right to health through promoting access to healthy diets for all and averting all forms of malnutrition; (iii) promotion of the right to education through universal school feeding program; (iv) promotion of social transformation through poverty reduction and promotion of gender equity (through reduction in malnutrition, and economic empowerment of women and youth in agribusiness); (v) promotion of planetary health and climate action through greening the Cities, reduction in food loss and gas emissions in the landfills; & (vi) eventually promote peace building and justice for all in African Cities.

The main potential funders for this initiative may include the European Union and the Rockefeller Foundation among others.

#### WHAT IS THE RISK, SHOCK, STRESS THAT THE SOLUTION IS TRYING TO ADDRESS?

The solution is trying to address the shock related to COVID19 pandemic and economic shocks related to rapid urbanization in a context of sub-optimal urban planning that has resulted in high levels of urban poverty and vulnerability to food insecurity in African Cities. The projected urbanization whereby it is estimated that about 68% of the world will be urban by 2050 could only make the situation worse if we do not act now.

#### HOW DOES THE SOLUTION IMPROVE OR ENHANCE RESILIENCE OF FOOD SYSTEMS?

The solution will ensure resilience in the food system by ensuring universal food access through local food production for local use and efficient and equitable food redistribution. It will therefore reduce vulnerability to food insecurity and promote social justice and peace.

#### IS THE SOLUTION RELEVANT TO THE RESILIENCE TRACK? IS IT TARGETING ONE OF THESE CAPACITIES?

- a) Anticipate shocks/risks/stress and/or reduce vulnerability
- b) Manage risks
- c) Prevent (reduce exposure)
- d) Absorb, respond/cope
- e) Adapt to shock-affected scenarios and evolving risk scenarios
- f) Transform the Food System when the current Food System is no longer sustainable.

#### IN WHAT REALMS OF INTERVENTION IS THE SOLUTION DESIGNED TO ACT ON RESILIENCE?

- a) At individual level

- b) At household level
- c) At community level
- d) At land/seascape level
- e) At institutional level

## IS THE SOLUTION GAME-CHANGING?

- a) Impact potential at scale (incl. return on investment)<sup>40</sup>
- b) Actionability (politics, capacity, costs, availability of funds for implementation)
- c) Sustainability (the ability to keep delivering to 2030 and beyond).

## HOW CAN THIS SOLUTION ADDRESS THE PROBLEM?

The solution rides on the hypothesis that if urban communities are encouraged and supported to innovatively and safely produce their own food locally, every household, every community and every institution will be motivated to produce healthy food in their space. This will lead to plentiful healthy food in the space to feed the food producers and sometimes excess where there is more space and in the food markets. Given the variance in availability of space across the social economic divide, some people will be able to produce more food than they need while others may not be able to produce enough. *People are motivated, through the spirit of "Ubuntu" – I am because we are – to share excess food with others who may not have adequate.* A food rescue system in the space would come in handy to support this. Local food production in the cities will ensure that the city remains green despite the projected trend in urbanization, whereby it is projected that 68% of the world will be urban by 2050, with most of the urbanization happening in Africa and Asia. The food rescue system will reduce food waste & thereby reduce the amount of food dumped in landfills, hence reduce carbon emissions. Ultimately the greening of the cities despite rapid urbanization and reduced food loss will avert climate change. The local food production & food rescue system will create jobs in agribusiness for the local population, particularly women & youth in urban poor settings, thereby reducing poverty, promoting gender equity & social transformation.

This solution will ensure universal food access through ensuring food is a common good – accessed by all despite their social economic situation. This will therefore promote the right to adequate and nutritious food. The solution will promote the right to education through universal school feeding program with food produced in schools, promote the right to health through promotion of universal access to healthy diets, and promote social transformation and poverty reduction through economic empowerment of youth and women. This will lead to resilience in the food system and faster recovery from the shock of COVID19 pandemic which worsened the food insecurity situation in African Cities. Ultimately, this is expected to lead to justice for all and peace and harmony in the population.

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE GENERATED IN THE FIELD OR IN ACADEMIA TO SUPPORT THIS IDEA?

The Global Nutrition Report (GNR 2020)<sup>41</sup> indicates that one in every nine people in the world is hungry, with close to a quarter of children under five years stunted. More than 250 million of the world's undernourished people live in Africa and the numbers are increasing faster on that continent than anywhere else in the world<sup>42</sup>. This situation is likely to be worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>43 44</sup> if no action is taken.

<sup>40</sup> Does not necessarily imply a single large intervention as opposed to enabling multiple small actions

<sup>41</sup> Global Nutrition Report 2020

<sup>42</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>

<sup>43</sup> Meera Shekar, Jeanine Condo, Muhammad Ali Pate, Sania Nishtar. [Maternal and child undernutrition: progress hinges on supporting women and more implementation research](#). The Lancet, Vol. 397, No. 10282 published: March 7, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Rebecca A Heidkamp, Ellen Piwoz, Stuart Gillespie, Emily C Keats, Mary R D'Alimonte, Purnima Menon, and others. [Mobilising evidence, data, and resources to achieve global maternal and child undernutrition targets and the Sustainable Development Goals: an agenda for action](#). The Lancet, March 7, 2021

The UN population estimates projects the world population to grow from 7.7 billion in 2019 to 9.7 billion by 2050. Majority (68%) of the 2050 population will live in urban areas, and majority (90%) of the urban growth will be in Asia and Africa<sup>45</sup>. Increasingly, urban population growth is concentrated in urban informal settlements. The urban poor exhibit high levels of food insecurity. For example, in Nairobi, >80% of households in urban slums are food insecure<sup>46</sup>. This suggests a worsening of the food security with the projected urbanization and the impacts of shocks such as COVID19, if there is no action to avert the possible impacts.

## HOW WILL YOUR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT THIS IDEA?

We expect that the African governments will support this initiative, in line with the obligations under global, regional and national policy frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which promote the right to food; the African Union (AU) Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the AU Agenda for 2063, and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact – which promotes food security in cities including local food production, for which many African cities are party. Further, many African countries have constitutionalized the right to food. All these can provide direction on policy measures that governments can incorporate into their national policies to promote universal food access. To contribute to global and regional agenda, and also to address the shock due to COVID19 pandemic and other shocks and build resilience, various government have come up with national level agenda and initiatives. For example Kenya's Vision 2030 promotes prosperity for all, with promotion of food security for all being a key pillar. Further the Kenyan government's one million kitchen gardens initiative is an initiative that was established with the advent of COVID19 pandemic to address the impacts and build resilience for vulnerable communities, including the urban poor. Similar government initiatives are also in other African countries, for example the "three meal a day" initiative in Malawi, among other policies/initiatives across Africa.

The EU funded Horizon 2020 Healthy Food Africa Project ( <https://healthyfoodafrica.eu/>) consortium of 17 partners is already working on some aspects of the proposed solution.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEADING THIS SOLUTION AND ADVOCATING FOR A COALITION OF THE WILLING?

Yes, the African Population and Health Research Center, through it's food system program of work, is willing to lead this. The solution is at the center of actualizing APHRC's 2050 Food System Vision for Nairobi and other African Cities (see the [summary](#), [webpage](#)).

## IS THIS A NEW CONCEPT OR HAVE YOU ALREADY DISCUSSED IT WITH OTHER MEMBER STATES OR PARTNER?

It is an ongoing solution, building on ongoing work and partnerships. We will discuss further with other partners and member states to scale it.

## IS THIS SOLUTION APPLICABLE AT GLOBAL LEVEL (WITH ADAPTATIONS TO SPECIFIC LOCAL CONTEXTS) OR IS IT MEANT TO BE APPLIED IN SPECIFIC CONTEXTS OR PARTICULAR COUNTRIES?

Yes. This solution is applicable at the global level and we have had some discussions of how this could apply globally. We propose starting with African cities but this is scalable globally. We can scale this

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2018). The World's Cities in 2018—Data Booklet (ST/ESA/SER.A/417).

<sup>46</sup> Kimani-Murage EW, Schofield L, Wekesah F, Mohamed S, Mberu B, Ettarh R, Egondi T, Kyobutungi C, Ezeh A: Vulnerability to Food Insecurity in Urban Slums: Experiences from Nairobi, Kenya. *J Urban Health* 2014, 91:1098-1113.

through our regional and global partnerships under the Healthy Food Africa Consortium, the Rockefeller Foundation Food System Vision Prize global network, and through the Transformation Leaders Network supported by the World Economic Forum and the Rockefeller Foundation among other partnerships/networks.

**FINANCIAL SOURCES THAT ARE CURRENTLY SUPPORTING (OR MAY PROVIDE SUPPORT) TO THIS IDEA. ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO EXPLORE TO RAISE FUNDS (PUBLIC, PRIVATE FUNDS, INNOVATIVE FINANCING MECHANISM)?**

Currently, the APRHC has funding from the EU through the Healthy Food Africa Project and also through the 2050 Food System Vision Prize in which we emerged winners. Additional Funding will be seek from other potential donors. Further we are considering local resource mobilization through local philanthropies and community and potentially through social enterprise in future.

**HOW DOES THIS SOLUTION CONTRIBUTE TO (A) EMPOWER WOMEN AND COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITIES, AND (B) THE FULFILMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE RIGHT TO WATER, (C) MAKE USE OF INNOVATIONS (TECHNOLOGIES, INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES)?**

**a) empower women and combat gender inequalities**

Women (and youth) empowerment is at the core of this solution through supporting women (and youth) to actively participate in the food system, including through agribusiness. We anticipate creating many economic opportunities through agribusiness for women (and youth) through the local food production initiative and also the food resue system. We will provide the women (and youth) with capacity building in innovative agroeconomic urban farming, provide them with financial support to engage in agribusiness through seed grants, and provide continuous mentorship to them, working with experts in food systems.

**(b) the fulfilment of human rights, especially the right to food and the right to water**

The solution is human centered and human rights based. At the center of the solution is the promotion of the right to food and universal food access. We are forming a right to food movement, starting in Kenya – with an aim of making it a regional (Africa) and eventually a global movement to promote the right to food and universal food access through actualization of the provisions on the right to food of the Universal Decalration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights among other conventions, and thereby actualizing the sustainable development agenda Zero Hunger Goal by 2030 and beyond. Our solution is also likely to lead to the actualization of other rights including the right to health, the rigjht to water, gender equality, right to education, right to a clean environment and the right to development.

**(c) make use of innovations (technologies, institutions, processes)**

We will use innovative technology to influence efficiency in food production and distribution to reduce food waste in the food system and ensure equity. Food processing and preservation technologies will ensure food stability and availability for a longer time. Employing AgriFood Tech (<https://bit.ly/3bX4BMw>) will promote efficiency, hence improve economics in agribusiness.