

# Urban Planning for Community Change Summary Report 2025



# Urban Planning for Community Change (UPC)

Urban Planning for Community Change (UPC) is advancing efforts to promote more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable urban environments in Arusha, Tanzania. In 2025, UPC transformed a park through a community driven funding model and conducted research on park use, pedestrian safety, and school gardens. This report provides a summary of UPC's work.

## Community Improvement Funds to Improve Open Public Spaces

With support from local partners, UPC established a Community Improvement Fund (CIF) with the purpose of improving open public spaces in Baraa, Kimandolu, Kijenge, and Olorien Wards, in Arusha. Through the CIF, 3 abandoned playgrounds were transformed into a safe and functioning community park with benches, swings and simple landscaping. Community members were actively involved in the design and construction and are currently planning for how the space will be maintained. Local leaders used participatory budgeting and youth engagement to build a strong sense of ownership and reduce vandalism.



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Given the success of the pilot projects in Lemara, Baraa, Kimandolu, Kijenge and Olorien Wards, an additional CIF will now be established in 2026 to support two more wards in creating and managing their own parks using local resources. Activities will include community selection, organizing meetings to share ideas, and supporting low-cost park improvements such as tree planting.

Overall, this model demonstrates that small investments, when combined with community participation and institutional support, can improve public spaces, promote physical activity and support healthier communities in a sustainable and scalable way.

## Community Parks Research

In 2025, UPC conducted a series of mini evaluations in Lemara, Baraa, and Kimandulu parks based on observations of over 500 users. The study revealed significant inclusivity and accessibility challenges. In Kimandulu, 26% of park users were youth aged 15-18, however there were no youth present in Baraa. Similarly, the significantly higher representation of women in Kimandulu suggests that factors such as better safety (due to the park's location adjacent to the road) support greater female engagement in park activities. In contrast, both sites show low participation among older adults (4.11% in Baraa and 1.38% in Kimandulu), indicating potential barriers such as mobility challenges, safety concerns, or a lack of age-friendly infrastructure. These limitations are closely linked to inadequate infrastructure, including a lack of ramps, accessible toilets, inclusive seating, adequate shading, and proper sanitation facilities. Together, the absence of youth in Baraa and the limited presence of elderly users across both locations suggests that neither park is providing opportunities for community members of all ages. This should be addressed through more responsive public space design and targeted community outreach.

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UPC will continue investigating the frequency of use of developed community parks to monitor the needs of those who visit the parks. UPC will also work with the city council to adapt local community park models in other areas of the city.

## Pedestrian Safety and Urban Mobility

UPC had previously established zebra crossings on streets near Kilombero and Samunge markets in Arusha. In 2025, evaluations of these streets, namely Sokoine, Mtei, and Samunge, was conducted. The evaluations found uneven pedestrian usage, with Sokoine and Mtei streets along Kilombero market experiencing higher foot traffic than Samunge street along Samunge market.



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The most critical safety issue identified was the absence of adequate sidewalks, which forces pedestrians onto roadways. Unsafe driving behaviours, including speeding and failure to yield, further increase risks. Samunge, in particular, is characterised by high-speed traffic that does not yield to pedestrians, which accounts for the lower pedestrian usage. Adults, particularly women and elderly men, make up the majority of pedestrians, while persons living with disabilities remain largely absent, reflecting ongoing accessibility challenges. Overall, the findings highlight the need for continuous sidewalks, improved street crossing infrastructure, and stronger traffic enforcement to ensure safer and more inclusive mobility.

UPC plans to continue advocating for safe environments for pedestrians and promote safe walking infrastructure around local markets and beyond in Arusha.

## School Gardens in Tanzania

In 2025, UPC also conducted research to assess school gardens. The research showed that school gardens in Tanzania serve a dual purpose as educational tools and contributors to food security. They provide hands-on learning in agriculture and environmental awareness, while supporting school feeding programs and improving student nutrition. In some cases, surplus produce was sold at local markets, with funds being reinvested in infrastructure improvements in the schools. Despite these advantages, school gardens operate without a dedicated national policy and are primarily supported by NGOs, schools, and community actors.

School gardening faces multiple structural challenges, including water scarcity, limited funding, insufficient technical capacity among teachers, land constraints, and climate variability.

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This is compounded by weak integration into formal curricula that undermines the gardens' educational and institutional sustainability. Addressing these barriers requires stronger coordination, improved technical support, and more resilient resource management systems. Strengthening school gardens will depend on improved water and resource management, increased and sustainable funding, enhanced teacher training, and deeper integration into formal education systems. The adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices and more efficient use of limited land are also critical, alongside greater government leadership and sustained collaboration with NGOs and communities to ensure long-term success.

UPC's future programming will focus on designing and implementing school garden interventions in primary schools in Arusha. These interventions will integrate climate resilience, improved food systems, and linkages with broader urban development priorities such as environmental education.

## Conclusion

Overall, UPC's work in 2025 demonstrates the value of community-driven, low-cost approaches to urban development. Across public spaces, pedestrian safety, and school gardens, the findings highlight both meaningful progress and persistent gaps in accessibility, inclusivity, and infrastructure. By building on these efforts, UPC is well-positioned to scale its impact and contribute to healthier, safer, and more inclusive urban environments in Arusha.