

Terms of Reference for the Urban Futures Call for Partners – Collaboration Grant Call for Proposals

Location: Chongwe, Zambia

Date of Issue: 2 June 2026

Deadline for Submission of Proposals: 2 July 2026

Funding Type: Sub-grant

Value: €200,000

1. General Information

Hivos is an international non-governmental organization inspired by humanist values. Together with local organizations, Hivos seeks to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world in which citizens - women and men - have equal access to the resources and opportunities for their development. Hivos works in partnership with others in Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America on three impact areas: civic rights; gender equality diversity and inclusion and climate justice. Hivos believes in the creativity and capacity of individuals. For more information, see www.hivos.org.

2. Background

2.1 About the Urban Futures Project

Our food systems are not meeting the needs of people or the planet. Rapid urbanization will result in approximately 70% of the world's population living in urban areas by 2050. Cities account for 2% of the earth's surface yet consume nearly 80% of food, generating 70% of global emissions and 70% of waste. Urban food systems have a significant local and global impact on climate change, youth well-being, and economic opportunity.

Food system approaches recognize the need for the participation of diverse stakeholders to improve policy and program design and enhance commitment to implementation. Through the [Urban Futures](#) program, Hivos and the RUAF aim to contribute to more inclusive, climate-resilient urban food systems through the Urban Futures: Youth Action for Inclusive, Climate-Resilient Cities project.

Urban Futures (UF) is a 5-year global program (2023–2027) at the intersection of urban food systems, youth well-being, and climate action. UF program is funded by Fondation *Botnar*, managed by Hivos with the RUAF Global Partnership on Urban Agriculture and Food Systems, and local partners, networks, and experts.

UF addresses innovative and inclusive food system approaches to improve access to sustainable, diverse, and nutritious food and ensure food security. Sustainable agriculture addresses threats to livelihoods and food and nutrition security resulting from climate impacts.

UF supports local partners and innovators, especially young people, in building more inclusive, climate-resilient urban food systems where youth collaborate to voice their priorities, influence decisions, and seize opportunities in the food sector. The program aims to achieve this through multi-stakeholder collaborations and locally-owned innovations.

From a gender and feminist approach, UF seeks to strengthen the feminist and transformational leadership capacity of youth groups, women's networks, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to amplify their voices for inclusive, rights-based, and just food systems.

2.2 Long-Term Outcomes of the Urban Futures Program

The Urban Futures program is guided by the following long-term outcomes:

1. Inclusive, transparent and participatory food policies and governance strategies that support youth and gender equality through multi-stakeholder collaboration.
2. Youth-driven narratives of inclusive, conscious and climate-resilient cities promote behavioural change and improved consumption patterns that favour sustainable, healthy and food heritage practices.
3. Agri-food systems adopt sustainable, regenerative and climate-resilient practices.
4. Increased resources and opportunities from diverse stakeholders – private, public, multilateral and community-based – create an inclusive and climate-adapted entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports youth and women’s participation in food system initiatives.

2.3 Target Group

The main target group is urban youth aged 15 to 35 years, with focus on youth population groups most affected by climate change, including young women, the urban poor, people with disabilities, minority groups, and other marginalized groups.

The UF intervention plans to harness diverse perspectives and alternative approaches, recognizing youth as key actors in ensuring the voices of marginalized groups are heard.

Through a citizen agency and rights-based approach, the program provides dedicated support including funding, training, mentorship, and safe spaces to facilitate young people and other groups to claim their rights and ensure equitable access to resources.

2.4 Chongwe Context

Since 2023, CONSUMER UNITY AND TRUST SOCIETY (CUTS), as the lead partner in a consortium with GLOBAL NETWORKS SOLUTIONS (GNS), has been implementing activities in Chongwe District focused on youth engagement across various project outcomes, including inclusive food systems, sustainable consumption, climate-smart agricultural practices, and community participation. The project promotes sustainable livelihoods, improved food systems governance, and economic opportunities for young people and women within urban and peri-urban communities.

As the project enters its final implementation phase ending in August 2027, there is a need to identify and engage one additional local partner in Chongwe District to strengthen, consolidate, and expand support to youth and women already engaged through CUTS. The selected partner will specifically focus on the following outcome:

“Increased resources and opportunities from diverse stakeholders – private, public, multilateral, and community-based – create an inclusive and climate-adapted entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports youth and women’s participation in food system initiatives.”

The new partner is expected to build on the foundations established by CUTS and GNS by delivering practical, hands-on support to youth and women-led food system enterprises. This support should strengthen enterprise capacity, market readiness, resource mobilization, climate-smart practices, and stakeholder linkages. The role goes beyond convening actors or making introductions: the selected partner will be responsible for designing, delivering, documenting, and following up on a structured support package for youth and women-led enterprises.

This assignment will directly contribute to Urban Futures Pathway 4, financial flows to climate-resilient and sustainable food systems. It is expected to generate measurable progress on youth and women-led businesses established or expanded, jobs created by supported food system enterprises, and participants completing financial, entrepreneurship, work-readiness, and technical agri-food capacity-building activities. As an indicative minimum target, the selected partner should support at least 50 new youth and women-led food system enterprises and strengthen at least 25 existing enterprises that were previously created or are already engaged in the Urban Futures program. These targets should be reviewed and, if needed, refined during the inception phase based on the baseline assessment, available information from the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, and the implementation capacity of the selected partner.

The new partner will also work in close liaison with the CUTS and GNS consortium in relation to the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub in Chongwe. Where relevant to the achievement of project outcomes, the partner will contribute to and support activities linked to the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, including collaboration with youth and women-led enterprises connected to the hub ecosystem. The partner may also make use of the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub premises and related facilities, where necessary and appropriate, for trainings, mentorship sessions, stakeholder engagements, enterprise support activities, and other program-related interventions. Coordination around the use of the hub space and related support will be undertaken jointly with CUTS, GNS, and the Urban Futures Project Management Team.

3. Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this ToR is to identify and engage one qualified local implementing partner in Chongwe District that will:

- Strengthen and support youth and women already participating in Urban Futures activities since 2023;
- Design and deliver a structured support package that enables youth and women-led food system enterprises to access entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, work-readiness support, mentorship, market access, and climate-smart enterprise support;
- Provide direct technical assistance to strengthen climate-adapted and inclusive food system enterprises, including support for business models, market readiness, financial management, and sustainability planning;
- Broker, accompany, and follow up on concrete linkages between youth and women-led enterprises and public, private, community, financial, and multilateral stakeholders, ensuring that these linkages lead to practical opportunities where feasible;
- Support the establishment or expansion of youth and women-led food system enterprises and the creation of income-generating opportunities and jobs through program-supported enterprises, with an indicative minimum target of at least 50 new enterprises/entrepreneurships established and at least 25 existing enterprises strengthened during the assignment period;
- Ensure that all capacity-building activities are structured, completed, documented, and reported by participant profile and skill type, including financial, entrepreneurship, work-readiness, leadership, and technical agri-food skills.
- Collaborate with CUTS, GNS, and the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub to strengthen enterprise development, innovation support, stakeholder engagement, mentorship, and practical learning opportunities for youth and women participating in the Urban Futures Program.

4. Specific Objectives

The selected partner will be expected to:

1. Strengthen existing youth and women-led food system initiatives established through CUTS and GNS interventions;
2. Design and deliver a structured enterprise development package for youth and women-led food system enterprises, including entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, work-readiness support, mentorship, business development services, market-readiness support, and support to access appropriate financing mechanisms;
3. Support the establishment or expansion of youth and women-led businesses in sustainable and climate-resilient food value chains, including production, processing, distribution and retail, consumption and services, and waste recovery or circularity, with an indicative minimum target of at least 50 new enterprises established and at least 25 existing enterprises strengthened;
4. Build, strengthen, and actively manage partnerships with government departments, private sector actors, financial institutions, cooperatives, community-based organizations, and development partners, with clear follow-up actions for youth and women entrepreneurs;
5. Prepare and accompany youth and women to participate more effectively in food systems governance, markets, enterprise networks, and partnership spaces;
6. Support youth and women to develop, test, and improve climate-smart and inclusive business models within food systems;
7. Track and report jobs created by program-supported food system enterprises and participants completing capacity-building activities, using the required disaggregation categories;
8. Document lessons learned, impact stories, and best practices from supported enterprises and partnerships.
9. Support and contribute to activities linked to the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, including utilization of the hub space for enterprise development, mentorship, networking, capacity-building, innovation showcasing, and stakeholder engagement activities relevant to Pathway 4 outcomes.

5. Scope of Work

The selected partner shall undertake, but not be limited to, the following tasks:

5.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

- Coordinate with CUTS, GNS, and other project stakeholders to ensure continuity, complementarity, and clear handover of support to youth and women already engaged in Urban Futures activities;
- Map relevant public, private, community-based, financial, and multilateral actors within Chongwe District and develop a practical engagement plan showing how each actor can support youth and women-led food system enterprises;
- Organize and follow up on multi-stakeholder dialogues and engagement platforms focused on youth and women participation in food systems, ensuring that discussions lead to documented actions, referrals, partnerships, or enterprise support opportunities.
- Coordinate with CUTS, GNS, and the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub management structures to ensure effective utilization of the hub as a collaborative platform for youth and women enterprise support, stakeholder engagement, mentorship, innovation incubation, and program learning activities.

5.2 Youth and Women Enterprise Strengthening

- Identify and assess existing youth and women-led enterprises previously supported under the project, including their business model, value chain position, market readiness, financial management practices, climate adaptation needs, and support priorities;
- Develop enterprise strengthening plans for selected youth and women-led businesses, including baseline status, business needs, growth targets, support package, and expected contribution to Pathway 4 indicators. The enterprise portfolio should include, as an indicative minimum, at least 50 new youth and women-led enterprises to be established and at least 25 existing enterprises to be strengthened, unless the inception assessment justifies an adjusted target based on hub data and implementation feasibility;
- Provide tailored business development support and mentorship through a structured accompaniment process with clear objectives, timelines, and follow-up for each supported enterprise or group;
- Support enterprise formalization where applicable, including guidance on registration, compliance, recordkeeping, cooperative or group structures, and readiness to engage buyers, financial institutions, or public programs;
- Design and implement market access activities, including buyer mapping, preparation of youth and women entrepreneurs for market engagement, business networking events, and follow-up with potential buyers, aggregators, cooperatives, or private sector partners;
- Provide technical assistance to improve climate-adapted enterprise models and innovations, including practical support on production, processing, distribution, waste reduction, resilience, and sustainable resource use where relevant;
- Track whether each supported enterprise is newly established or expanded, classify each enterprise by value chain position: production, processing, distribution and retail, consumption and services, or waste recovery and circularity, and report progress against the agreed enterprise targets of new and strengthened businesses.
- Facilitate the participation of supported youth and women-led enterprises in activities hosted through the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, including mentorship sessions, innovation showcases, enterprise incubation activities, networking events, market engagement opportunities, and practical demonstrations.

5.3 Resource Mobilization and Linkages

- Identify relevant financing, grant, savings, investment, and business support opportunities for youth and women-led food system enterprises, and provide hands-on support to help entrepreneurs prepare, apply for, and follow up on these opportunities;
- Support enterprises to meet basic readiness requirements for financing or market engagement, including business records, simple financial projections, registration documents where applicable, business profiles, and pitch materials;
- Accompany entrepreneurs in engaging relevant support institutions, including financial institutions, government departments, cooperatives, private sector actors, and development partners, with documented follow-up actions and outcomes;
- Document resource mobilization efforts, applications submitted, financing or support accessed, and the effect of these resources on enterprise expansion, income generation, or job creation;
- Develop and manage partnerships that increase resources and opportunities for youth and women in food systems, with attention to practical results such as training opportunities, market access, financing readiness, inputs, technical support, or buyer relationships.

5.4 Capacity Building

- Design and deliver structured capacity-building initiatives for youth, women, and youth/women-led enterprises, covering financial literacy, entrepreneurship, work readiness, market readiness, business sustainability, leadership, and technical agri-food skills;
- Provide practical trainings, coaching, and mentorship sessions that use applied exercises linked to the enterprises supported;
- Strengthen organizational and leadership capacities of youth groups and women-led initiatives, including planning, recordkeeping, group governance, negotiation, communication, and readiness to engage external partners;
- Define completion criteria for each capacity-building activity, such as full attendance or a minimum percentage of sessions, and report participants who complete the activities, disaggregated by age, gender, and skill type;
- Use pre/post assessments, attendance sheets, certificates, mentorship records, or partner validation forms to document completion and learning outcomes.

5.5 Monitoring, Learning, and Documentation

- Track progress and outcomes of supported initiatives, including changes in enterprise capacity, market engagement, financing readiness, partnerships, climate-adapted practices, and business performance where evidence is available;
- Maintain an enterprise-level monitoring file for all supported businesses, including baseline status, type of support received, value chain position, evidence of establishment or expansion, jobs created, financing or market opportunities accessed, and capacity-building completed;
- Track and report progress against Pathway 4 indicators: businesses established or expanded with program support, jobs created by program-supported food system enterprises, and participants completing capacity-building initiatives;
- Collect data, success stories, case studies, and evidence packages that demonstrate practical changes in skills, enterprise performance, market access, resource mobilization, and climate-smart practices;
- Participate in project review and learning meetings with Hivos, CUTS, GNS, and other relevant stakeholders;
Submit timely narrative, financial, and indicator reports in line with project guidelines and donor requirements.

6. Expected Deliverables

The selected partner will be expected to deliver the following:

1. Inception report detailing the implementation approach, workplan, stakeholder engagement strategy, enterprise support methodology, mentorship approach, risk management measures, and proposed enterprise targets. The inception report should confirm or refine the indicative minimum target of at least 50 new enterprises established and at least 25 existing enterprises strengthened, based on the baseline assessment, Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub data, and implementation feasibility;
2. Mapping report of key stakeholders, market actors, financing options, enterprise support services, and concrete opportunities for youth and women-led food system enterprises in Chongwe District;
3. Enterprise assessment and strengthening plans for selected youth and women-led enterprises, including baseline status, value chain position, support needs, growth targets, market access needs, financing readiness, and expected contribution to Pathway 4 indicators. The plans should clearly distinguish between new enterprises to be established and existing enterprises to be strengthened;

4. Capacity-building and mentorship plan, including training topics, coaching approach, completion criteria, participant profiles, skill types, and sources of verification;
5. Evidence of enterprise support delivered, including training, mentorship, technical assistance, formalization support, market access activities, resource mobilization efforts, and follow-up actions with relevant actors;
6. Quarterly progress reports highlighting achievements, challenges, lessons learned, recommendations, and progress against enterprise support, mentorship, market access, financing readiness, partnership, and Pathway 4 indicator targets;
7. Quarterly Pathway 4 indicator tracking table, reporting businesses established or expanded, progress against the agreed targets for new and strengthened enterprises, jobs created, participants completing capacity-building initiatives, disaggregation data, and sources of verification;
8. Success stories and evidence packages for supported youth and women-led enterprises, including business profiles, photos, business records, market access evidence, financing documentation where applicable, testimonies, and job creation records;
9. Final project report summarizing achievements, outcomes, sustainability measures, lessons learned, and recommendations for continuity beyond the project period.

7. Expected Results

The engagement is expected to contribute to the following results:

- Youth and women-led food system enterprises are strengthened through practical entrepreneurship, financial literacy, work-readiness, mentorship, market access, resource mobilization, and climate-smart enterprise support;
- At least 50 new youth and women-led food system enterprises are established and at least 25 existing youth and women-led food system enterprises are strengthened with program support, subject to target confirmation or refinement during inception, and categorized by their position in the food value chain;
- Youth and women-led enterprises have stronger and better-documented relationships with public, private, financial, community-based, and development stakeholders;
- Program-supported food system enterprises generate new income-generating opportunities and jobs for youth, women, and community members;
- Youth and women complete structured capacity-building activities in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, work readiness, market readiness, leadership, and technical agri-food skills;
- Climate-adapted entrepreneurship is strengthened through improved business models, market readiness, and sustainable production, processing, distribution, or circularity practices;
- The sustainability and scalability of youth and women-led food system initiatives established since 2023 are improved.
- The Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub is strengthened as a collaborative platform for youth and women-led food system enterprises through increased utilization, enterprise support activities, mentorship, stakeholder engagement, innovation showcasing, and partnership-building initiatives.

8. Geographic Coverage

The assignment will be implemented in Chongwe District, Zambia, targeting youth and women already engaged under the Urban Futures Project since 2023, while allowing for additional strategic outreach where necessary.

9. Duration of Assignment

The assignment is expected to run from July 2026 to August 2027.

10. Reporting and Supervision

The selected partner will report directly to the Urban Futures Project Management Team and will work in close collaboration with CUTS, GNS, and other implementing stakeholders.

The partner will be responsible for:

- Timely submission of technical, financial, and indicator reports;
- Participation in coordination and review meetings;
- Compliance with project guidelines, safeguarding policies, and donor requirements.

11. Eligibility Criteria

Interested organizations must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Be a legally registered organization in Zambia;
- Demonstrate presence and operational experience in Chongwe District;
- Have proven experience working with youth and women in entrepreneurship, food systems, livelihoods, or climate adaptation initiatives, including direct delivery of training, mentorship, enterprise development, or business support services;
- Demonstrate experience in partnership building, stakeholder engagement, market linkage development, and follow-up with public, private, financial, community-based, or development actors;
- Have sound financial and administrative management systems;
- Demonstrate capacity to implement community-based development interventions;
- Experience working with donor-funded projects will be an added advantage.

12. Requirements and submission

Interested organizations should submit:

1. Organizational profile;
2. Copy of legal registration documents;
3. [Technical proposal outlining understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology, implementation approach, and workplan; \(Annex 2\)](#)
4. [Financial proposal/budget; \(Annex 1\)](#)
5. Evidence of previous relevant experience;
6. References from similar assignments;
7. CVs of key personnel.

13. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated through a competitive assessment process based on technical capacity, organizational experience, contextual understanding, implementation approach, and value for money.

The evaluation committee will assess applications using the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Weight
Understanding of the Assignment and Technical Approach	Demonstrated understanding of the Urban Futures Program, the Chongwe context, youth and women participation in food systems, and the assignment objectives. The proposal should clearly explain the methodology, implementation strategy, stakeholder engagement approach, sustainability measures, and innovation in delivering the assignment. Strong proposals will show a practical methodology for delivering against Pathway 4 indicators, including enterprise establishment or expansion, job creation through supported food system enterprises, and completion of structured capacity-building activities. Applicants should explain how they would reach or refine the indicative minimum target of at least 50 new enterprises established and at least 25 existing enterprises strengthened, using evidence from the Urban Futures AgriConnect Hub, existing enterprise data, and their own implementation assessment. The proposal should also demonstrate direct delivery capacity in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, work readiness, mentorship, market access, and resource mobilization support.	30%
Organizational Experience and Technical Capacity	Demonstrated institutional experience in implementing community-based development programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, food systems interventions, youth empowerment, women economic empowerment, climate adaptation, or livelihoods programming. Applicants should demonstrate operational presence and experience in Chongwe District or similar contexts, as well as capacity to provide direct enterprise development support rather than only convening or referral services. Experience managing donor-funded projects, consortium partnerships, and multi-stakeholder engagements will be considered an added advantage.	20%
Experience Working with Youth and Women	Proven experience working directly with youth and women, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, in entrepreneurship, enterprise development, leadership, livelihoods, or food systems initiatives. Applicants should demonstrate inclusive programming approaches, mentorship experience, and the ability to create safe and enabling spaces for participation. Evidence of previous work delivering practical training, coaching, enterprise strengthening, financial literacy, work-readiness support, and women economic empowerment initiatives will be highly considered.	15%
Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Building Capacity	Demonstrated ability to build, maintain, and follow up on strategic partnerships with public institutions, private sector actors, financial institutions, community-based organizations, cooperatives, and development partners. The proposal should show clear strategies for collaboration, coordination, resource mobilization, market access, and facilitation of practical opportunities for youth and women entrepreneurs. Existing networks and local partnerships in Chongwe District will be an advantage.	15%

Criteria	Description	Weight
Monitoring, Learning, and Reporting Capacity	Demonstrated systems and experience in monitoring, evaluation, learning, accountability, documentation, and reporting. Applicants should show capacity to collect quality data, track enterprise-level results, document lessons learned, and produce timely technical, financial, and indicator reports. This includes tracking value chain position, business stage, jobs created, completion of capacity-building activities, disaggregation requirements, and verifiable evidence for each reported result. Availability of qualified personnel and internal systems for project management and compliance will be considered.	10%
Financial Proposal and Value for Money	Clarity, realism, and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget in relation to planned activities and expected results. The financial proposal should demonstrate efficient utilization of resources, reasonable costing, and alignment between budget lines and proposed interventions.	10%

14. Key Principles

The selected partner shall ensure:

- Inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups;
- Climate adaptation and sustainability considerations in all interventions;
- Participatory and community-driven approaches;
- Accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct;
- Coordination and collaboration with existing project structures and stakeholders.

15. Submission of Applications

Interested applicants should submit their proposals and the above-mentioned documentation via email to proposals.hubsaf@hivos.org by 2 July 2026, end of day. Please reference the application as "UF Chongwe Partner".