

# BUILDING A GREEN & PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR MALAWI'S CITIES

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Insights & Perspectives



**LUSH**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# FOREWORD

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The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration that started in 2021 is ‘a global rallying cry to heal our planet’. We take that cry seriously because ecosystems support all life on Earth. However, we must ensure that our efforts in that regard do not neglect urban ecosystems. After all, half of the world’s population now live in cities. Even here in my country of Malawi, populations in the biggest cities of Lilongwe and Blantyre are projected to swell by over 50% by 2031.

Our response to this reality must be deliberate. We cannot afford to respond with inaction or short-termism. That is why we have resolved that the best approach is a collaborative and nature-friendly approach that restores the urban ecosystems we need in our quest to end poverty, improve human health and combat climate change.

Toward that end, this report considers how Malawi can build a green and prosperous future for its cities. It starts with a bird’s eye view of the global context, the key themes and challenges that context presents, and examples of what best practice looks like. Thought leaders and experts in their various fields then give us their perspective on some of the issues most pertinent to Malawi. Finally, it outlines the vision and plan for the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative (LECI), along with a ‘call to arms’ for all stakeholders.

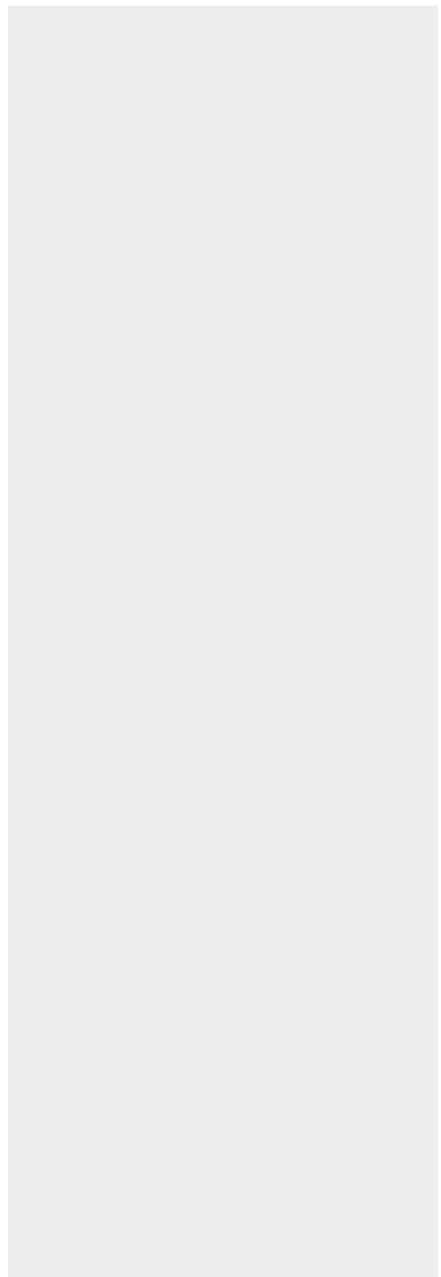
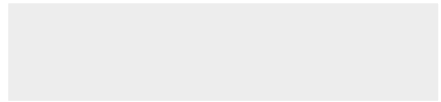
In the spirit of collaboration, this report has been compiled with a wide variety of stakeholders in mind. Media, policy makers, CSO’s, donors, learners, business, religious, and community leaders, and urban dwellers have all been taken into account, because they all have a vested interest in understanding what sustainable urban development means, how it can be achieved, and where they can play their part.

LECI represents a unique and potentially paradigm-shifting opportunity. The groundwork has been laid, and it is now time to broaden these conversations and start putting our collective weight behind the ambition. Indeed, Lilongwe has the potential to stand as Southern Africa’s emerging green city, which would not only be a source of great national pride, but also position Malawi on a global platform as a progressive nation that understands the value of its natural assets. By carrying out meaningful conservation action and pursuing sustainable urban living, we will demonstrate to our rapidly urbanizing globe that it is both possible and imperative to turn our cities into spaces where nature and people thrive together.

I therefore call on all stakeholders across all sectors to play their part in turning this vision into reality - and quickly, before it is too late.




*Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera,  
President of the Republic of Malawi*



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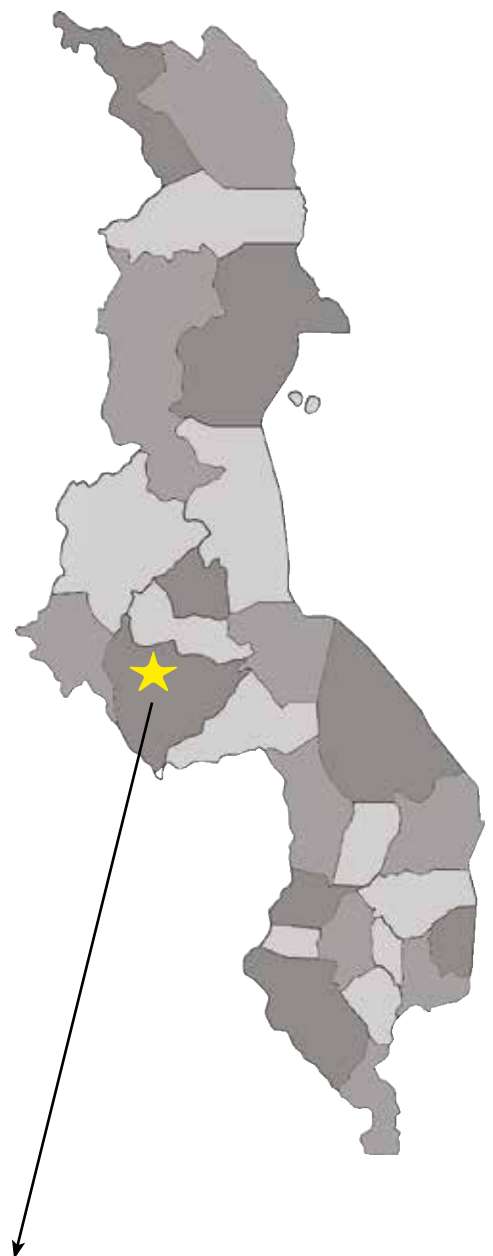
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## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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- The world's urban population will **surge to 6.7 billion by 2050**, with the greatest urban expansion occurring in biologically rich countries with limited capacity to develop sustainably.
- Nearly **70% of the global population** is expected to live in cities by 2050, up from just 30% in 1950.
- Well-managed urban areas can support rich biodiversity, yet urbanisation remains the **third most frequently cited threat to species on the IUCN Red List**.
- **Green and blue infrastructure** can cost-effectively enhance the liveability, sustainability, and resilience of cities.
- Exposure to nature can render **significant physical and mental health benefits** while inspiring care for the natural world.
- Cities have ecological footprints that can be **orders of magnitude larger than their physical area**.
- **Cities are centres of consumption and production**, accounting for 60% to 80% of the world's energy consumption, 75% of natural resource consumption, and 70% of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions.
- By 2030, **40% of strictly protected areas** are expected to lie within 50km of a city.
- Depending on how they are designed, planned, built, managed and governed, cities have the potential to profoundly **exacerbate or ameliorate the global environmental emergency**.



**6.7 billion**



The world's urban population by 2050.

**60-80%**

The amount of the world's energy consumed by cities.



**70%**

The amount of the world's anthropogenic carbon dioxide emitted by cities.



**40%**

of strictly protected areas are expected to lie within 50km of a city by 2030.





## Embracing the Value of Urban Biodiversity

*Russell Galt, Head of the Urban Alliance, IUCN Urban Alliance*

Homo sapiens is becoming a distinctly urban animal. When the IUCN was founded in the mid-20th century, some 750 million people – roughly one third of the world's population – lived in cities, only two of which qualified as megacities (with populations exceeding 10 million). Today, 4.2 billion people live in urban areas and there are 33 megacities. Greater Tokyo Area alone, has 38 million inhabitants – more than the entire population of Canada. The global urban population is projected to continue rising, reaching 6.7 billion (68% of humanity) by 2050.

Cities constitute the world's fastest-growing ecosystem, characterised by high densities of residential and commercial buildings, sealed surfaces and people. Urbanisation brings about dramatic environmental changes pertaining to temperature, light, noise, traffic, predation, parasitism, competition, prey and substrate type. Between 2000 and 2030, it is estimated that urbanisation will directly consume 290,000 km<sup>2</sup> of natural habitat, particularly the tropical moist

forest and temperate forest biomes of Africa and Asia.

Cities are centres of consumption and production. They account for 60% to 80% of the world's energy consumption, 75% of natural resource consumption, and 70% of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions.

### Why is this important?

Prevailing patterns of urbanisation tend to weaken human-nature connections and exacerbate social inequities. As evidenced during the pandemic, exposure to nature can render significant mental and physical health benefits, while inspiring care for the natural world. For most people, the first and only form of nature that can be readily accessed is urban. However, its unequal distribution along lines of affluence leaves many city dwellers under-served, raising questions of environmental justice.

The most rapid urbanisation is occurring in areas of high ecological value (e.g. flood plains and coastal zones), including Global Biodiversity Hotspots, and in countries of the Global South that have limited capacity to develop sustainably. Unplanned and informal urbanisation results in the corrosion of natural capital, inadequate provisioning of ecosystem services, and exacerbation of climate and disaster risks.

### To expedite the creation of greener, healthier cities, seven catalytic interventions can be applied:

- I. Measure performance.** Tools such as the IUCN Urban Nature Index can help cities to better understand their impacts on nature, set science-based targets and monitor progress.
- II. Educate city shapers.** Ecological literacy is key to ensuring that architects, engineers, planners, designers, investors, developers, policymakers and citizens recognise the value of nature.
- III. Empower communities.** Participatory planning, co-design, and other forms of deliberative democracy can bring popular demand for nature to bear on forms and patterns of urban development.
- IV. Adopt a rights-based approach.** Advancing the human right to a safe, clean and wildlife-rich environment can help transform urban planning regulations and design codes.
- V. Ally with culture-makers.** Partnering with creatives – musicians, writers, poets and artists – is vital for reaching the scale of audience required to bring about 'whole-of-society' transformation in cities.
- VI. Fix market failure.** Targeted policy solutions (e.g. urban planning and zoning) and market-based instruments (e.g. taxes and subsidies) can address the environmental shortcomings of the free market.
- VII. Share knowledge liberally.** Gather and share experiences and lessons through platforms such as PANORAMA Solutions, to inform the replication and scaling of best practices.



By 2030, 40% of strictly protected areas are expected to lie within 50km of a city. Inching ever closer, cities subject protected areas to intensifying 'urban edge effects', including light and noise pollution, air and water degradation, and the introduction of invasive species. Direct human impacts including trampling, poaching, littering, arson and vandalism also rise sharply.

'Commercial and residential development' is now the third most frequently cited threat to species on the IUCN Red List. A growing number of species are succeeding in establishing themselves in urban areas – typically generalists aided by behavioural, physiological and morphological adaptations. However, native species often struggle to cope with the novel conditions presented by urban ecosystems. They are consequently displaced, diminished or extirpated.

Cities have ecological footprints that can be orders of magnitude larger than their physical area. Thus, while total urban land coverage is only 2%, the full reach of cities – their demand for resources, discharge of waste, and disruption of ecosystems – extends to virtually every corner of the globe, even the remotest remnants of wilderness.

Urban systems are heavily exposed to climate and disaster risks, including rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion, storm surges, flooding, drought and heat stress. Strengthening the resilience of urban communities and infrastructure has become an imperative of the highest order.

## What can be done?

Rapid urbanisation presents an opportunity to reimagine the built environment and, by extension, our civilisation. To secure a resilient, liveable, sustainable and just future in harmony with nature, the following urban imperatives should be addressed:

**Design.** Adopting nature-inclusive design principles, embracing nature-based solutions and blending grey, green and blue infrastructure, so as to deliver benefits to both people and wildlife. Important biodiversity elements to consider are habitat patch size, ecological connectivity, matrix quality, habitat diversity, native species, special resources and habitat management.

**Density.** Promoting compact integrated development to enhance land-use efficiency, curb urban sprawl, and safeguard natural and agricultural habitats on the urban fringe.

**Direction.** Using land-use planning, zoning and other policy measures to steer urbanisation well clear of protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas and biological corridors.

**Dependency.** Greening supply chains, enhancing resource-use efficiency, promoting sustainable consumption and production, and tackling waste, so as to lessen the (mis) appropriation of near and distant ecologies.



*In Nairobi National Park, endangered wildlife exist in close proximity to the noisy, busy streets of Kenya's most populated city.*



## **SADC Cities Must 'Step Up' on Sustainability**

*Sibongile Mavimbela, Senior Programme Officer, Environment & Climate Change, Southern African Development Community (SADC)*

The SADC region is faced with a wide range of environmental challenges many of which are both a cause and result of environmental and socio-economic factors. The economies of most countries in the region remain heavily dependent on natural capital.

Biodiversity forms the foundation of the vast array of ecosystem products and services that contribute to human well-being and drive the economies of Member States. This means that if the biodiversity resource base deteriorates further it will have major economic and socio-economic impacts. On the other hand, the maintenance, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity can significantly contribute to achieving the region's socio-economic development objectives.

Land degradation presents a serious challenge in Southern Africa which has been driven by multiple natural and human-induced processes including soil erosion, non-sustainable agricultural practices, burning for charcoal production and biological depletion. These have negatively impacted the livelihoods of a significant proportion of the region's population relying on subsistence agriculture.

Rural-urban migration has also caused serious challenges in cities, including overcrowding, and high levels of pollution and waste. The Southern African region specifically, is experiencing unprecedented amount of pollution, especially from plastic waste, but also including raw sewage discharges and agricultural run-off, which have become a major environmental, economic and public health concern. This challenge has been attributed mainly to population growth and urbanisation, poor

waste management, landfill practises and uncontrolled dumping.

SADC is currently experiencing, and will continue to experience, several climate hazards, including heat waves, strong winds, drought and extreme rainfall. The occurrence and severity of droughts in the region are likely to worsen due to increases in temperature and changes in rainfall.

There remains some uncertainty around climate change's impacts on mean rainfall, however, extreme rainfall is expected to increase over large parts of the region, leading to flooding, landslides, soil erosion and a spread of pests and diseases. The region therefore has a clear objective to enhance the adaptive capacities and resilience of Member States with a view to minimizing their vulnerability; pursue a low-carbon growth path dictated by the principles of poverty reduction, sustainable resource use and circular economy; and orient governance, knowledge systems, planning and structures to addressing climate change as a development imperative. Cities can play a major role in this.

In the face of such challenges, it is incumbent upon us to map out a sustainable future for the development of our cities and countries, that responds to these challenges and incorporates nature-based solutions, while continuing to prioritise the needs of our citizens.

A number of cities have incorporated nature-based solutions into their development, and have become stronger and richer in the process. So far, few of these have been in Africa, in spite of our continent experiencing many of the impacts of climate change. I believe we now have the opportunity to leapfrog ahead in the area of urban development. We have begun work towards a SADC Sustainable Cities Strategy, and are pleased to see the strides already being made by Lilongwe in advancing this agenda.



Ref: Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Strategic Plan 2020 (LECC/ICLEA))

# CITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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## Singapore

Once one of the world's most polluted cities, Singapore has transformed itself into an urban biodiversity powerhouse – a 'biophilic city in a garden' where skyscraper greenery is an urban development priority and its people are citizen scientists. Singapore's jewel in the crown is the Gardens by the Bay, where 50-metre tall vertical gardens – or supertrees – sustain themselves through solar energy and collected rainwater. Integral to the country's success is recognition of the importance of youth education and public engagement in ensuring a sustainable future for its green vision.

### The facts

- Trees and vegetation cover more than 50% of Singapore's land mass.
- Over 350km of green corridors or 'park connectors' crisscross the city
- More than one million plants from 19,000 species grow in the Gardens by the Bay

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## Kigali, Rwanda

Rwanda, and primarily its capital, Kigali, has become a global leader in plastic pollution reduction. In 2008, Rwanda banned the importation and use of plastic bags, having recognised the environmental challenges they pose: blocking of water channels and drainage systems, soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, and air pollution from burning waste. In 2019, the country went a step further, banning the manufacture, importation, use and sale of all single-use plastics. Kigali has since become known as the cleanest city in Africa, resulting in a significant boost for the tourism industry.

### The facts

- In 2019, an estimated 1,219,529 international tourists visited Rwanda, with the majority arriving via Kigali.
- Investment in plastic alternatives has boosted employment and generated local income.
- Rwanda has seven plastic recycling facilities.



**Spurred on by the threat of climate change, cities around the world are embracing the nature-based solutions that urban biodiversity provides – and reaping the benefits.**

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## **Copenhagen, Denmark**

After a cloudburst rainfall event flooded Copenhagen in 2011, Denmark's capital city overhauled its outdated drainage system to better manage run-off water. Low-tech solutions – replacing concrete with grass or trees and creating temporary water retention zones – increased the urban area's ability to absorb water, making Copenhagen what is colloquially known as a 'sponge city'. Add to that the cycling culture, the numerous urban and rooftop gardens, and its ambition to become the first carbon neutral capital by 2030, and Copenhagen may be one of the world's greenest cities.

### **The facts**

- There are estimated to be 700,000 bikes in Copenhagen, with 62% of the population using bikes to commute.
- A quarter of Copenhagen is green space.
- Since 2010, regulations require all newly-constructed buildings to incorporate green roofs.



## **Medellin, Colombia**

To address a severe heat increase due to 50 years of rapid urbanisation, in 2016 Medellín trained a number of its citizens to become city gardeners, and created 30 'green corridors' throughout the city, connecting existing green space and improving urban biodiversity. The project provides a range of ecosystem services: it reduces the urban heat island effect, improves air quality by soaking up pollutants and provides much-needed shade. The city has also 'greened' heat-trapping structures, such as bridges and pillars, and installed green roofs and vertical gardens on government buildings.

### **The facts**

- 30 green corridors provide a 20km network, including bike lanes and walkways.
- 75 locals from disadvantaged backgrounds were trained to become city gardeners and planting technicians.
- Urban heat island effect reduced by 2°C



The world has lost two thirds of its wildlife in the past 50 years.<sup>1</sup>



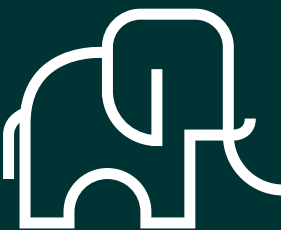
Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate inaction has risen by 25.4%.<sup>2</sup>



Biodiversity loss could cost the world US\$9.87 trillion by 2050.<sup>3</sup>



Three quarters of the earth's land surface and two thirds of its marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions.<sup>4</sup>



1 million of the planet's estimated 8 million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction due to human activities.<sup>5</sup>



Ecosystem services are estimated to be worth trillions of dollars, double the world's GDP.<sup>6</sup>

1 Living Planet Report 2020

2 The Global Risks Report 2022

3 Global Futures Report

4,5 IBPES Global Assessment Report 2019

6 BiodiverCities by 2030 Report

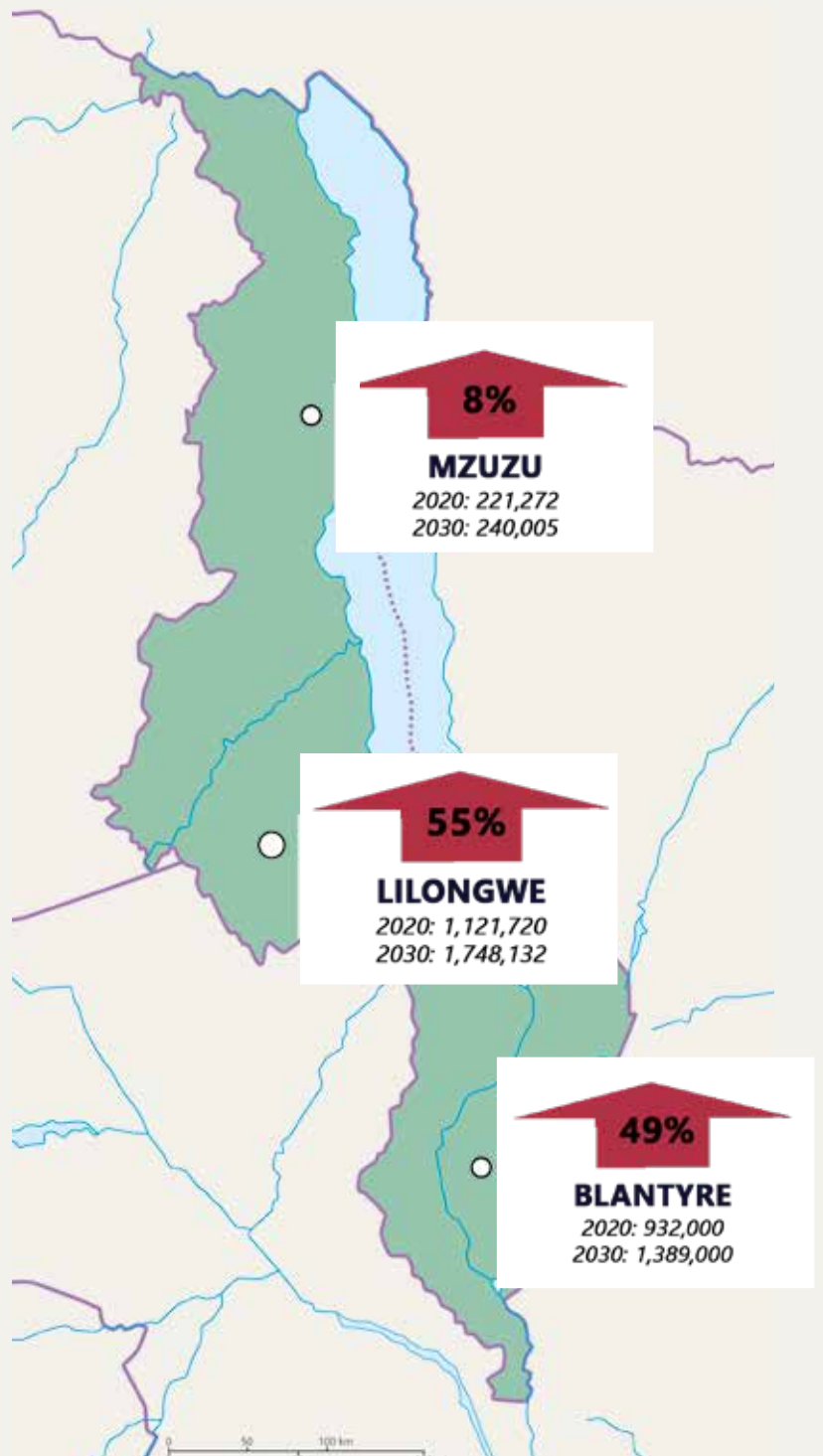
# MALAWI PERSPECTIVE

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Urban growth rates in Malawi are following global trends. Malawi's cities are growing at an average rate of 4.38% – almost double that of the country's annual population growth of 2.7%. Lilongwe's population is projected to almost double from 1.12million in 2020 to 2.21 million in 2035.

All three of Malawi's cities – Blantyre, Mzuzu and the capital, Lilongwe – suffer from unplanned development, inadequate funding and resources, and outdated policies and regulation.

All three cities, however, also have the advantage of nature sanctuaries within city limits and, compared to cities in neighbouring countries, benefit from tree-lined avenues and have not yet become high-rise 'concrete jungles'.



*Projected Population Growth  
2020-2030*



## Green Cities are Resilient Cities

*Andrew Spezowka, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction*

*Andrew Spezowka was Portfolio Manager for Resilience and Sustainable Growth at UNDP Malawi from 2016 to 2021, and is currently on loan to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). This commentary reflects his personal views.*

Africa faces significant challenges in adapting to climate change, with costs and damages rising rapidly in our warming world. Many, if not all, African countries are 'vulnerability hotspots' and despite efforts to keep global-mean warming below 2°C of pre-industrial levels, or better still below 1.5°C, the world will still be confronted by the additional warming baked into our global climate.

Impact projections that have appeared in peer-reviewed literature over the past two decades point to a large and multidimensional adaptation challenge, along with significant residual damages across Africa. As we move to collectively press the brakes on emissions, we are locked into more warming, even as we move to fully transition to decarbonise our energy, transportation and other systems. With record atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations and accumulated heat propelling the planet into uncharted territory, there are far-reaching repercussions across Africa, including for Malawi.

Climate change is a serious challenge for Malawi, where urbanisation is happening at breaking speed. It threatens to increase vulnerabilities, destroy economic gains, and hinder social and economic progress. And the urban poor will bear the brunt of its effects, since they live and work in settlements that are more exposed to hazards such as floods, heat stress, and water shortages. What we do or don't do in this next decade will determine the prospects for a climate-resilient future.

There is hope for a better way forward – if we take transformative action now for

nature and people. We need greater policy attention and investment in nature and the services it provides to people and planet. Investing in nature will have a positive impact on human health and livelihoods, and can help lift people out of poverty. Studies by the United Nations show that every dollar spent on ecosystem restoration yields at least \$9 of economic benefits.

A resilient city is one that is prepared for existing and future climate impacts. Thankfully, an increasing number of cities across Africa have begun to plan for climate change by developing climate plans or by incorporating climate mitigation and adaptation considerations into existing plans, policies, and projects. City officials are making major development decisions today that will have long legacies on the ability of their cities to adapt to a new climate future.

For this reason, nature-based solutions are garnering increased attention and emerged as a prominent feature of COP26 in December 2021. Often referred to as NbS, nature-based solutions offer another tool to incentivise action on adaptation, particularly where such efforts are bolstered by community buy-in and leadership. More broadly, we all know that nature feeds us, provides us shelter, regulates our weather patterns, fuels our economies to generate improvements to our wellbeing, and plays a protective role in safeguarding us from disasters and building resilience. As we have learned the hard way through the global coronavirus pandemic, ecosystem, animal and human health are inextricably interconnected and vital for securing our prosperous future.

While NbS also offer important solutions to the climate crisis, critical too are the benefits it brings to Africa's cities in other areas, such as improving air quality, urban

A resilient city is one that is prepared for existing and future climate impacts



food production, habitat creation and conservation, improving biodiversity, expanding opportunities for recreation, and, importantly, bringing improvements to our physical and mental health. But while we know that nature is vital, we also know that we are losing nature at a rate unprecedented in human history. Investing in NbS is one of the smartest decisions cities can take to improve quality of life and to secure the foundations for future prosperity.

The United Nations expect Africa's population to double by 2050, most of which will be concentrated in urban areas. Addressing this trend is both a challenge and an opportunity, as many people move to the city in hope of finding employment and better living conditions. Tackling environmental degradation, deforestation, and water stress through NbS offers multiple spill-over benefits, especially in leveraging the power of healthy ecosystems to reduce disaster risk. NbS can effectively mitigate urban flooding caused by high-frequency precipitation events, with additional economic, ecological, and social benefits accruing to local communities and across the entire urban population.

### **The Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative**

These are some of the reasons that the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative (LECI) puts Malawi on the frontier of applying NbS for resilience and adaptation to a changing climate. This multi-purpose initiative brings together a diverse range of stakeholders and local communities and is exactly the type of action recommended under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and embodies the principles and approaches espoused in this resolution by the United Nations General Assembly.

While the corridor will bring economic benefits such as tourism and green jobs, and further propel Lilongwe's transformation into a green city in the heart of Malawi, there are other benefits. Malawians can all too easily recall the flash floods that hit Lilongwe when rains fall with increasing intensity, causing the Lingadzi, Lilongwe and Nankhaka rivers to

break their banks. Urban rivers are too often a casualty of urban development rather than the keystone ecological asset around which city planning should pivot. Work on the corridor is ongoing and covers activities such as planting trees and hedges to increase water absorption and stabilise banks, helping to slow down surface water run-off to reduce erosion and land slippage.

This is what makes the LECI such an impressive – and imperative – investment in Lilongwe's future. Restoring the corridor will not only protect local communities from flood hazards, but it will serve as a living 'learning lab' to expand environmental education for youth and the public to better understand the range of benefits provided by ecological restoration and the importance of green urban spaces. This helps people understand that rivers and clean water are the heart and lungs of the city. The corridor is also a critical step in setting adaptation priorities as the impacts of a changing climate bear down across the globe. Solutions that come from nature present opportunities for greater resilience to climate change. The LECI is an endowment that will reap benefits today and for decades to come.

Looking back many years on this critical decade for climate and ecological action, future generations will see the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative as a turning point. Having set a benchmark for collaborative action on ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions, the corridor stands as a challenge to all cities across Malawi to accelerate the transition to greener and cleaner urban living.



*Houses and infrastructure were destroyed and lives were lost in the Lilongwe floods of 2017*



## **Enforce the Law for the Greater Good**

*Hon Chilenga, MP Chitipa South, Chair of Parliamentary Natural Resources Committee and co-chair of the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus*

Last year, the World Bank warned that Malawi is facing ‘an environmental cycle of decline and degradation’. A combination of complex and interrelated factors – including population growth, climate change, pollution, land use change and uncontrolled and illegal use of natural resources – have put the nation on an ‘unsustainable development trajectory’.

Based on the irrefutable facts, we can all agree on the need for action, but we cannot simply rely on goodwill and individual choice. There will always be those who put their own short-term gains ahead of the greater good. The sandminer who destroys the riverbanks that protects crops and houses downstream from floods. The chicken factory owner who pours waste into the river, poisoning the drinking water and killing the wildlife. The developer who clears his building plot of trees, and builds with timber illegally sourced from the nearby forest reserve that in turn protects the city’s water table.

Joined-up environmental regulation and enforcement are necessary tools to curb such behaviours, which add up to a degraded, unproductive, even toxic urban environment.

Major legislative revisions, including the forestry and wildlife acts, have been passed in Parliament in recent years. Malawi has since received global commendation for its successes in dismantling one of the region’s organised trafficking syndicates, through the use of dedicated investigation and prosecution units, and inter-agency collaboration. The same model is being applied to some effect in forestry.

According to the World Bank, the new Environmental Management Act – if implemented effectively – has the potential

to be ‘one of the most powerful legal instruments for environmental management introduced so far in Africa’. At its heart is the creation of a new regulator, the Malawi Environmental Protection Authority (MEPA). This new body has been given far-reaching powers and duties, working with and through other lead agencies, districts and councils.

Imagine if this regulator could work together with the urban authorities, with a shared priority to clean up our cities, protect our natural assets, and create urban places that are a pleasure in which to live, to visit, and indeed, to prosper. Imagine what would be possible if there was unwavering support.

of the highest political office, the genuine dedication of its officers to work tenaciously and resist corruption, the goodwill of the public, and the cooperation of its partners.

We are the custodians of our natural assets, and we must take this responsibility seriously. We must learn to live in harmony with nature, and use every tool in our armoury to avoid the future that science is currently predicting.



*This illegally dumped waste in Mzuzu in 2020 became a public health hazard*



## Why Trees are Vital to our Urban Infrastructure

*Dorothy Tembo, Director of Programmes, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust*

When I was growing up in Lilongwe and Blantyre, there were so many trees, and how beautiful they were. But now, because of the high deforestation rate, all our cities are bare. Trees are so important for urban areas, not just for their beauty but also for the ecosystem services they provide. They clean the air, help to prevent flooding, reduce noise and cool down the temperature.

I know of many cases of trees and forests being cleared for development, with short-sighted planners not considering the importance of the trees and what they offer. In Blantyre, since the major biodiversity hotspots of the Soche, Mpingwe, Bangwe and Ndirande hills have been deforested and built on for residents and farms, there has been increased frequency of disasters. With the Shire river catchment area destroyed, there is more run-off and there has been increased flooding in the lower Shire, including Blantyre, and costs have increased.

Then there's the felling of the protected red mahogany trees on Kenyatta in Lilongwe, to make way for the six-lane road expansion. These beautiful trees were over 50 years old and would have been part of the proposed ecological corridor through the city. Their loss will result in disturbances of ecologically sensitive areas around Lingadzi and Lilongwe rivers and nature sanctuary.

These trees helped to control the runoff that gets into the rivers when it rains, so there will be more flooding, especially during rainy season. Now the soil is also degraded and debris and pollution from the streets and market will get into the water, affecting the river life and biodiversity.

The trees offered shade for people walking, helping to cool the area, and they also helped to control air pollution from the cars. The air used to be fresher, but walking there now you can feel the heat and breathe in the dust a lot

more – I have heard of people getting allergies.

These are just some examples of how trees provide benefits to our cities – and the problems that happen when they are cut down. If we really want to transform Lilongwe into a clean, green, resilient city, we must focus on longterm, nature-based solutions and protect our urban natural resources.



*Tree-lined streets - like this one in Limbe, Blantyre - offer shade to walkers, cool the air, filter urban pollutants, and stabilise the soil.*



## Our Communities Need Nature to Thrive

*Eveline Sibindi Van Dam, President, Rotary Club Lilongwe-Lingadzi*

Nature is a crucial part of any community, yet our capital city lacks sufficient parks and green spaces to benefit our people. Luckily, with the development of the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor, this all will change.

Lilongwe is a growing city, which means more traffic, more roads and more buildings. An abundance of flat, dark surfaces made of asphalt and concrete creates what is known as the 'urban heat island effect'. This makes cities hotter, which, besides being uncomfortable and unhealthy, is a major factor in smog creation. This can be eliminated from Lilongwe through a combination of increased park space and planting trees among houses, office parks and industrial areas. Strategic planting of trees and vegetation can reduce summer temperatures by 0.5 to 5°C.

Trees produce the oxygen we breathe and remove pollutants from the air. Air pollution

can increase risk of certain cancers and have adverse effects on anyone with underlying respiratory problems. It also increases the mortality rate in highly polluted cities. Even a small increase in the number of city parks can make a big difference when it comes to air pollution. And let's not forget the reduction of dust by grass, shrubs and trees in the dry seasons.

We have all seen the flooded roundabouts and muddy streams across the road during rainy seasons. Trees and grass are very efficient and cost effective in absorbing water, especially in comparison to drainage ditches made of concrete. With temperatures on the rise, we can expect more intense rainfall, and an increase in green space could save a lot of money. Nature also increases worker productivity; psychologists have found that access to plants and green spaces allows workers to be more productive.

Parks provide space for events, arts, and sports activities, allowing people to develop a sense of community, while hiking trails, cycling paths, basketball fields and outdoor gym spaces get people active and improve their physical health. Parks are places where people can make connections and participate in recreational activities. Direct exposure to nature has its own benefits, reducing stress and increasing happiness. Research has also shown that increasing the

number of parks and recreational facilities in a city also youth crime rates.

As Lilongwe grows, animals find themselves without homes, and parks provide a safe place for many of those displaced by concrete and asphalt. Building a healthy network of green spaces is one way to protect these animals and preserve local ecosystems. And they are great places to teach children about the environment.

Whether its businesses, adults, children or animals, more green space will significantly benefit everyone in our community, and help protect us from the growing threat of climate change.



## Urban Biodiversity will Boost Tourism and the Economy

*Haroon Sacranie, Chairman,  
ZST Investments Ltd*

I have been a businessman in Malawi for 45 years, and my company, ZSL Investments Ltd, employs over 700 people across 15 subsidiaries in Lilongwe and Blantyre, including Shaanti Constructions Ltd and the Crossroads Hotels, Shopping Malls and Franchise Food Courts.

Over the years, I have seen – and been involved in – the development of infrastructure and buildings in Malawi's



*The Lilongwe City Green Guardians are a good example of a grassroots citizen environmental action group. Set up in 2021, they work to raise community awareness, monitor urban issues, and encourage citizen action.*

urban areas, particularly Lilongwe. This development will continue, but Lilongwe still has a lot of empty land and greenery, and this must be considered and protected in future development.

Malawi has unique flora and fauna, which provide ecosystem services such as food, shelter, medicine, and cultural and spiritual services. These services are many and varied: forests provide a carbon sink and help to store the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; wetland ecosystems provide flood control and help reduce erosion. Ecosystem services support life by regulating essential processes, such as purification of air and water, crop pollination, nutrient cycling, decomposition of wastes, and renewal of soils. These ecosystem services are vital to the country's economy, and maintaining biodiversity in these areas will ensure employment and food security, as high biodiversity improves the health of the ecosystem and increases productivity throughout the economy. In 2017, the forestry, fisheries and wildlife sectors contributed 12.8% to Malawi's GDP, so the loss of biodiversity would be very harmful to the country's economic activity. The sustainability of biodiversity in Malawi is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, overexploitation of natural resources, pollution and climate change.

Malawi has experienced positive economic growth over the past 10 years,

however it is currently in an economic recovery stage due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Being one of the largest contributors to the country's GDP, the tourism industry in Malawi is very important. Those visiting Lilongwe and Blantyre for conferences and conventions are the largest group of visitors, followed by work and business people. In Malawi, ecosystem services and biodiversity play a key role in attracting tourists, and improving Lilongwe's urban biodiversity will increase its attraction to business people and will boost investment interest.

## Improving Lilongwe's urban biodiversity will increase its attraction to business people and boost investment

The Lilongwe Ecological Corridor recognises the importance of greening urban areas and connecting fragments of green space to improve biodiversity within the urban landscape. This will increase the local level resilience of the city, and will attract more tourists who will be willing to come and see how Malawi is ensuring its flora and fauna are protected in a sustainable way.



*Malawi's climate means that local and international visitors can enjoy time outdoors, and all the better if they can get close to nature*



## Urban Parks Bring Nature to City Dwellers

*Brighton Kumchedwa, Director,  
Dep't of National Parks & Wildlife*

Green areas and nature sanctuaries within cities are very important. Not only do they help to reduce air pollution, heat and flooding, but they also offer important enjoyment and education opportunities.

In Malawi, many city-dwellers don't get to go to the national parks and reserve, such as Liwonde or Nyika, and for a lot of people who live in Lilongwe, the nature sanctuary and Wildlife Centre are their only experience of biodiversity.

The situation may be the same for tourists, who come to Lilongwe or Blantyre but aren't able to travel further. Nature sanctuaries within a city are like a lab, bringing to the urban area what people would see in the wild.

The Lilongwe Ecological Corridor is a very good initiative for many reasons. It will offer a lot of recreation opportunities and it will improve tourism to the city. There are currently some wild animals in Lilongwe, such as hyenas, small antelope and birds, but the Ecological Corridor will improve biodiversity and attract even more wildlife. And the more animal life and trees we have in the city, the more opportunities the people of Lilongwe have to experience them.

It will also be a really good opportunity for education. At the moment, the nature sanctuary and Wildlife Centre provide education opportunities for children and students – it's a fantastic educational centre. The first phase of the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor – Project GreenHeart – will improve these facilities even more. The more that children and adults learn about Malawi's biodiversity, the more they will know how important it is to protect it.



*At the heart of Lilongwe lies a 180 hectare nature reserve, which is rich in biodiversity and open to the public*



## Youth are Passionate about Sustainability

*Temwa Mbeya, founder of United  
Communities for Transformation*

I am passionate about sustainability in Malawi, but I find that a lot of people in this country lack a sense of responsibility when it comes to the environment. That's why I founded the youth-led NGO United Communities for Transformation, and our mission is to promote environmental, economic and social sustainability in Malawi. My vision is for all Malawian homes to thrive through sustainable development initiatives – it is so important that we all play our part.

I want to live in a city that is clean, cool and green – one that is resilient to climate change for the generations to come. But at the moment, the government is focusing on the short term instead of the long term, and isn't doing enough to solve our environmental problems.

Our capital city is full of litter, especially in our drainage system, which is really bad. When people litter in the drains and it rains, our city gets flooded, and buildings and bridges get destroyed. Land in our cities, especially Lilongwe, is being cleared for

construction, and green nature has been replaced by new buildings and concrete pavements, which absorb a lot of heat and cool down slowly. Fewer trees and greenery in the city means pollution, which comes from cars, burning of wood and charcoal and agriculture practices, is getting worse. Excessive heat and pollution put Malawians' health at risk.

There is a need for sustainability planning in city construction work and infrastructure development, so that Lilongwe can withstand climatic shocks. It is also very important that trees that are cut down are replaced, and there is a need to educate Malawians in environmental conservation, so we can help the city, and reduce pollution and cool down the temperature, especially in the summer months.

The youth of Malawi, especially Lilongwe, are at the forefront of environmental and sustainable projects. We are more aware of the environmental problems we face than previous generations and we know that

the best way for Lilongwe to protect itself against climate change is to use its nature and its biodiversity. It is the youth who can influence traditional leaders and the older generations to make changes.

We are passionate about making these changes. There are many sustainable projects happening now – and we have so many ideas for the future – but the big problem is that we lack funds and support. The young people of Lilongwe are the future of the city and we are trying to make it a better, happier, healthier place to live.



Students testing the quality of water samples from the Lingadzi river. The pilot project is a joint initiative from IUCN, Earthwatch, and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust.

*'Through their participation in the pilot project for the Urban Nature Index, our students have learnt new skills but most importantly they are learning the value of our biodiversity, the importance of monitoring, research and understanding, and the positive or negative impact that we, as humans, can have. We need to keep our river healthy for the benefit of people and nature. These learners will become the guardians of this new ecological corridor'*



**Patrick Siliya, Head Teacher,  
Mchesi Secondary School, LLW**

# LILONGWE ECOLOGICAL CORRIDOR

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## **Working Towards a Clean, Green & Prosperous City**

*John Chome, Chief Executive Officer,  
Lilongwe City Council*

My job, in one sentence, is to manage the city. I'm responsible for ensuring that there is good governance and for delivering a wide range of services – infrastructure, sanitation, education, planning, recreational, environmental.

We're facing a number of environmental challenges in Lilongwe. Solid waste is one of our biggest challenges. We only have a fraction of the capacity we need to manage all the waste that the city generates. Energy is also a problem. Many trees within the city and – more importantly – outside the city are disappearing to create charcoal and firewood. Dzalanyama Forest is disappearing. We need to find a solution to this crisis because if we deforest the catchment areas which supply our water then one day Lilongwe will wake up to no water.

How we build the city is also a problem. Most construction in the city uses burnt bricks which requires firewood and is a major contributor to the disappearance of trees. That's why we're promoting a new 'green construction' strategy banning the use of these materials in all public buildings. We're also degrading our natural assets through sand mining in the rivers, brick molding, cultivation along the rivers, and pollution.

If you look at the major cities in the world – the beautiful cities – they are the ones that have harnessed their natural assets to form the central fabric of their city. Paris has the Seine, London has the Thames, Budapest the Danube. These rivers define the form of the city.

Here in Lilongwe we are blessed perhaps even more than these cities – not only do we have two big rivers, we also have a beautiful wild area right in the centre. Not many cities can boast of assets like this. But, until now, we haven't looked at these attributes as things we can utilise to make the city better. That's where the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative (LECI) comes in. We recognised four critical ecosystems in Lilongwe that connect to form a corridor: the Lilongwe River, the Lingadzi River, the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary, and the Botanic Gardens.

The idea is to harness these important natural assets to define the city's transformation. We want people who live in and visit Lilongwe to feel that the city has a heart and a soul – and that will be the corridor.

To make the corridor initiative successful we need to do two things. First, we need to make these assets useful to the public so that they look at them with value. If something has value, it's protected. So we're going to create eco-services like a riverine footpath, which families can use to walk or jog along. We're creating beautiful public parks along rivers. Lilongwe Wildlife Centre is redeveloping its facilities under the Project GreenHeart initiative to improve their visitor experience. We will also clean up the rivers and restore their banks. These actions will make these assets productive for people – they will become spaces where people can go and enjoy themselves.

Second, we need to couple these activities with education and awareness, particularly in schools, so that young people begin to appreciate nature more. It's all about mindset change. Of course this cannot happen in a day or in a year – it is a long process. There is no quick fix.



In the village where I come from there are lots of hills. These hills were full of trees but the trees had almost completely disappeared by the 80s and 90s. In 2010 President Bingu Mutharika had the community plant one side of the mountain with fast-growing trees and the community were told to guard the trees. Now the trees have grown and the community are allowed to go and collect firewood. The village is now protecting their forest together – they are planting more trees and their mindset has changed. They know that if they protect the trees, they will all benefit.

Even within the City Council, the biggest challenge was to convince people that the ecological corridor was a good idea! I had to do a lot of work to convince colleagues within and without that this is something that can transform this city. Even now there are some that are not convinced, but for me I believe and I know that this can be one of the most transformational activities that this city will ever undertake. I am determined – as long as I am here I will ensure that this happens.

What gives me hope is that we have support at the highest levels – this initiative is part of the public sector reform programme and it has been approved by the Government at the highest level. That alone is a big motivating factor – if there is no political will or support then things become difficult. We have the political will to have this done.

Partners are also critical. We have some very committed partners and I'm sure there will be even more – that gives me real confidence.

Finally, we have a demand-driven need for change. If you listen to people, most of them are not happy with their city. They are complaining about so many things, they want their city to look like other more beautiful and liveable cities. That demand for transformation is also what drives me. We want this city to transform. We see the corridor as one of the keys to that transformation.

*This river is the lifeblood of our communities. Without 'chilengedwe' we are nothing. We must learn to live in harmony with nature again, and do all we can to protect and restore our God-given assets.'*

*George Mkalimba, Chief, Kawale Township, LLW*



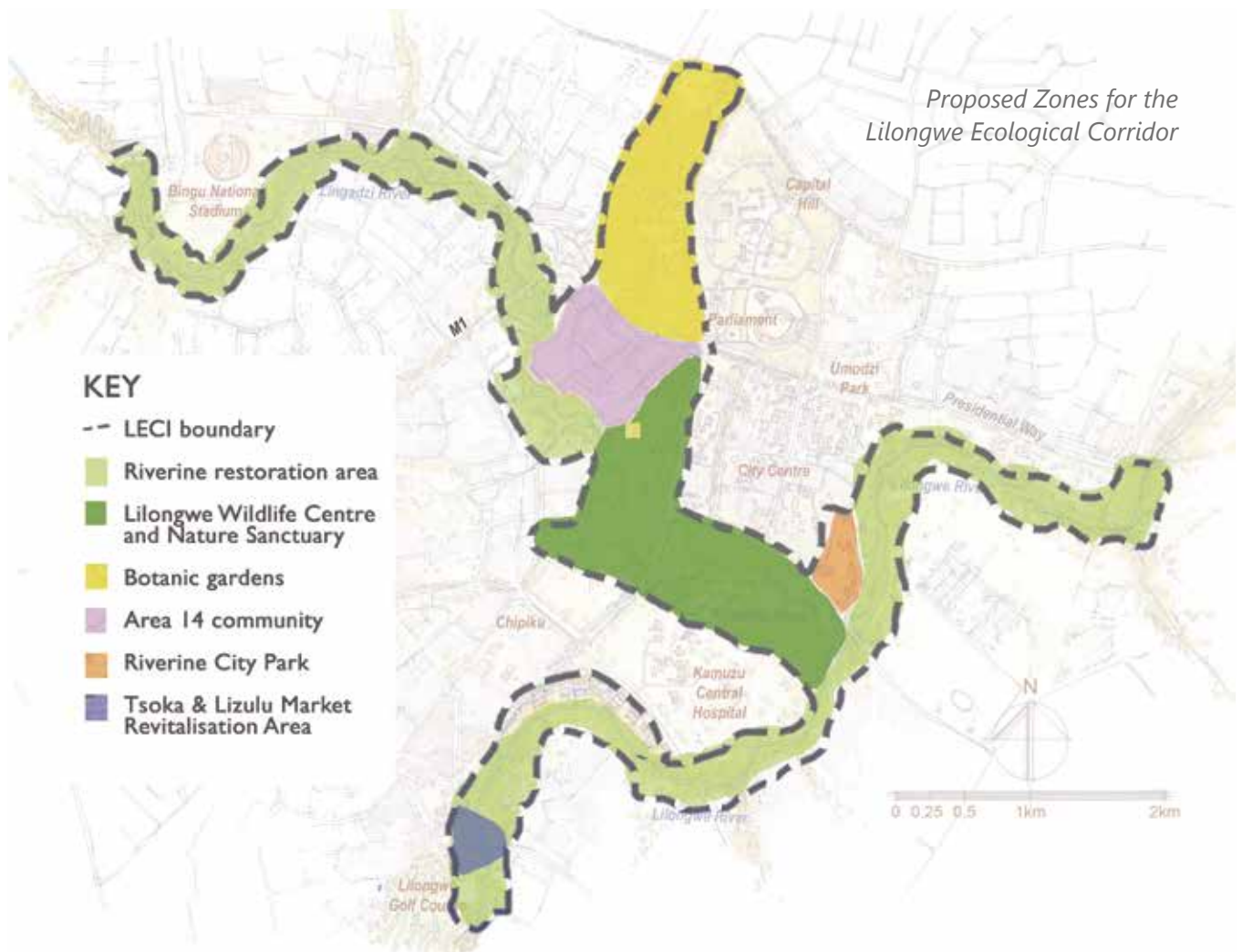


Under the leadership of the Lilongwe City Council, LECl brings together communities, NGO's, CSO's and the private sector to create a enjoyable, green, clean and prosperous city.

Citizens and businesses will thrive through the connection of green spaces, which will protect the City's natural assets, while investing in environmentally and socially sustainable infrastructure and supporting services.

Physical and mental wellbeing will be enhanced thanks to access to nature and the numerous of benefits from improved ecosystem services include cleaner air and water. Jobs will be created, with new opportunities for education and vocational training opportunities made available.

Through the same processes, the city's resilience to the impacts of climate change will be strengthened and tourism and new business opportunities will provide a fresh boost to the economy. The realisation of the LECl vision will position Lilongwe as Southern Africa's emerging green city, attracting national and foreign investment and standing as a model for others to follow and a symbol of national pride.





## GREEN SPACES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Spaces and places for tourism, recreation, education, and businesses will be regenerated and created, connecting people and nature and showcasing the value of eco-build techniques and sustainable management practices.

Proposed projects include: Project Greenheart, Riverine City Park, Lizulu/Tsoka market redevelopment, and the Botanic Gardens regeneration, new cycle and walking paths for commuters.



## BIODIVERSITY RESTORATION

Riverine habitats will be revitalised, with the planting of trees and shrubs to stabilise the river banks and create new habitat. A 10-year biodiversity management plan is underway at the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary and Wildlife Centre to remove exotic/alien species.

Linking to the environmental stewardship and community programme, businesses, residents and local authorities will be encouraged and incentivised to allow biodiversity to thrive throughout the corridor, and adopt sustainable practices such as no pesticides, and composting instead of burning.



## GREEN SERVICES

Waste management will be prioritised with pollution and disease control front of mind. The innovative solutions will be facilitated, providing opportunities to trial out initiatives before rollouts to larger areas. e.g. recycling, plastic bricks, community compost, circular economy. Jobs will be created through the schemes.

Sustainability service agents will visit communities to assess opportunities to improve the sustainability of their households and commercial premises. Proposed projects include trading traditional stoves for fuel efficient ones to eliminate charcoal usage; plumbers repairing leaks to reduce water wastage; biogas from waste processing for the creation of cooking fuel; increased access to energy through renewable energy / microgrids.



## NATURE-BASED ECONOMY

LECI will form a key part of the eco tourism network within Malawi, linking with National Parks and other eco tourism providers to provide an additional environmental experience within the capital for national and international tourists.

Proposed initiatives include an eco-business support hub will provide marketing and development support to businesses along the corridor; a micro-finance partnership to allow citizens to access green loans; renewable energy services for social institutions along the corridor, for them to provide more sustainable services, and potentially act as an energy hub for the surrounding community.



## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

LECI will provide a participatory space for environmental action, with activities allowing residents, citizens and businesses to play their part e.g. tree planting, recycling, monitoring.

A new 'environmental centre of excellence' will act as a hub for environmental education and nature-based training, thus building in-country ecological literacy and conservation capacity.

A sustained media and advocacy programme will help to amplify the impact of LECI, thus inspiring further action, both within Lilongwe and beyond.



## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

A green charter will be supported with a revised set of bylaws ideally in consultation with a special assembly of citizens, law-makers and development experts.

The Lilongwe City Council and MEPA will work closely to prioritise the enforcement of the bylaws and other environmental legislation. A community network of river guardians will be established to monitor and report incidents and concerns.



## MAPPING IMPACT

**The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Here we consider the vision of the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor Initiative against each of the SDG's:**

### 1. NO POVERTY

Regeneration of urban space will create employment and boost investment. Citizens and residents benefit from targeted improvements to the urban environment, creating a model for poverty reduction in cities across Malawi.

### 2. ZERO HUNGER

Residents will access more economical and sustainable cooking solutions to reduce charcoal demand, therefore increasing their budget for food and potential for dietary diversification.

### 3. GOOD HEALTH & WELLBEING

Air and water quality and disease control will improve, leading to better health outcomes. Increased access to nature and more opportunity to access leisure spaces will have physical and mental health benefits.

### 4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Educational institutions along and near to the corridor benefit from targeted development initiatives and improved access to green spaces, including access to environmental education and training opportunities, open to urban and national audiences.

### 5. GENDER EQUALITY

Women are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation. With this knowledge, LECI will ensure women are explicitly targeted in both quality education and green growth related activities, ensuring an equal opportunity to participate and importantly, to benefit.

### 6. CLEAN WATER & SANITATION

Restoration of the riparian environment improves supply of clear water through the city. Initiatives will include water harvesting and reduced water wastage. Sanitation and waste management will be prioritised within the corridor.

### 7. AFFORDABLE & CLEAN ENERGY

Schemes to expand on-grid and off-grid power solutions will be promoted. Access to renewable energy products such as solar will be subsidized. Households along the corridor benefit from an mbaula amnesty where traditional stoves are swapped for clean cookstoves to reduce

charcoal usage and associated cooking energy costs. Introduction of biogas digesters to turn household / market waste into affordable energy. Commercial and institutional users of unsustainably sourced cooking and heating energy will be converted to alternative energies and/ or fuel-efficient technologies, reducing unsustainable fuelwood consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

## **8. DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH**

LECI will attract investors to Southern Africa's emerging 'green' city. It will boost the local recreation and national, and international tourism economy, in turn creating new employment opportunities from hospitality through to the restoration and subsequent maintenance and management of sites. Redeveloped market will benefit sole traders and companies. Businesses in the corridor benefit from environmental-linked initiatives, such as business development support, plus promotion and increased footfall through the corridor for improved trade.

## **9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

LECI will support sustained, green growth of businesses within and around the corridor, develop public infrastructure for citizens and promote environmental and social innovation on rethinking what constitutes a successful environmentally sound public space.

## **10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

LECI spaces will be open to all and benefit citizens at all socio-economic levels.

## **11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES**

This is a key goal for LECI, pioneering a replicable model that also stimulates national pride. The city will be more resilient to climate-change related disasters such as flash floods.

## **12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION**

The redevelopment of the corridor will be delivered according to environmentally sustainable principles

and create minimum waste. The research underpinning LECI's waste management system will identify major sources of waste and investigate and recommend means by which these might be reduced. Circular economies will be encouraged.

## **13. CLIMATE ACTION**

LECI will provide opportunities for climate action and environmental stewardship for individuals, households, communities, businesses, and political leaders. The LECI will connect people with nature, encourage groups such as CSO's and church groups to utilise the green spaces and access services such as free environmental education, this improving ecological literacy. The success of LECI will inspire further social and political action for similar initiatives in Malawi and beyond.

## **14. LIFE BELOW WATER**

Restoration of the riparian environment will support the redevelopment of freshwater habitats.

## **15. LIFE ON LAND**

The nature reserve rich in biodiversity will be protected. Businesses and communities will be incentivised to create and connect pockets of urban biodiversity and adopt sustainable management practices such as composting and small-scale permaculture, in turn promoting a positive model of human-wildlife coexistence.

## **16. PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

LECI will be underpinned by a strong charter and by-laws, developed by a citizen's assembly, that models a positive new form of citizen engagement. Institutions will be supported to collaborate on the delivery of quality services and the enforcement of legislation.

## **17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**

The success of LECI will rely on a convened, multi-stakeholder partnership, harnessing relative areas of expertise and comparative advantage for effective delivery.

# LECI PHASE 1: PROJECT GREENHEART

In the centre of Lilongwe lies a 180ha forest reserve, the last remaining stand of the Central Region’s nationally endangered Piliostigma-Acacia-Combretum woodland. The habitat supports a diversity of wildlife - from hyenas, bushpigs and crocodiles to over 200 species of birds - all of which thrive thanks in large part to the Lilongwe and Lingadzi rivers that pass through its heart. The reserve is home to Lilongwe Wildlife Centre, Malawi’s only wildlife sanctuary for orphaned and injured animals, and has also served as a popular tourism destination in its own right for over a decade, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors every year.

‘Project Greenheart’ represents the first phase of the Lilongwe Ecological Corridor. It is an ambitious redevelopment initiative, overseen by Lilongwe Wildlife Trust and funded by UNDP, that aims to maximise the site’s social, economic and ecological value of the site. The project will:

- ◆ Regenerate the forest and riverine habitat, thus restoring optimal habitats for native wildlife and safeguarding vital ecosystem services for Lilongwe’s citizens.
- ◆ Connect more people with nature, increasing access to Lilongwe’s green spaces. The redeveloped site is designed to encourage exploration and discovery within the beautiful woodland setting, and will feature a new network of nature trails, an elevated boardwalk, benches, a playground, picnic areas and an arboretum. This in turn will promote recreation and tourism, supporting secondary businesses and sustainable livelihoods.
- ◆ Provide world-class wildlife rehabilitation services, and build conservation capacity through the establishment of a conservation hub and ‘centre of excellence’. Improved facilities for research, citizen science, wildlife rehabilitation and veterinary medicine will open up sector-leading training and development opportunities for international and Malawian students and professionals. and tailored education programmes will be accessible to both primary and secondary learners.

At time of writing (Feb 2022), the new education centre and sanctuary facilities were nearing completion. The final tranche of funding is being sought to complete the final components of the tourism infrastructure.



Plan for the new education centre



Model of the forest walkway



Artist's impression of the new amphitheatre



Signage explaining the developments to visitors



## WHAT NEXT?

*Zilanie Gondwe, Director for the Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICON) & Chair of the LECI Steering Committee.*

The concept of LECI was born back in 2018, thanks to ICLEI who supported the Lilongwe City Council to develop the first ecological corridor strategic plan.

Fast forward to today and, thanks to generous funding from UNDP, we are close to seeing the completion of phase 1 through 'Project Greenheart'.

As part of that first phase, the LECI Steering Committee was formed with a view to building up the network required to bring LECI to life, and we have been overwhelmed by the response.

Cross-sector engagement is critical to the success of this project and membership now includes multiple government departments beyond local government to include tourism, wildlife, environment, roads, and water.

We are reaching out to NGO's, CSO's, donors, and businesses to identify synergies with LECI's themes. The Rotary Club, for example, aim to plant a million trees next year, many of them within the corridor, and UN Habitat have commissioned work to restore some riverine habitats close to communities at risk of flooding. The Lilongwe City Green Guardians are successfully mobilising

grassroots forces and local schools have signed up to water monitoring with LWT and Earthwatch. The Modern Cooking for Healthy Forests (MCHF) project funded by USAID and UKAID is focusing on reducing urban charcoal usage and introducing alternative fuels, and the likes of TNM have in the past mobilised their workforce to clean up litter by the river.

This is only the beginning. We need to convene a coalition of likeminded and effective organisations and individuals to pull in the same direction, facilitating action where we can and identifying and filling the gaps.

I hope that this report has helped in some way to inform and inspire you. I therefore end with a 'call to arms', to ask that you reach out to us and tell us where you might be able to help. We need technical support, manpower, funds, high-level political will and public support.

We can turn  
Lilongwe into a  
green, clean,  
resilient, and  
prosperous city  
- a joyful place  
to live and work,  
a must-visit  
destination - if we  
work together.

Please, drop us a line on [zilanie@icon.mw](mailto:zilanie@icon.mw).



*Lilongwe, 1982*

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Find out more at [www.ICON.mw](http://www.ICON.mw)