

Top Visionary

Restoring Nairobi to “A Place of Cool Waters”

Who We Are

The Vision is led by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC). With close to 20 years of advocating for the urban poor in Nairobi, the team behind APHRC has a special connection with the city and is inspired to advance the Vision.

The Challenge

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, prides itself on its arboretum and its variety of parks and open green spaces. Directly translated from Say Maa, the language of the Indigenous Massai people, Nairobi means “cool waters” in reference to the cold stream flowing through it. Yet due to a host of challenges – including pollution and deforestation – the paradisiacal reference to Nairobi seems long forgotten.

Nairobi today is deeply divided between the “haves” and the “have nots,” with 60% of the 4.7 million residents in Nairobi living in informal settlements, or slums. There are high levels of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition; inadequate water supply and sanitation; widespread environmental pollution; and a lack of income-earning opportunities. Some residents have resorted to crime, child labor, and scavenging from dumpsites to make ends meet.

The socioeconomic divide plays out prominently in diet and nutritional status, with 70% of households in lower income communities consuming fruits at levels below the WHO/FAO recommendations (of at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day), versus 33% of higher income households. Yet, due to inefficient food storage, preservation, processing, and distribution, there is significant food waste at industrial, household, and market levels.

The Facts*

In Nairobi’s informal settlements:

50% of children are **undernourished**



80% of households are **food insecure**

1/5 people eat only **one (or less) meal a day**

*Citations available upon request

“Within the next 10 years, as we march towards zero hunger by 2030, we will green Nairobi with food and fruit trees through agro-ecological, urban farming. We will put in place a food rescue system to ensure no food is lost and no one is hungry. We will create jobs for women and youth in Nairobi’s urban poor settings through agribusiness and create a Right to Food movement to promote the Vision.”

The Vision for the year 2050

To transform the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, from a food-insecure megacity to a paradise of “cool waters”, where people are well-nourished and healthy and live in harmony and peace – in the spirit of Ubuntu – through a regenerative, transformative, and human-centered food system.

Our Solution

To reconstruct Nairobi’s food system to ensure a food-secure and self-reliant community, we identified the actions needed for a successful future in which this Vision becomes a reality:

- First, we will **promote access to safe and healthy foods through innovative agro-ecological urban farming.**
 - We will develop a demonstration farm at the African Population and Health Research Center.
 - To motivate, inspire, and engage the community in this effort, we will identify community spaces where urban farming plots can be built, including at public schools, churches, and other places central to the community.
 - We will lobby policy makers to implement existing legislation that allows this public land to be used to grow vegetables. This initiative will primarily focus on supporting and providing income-generating opportunities for women and youth.
 - We will educate, influence and empower landlords to allow and promote their tenants’ urban farms on their property. And we will work with schools to promote urban farming among children and uphold the culture of farming in the context of a rapidly urbanizing Africa.

- Our next initiative will be to establish a food rescue system to drive our efforts to **reduce food loss and waste, and promote equity through efficient redistribution.** We will engage new partners to sponsor the piloting of our first prototype designed from existing food rescue center models.
- We will also **economically empower the community in agribusiness** through capacity building (training, inputs, support supervision) of community-organized groups (including youth and women’s groups) to encourage urban farming.
- Lastly, we plan to work directly with key civil society groups to **initiate the Right to Food movement** to support advocacy and visibility of our Vision. This movement will host an annual celebration of the Right To Food through a Food Festival around World Food Day (16th October) and will create a network of social activists for the right to food.