



urban>>futures

Cultivating the land: laying the groundwork for change

Urban Futures Program
2024 annual report



A global program at the intersection of urban food systems, the well-being of young people and climate action, with local collaborators in Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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Introduction

Young people driving change in food systems

Despite the vast expanses of land all over the earth, it's actually in cities where most people live. And by 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. Not surprisingly, cities account for nearly 80 percent of the world's food consumption. But not everyone has equal access to that food. As with many other forms of inequality, decisions about food— what kind it is, how it's produced, who gets it, and who profits—are often made top-down, without involving the consumer.

That's why we have to rethink how our food systems work. We need systems that are fair, healthy, inclusive, and resistant to the impacts of climate change. Food systems are more than just ways of feeding people; they are also drivers of positive social change.

But this kind of transformation won't just come from government policies. In fact, in many places that's the last place where it starts. The real catalysts of change are people. Especially young people, women, and communities that historically have been left out of decision-making. Their creativity, energy, and leadership are what will really give us the Urban Futures we need.

What is Urban Futures?

Urban Futures is a global program connecting urban food systems with youth wellbeing and climate action. We started in 2023 in ten urban regions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia with the aim of seeing young people play a central role in shaping healthier and more sustainable food systems. The program works with 38 local organizations that design, test, and scale up ideas from their own communities.

Urban Futures is made possible by Fondation Botnar, a philanthropic foundation dedicated to the wellbeing of young people in urban and digital spaces around the world.

Hivos' role, as the global facilitator, is to pass on our experience in advancing climate justice, gender equality, and supporting movements. And we also learn together with partners and rightsholders, sharing knowledge across regions, and— most importantly—putting young people at the center of everything we do.

Our approach

Urban Futures is built on four key pillars that support and strengthen each other.

First, we focus on inclusive governance. That means creating spaces—both formal and informal—where young people can actively participate in decision-making. Where they can help shape policies, influence budgets, and bring their voices to public discussions. The program trains youth in leadership, political advocacy, and accountability, while creating safe platforms from which they can act to influence local, national, and international food policies.

Second, we work on changing the narrative. Through culture, art, journalism, and community media, young people show that food is not just a commodity, but is deeply connected to justice, health, culture, and climate. The program trains youth in communication skills, public speaking, and storytelling so they can clearly and credibly explain their proposals to their peers and campaign in their communities for sustainable, culturally inclusive, and climate-resilient food systems.

Third, we promote sustainable food systems. We train young people in nutrition, agroecological farming, fair distribution, waste reduction, and other circular economy solutions that respect local ecosystems and put people and the planet first. These lessons, when shared throughout the young people's communities, eventually translate into more widespread responsible production, distribution, and consumption patterns.

And finally, we invest in transformative entrepreneurship and finance. We help young people and women start and develop food-related businesses by providing training, seed funding, and access to markets. This helps build stronger, more inclusive local economies. Once young people learn to design workable business models, access resources, and attract investments, they can build alliances with public, private, and financial actors, and gain visibility in markets and policy spaces. Over time, this will lead to increased youth employment and sustainable enterprises that generate income, while channeling more finance towards green entrepreneurship.



The first phase of Urban Futures

The 2024 Urban Futures Global Report presents the results of our first year, organized around the four pillars just described. It has been a process of preparing for later phases that will yield broader and more lasting change. The lessons learned, the capacities developed, and the networks built so far are a solid foundation for the youth movement we are building.

And the results are already visible.

Urban Futures helped create or strengthen over ten platforms where people from different sectors come together to talk, plan, and act. More than 270 young leaders are now actively involved in these spaces, working with decision-makers and community groups to shape better food policies. Over 1,500 young people have been trained in agroecology, advocacy, and entrepreneurship. And they are putting those skills to work—launching projects that respond to the real needs of their communities.

Young people are stepping up. They're leading conversations about food and climate, and they're coming up with bold, creative solutions. It's inspiring to see. But we know there's still a long way to go.

To keep this momentum, we need to scale these efforts, secure sustainable funding, and build stronger networks that support youth-led innovation for the long term.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, Urban Futures will keep empowering local leaders. We want to see more young people "at the table" when food policies are made—and we want their ideas to turn into real action.

We will keep expanding support for climate-smart initiatives that deliver real benefits for people and the planet. And we will continue to share what we learn—creating tools and resources that any city or region can use to build better food systems.

We believe that by working together, we can speed up the transition to food systems that are resilient, fair, and ready for the challenges of the future.

A call to action

On behalf of the entire Urban Futures team and our partners, we are proud to share these first results with you. We hope they inspire more collaboration—with youth networks, organizations, and donors who are committed to real, systemic change.

And we invite you to join us. Stand with the young people and women who are already leading the way. Let's work together to build a more just, sustainable, and nourishing future for our cities.

First signs of growth

Results that mark the beginning of youth-led food system transformation

Inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance

882 youth strengthened their technical skills, enhanced their leadership, and consolidated their legitimacy to influence decision-making.



278 youth actively participate in **10 multi-stakeholder platforms** in Ecuador, Colombia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia. **4 advocacy actions** were recorded in **local public policies** in Ecuador and Zimbabwe.



Increased financial flows toward climate-resilient and sustainable food systems

161 youth strengthened their capacities in financial management and entrepreneurship through training, mentoring, and business development processes.



145 youth participated in networking and partnership spaces with public, private, and financial actors, positioning themselves for new livelihood opportunities and market access.



45 youth-led enterprises in sustainable and climate-resilient food systems were supported.



17 jobs were created (including seasonal, part-time, and full-time positions)



Strengthening youth communication and leadership skills

71 youth strengthened their communication skills to become effective advocates for food system transformation.



Over 7 million people reached through communication campaigns with messages aimed at raising awareness about food system transformation.



Advancing sustainable and climate-resilient food systems

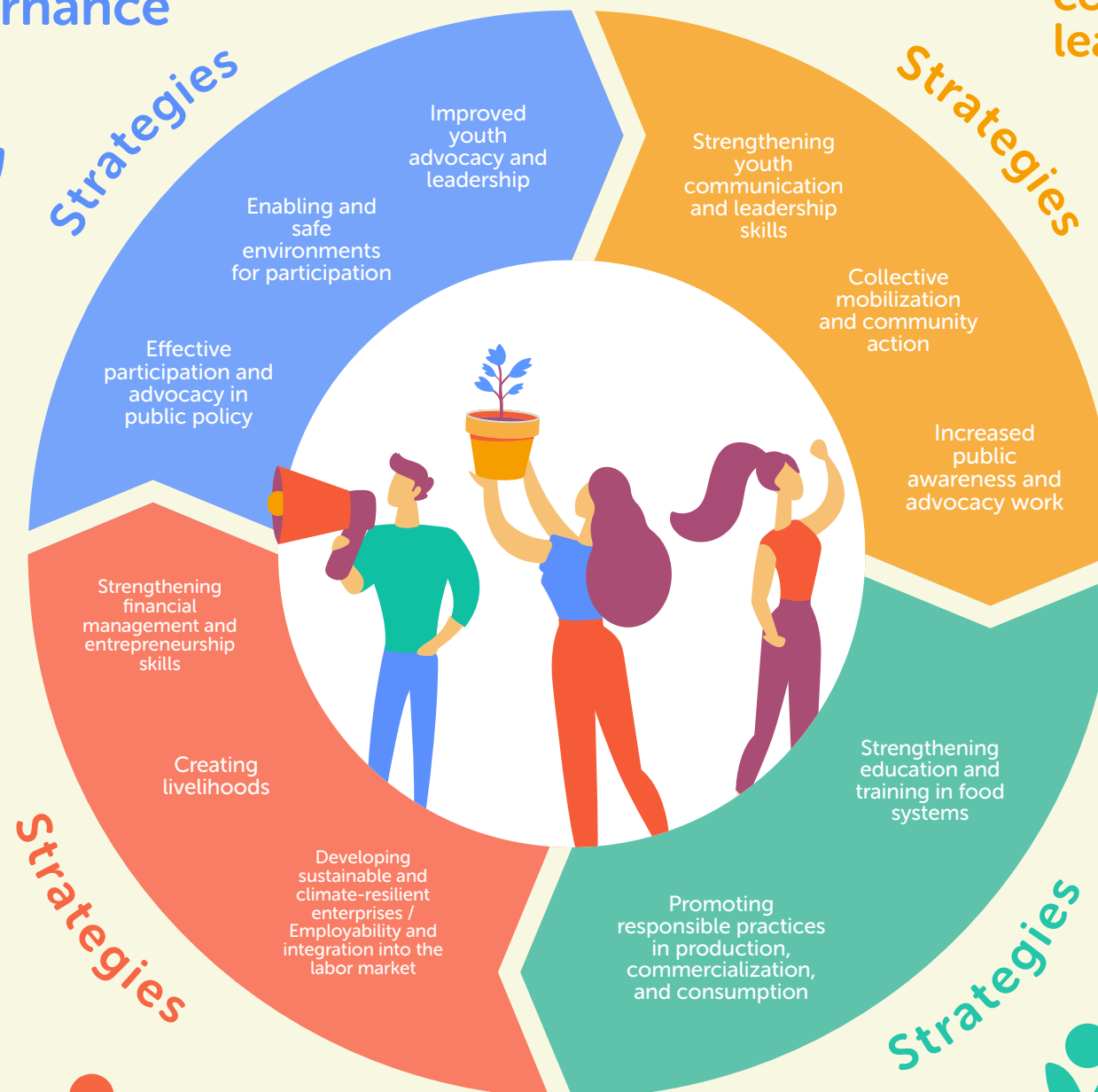
487 participants strengthened their knowledge and skills through various education and training activities in food systems.



2 responsible commerce fairs were promoted in Latin America, supporting agroecological production.



2 responsible production processes took place in the Southern Africa region, where youth applied climate-smart techniques such as agroecology and hydroponics.



Stories



Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Planting without soil, cultivating hope



Chongwe, Zambia

Women who sow the future with local food



Kitwe, Zambia

A generation that flourishes



Mutare, Zimbabwe

The family that sows the nutritional revolution



Cali, Colombia

From local streets to the global stage

Latin America

Southern Africa

Indonesia



MANPANOR, Ecuador

Where food is territory, economy and resilience



Medellín, Colombia

Bridges that cross the fields to the city



Quito-Chocó Andino, Ecuador

Chala: Youth cultivating the local economy



Bandung, Indonesia

Sowing the next generation of food entrepreneurs



West Manggarai, Indonesia

Multi Stakeholders Forum for Food System of West Manggarai (MSF)

Southern Africa

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

In 2024, Urban Futures in Bulawayo promoted resilience to droughts and food crises through youth leadership. More than 250 young people were trained in green technologies such as hydroponics, smart irrigation, and waste valorization, with support from Lupane State University. The City Council recognized youth as a key actor in urban agriculture and climate adaptation policies.

Looking ahead to the coming years of program implementation, youth-led initiatives will aim to scale through agroforestry, food hubs, and narratives that reclaim traditional diets, consolidating a green and just future.

Planting without soil, cultivating hope

In the heart of Bulawayo, a city struggling with drought, rising food prices, and urban agriculture marked by inefficient resource use, adverse environmental impacts, and limited community benefits, change is taking root.

It's being driven by young people who are stepping forward with initiative and a deep understanding of innovative, sustainable practices.

In 2024, Urban Futures and Lupane State University launched Zimbabwe's first Advanced Certificate in Urban Food System Green Technologies, a training program that became a turning point. For the first time, youth from vulnerable communities, including five young people with disabilities, gained hands-on experience in climate-resilient agricultural techniques such as hydroponics, smart irrigation, and waste valorization systems.

The training was provided with sign language interpretation throughout the course, allowing deaf participants to fully engage, not only learning alongside their peers but also co-leading group projects and community presentations.

This program became a recognized pathway for youth to enter the green economy, such as iNdimizulu Hydroponics, a low-cost soilless farming initiative adapted to Bulawayo's water-scarce environment. Another group won the INALA Smart Agro Challenge, where the youths developed a Farmlink App that provides direct links to suppliers, weather and climate updates, courses and guides as well as market research data through chatbot.

The course also sparked broader change. The Bulawayo City Council officially recognized youth as key actors in urban agriculture and climate adaptation policy processes. Similarly, this knowledge extended to other spaces, such as homes and campaigns promoting traditional diets to reintroduce indigenous vegetables in school cooking competitions.

This program is a seed that cultivates a future where youth are builders of climate-smart cities.



Chongwe, Zambia

The program in Chongwe achieved significant progress in transforming the urban food system within a context of rapid urban expansion, land pressure, and climate change impacts. Despite limitations such as restricted access to land, capital, and technical assistance, the program promoted youth participation in governance spaces, encouraged sustainable food practices, and opened new financing opportunities for agri-food enterprises. Among the most notable achievements was the creation of the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, where young women established microenterprises producing nutritious foods for infants, combining community nutrition with economic empowerment. This hub became a safe space for training in climate-smart agriculture, value addition, and entrepreneurship, connecting youth cooperatives and positioning young people as key drivers of change in the local food economy.



Women who sow the future with local food

The Chongwe district is experiencing rapid urbanization, where rural traditions coexist with dynamic demographic change. In this context, there has been remarkable growth in women-led microenterprises focused on producing nutrient-dense snacks, meals and beverages. These initiatives emerged from workshops organized by the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub. For many participants—especially young mothers—this was their first experience with business training, and it offered a supportive space where their ideas and voices were truly valued.

After learning food preservation techniques, nutrition focused processing and small business management, several young women ventured into diverse processing and value addition techniques. One woman is producing baby food made from sweet potatoes, which need no added sugar thanks to their natural sweetness. Two other young women are adding value to natural roots, flowers, and leaves collected from their backyard and sack gardens, such as hibiscus. Their juices and herbal teas promote wellness and are commonly used to help ease fibroid and menstrual pain. Another unique enterprise is AfriKay Cosmetics, a brand owned by a young woman producing natural cosmetics, through which she promotes self-care and self-awareness.

Urban Futures focused not only on technical skills, but also on strengthening women's confidence and expanding

their access to networks. Through the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, participants gained visibility among key decision-makers, meeting directly with district officials and parliamentarians to ensure that their businesses—and the challenges they faced—were recognized and addressed.

In a context where access to capital, land, and networks continues to be shaped by gender norms, these efforts created meaningful opportunities for women to advance their leadership, autonomy, and economic empowerment on their own terms.

This is how they became part of a broader ecosystem: supported by mentorship, grounded in climate-smart agriculture, and recognized through digital communication efforts that helped normalize women as entrepreneurs in local narratives. With the support of district focal points, even women with disabilities participated, further expanding the boundaries of inclusion.

These enterprises demonstrate how equitable transformation of food systems begins with small, deeply local actions, when women are not only included but actively leading. By 2025, with additional seed funding and access to land under negotiation, these microenterprises could become models of community nutrition, gender equity, and economically resilient initiatives driven by young women.

Kitwe, Zambia

Since its launch in 2024, the program has driven in Kitwe, a Copperbelt city shaped by mining and widening inequalities among youth, a multi-sectoral strategy aimed at transforming urban food systems, powered by youth leadership.

Through trainings in climate-smart agriculture, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and the use of technologies such as hydroponics, the program has actively engaged young people as agents of change, amplifying their voices in decision-making spaces and positioning them as green entrepreneurs and community leaders.

With the support of strategic partners and public platforms such as national radio, young people are redefining their role in urban development, contributing to the transition toward a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive city.

A generation that flourishes

In 2024, COSMA AgroSolutions was born: an initiative led by three young people who chose to sow hope in a land where both soil and water are scarce. Confronted with the pressures of an economy driven by often informal and risky mining, these youth turned to hydroponic agriculture as an innovative, resilient, and sustainable alternative.

Their proposal focuses on soilless cultivation, using low-cost hydroponic systems that make it possible to grow kale, lettuce, and Chinese cabbage, even in small urban spaces such as backyards or balconies. The team, made up of Eugene, Sophie, and Conrad, combines expertise in agronomy, environmental engineering, communication, and management to train other young people, provide technical support, and demonstrate that it is possible to strengthen food security without relying on large tracts of land, but instead through innovative practices adapted to the urban environment.

COSMA has fostered community building by sharing knowledge, connecting producers with local and university markets, and sparking the interest of a generation that has historically been disconnected from agriculture.

Their educational and hands-on approach has engaged dozens of young people, both for self-consumption and for the replicability of the entrepreneurship model.

They have strengthened their skills, received mentorship, and expanded their networks. In a context of climate change and water scarcity, their model demonstrates that youth can lead adaptive, accessible, and scalable solutions. COSMA not only grows food, it cultivates a new perspective: one where agriculture is synonymous with innovation, dignity, and opportunity.

What began as an experiment in an urban garden is today a living network of young people who are transforming their territory leaf by leaf, drop by drop, with climate intelligence, community commitment, and a vision for the future.



Mutare, Zimbabwe

In 2024, Urban Futures in Mutare moved from its founding phase to strategic implementation, addressing challenges such as food insecurity, unsustainable consumption, and political restrictions that hinder urban agriculture. However, it managed to make progress by positioning youth and women as protagonists of systemic change in the city's food environment.

Milestones include the creation of youth innovation spaces, advocacy for public policies for more inclusive urban agriculture, and the promotion of climate-resilient practices, which reached 1,350 young people. These actions not only strengthened livelihood alternatives but also placed sustainability and public health at the center of urban debate.

The experience provided valuable lessons about the importance of flexibility, behavior change communication, and promoting youth entrepreneurship as drivers of resilience.



The family that sows the nutritional revolution

In 2023, in the city of Mutare, Zimbabwe, Impilo Organics was born, a family startup that has planted a philosophy of life. Founded by Nomagugu Chieza together with her son and daughters, the initiative seeks to transform urban food systems from the heart of the home, reclaiming indigenous knowledge, promoting organic agriculture, and creating economic opportunities for rural communities led by women and youth.

Impilo, which means “life” in a local indigenous language, is inspired by the need to heal, from the soil to the body. They produce items such as teas, oils, natural cosmetics, dehydrated vegetables, and superfoods derived from baobab, in collaboration with rural families who harvest, process, and add value to native foods. Everything is produced with deep respect for the environment, integrating sustainable practices such as waste recycling, urban agroecology, and intercropping. For the Chieza family, each food item not only nourishes, it also educates, restores, and transforms.

With the support of the Urban Futures program, the family has strengthened their marketing skills, from presenting their project to secure funding, to participating in fairs, masterclasses, and dialogues with other young entrepreneurs. In this way, their work has reached schools, restaurants, local markets, and the collective imagination, demonstrating that indigenous foods can be easily incorporated into daily diets, are nutritious, and above all, can coexist harmoniously with the land.

Today, Impilo Organics stands as an example that food systems are cultivated through everyday life. It is a commitment to return to the roots, honor agricultural work, and build community through nutrition.

Latin America

Cali, Colombia

In 2024, Urban Futures in Cali strengthened food systems as spaces of identity, resilience, and youth participation, combining agroecological knowledge with digital storytelling and connecting local experiences to global dynamics.

Under the leadership of the Sidoc Foundation and with the involvement of over 150 stakeholders, a city-region strategy with a gender and youth focus was consolidated, achieving milestones such as the formal inclusion of young people in the Territorial Council for Food and Nutritional Sovereignty and Security, technical support to evaluate local food policy, and the launch of a youth-led Ideas laboratory.

Although challenges persist, such as institutional fragmentation and lack of political continuity, the program adapted through partnerships, learning, and increased visibility in spaces like COP16, demonstrating that systemic change requires trust, locally grounded communication, and flexible strategies in the face of changing contexts.

From local streets to the global stage

In October 2024, while Cali became a global epicenter with the 16th United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16), another equally significant event took place in the heart of the San Antonio Ecobarrio. Young leaders, women, and community farmers participated in an eco-pedagogical tour developed in partnership with the Casa de Las Burbujas Foundation, during which strategic spaces for the city were identified in terms of agri-food and environmental planning.

This territorial exercise highlighted local initiatives while also opening the door for the Urban Futures Cali program to participate in the From Learning to Action event, led by the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia (APCColombia). In this space, the program shared with national and international participants the diagnosis of Cali's food system, as well as the city-region articulation strategy guiding its work.

50 participants engaged with urban gardens, composting, pollinator-friendly practices, and the Edible Forest. As a result of this participation, APC-Colombia extended an invitation to the Sidoc Foundation and the Urban Futures program in particular to join the Investment and Philanthropy Roundtable, expressing interest in including the program in the Pacific Portfolio.

This document, promoted by the Vice Presidency of the Republic, will compile

strategic processes for which funding sources will be sought to strengthen and amplify their objectives.

Cali also advanced efforts to inspire behavior change through the co-creation of new narratives about inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient cities, particularly within communities and educational institutions. A comprehensive methodological roadmap was developed, outlining work sessions, thematic priorities, expected outcomes, and a timeline.

Additionally, efforts to promote youth- and women-led employment and entrepreneurship in the food system progressed with the identification of 30 emerging entrepreneurs aligned with sustainability and food system transformation. This group now forms a collaborative network focused on capacity building, market access, and innovation. They have also showcased their businesses at the first Green Entrepreneurs Fair, organized in partnership with a local organic farmers' market to connect with allies from diverse sectors.

These actions reflect the potential of bringing together communities, private organizations, public entities, and international actors around a common agenda. At the same time, they demonstrate how youth and women can amplify their narratives, influence policy processes, and drive concrete transformations, while creating more and better opportunities for their holistic development.



MANPANOR, Ecuador

With every challenge comes an opportunity to grow. In 2024, Urban Futures in MANPANOR faced obstacles such as coordination between municipalities, planning difficulties, and insecurity, yet it still made progress and laid a solid foundation for the transformation of food systems with youth and community leadership. Among the milestones are the inclusion of agroecological gardens and leadership schools in the municipal plans of Sucre, Jama, and San Vicente, as well as the nomination of Manabí as a 2026 World Gastronomic Region, a recognition that celebrates its culinary identity and showcases its efforts to the world.

The experience also provided valuable lessons that prompted a refocus on local action, strengthening the FUEGOS Foundation, and embracing flexibility and continuous learning as key drivers of change.



Where food is territory, economy and resilience

On the Ecuadorian coast, northern Manabí has been sowing something more than food for nearly a decade: a new narrative in which gastronomy has become a driver of social, territorial, and intergenerational transformation. What was once recognized solely as tasty dishes and culinary traditions is now consolidated as a strategy to regenerate community ties, energize local economies, create opportunities for youth, and project a more just and resilient future for the entire region.

This endeavor took shape through workshops, participatory diagnostics, mapping exercises, fairs, leadership training, and the promotion of gastronomic enterprises. Along the way, many young people, primarily women, began to come together and co-create solutions rooted in their identity, knowledge, and traditions. All of this unfolded in a context marked by structural challenges: multidimensional poverty, environmental crises, violence, youth migration, and institutional fragility. Yet, from within the territory and driven by the creative energy of youth, food moved from being an invisible issue to becoming a central pillar for narratives and transformative action.

2024 marked a turning point. Six Urban Futures initiatives were incorporated into the Development and Territorial Planning Plans (PDOT) of three municipalities.

From agroecological gardens to governance and transformative leadership schools to educational campaigns, each of these actions point to the potential of food to simultaneously be territory, economy, and resilience. This political achievement resulted from an advocacy strategy combined with a deep recognition of food as a common language capable of uniting generations, sectors, and diverse perspectives.

At the end of the year, another milestone reinforced this vision: Manabí was nominated by International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism - IGCAT as a 2026 World Gastronomic Region, thanks to the plan "A Millenary Gastronomy". Far from being a symbolic recognition, this title is envisioned as an international platform to position gastronomy as a bridge toward sustainable development and as a driver of social and cultural transformation.

It's not just about products or recipes: these are inherited knowledges, shared stories, and emerging youth leaderships slowly taking shape. Challenges remain, but the experience of 2024 left a clear message: when food is understood as part of a territory's soul, it has the power to regenerate it from within. In northern Manabí, that more human, more just, and more locally rooted food system has already begun to be served at the table.

Medellín, Colombia

In 2024, Urban Futures in Medellín advanced the transformation of food systems by launching its participatory Theory of Change and the City-Region Strategy, both developed with more than 60 stakeholders. This not only defined a clear pathway but also strengthened cross-sectoral relationships and promoted the inclusion of youth and women, gaining growing recognition on platforms such as FOLU Antioquia and the Circular Economy Alliance.

Although full implementation began in August, key results emerged: the program's inclusion in the governance of FOLU Antioquia, the adoption of its recommendations in policies of the Circular Economy Alliance, and the identification of shared narratives to drive collective change. The experience confirmed the interest of youth and women in food governance and the transformative power of narratives, while the program continues to strengthen relationships, mobilize resources, and adopt adaptive strategies to scale regenerative food practices in Medellín.

Bridges that cross the fields to the city

In 2022, the Communities Supporting Agriculture Network (CSA) was founded in Medellín, a youth-led movement whose approach is based on eliminating intermediaries, guaranteeing stable incomes for farmers, and offering fair prices to consumers, thereby creating a solidarity economy that repairs the historical disconnection between rural and urban areas.

With a diverse team of young women, they support 45 farmers from 17 families, who provide directly to over 350 urban households — around 750 people — fresh, agroecological foods full of history. Each week, more than 5 tons of products grown in harmony with the land are distributed in baskets that are much more than food: they carry messages, shared knowledge, and connections that weave and regenerate relationships between rural and urban communities.

The network provides technical guidance, well-being support, and communication advice, strengthening both production and the sense of community. Thanks to this work, farmers improve both economically, covering between 70% and 80% of their expenses, and emotionally, cultivating dignity, peace of mind, and the prospect of a safer and more hopeful future.

This network has been recognized as a powerful model of climate change adaptation, thanks to its short distribution circuits and localized agroecological production. Beyond serving as an economic bridge, it is also a pedagogical initiative that reimagines and tells the story of the food system from a different perspective, one that is much closer and more inclusive.

Looking ahead, the CSA Network is preparing to expand territorially while advancing the generation of academic evidence to support the model and enable its replication.. Thanks to the support of spaces like the Urban Futures program, it has strengthened its narratives, connections, and capacity to inspire more young people to engage in regenerating their territory through food. What began as a solution in times of crisis is now a living, resilient network with a young face, demonstrating that another food system, more just, more humane, and closer to people, is indeed possible.



Quito–Chocó Andino, Ecuador

In 2024, Urban Futures in Quito–Chocó Andino promoted the transformation of food systems through inclusive governance and youth leadership. The Food Systems Subcommittee brought together 26 organizations, strengthening alliances and fostering collective action. Initiatives such as the National Youth Meeting for Food and Climate Resilience and the Chala agroecological store demonstrated that young people are active protagonists in sustainable solutions, while workshops, fairs, and seed exchanges revitalized traditional knowledge and local systems.

The year highlighted the importance of investing in youth and local knowledge, building strategic alliances, and fostering deep connections with food and the territory. Looking ahead to 2025, the program will continue strengthening youth skills, evaluating civic participation, and consolidating intergenerational governance spaces, demonstrating that sustainable transformation is possible when communities lead with shared vision and room to innovate.



La Chala: Youth cultivating the local economy

In December 2024, in Calacalí —at the rural-urban intersection between Quito and the Chocó Andino— La Chala was born, the first community-run agroecological store led by local youth. This space is the result of a long collective effort that began during the pandemic with the Sembrar Salva Vidas campaign, when young people raised their voices for food sovereignty, turning that call into a concrete proposal for a solidarity-based economy grounded in care for the territory and the community.

Behind La Chala is the Chocó Andino Youth Network, a collective that has built its vision of the present and future from family and community roots. The young people inherited agricultural knowledge from their elders while also reimagining it: they connected these traditional practices with new forms of organization, governance, and food distribution. In partnership with the Agroecological Collective of Ecuador and with support from the Urban Futures program, they collaboratively designed the store's business model, integrating intergenerational knowledge and innovative proposals that revalue local food systems.

La Chala is not just a point of sale; it is a concrete proposal for community food security. Supplied by women and

young farmers, it promotes fair prices, agroecological practices, and the preservation of native foods.

It is also a living school of solidarity economics: here, young people are trained in responsible entrepreneurship, sustainable logistics, and narratives that honor the territory and those who cultivate it. In this process, every food item sold tells a story, of territorial identity and of the future.

La Chala transforms the act of consuming into a conscious choice, establishing a direct link between producers and those who eat. In this way, the store strengthens the local economy and demonstrates that the community, when organized, has the capacity to create fair, resilient supply networks with a youthful face.

This community store is already sowing new pathways, as it envisions expanding its model to the 11 parishes of the Chocó Andino. The goal is to consolidate a territorial ecosystem where each space functions as a center for cultural, educational, and local identity exchange, while promoting a pedagogy of responsible consumption that connects people with agroecological, healthy, and historically rich foods.



Indonesia

Bandung, Indonesia

In 2024, the Urban Futures program in Bandung advanced the development of a more inclusive and sustainable food system in a young city highly dependent on external food sources (over 90% of its food from outside the city). With the participation of 625 young people across 83 activities, including youth entrepreneurship camps, food journalism training, and community-supported agriculture, the program positioned food security as an urban priority, fostered innovative enterprises, and strengthened multisectoral alliances. Through cultural and climate-focused narratives, the initiative promoted more inclusive and resilient governance, reaffirming the role of youth and women as key actors in transforming consumption habits toward local and healthy foods.

Sowing the next generation of food entrepreneurs

In 2024, amid Bandung's shifting political landscape and the ongoing challenges of the food system, the Urban Futures program planted a powerful seed for long-term transformation: the Youth Entrepreneurship Camp. In a context of food insecurity, heavy reliance on external food sources, and a growing waste crisis, the camp provided young people with tools for entrepreneurship and, above all, a framework to reimagine the city's food future.

Organized in December 2024 by Prestasi Junior Indonesia, the Camp received an extraordinary response: 142 aspiring young entrepreneurs were selected to participate in the immersive one-week experience. These participants—many of whom were young women, university students, or early-stage entrepreneurs—engaged in intensive training sessions on self-leadership, financial literacy, food systems design thinking, and the Lean Canvas model.

This fostered a shift in mindset, as participants began to see food as part of a complex, interconnected system that requires innovative, sustainable, and community-centered solutions.

Several young people developed business ideas focused on organic farming and eco-friendly packaging, directly addressing the city's pressing environmental concerns.

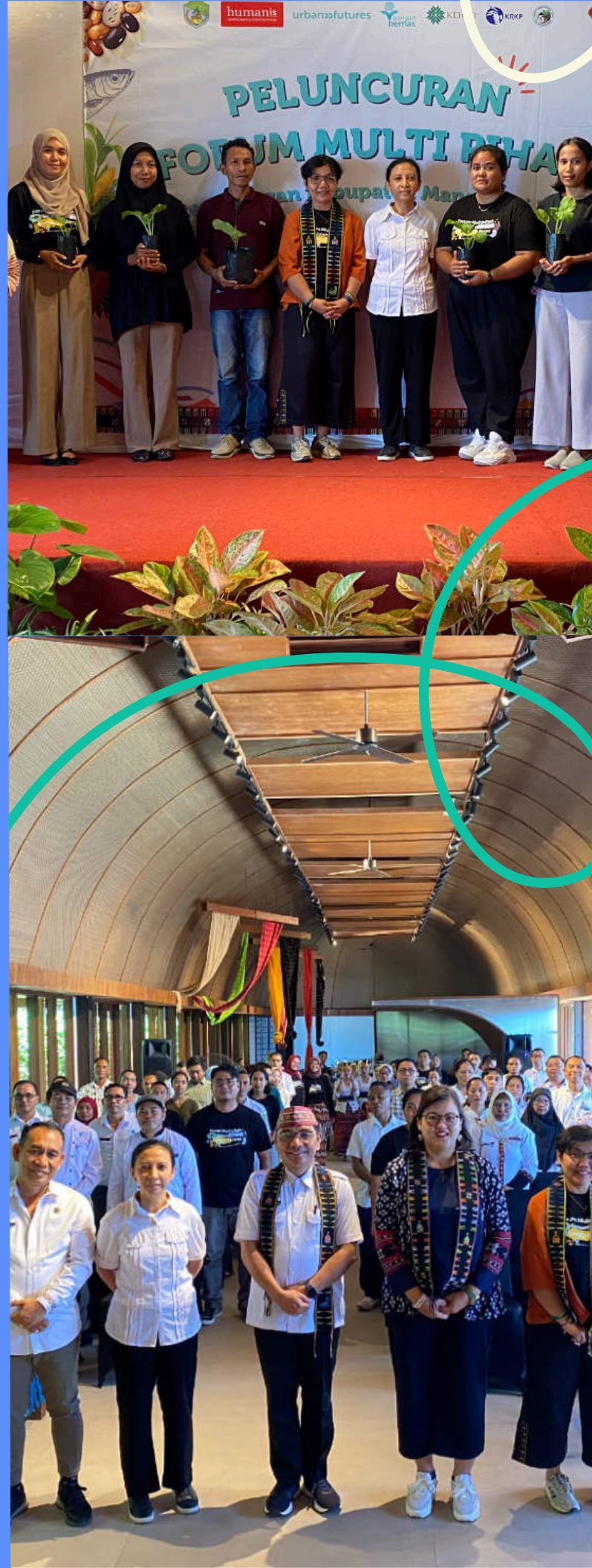
These young leaders are now on their way to launching or expanding food businesses, generating income while simultaneously promoting resilient, inclusive, and circular food systems.

Urban Futures helped unlock the potential of Bandung's youth, channeling their entrepreneurial energy into practical solutions and building a new generation of food system changemakers. The program has shown that, with the right tools, community, and purpose, the city's young people are ready to lead the transition toward a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable future.



West Manggarai, Indonesia

Since 2019, Labuan Bajo in West Manggarai has experienced rapid tourism development, which has reduced youth interest in agriculture and weakened the transmission of traditional knowledge on local agriculture and food systems. To address this challenge, the Urban Futures program has engaged 360 young people in 57 activities aimed at repositioning local food, creating safe spaces for participation, and promoting sustainability with a gender perspective. The strategy also connected tourism, gastronomy, and local production: women led the processing of traditional foods, and youth pursued ventures in sustainable gastronomy, although the challenge of linking local production with luxury tourism remains. In response, short value chains and narratives that revalue traditional cuisine as a driver of resilience and cultural pride have been promoted, with plans for 2025 to strengthen these efforts through responsible tourism and consolidate public policies in support of local producers.



Multi Stakeholders Forum for Food System of West Manggarai (MSF)

Elevating local food issues to a top priority among stakeholders is essential. Urban Futures-through Pangan Bernas consortium-actively promotes this initiative through various activities that involve government, private sector representatives, academics, and the youths.

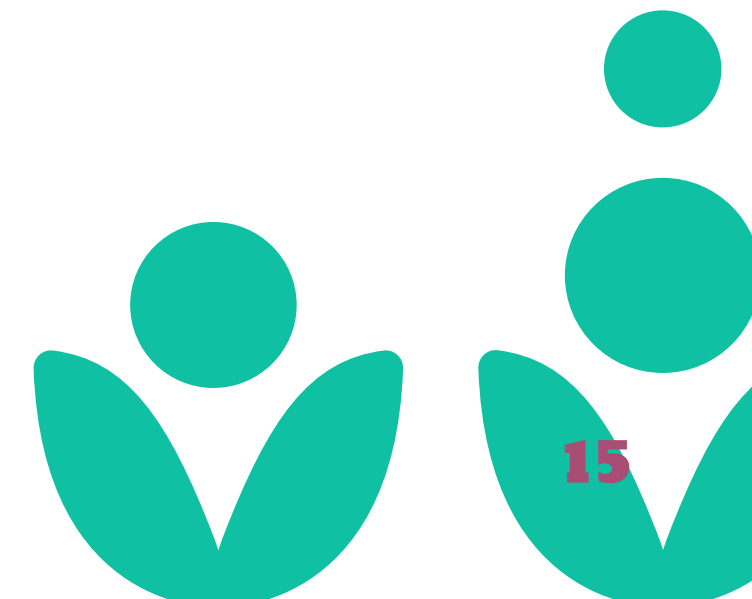
Through the initial discussions involving various food system stakeholders of West Manggarai, facilitated by the Pangan Bernas consortium, it was agreed that the multistakeholder collaboration needs to be formalized into a forum that will meet and discuss regularly to work on various agendas and approaches to support the food system transformation agenda. The establishment of this forum was strongly supported by the Regent, and strengthened by the issuance of a Regent Decree which stipulates the structure of the Working Groups, along with the members of the forum. The Multistakeholder Forum (MSF) is even more special with the representation of young people which is stated in the Decree.

The forming of the MSF was officially launched on 15-16 October 2024. The two-day agenda also showcased various activities that highlighted

the role of young people in West Manggarai's food system, such as a local food cooking competition, and mini exhibition of processed local food products by young people.

Through the MSF, youth have begun to play an active role in important forums that discuss critical issues such as climate change and food diversity; share ideas and practical solutions to the challenges faced.

With the right support and empowerment, youths will continue to be an important force in realizing a more inclusive, sustainable and locally-based food system transformation in West Manggarai.



Lessons learned

In 2024, Urban Futures consolidated the foundations for transforming urban food systems in Latin America, Africa, and Indonesia, placing youth at the center and activating partnerships between governments, the academy, businesses, and civil society. Governance was energized by young people, who assumed formal and informal roles in decision-making. Community networks and local governments sustained agreements, providing legitimacy and continuity to actions. Narratives were nourished by local voices that link food with health, identity, and justice. On the ground, practices such as agroecology, composting, and short-circuit food chains strengthened urban resilience because they were co-designed with communities and connected to markets. At the same time, capacity building, support networks, and public visibility fostered green entrepreneurship led by women and youth, while gender equity, climate action, and lifelong learning intertwined and amplified these advances.

The program consolidated an inclusive governance model by formalizing youth participation, streamlining structures, and energizing decision-making spaces. Cities activated or revitalized multi-stakeholder platforms and incorporated youth into planning to propose key initiatives for their communities. Ten of these platforms were activated, and 278 young people actively participated in dialogues that informed governance strategies and processes. The experience showed that civic influence grows when prioritizing the strengthening of existing networks and platforms. This work, which required patience, flexibility, and persistence among local governments,

academia, businesses, and civil society, laid stronger and more lasting foundations for sustainable participation over time. The early contributions of youth allowed their priorities in responsible production, employment, and entrepreneurship to be incorporated into the public agenda, while training and mentoring strengthened their leadership and consolidated it at the center of public action.

The program also laid the groundwork for working on new narratives. It was evident that behavioral changes through communication are effective when led by young people. Narrative workshops, digital campaigns, and collaborative content acted as levers for initiating public conversations and strengthening civic coordination around food systems because the messages were constructed from everyday life, using local languages and participatory processes with trusted actors, such as community leaders, small business associations, and youth groups. Interregional exchanges—forums, campaigns, and peer mentoring—expanded skills, created new alliances, and reinforced the legitimacy of the initiatives. By disseminating through neighborhood radio, local television, workshops, and community stories, the narratives translated technical language into everyday consumption and production decisions, calling on communities to join concrete actions for more just, healthy, and climate-resilient food systems. The experience left a clear lesson: messages that are simplified, adapted to local language, and rooted in daily life are not only heard, they also mobilize.

Promoting sustainable and climate-resilient practices in agri-food systems required working from the ground up, where innovations such as hydroponics, composting, and agroecology were consolidated as accessible avenues for strengthening urban resilience and short-circuiting. These production strategies were co-designed with the participation of young people and integrated into existing community marketing spaces. At the same time, associations and collectives revitalized traditional practices such as food bartering and the reuse of organic waste, which became effective gateways to circular economies. Climate resilience was no longer seen as an isolated component and became central to urban food system planning, guiding decisions about the management of organic resources, water, soil, and biodiversity. This approach, which combined local knowledge with regenerative practices, showed early results in adoption and public visibility, especially in intermediate-sized cities.

Likewise, Urban Futures made a gender and inclusion approach an important part of its work, understanding intersectionality as a condition for the transformation of food systems. It recognized persistent barriers for young women, youth with disabilities, and young people from rural areas, and responded with safe spaces, gender-responsive methodologies, and concrete participation mechanisms that legitimize their voices in territorial governance, narratives, and practices. Thus, inclusion ceased to be an enunciated principle and became a design criterion, translated into decisions, content, and models where youth participate and define the direction of urban food systems.

The Urban Futures program advances toward food systems that are adaptable to environmental and economic crises, ensuring that access to food remains a guaranteed right even in adverse and multi-crisis scenarios.

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Contact

Tanja Lubbers (tlubbers@hivos.org)

Diego Orellana (dorellana@hivos.org)

<https://hivos.org/program/urban-futures>

HIVOS – Global
Grote Marktstraat 47a
2511 BH Den Haag
Netherlands
Telephone: +31 (0)70 376 55 00
www.hivos.org

Credits

Authors program Urban Futures

Diego Orellana - Global Coordinator Urban Futures, Hivos

Ana Carolina Benítez - Linking, Learning, and Communications Officer, Latin America, Hivos

Runyararo Chibota - Regional Coordinator, Southern Africa, Hivos

Doris Ortiz - Regional Coordinator, Latin America, Hivos

Laily Himayati - Regional Coordinator Indonesia, Yayasan Humanis

René van Veenhuizen - Food Systems and Advocacy Advisor, Hivos

Theresia Kinanti Dewi - Linking, Learning, and Communications Officer, Yayasan Humanis

Rujeko Tokotore – Knowledge Management and Learning Officer Southern Africa, Hivos

Mónica Tobar - Global Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Officer, Hivos.

Review and contributions

We appreciate the contributions of:

- **Tanja Lubbers** - Regional Director, Hivos Latin America
- **Langton Moyo** - Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
- **Clariss Rufaro Masiya** - Mutare, Zimbabwe
- **Chileleko Hamukali** - Chongwe, Zambia
- **Olga Silavwe** - Kitwe, Zambia

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- **Anisa Nurkasanah** - West Manggarai, Indonesia

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