



## Responding to inequalities in health in urban areas in east and southern Africa

# BRIEF 4:

## WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM EXPERIENCES AND INNOVATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE YOUTH HEALTH AND WELLBEING?



### Introduction:

#### A lens on urban health inequalities

By 2050, urban populations will increase to 62% in Africa. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and UN Habitat in their 2010 report “Hidden Cities” note that this growth constitutes one of the most important global health issues of the 21st century. Cities concentrate opportunities, jobs and services, but they also concentrate risks and hazards for health (WHO and UN Habitat 2010). How fairly are these risks and opportunities distributed across different population groups but also across generations? How well are African cities promoting current and future wellbeing? How far are health systems responding to and planning for these changes?

TARSC as cluster lead of the “Equity Watch” work in EQUINET explored these questions in 2016-7, for east and southern African (ESA) countries. We implemented a multi-methods approach to gather and analyse diverse forms of evidence and experience on inequalities in health and their determinants *within* urban areas. We also explored current and possible responses to these urban conditions, from the health sector and the health promoting interventions of other sectors and of communities.

We aimed to build a holistic understanding of the social distribution of health in urban areas and the responses and actions that promote urban health equity. This included building an understanding of the distribution of opportunities for and practices promoting health and wellbeing from different perspectives and disciplines. We thus integrated many forms of evidence, including a review of literature, analysis of quantitative indicators, internet searches of evidence on practices, thematic content analysis and participatory validation by those more directly involved and affected. The Harare youth involved in the participatory validation and review were those listed in *Brief 3*.

This brief covers the evidence from internet searches on areas of practice found to be important for urban youth wellbeing from the literature, data and participatory validation reported in *Briefs 1-3*.



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## Exploring approaches to urban health and wellbeing

The literature and statistical reviews and participatory validation by the Harare youth reported in the previous briefs identified various areas to be important for widest collective improvement of urban youth health and wellbeing. The Harare youth prioritised a number of these for a follow up appreciative inquiry on approaches being applied to address them in other countries globally:

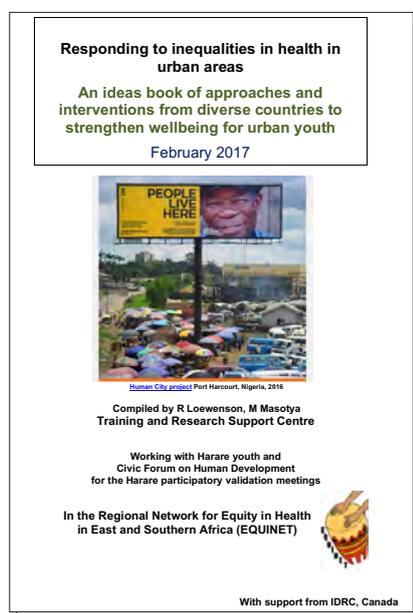
1. **Education**, and ensuring access and responsiveness of the curriculum to youth needs.
2. **Job creation** and the measures to support job creation for youth.
3. **Enterprise creation**, and support of how health promoting activities support youth entrepreneurship.
4. **The creative and green economy**, how it is being developed and organised to support youth employment and wellbeing.
5. **Shelter/social conditions**, including youth access to shelter and non-violent enabling community environments.
6. **Information and communication**, how youth are influencing debates, norms and practices and using social media to promote wellbeing, gender equality and solidarity.
7. **Participatory government**, and youth influence on decisions affecting wellbeing.

TARSC gathered secondary level multimedia evidence of English and Spanish materials post 2000 accessed from google, google scholar, institutional and civil society websites on innovations for the improvement of wellbeing within these areas in cities globally. We included publications, websites, blogs, visual and audio / video evidence on how the practice reaches, involves or benefits youth and more marginalised groups. We included evidence on outcomes, including where available on how the practice addresses social or health inequalities and how it improves wellbeing.

We also carried out deeper searches of identified innovations to determine inclusion and prepare the case study summary. This included the area of wellbeing addressed, country and geographical scale of application, description of the approach, challenges and outcomes. Where there are reports we reference these, and where the information is from online sources we provide hyperlinks to these resources.

An ideas book was produced compiling these interventions where the full set of information can be found (Loewenson and Masotyia 2017). This brief highlights key features of the innovations with some extracts drawn from the ideas book to exemplify issues of areas of work.

The innovations were discussed by the six groups of young people from different areas, economic and social situations in Harare Zimbabwe (as outlined in Brief 3). Participatory processes were used to draw their perceptions and views on the approaches and innovations being implemented to improve youth wellbeing in other countries as well as those being applied in Harare, together with what these interventions imply for practices in the health system.



## Diverse interventions with cross-cutting benefits

The interventions found addressed a range of dimensions of wellbeing, whether material (such as shelter and sanitation), economic (such as resources and income), social (such as skills building, violence prevention or participatory planning) or personal (such as strengthening security and voice).

Many address several dimensions of wellbeing, material and social, with cross-cutting benefits. For example, they build shared organisation and networking together with social skills in the process of addressing material issues; embed measures to promote access to education within nutrition interventions, or tackle issues such as environment and food security jointly.

A variety of interesting practices, experiences, tools and e-resources emerged in the work. It took some searching and screening to locate them, however. It would be useful to have an online portal where people, including young people, can locate and connect to these resources more easily. Photographs and videos give direct representation and voice for those involved, and were a powerful means to show the realities and experiences more directly. The links to these are shown in the examples.

The **Building in Partnership: Participatory Urban Planning (BiP:PUP)** project implemented by Practical Action-East Africa with the Municipal Council of Kitale and community members in three informal settlements. They implemented participatory surveys and participatory planning on security of land tenure, improved service provision, including for water and sanitation, access to micro-credit and skills for small enterprises, construction of springs, wells and new boreholes and other improvements to living and social conditions (See for example a [video](#) on the work) (Okello et al., 2008)



The **Honduras Barrio Ciudad** project aimed to address high levels of homicide and youth violence in certain urban areas of Honduras, attributed to inequity, unemployment, lack of public services, disintegrated families, gender based violence and child abuse, drug abuse, school drop-out, and the availability of firearms. In marginal neighbourhoods in 7 municipalities actions were developed to address crime and violence (C&V) with the communities. Youth developed 'insecurity maps' and conducted walkthroughs of hot spots at night with the community, to inform C&V prevention plans. These actions were based on situational prevention (preventing crime through environmental design, urban renewal), capacity building (through training and technical assistance in multi-sectoral C&V prevention, community crime mapping and diagnostics and community safety and monitoring) and complementary investments in infrastructure and programs for community safety (Gamero 2010).



**Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE)** is a youth collaborative for education and racial justice led by students of colour from six community organizations across Chicago. It was set up by student leaders in 2007, driven by the belief that the students, as most affected by educational inequities, also hold the solutions to improving the system. The 250 youth leaders engage over 350 000 students in online surveys and action research, producing change in areas such as exclusionary discipline practices, investment in social- emotional supports and in approaches to school safety (VOYCE 2011).



## Building visibility, voice and relationships

Many of the processes **address a demand for visibility and voice**, sometimes in contexts where there has been conflict between communities and authorities over conditions. For youth in informal settlements, in education institutions, and those who are unemployed and homeless, these processes provide a vehicle to demand recognition that “we are here, study here, or live here,” to generate confidence to assert their rights and shift how others perceive their conditions. The processes **build relationships between young people. They also connect young people with others that they need to interact with**, but with whom they may not have had an existing connection. This includes local authorities, urban services, administrative and technical personnel, artists and different community leaders, some of whom took part in prior activities in their youth .

The [youth participatory budgeting \(Joven de Rosario \(PPJoven\)\)](#) in Rosario Argentina began in 2004 to raise the active participation of young people 13-18 years-old in budget processes. This was a group traditionally excluded from this area of decision-making. Participation is free and open to all of youth in Rosario's neighbourhoods. The work process begins with first round assemblies in each district, that diagnose problems in the neighborhood from the youth's perspective. The assemblies discuss what needs to be done to improve the quality of life for youth in the city and to recognize their rights and obligations. Male and female youth councilors are elected to a Youth Participatory District Council.

This is a permanent forum that organises the ideas from the assemblies and presents projects to address issues raised to the city council for their technical and financial evaluation. Three months later, in a second round of assemblies, the delegates discuss the district



projects and prioritise with municipal officials which of these can be effectively completed. After this, the municipality budget integrates identified priorities and the youth review and assess the experience.

[A video shows the 2017 process.](#)

The municipality has selected 103 youth proposed projects and assigned 4200 mn pesos from the budget for them. The funded projects include youth workshops, construction of a community library and social events. (Fletcher and Smith 2016).

## New practices link to local ideas and familiar settings

The participatory youth-oriented dialogue and capacity building within municipal budget processes, such as in the Rosario, Argentina case above, is one example of this. Innovative practice often involves modification of something already in place to make it work for marginalized communities. For example the [Equity for Tanzania](#) loan scheme provides equipment rather than cash to address equipment needs and collateral gaps in low income communities. After approval, the fund pays the supplier directly for the equipment purchase and delivery to the customer. Customers then make repayments to the fund over three years.

Some processes **make use of online methods and social media**, to make connections, to provide information and advice or to share and discuss experiences across settings. IT has been used to support participatory planning in a range of settings, including through online mapping and surveys (such as by *Voices of Youth Maps* and *Slum dwellers International* described on page 3 and adjacent). The surveys have been used to facilitate crowdfunding of large funding needs by a large number of small, people's contributions (such as the *Luchtsingel infrastructure* in Rotterdam described later). Online *Change Labs* and spaces have been used in Mexico, South Africa, Kenya and other cities for young people to generate and model ideas for urban improvement or new enterprise without high costs.

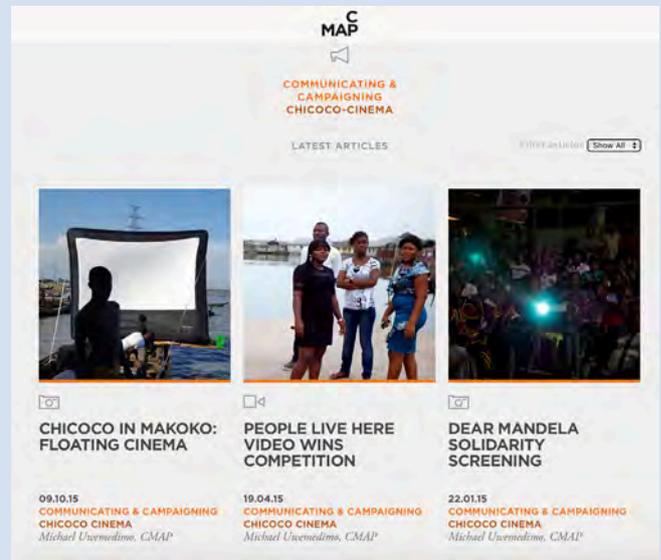
**Slum Dwellers International (SDI)** is a network of federations in 33 countries that exchanges the shared realities, knowledge, aspirations and values of those growing up and living in slums. 'Know your city' [SDI databases](#) are some of the largest, publicly available databases on informal settlements in the world. The data is collected by SDI members and used to negotiate visibility and improvements by local slum dweller movements. For example, the [Kenya Slum Youth Federation](#) collects this information to give a presence to people otherwise invisible in formal records and to secure land tenure and services (Makau 2011).



Social media has also been used to ensure accountability on urban services. **Spotholes** in Boston, for example, used social media to report potholes for road repair, a tool that was also noted to exist in Harare. Internet, and social media provide a resource for raising the visibility of urban social conditions, for organising evidence and sharing information. They complement and do not replace more direct participatory processes, however.

Many of the approaches found **build innovation around local ideas, practices and resources**. Through participatory approaches they bring local experience, ideas and resources to the table, and build on this to set and implement shared plans. The [Human City project](#) described below is one such example.

The **Human City project** in an informal settlement of Port Harcourt, Nigeria is one of many examples of such practice. Initiated to help excluded communities halt illegal demolitions, it has developed for them to demand their rights and gain a place in the planning and politics of their city. The interventions were identified and designed with the community, including a floating 'Chicoco' radio station and 'Chicoco' inflatable cinema, a 'People Live Here' multi-platform media campaign, a [building and planning element](#) where residents voice to their visions for the future, detail it through maps and action plans, and create civic building and public spaces, and a [human rights action and research](#) carrying out rights based research, awareness and litigation (CMAP 2016).



## Raising social dimensions of and social resources for wellbeing

The innovations **often give more prominence to social dimensions**, such as the recognition in the [Human City project](#) of a radio and film intervention to respond to the community's desire for social debate and networking, or in the [Green My Favela](#) project described below that creates desirable public and green spaces not only for food security and incomes but also to build shared and respected spaces for community interactions. They recognise, as in the case of [CuidArte](#) in Chile, the way social processes and art can build awareness and public support for therapeutic, educational, recycling and other services. They also engage people's creativity and curiosity, such as the [Pulse of the City](#) art installation to check blood pressure in Boston.



**Green My Favela** (GMF) is an environmental regeneration project located in the favelas (informal settlements or slum communities) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to reclaim degraded land and to create more productive green spaces inside favelas. Favela residents green what is possible through collaborations with individuals, families, NGOs, schools, the private and public sector, and with social innovators remediate neglected and abused land; cultivate nutritious crops; and make more productive, environmentally responsible, and desirable public space. The gardens create clean space, safe water supply, diminishing vermin, and provide some income from food grown and sold locally (Green My Favela 2014).



There are thus many examples of mechanisms and spaces that **provide an enabling environment for youth to bring their ideas and views forward**. These are youth-specific and youth-controlled spaces, (such as youth councils in USA or [VOYCE in Chicago](#); [Innovate Kenya](#), “[Youth Lead the Change](#)” [participatory budget process in Boston](#), where young people can meet, exchange, build and sustain collaborative actions. Having their own space enables young people to articulate and build evidence around their issues. This appears to strengthen youth confidence to take these issues into formal platforms, such as in the campaigns of the [Urban Youth Collaborative](#) where New York City students successfully engaged on education reforms.

In many cases the **youth are themselves the resources in the process**. In the [Promoting Access to Community Education \(PACE\)](#) programme in Kenya, for example, high school graduates are teaching school students, benefiting both their own career paths and the students’ education (Gathenya et al., 2012). Nairobi youth community based organisations in [Taka Taka Solutions](#) are building incomes from waste management, while improving urban environments (Njenga et al., 2010). Youth in the [Youth Peacemaker Network in South Sudan](#) have played a role in restoring peace in their own conflict-impacted communities (WIPD undated). In 2014, [Restless Development](#) involved 1 452 youth mobilisers to reach 8 880 communities across 12 of the 14 districts with Ebola in Sierra Leone with information on Ebola prevention and support (Restless Development 2016). While the youth involved may not always initiate these processes, they contribute critical ideas and inputs to shape or strengthen them.

## Facilitating co-operation between communities and services

Various measures facilitate co-operation and reduce barriers to interactions between communities and services. **‘Co-locating’ the different services needed by young people in the same place** creates common entry points and overcomes barriers to uptake. For example Finland launched one-stop guidance centres for youth, to strengthen and simplify services for them, including personal advice and guidance, career planning, social skills, education and employment support (EC 2018). This aimed to improve co-ordination across services, allowing for shared staff training on competencies for working with youth and team approaches.

**Non-government organisations play a role in many cases in facilitating new practice**, in catalysing practice within social groups and in bringing innovative experience from one setting or country to another. These, and social networks like *Slum Dwellers International* also help to link youth activities across countries. Some, such as [Connect ZA](#) in South Africa connect youth initiatives in lower income countries to funds in higher income countries.

Initiatives such as that of Connect ZA, the crowdsourcing of the [Luchtsingel / ZUS infrastructure](#), described adjacent, or the Equity for Tanzania equipment loan scheme reflect a different mode of cross subsidy between high and low income settings than development aid. In these initiatives, **common interest organisations - and the public - co-operate more directly in mobilising and organising resources**. At the same time, states have also applied innovative approaches to funding initiatives, such as Korea’s [K-Startup Grand Challenge](#) 2016, using public resources to attract global innovators to make the country a prominent start-up business hub globally, particularly in relation to the green and creative economy, and the support for an *Angel Investment Support Center* to ‘matchmake’ private funders with youth ventures (OECD 2015).

The **Luchtsingel / ZUS** is the world’s first crowd funded public infrastructure. It has a 400-meter- long pedestrian bridge that reconnects three districts in the heart of Rotterdam. When, in 2011, it was announced that a planned development had been cancelled, Rotterdam residents took over with thousands of small donations. Just €25 bought one of the 17,000 planks that spans the 1,150-foot bridge. Each plank had the contributor name etched in it, putting the “public” in public works. Crowd-funding was used for the bridge to be financed in an alternative way [so that] construction could start and meant that improvement in the area was no longer fully dependent on real estate developments. See the video at <https://vimeo>.



## Taking time to do things differently

**These innovations progress over time.** They start with small scale work and sometimes single ideas and demonstrations – like a technology for managing waste. In some cases they use IT modelling as a way of showing what an idea can look like in practice to show to authorities or communities (UN Habitat 2016). In the solar developments in Nicaragua's [Sabana Grande](#), initial work to develop solar lighting extended to use of solar power in a community restaurant and in youth centre activities (Guevara-Stone 2014). In Indonesia, sites for youth creative enterprises attract youth, but also grow as 'cool creative' tourist sites that over time generate new investment and new employment options (Azali 2015).

While they may build on local experience and in familiar settings, these approaches **often also imply doing things differently, rather than tweaking current approaches.** UNIDO (2013) reports, for example, how youth entrepreneurship in the creative economy depends on the usual factors of access to markets, finance, investment and intellectual property rights, but that the approaches to address youth's new entry needs market incubators, business residencies and connections to social media. [Minecraft](#), a familiar online game, has for example been used for urban design with young people, providing an accessible means to generate project plans and build technical review and wider community confidence in youth proposals (UN Habitat 2016).

One **gap identified in many of the practices found is the absence of monitoring and evaluation** of their outcomes or impact. There is some documentation of outputs and changes achieved but evaluation of intended outcomes appears to be an important area to strengthen.

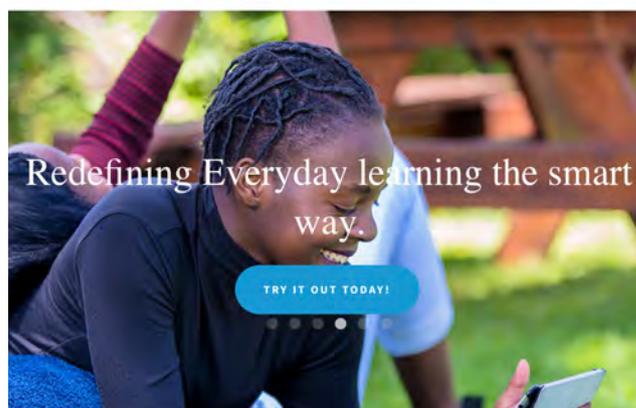
## Harare youth review of the innovations for urban wellbeing

When the approaches being used in other countries were reviewed by the six groups of young people in Harare, the youth observed a range of things from these examples that they saw as having potential relevance for and feasibility in improving wellbeing in Harare.

This included:

1. The **use of internet platforms**, including to encourage entrepreneurs, to monitor council services and for youth to **work together on their own issues**: *I liked the idea that the students were united and took their world into their own hands.* An example was raised of [Ruzivo digital learning](#) that is aligned to the Zimbabwean school curricula making support for education accessible to all pupils.
2. The **role of crowdfunding** as an approach to resourcing activities, noting the presence of such sites in Zimbabwe ('*tswana.com*' and '*go-fund*') but also that it not *replace the duty of councils to involve is in setting a good budget.*
3. The role of **community media in turning a conflictual situation into communication between residents and planners and participation in urban planning.**
4. The measures to **improve quality and use of public spaces**, such as providing some free wifi and charging points in public spaces, combining *socialising and interaction with a service*, or community organised urban agriculture: *It turns neglected spaces into farms!*
5. The role of innovation festivals, as a **'festival of ideas' to share and market innovations**, where current cultural events such as Shoko festival in Harare could extend to cover technology and other innovations.

**RUZIVO**  
Smart Learning



In general, the Harare youth perceived the need for a range of informal approaches to create space for such innovation for wellbeing in Harare: peer-to-peer strategies, engaging with residents on specific areas within their localities; youth hubs and innovation festivals; online surveys, facebook polls, social media and internet based crowdfunding. While formal mechanisms like the junior parliament or the local government junior council were seen to be useful, and partnerships with state institutions essential to develop solutions to priority problems, it was perceived that these formal mechanisms needed to link to and enable the informal spaces and processes above, to reach and engage young people across the whole city.

These linkages were also seen to be important for urban primary health care to promote health and address the health and wellbeing of urban youth. It was suggested that city health departments could more proactively use e-governance, providing online places for people to report issues, get information and provide feedback, and that health department teams go into community to consult or implement programmes, and engage youth forums on programmes and budgets. Equally it was raised that young people could be more involved in the work of the council, in disseminating health information in the community and as a community watchdog and voice for health. Youth can take up issues with peers that affect health and share information on perceptions and concerns with the health services. Further, for urban primary health care to adequately address the factors affecting health, it was raised that youth have a role to play in engaging on the health promoting actions of other sectors, such as the protection of green spaces, healthy foods and safe environments.



Margolis wheel discussion on interactions between health departments and youth, Harare

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Page 1: CMAP/cmapping.net

Page 3: Achok Youth Group Centre, Kenya, Caroline Cage, 2018 (top) Honduras Barrio Ciudad project website, accessed 2018 (middle)

Page 4: Barrio Cuidade, L Gamero (top), Slum Dwellers International Know Your City website, AK MacPherson (bottom)

Page 5: CMAP/cmapping.net (top), Pulse of the City website (bottom left), Green My Favela, Lea Rekow (bottom right), all accessed 2018

Page 6: Luchtsingel / ZUS + Hofbogen BV, Ossip van Duivebode

Page 7: Ruzivo website, accessed 2018

Page 8: R Loewenson, 2018

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