

URBAN FUTURES

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NEWSLETTER



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Message from the Project Manager



Mr. Ilishebo Susiku
Lead Programmes Manager

Improving Food, Income and Nutrition Security Through Crop Diversification

Crop diversification is an important step towards building more resilient food systems and improving the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in Zambia. Many farmers depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture and rely on maize as their main crop. This leaves households vulnerable to drought, changing weather patterns, pests, market fluctuations and limited dietary choices.

We need to broaden what we grow and what we eat. Farmers can integrate crops such as sorghum, millet, cassava, cowpeas, legumes, vegetables and other locally adapted crops alongside maize. Growing a wider range of crops can strengthen household food supplies, create additional income opportunities and contribute to more diverse and nutritious diets.

Reducing dependence on synthetic herbicides is also important in supporting more diverse and sustainable farming systems. Practices such as agroecology, crop rotation, intercropping, organic soil management and the use of locally available inputs can help farmers manage their soils and production systems more sustainably.

At Urban Futures, we are working with young people and communities to promote practical approaches that strengthen climate resilience, food production, nutrition and enterprise development. Crop diversification is part of this work. By supporting farmers to grow and add value to a wider range of crops, we can contribute to food systems that provide better opportunities for farmers and more nutritious food for communities.

The Role of Women in Food Systems Transformation in Zambia



By: Angela Mwape Mulenga

As key drivers of the local economy in agricultural hubs like Chongwe, women play an indispensable yet frequently overlooked role in securing the food supply for fast-growing urban centers such as Lusaka. Despite facing systemic barriers including limited land ownership, constrained capital, and the heavy burdens of unpaid care work women persistently innovate through community-led farming, localized food processing, and informal markets.

Initiatives like the Urban Futures program, alongside partners such as the Consumer Unity and Trust Society International (CUTS), are working to dismantle these structural inequalities by embedding multi-stakeholder engagement and youth and women's empowerment into urban agricultural policies.

By providing targeted capacity strengthening, resource access, and inclusive enterprise training, these collaborative platforms equip women and young agripreneurs to drive long-term, sustainable change across the entire food value chain.



Recognizing women as central agents rather than marginal participants is vital for creating resilient, equitable, and nutrition-secure urban food systems across Zambia. When grassroots female leadership is actively integrated into municipal planning and policy frameworks, communities gain enhanced capacity to navigate climate shocks, economic precarity, and food insecurity. Ultimately, fostering a truly enabling environment for sustainable urban agriculture requires targeted, gender-transformative approaches that value local social capital and support women-led enterprises, ensuring that the food baskets of tomorrow are built on a foundation of justice, equity, and shared prosperity.

DID YOU KNOW

Women play a vital role in Zambia's food systems, contributing to farming, food processing, trading, household nutrition and the preservation of indigenous foods. Expanding women's access to land, finance, markets, technology and decision-making can strengthen food production, livelihoods and more inclusive food systems.



Building the generation of strategic leadership.

By: Wiseman Daka

Born on 8 February 1998 in Nyimba, Eastern Province, Wiseman is the fourth-born in a family of six. He was raised in Chipata before relocating to Chongwe in 2016. He holds a Diploma in Clinical Medical Sciences from CHRESO University and is registered with the Health Professions Council of Zambia as a Clinical Officer General.

Beyond healthcare, Wiseman has built a strong record in youth leadership, public policy, advocacy, debate, and community development. He serves as Chairperson of the Urban Futures Youth Champions Committee in Chongwe and is involved in initiatives promoting meaningful youth participation in governance and development.

Wiseman is a co-founder of Start Them Young for Leadership (STYL), an initiative focused on nurturing leadership, civic participation, and democratic engagement among young people. His passion for public discourse has also seen him distinguish himself through competitive debating and policy advocacy, including participation in the People's Budget Competition, where he progressed to the national Top 4 and finished third.

In 2026, Wiseman participated in The People's President, season Two which was implemented by the Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD), with support from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), with a focus on ensuring that youth perspectives on public health governance contributed to the broader national policy discourse, where he merged victorious as the People's President 2026.

The competition further sought to strengthen young people's capacities in public speaking, research, policy formulation, critical thinking and civic engagement, while encouraging them to examine the responsibilities associated with political leadership.

The victory followed a competitive process in which participants demonstrated their ability to research national issues, communicate policy proposals, engage diverse audiences and defend their positions on matters affecting Zambia.



Connecting Farmers to Markets, One Call Away



Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub Call Center

By: Josephine Tembo

The Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub has introduced a toll-free Call Centre, making agricultural information and market opportunities more accessible to farmers, customers and communities in Chongwe.

By dialling 2474, farmers with agricultural produce can access support in identifying potential buyers and market opportunities. Customers looking for farm products can also call the same number to find available products and connect with farmers who can supply them.

The Call Centre provides information about the AgriConnect Hub and its services, helping users connect with relevant information, people and opportunities.

The initiative strengthens farmer-to-market linkages while supporting youth-led enterprises and improving access to agricultural information within local communities.

Building a Sustainable Agri-Connect Hub



The Chongwe Agri-Connect Hub participated in a three-day Investment Readiness Masterclass, focused on exploring how the Hub can evolve from a project-supported space into a sustainable, income-generating business.

The masterclass, facilitated by BongoHive, equipped the team and entrepreneurs with practical tools to assess the Hub's business model, identify potential revenue streams, strengthen financial planning and develop clear investment propositions. Participants also explored how the Hub can turn its services, infrastructure and networks into opportunities that generate income while continuing to support young entrepreneurs.

What Can This Become?

My Urban Futures Journey from Law to Food System Impact

By Nozipho Nkomo

"Education gave me the knowledge; Urban Futures gave me the exposure, skills and confidence to understand what to do with it. I discovered that my knowledge was not meant to sit on a shelf, it was meant to solve problems."

When I joined Urban Futures, I expected to work in the Policy Pillar because of my background in law. Instead, I was selected for Access to Finance, a space I had not deliberately chosen, but one that helped me rediscover my longstanding passion for business and connect it with my legal background.

Through the Youth Champions Committee, I began seeing food as a system connecting agriculture, health, business, markets, finance, policy, sustainability and livelihoods. I became more conscious of what I consume, more interested in traditional foods, backyard farming and value addition, and began seeing organic "waste" as a resource rather than something to discard.



Urban Futures also showed me how law can contribute to the food system. Food businesses need more than capital; it needs to be formalised, compliant and finance ready. Registration, licences, records, good business structures and compliance can determine whether an entrepreneur can access markets, investment and other opportunities.

This perspective has influenced my own life and business interests. Through Zambezi Basket, I have explored how familiar ingredients can become innovative products from dried fruits and sesame seed butter to okra coffee and flavoured peanuts. At home, I am also exploring backyard farming and vermicomposting.

Most importantly, Urban Futures changed how I see possibilities. I no longer ask only, "What is this?" I ask, "What can this become?"

Urban Futures did not simply give me a pillar to lead. It gave me a new lens through which to see law, business, food systems and opportunities for impact in Zambia.



Picture Highlight on Hivos Southern Africa Office visit to Zambia



Urban Futures Hub visit and appreciating the fish pods



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Two cat fish farm, youth beneficiary of the aquirium



Alice Simani, youth bebeficiary of the peanut butter making machine



Prisca Luputa, youth bebeficiary of the Food smoker



Nozipo Nkomo showcasing her dried fruits and vegetables

OCTOBER 6, 2026.

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Urban Futures Showcases Youth Innovation and Healthy Food Systems at Agricultural & Commercial Show

By: Josephine Tembo

The Urban Futures Project used the 98th Zambia Agricultural & Commercial Show, held from 29 July to 3 August 2026, as a platform to showcase youth-led innovations and promote sustainable and healthy food systems.

Through its exhibition stand and Urban Futures Food Court, the project engaged visitors on sustainable agriculture, food safety, healthy eating, agroecological practices and youth entrepreneurship. The exhibition featured value-added food products, indigenous foods and practical solutions developed by young entrepreneurs and project beneficiaries.



The six-day engagement also provided an opportunity to connect with farmers, consumers, private sector actors, government institutions and development partners. Visitors learned about initiatives such as Bokashi organic fertiliser and other approaches that promote local production, value addition and more sustainable food systems.

The Show strengthened the visibility of Urban Futures and provided a platform for youth entrepreneurs to promote their products, engage potential customers and build connections that can support future market opportunities.



BUSINESS MENTORSHIP TESTIMONIALS

CHESTER NJUNGU



I have learned a lot about how to set up and run a business, how to operate online, and most importantly, how to think about business in a more practical way. Having different professionals and people who are already running successful businesses come and share their experiences has made the lessons even more meaningful.

I also appreciate that the program is focused on food systems and organic products because it has helped me see the opportunities that exist in this sector and how I can turn ideas into something practical and sustainable.

GRACE PHIRI

Through this program, I gained a deep understanding of key business development terms, food system transformation, and how young people can use social commerce to grow SMEs. I learned that marketing is more than just advertising – it is about the 7Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence.

As a Food Science and Nutrition student, I am now able to connect what I learn in class with real business opportunities in the food system.



This mentorship program has helped me to understand the difference between a business and a hobby. Before the mentorship I thought I was running a business, but only to find out it was a hobby. With the knowledge I have acquired from this mentorship program I have been able to sit down and look at opportunities that could be turned into real businesses in my community while, contributing positively to the food system. I have also created an active Facebook page promoting backyard farming and I've been receiving phone calls and messages from people who want to learn more about how I do it.



ALISTER CHOMPOLOLA

I gained a better understanding of business development and the food system transformation.

An important lesson was record keeping. I learned that keeping proper records helps a business track sales, expenses, stock, profits, and make better decisions.

Before the mentorship, I thought having a good business idea was enough. Now I know I need a pitch deck, marketing strategy, records, customers, and a whole lot of discipline, even my notebook knows it is part of the business.

KUNDA MALAMA

This mentorship program helped me take my business ideas from concept to something concrete. I created my first business pages through it, learning how to present a business professionally. It also taught me how to build a pitch deck – how to clearly communicate a business idea to investors, covering the problem, the solution, and the ask.

Overall, it gave me practical skills I now use in real business situations, and I'd recommend it to any young entrepreneur looking to sharpen how they package and present their ideas.



NYUMA NYIRONGO



RONALD SAKUWAHA

This mentorship has been remarkably awesome, on my personal account I have learned how to write and prepare a scalable business plan and how to prepare a winning pitch deck. Over the last couple of months of learning and being mentored I went ahead and put that which I desired to start as a business into practice, and I have been able to prototype my product and done sampling to friends and family, and been able to get results on what should be improved and maintained

A JOURNEY OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE



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By: Malambo Mainza

When I joined the Urban Futures Project, I thought it was mainly about food. I soon discovered that the project was also about leadership, entrepreneurship, advocacy and community development.

Through mentorship and engagement with the Urban Futures team, GNS and CUTS International Lusaka, I developed skills that changed how I understood leadership and my role in my community.

As Chairperson of the Urban Futures Cooperative, I learned how to organise young people, chair meetings, resolve conflicts, make decisions and represent youth at different engagements. The experience taught me that leadership is about service and creating opportunities for others.

The project also strengthened my skills in entrepreneurship, marketing, value addition, financial literacy and market linkages. I gained a better understanding of the food system, from production and storage to processing and markets. These lessons helped me see how young people can turn agricultural opportunities into sustainable businesses.

I also developed confidence in public speaking and advocacy through community dialogues and engagements with farmers, local authorities and other stakeholders.

My experience with Urban Futures also shaped my approach to community leadership. In 2026, I contested for the position of Area Councillor for Ntandabale Ward and was elected.

The leadership, advocacy and community engagement skills I developed through Urban Futures continue to influence how I approach public service. I want to use this experience to support opportunities for youth, women, farmers and other community members, with a focus on enterprise development and food security.

Urban Futures has shown me that investing in young people can create leaders who take their knowledge beyond the project and use it to serve their communities.



Mainza Malambo during campaigns

Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Better Project Outcomes

By: Josephine Tembo

The Urban Futures Project strengthened its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) capacity through a two-day capacity-building workshop.

The workshop focused on strengthening the team's skills in MEL frameworks, evaluation, data quality and management, reporting, communication, and the development of practical MEL tools.

The capacity-building will support more systematic tracking of project activities, outcomes and lessons learned, while improving the quality of evidence used to assess progress and inform programme implementation.



CUTS & GNS Staff pose for a picture after the workshop



Food Processing and Preservation Training

By: Josephine Tembo

The Urban Futures Project strengthened youth skills in food processing and value addition through a two-day Food Processing and Preservation Training.

The training combined hands-on learning at the Urban Futures Youth Hub with practical exposure at the University of Zambia (UNZA). Participants learned how to use solar drying technology to preserve fruits and vegetables while maintaining food quality and safety. At UNZA, they also explored modern food processing and preservation equipment and gained exposure to industry practices and technologies.



Building Youth Enterprise Capacity for Export Market.

By: Josephine Tembo

CUTS International strengthened the capacity of Urban Futures Youth Champions through a practical training on trade fair preparedness, trade fair management and export readiness.

The training covered marketing channels, pricing, export procedures and exhibition management, equipping young entrepreneurs with practical skills to present their products and engage potential customers and business partners.

Participants strengthened their confidence in promoting their enterprises, communicating with customers and exploring opportunities in wider markets

Turning Social Media into a Business Growth Tool



By: Josephine Tembo

Social media is becoming an important tool for businesses to build visibility, reach customers and create new market opportunities. For small and growing enterprises, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok and WhatsApp provide affordable channels for promoting products and communicating directly with customers.

Effective business communication goes beyond regular posting. Businesses can use social media to tell their stories, showcase products, share customer experiences and demonstrate the people and processes behind their brands. Consistent and relevant content helps customers understand what a business offers and builds familiarity with the brand.

Social media also provides a direct channel for customer engagement. Businesses can respond to enquiries, receive feedback, understand customer preferences and address concerns. This interaction can strengthen customer relationships while providing useful information that can inform products, services and marketing decisions.

For young entrepreneurs, social media can support access to wider markets. Product showcases, testimonials, partnerships and success stories can attract customers, retailers, investors and potential business partners beyond the immediate community.

The focus should be on making communication support clear business objectives. This includes identifying target audiences, developing relevant content, maintaining a consistent brand voice, monitoring engagement and using digital insights to improve communication.

When used strategically, social media can help businesses move from simply being visible online to building stronger customer relationships, generating enquiries and creating opportunities for growth.



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