



## **Urban farming and food security in Nairobi's informal settlements**

Producer: Katharina Eichinger (Austria)

Radio station: Women on Air (Global dialogues), broadcasted on Radio Orange, Vienna

*Music: Alikiba - Lupela*

Hello and karibuni sana to today's show of Women on Air – Global Dialogues about "Urban farming and food security in Nairobi's informal settlements".

Nairobi, the bustling economic center of East Africa, faces like many other African cities rapid urbanization. The ongoing expansion of urban areas, especially informal settlements, poses a severe challenge to food security for its about 3,7 million inhabitants. One estimate suggests that about 38 percent of the city's population suffer from chronic food insecurity. In order to deal with those difficulties governmental institutions as well as other NGOs try to find innovative ways of growing food in areas where space is usually very limited. Vertical gardens, also known as sack gardens, are one possible solution.

In the following fifteen minutes you will hear Musa Juma, a private consultant in urban farming and former community mobilizer of Solidarite International, talking about urban farming in Nairobi, its challenges and future. Furthermore, Alfred Nbagabwa, an inhabitant of Kibera, one of Nairobi's best known informal settlements, will share his experiences as an urban farmer. My name is Katharina Eichinger and I will lead you through the show.

*Music: Alikiba - Lupela*

Walking through Nairobi's biggest informal settlement, Kibera, an attentive observer will be surprised. Agriculture in such a densely populated area, is that really possible? And yes, it is. A chickenhouse in the backyard of a small hut, different vegetables growing in narrow passages, the inhabitants of Kibera find creative ways of growing their own food.

Urban farming seems to be the new trend when it comes to the sustainable development of cities. But what is so special about this new source of hope?

***Musa: What is urban farming (in comparison to conventional farming)?***

Solidarite International, a French NGO, was one of the first organizations, which recognized the potential of urban farming to contribute to food security in the informal settlements of Nairobi. Since 1980 its programmes have provided aid to victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters. Currently Solidarite International is present in more than 15 countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

***Musa: Description of Solidarite International***

Considering the limited space in informal settlements sack gardens represent a very efficient solution. Sacks, filled with manure, soil and small stones that enable water to drain, can be put in any corner that is free. From the tops and sides of these sacks the urban farmers are then able to grow vegetables, like for instance sukuma wiki, which is a type of kale. Apart from the uncomplicated maintenance the durability of the sacks is another big advantage.

***Musa: Description of sacks and the soil***

There are different ways of getting organic fertilizers. Alfred, one of the many urban farmers in Kibera, explains his methods.

***Alfred: How to make organic fertilizer?***

*Music: Sauti Sol – SuraYako*

Some urban farmers produce enough vegetables to sell in their communities. Others, like Alfred, use the harvest to supplement the diet of their families or to feed their animals. In that case a sustainable circle of food production develops.

***Alfred: Benefits of urban farming***

However, the benefits of urban farming are more diverse than just income generation and contribution to food security. A more diverse diet, mitigation of environmental as well as hygienic issues and the empowerment of urban dwellers are some of the other benefits.

***Musa: Other benefits of urban farming***

Despite the diverse advantages of urban farming, it took some time to convince the inhabitants of Kibera to engage in agricultural activities and to see the benefits that come with it.

***Musa: How to convince people of urban farming?***

From 2008 to 2011 Solidarite International reached in total over 44 thousand households with their activities. But who are usually the urban farmers?

***Musa: Who are normally the urban farmers?***

*Music: Navy Kenzo - Moyoni*

Similar to the diverse benefits of urban farming, it also has many challenges. Questions of space, especially in a time where slum upgrading seems to be one of the new buzzwords in the development community, and the availability of water and materials are a constant companion of urban farmers in Nairobi.

***Musa: Challenges of urban farming***

Furthermore, Kibera is the home of a huge number of NGOs. Unfortunately not all of them are really aiming at the improvement of living standards.

***Musa: Challenge of briefcase-NGOs in Kibera***

Compared to many other projects in the world of development cooperation, Solidarite International managed to introduce a sustainable change in Kibera. Even after the end of their project, people still engage in urban farming. So what is their recipe for success?

***Musa: Why was Solidarite International successful?***

With this example of a successful urban farming initiative I would like to say Good Bye to you and thank you for listening. Asanteni sana kwa kusikiliza na kwa heri.

This segment is part of an audio series highlighting the importance of Communication as a major tool for Development. It has been produced with the support of the World Association of Community Broadcasters and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

*Music: Sauti Sol – Live and Die in Africa*