REGREENING COMMUNITIES SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE NOTE: URBAN CONTEXTS

World Vision International

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was developed by World Vision. We acknowledge contributions from our colleagues across the World Vision Partnership.

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a supplementary guidance note to support the implementation of the Regreening Communities (RGC) project model in urban and peri-urban contexts. It is designed to complement the Regreening Communities Handbook.[1] Urban environments present unique challenges and opportunities for regreening interventions. This document provides specific guidance for tailoring RGC to dense, diverse and dynamic urban settings using World Vision's Urban Programme Approach[2] and the Just and Resilient Cities for Children framework.

2. WHY REGREENING IN URBAN CONTEXTS?

Urban areas are at the forefront of both contributing to and being affected by climate change. They account for approximately 70% of global CO_2 emissions – primarily from transport and buildings. Rapid urbanisation, especially in low- and middle-income countries, is placing mounting pressure on natural ecosystems and driving cities into high-risk zones such as floodplains and coastal areas, dramatically increasing exposure to climate-related hazards.

Climate change further intensifies existing urban challenges, including frequent and severe heatwaves, flooding, and water scarcity. According to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, urban zones are consistently warmer than their surrounding regions, compounding heat stress and threatening public health. Sea-level rise and intensifying storms also place millions in coastal cities at risk of displacement and asset loss.

These growing climate risks do not affect all urban residents equally. Vulnerable populations – particularly women, children, people with disabilities, and those living in slums and informal settlements – often bear the brunt of climate impacts. Gender inequalities, limited access to services, and insecure housing conditions make it harder for these groups to adapt. In many cities, climate stressors also intersect with weak governance and rising competition over resources, contributing to social tensions and deepening fragility.

1 This is an internal organisational tool.

2 World Vision's Urban Programme Approach (UPA) is the organisational approach for achieving Cities for Children through integrated transformational development in stable and fragile urban areas. This is an internal organisational tool.

These intersecting pressures increase exposure (e.g. floods in informal areas), intensify sensitivity (due to economic and social vulnerabilities), and constrain adaptive capacity (through limited infrastructure and institutional support). These factors underscore the urgency of integrated, inclusive and context-responsive strategies to build resilience in urban settings.

In response, regreening urban and peri-urban areas through nature-based solutions (NbS) offers a powerful entry point to address root causes of vulnerability – including climate change mitigation – while delivering co-benefits across environmental, social and economic domains. NbS are key climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies in cities.

Nature-based solutions: These are actions addressing key societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of both natural and modified ecosystems, benefitting both biodiversity and human well-being. NbS have significant but currently underutilised potential to help address global challenges such as climate change, human health, food and water security, natural disasters and biodiversity loss.

Learn more about NbS: Nature-based Solutions | IUCN

Other than NbS, RGC can also integrate engineered solutions and infrastructure in the urban context, particularly where infrastructure is involved (e.g. water management, drainage, transport, waste management). As outlined in the *Regreening Communities Handbook*, this integrated approach directly supports the three programmatic pathways:

- **Social:** Regreening, when designed as a community-led process, strengthens the capacity of residents – especially those in informal or underserved areas – to create more climate-resilient environments. Through inclusive participation, these efforts not only improve local conditions but also foster social cohesion, civic empowerment and collective action.

- **Environmental:** Urban regreening supports the restoration of soil health, water cycles, vegetation cover and biodiversity in densely built environments. A wide range of context-specific techniques – such as sack gardening, composting, rainwater harvesting or native species planting – can be used to rebuild ecosystem functions while enhancing microclimates and reducing hazard exposure.

- **Economic:** By embedding regreening into urban value chains, communities can unlock new livelihood opportunities – such as compost cooperatives, upcycled materials markets or vertical gardening for food production in space-constrained settings. These interventions contribute to urban food security and income generation, especially for women and youth.

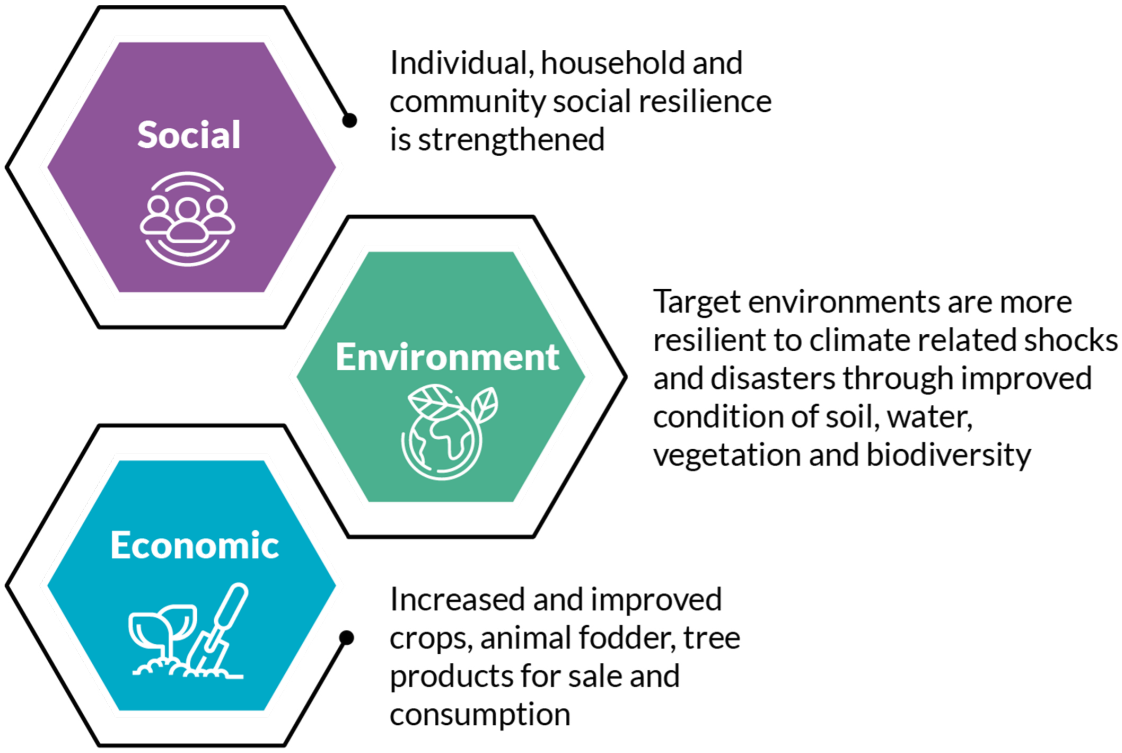


Figure 1. Outcomes of the Regreening Communities project model

Taken together, urban regreening is not only an environmental sustainability and climate action strategy, but a pathway towards sustainable, just, and locally driven transformation, especially when rooted in the lived realities, aspirations and agency of urban communities themselves.

In fragile and conflict-affected urban areas, where shocks are compounded by social fragmentation and governance breakdowns, regreening can also serve as a peacebuilding mechanism. Climate-induced stress – such as resource scarcity, displacement and environmental degradation – can drive unsustainable coping strategies (e.g. deforestation for charcoal) and heighten tensions. When implemented with sensitivity to local dynamics, regreening can reduce competition over resources, promote equitable access, and help rebuild trust between community members and institutions. For such contexts, this urban guidance should be used in conjunction with the Regreening Communities Supplementary Guidance Note: Fragile Contexts, which offers tailored approaches for conflict sensitivity, poverty, humanitarian presence and governance gaps.

3. HOW TO UNDERSTAND URBAN CONTEXTS TO INFORM REGREENING COMMUNITIES DESIGN

In urban and peri-urban settings – where climate risks, social inequalities and fragmented governance converge – context understanding is foundational for designing effective regreening interventions. Without a comprehensive grasp of the city's sociospatial dynamics, environmental pressures and institutional landscape, regreening efforts risk being misaligned, inequitable or unsustainable. The Citywide Assessment (CWA)[3] tool provides a practical, field-tested entry point for building this macro- and micro-level understanding of the context. It helps identify not only '**where**' and '**how**' to work, but also '**with whom**' and '**why**' – critical for applying the five-step cycle of the RGC model in complex and dynamic urban environments.

To support the design of RGC interventions in cities, practitioners should explore and analyse the following domains in alignment with the different CWA steps and the six assessments outlined in Section 2.2 of the RGC Handbook.

3.1. Urban population vulnerabilities and livelihood strategies[4]

- Analyse the socioeconomic conditions and coping strategies of vulnerable urban populations already identified in the environmental assessment (Section 2.1.2 of the RGC Handbook). Make use of the CWA to achieve this. Focus on groups such as informal workers, women, youth, migrants and persons with disabilities, whose livelihoods often depend on environmentally risky or extractive practices (e.g. charcoal selling, waste picking or informal food vending). Understanding these dependencies is essential for designing regreening efforts that create alternative, nature-based livelihood pathways.

3 This is a World Vision internal tool to guide urban programming.

4 For World Vision internal use, utilise the CWA Steps 4 (Secondary Data Review), 5 (Primary Data Gaps), and 8 (GEDSI Assessment) to help identify social vulnerabilities and prioritise areas within the city

- Identify livelihood–environment linkages, particularly in communities that rely on land, water or green waste for income generation. These insights can inform the integration of circular economy elements into RGC design – such as compost production, rooftop or vertical gardens, or recycled-material enterprises – that restore ecosystems while enhancing economic inclusion. If not already done through the CWA, it is key at this step to analyse and understand the dynamics and barriers to accessing resources in the urban environment, and how gender, disability and social inclusion play out.
- Identify hotspots of urban poverty and food insecurity where regreening interventions, such as small-scale urban agriculture or vertical gardening, can strengthen household and community resilience by improving food access and reducing heat stress. These low-cost and nature-based solutions also enhance livability and well-being in densely populated areas.

3.2. Institutional landscape and governance structures[5]

- Map formal and informal stakeholders across different levels of urban governance who influence land use, greening, infrastructure and service delivery. This includes municipal authorities, utility providers, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, and community-based groups. Identifying and engaging with the right actors ensures that regreening efforts are locally owned, technically supported and politically feasible.
- Assess the responsiveness and equity of governance processes, such as how budgets are allocated, services delivered, and decisions made in relation to vulnerable urban populations. Weak or exclusionary systems may undermine the success of NbS, while more inclusive planning structures can support the integration of RGC into broader urban development priorities.
- Identify structural enablers and barriers that will shape RGC implementation – such as existing environmental by-laws, land tenure policies, decentralisation mandates or overlapping institutional responsibilities. Clarifying these conditions early helps ensure that environmental restoration activities can be scaled, protected and sustained beyond pilot phases. It would be helpful to connect those with strategic city plans and national urban development plans and priorities.

3.3. Urban environmental stressors and ecosystem gaps[6]

- Map spatially key climatic and environmental stressors such as heat islands, flooding, plastic and chemical contamination, and air or water pollution – especially in informal or underserved areas where these hazards intersect with poor housing and limited infrastructure and access to basic services. This is essential for targeting regreening interventions that directly reduce climate exposure and restore ecological balance. Community participation (including children and youth) is key in updating these maps throughout the Regreening Communities mapping process.

5 For World Vision internal use, utilise CWA Steps 3 (Stakeholder and Institutions Mapping) and 10 (Stakeholder and Institutions Mapping for prioritised issues)) and Step 4 (Secondary Data Review) to understand how governance systems shape the feasibility and sustainability of RGC interventions.

6 For World Vision internal use, utilise the CWA steps 6 (Climate Risk Assessment) and 11 (Spatial Analysis) to identify where regreening is most needed and feasible within the city.

- Assess the degradation of urban ecosystems – including loss of vegetation, blocked natural waterways, contaminated soil or reduced biodiversity – which weakens the city's resilience. Addressing these ecosystem gaps is critical to selecting context-appropriate regreening techniques (e.g. tree planting, soil bioengineering) that contribute to both environmental regeneration and hazard mitigation. This can also be highlighted on the maps.
- Based on the secondary data, identify and map out localised climate impacts on vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, informal workers, migrants and people with disabilities who often live in degraded and hazard-prone environments and depend on natural assets. Prioritising these groups ensures that regreening supports both social equity and environmental restoration, while laying the groundwork for inclusive resilience-building.

3.4. Social cohesion, displacement and urban fragility[7]

- Analyse spatial and social fragmentation within the city – such as divisions between host and displaced populations, formal and informal residents, or ethnic and religious groups – that may affect equitable access to land, water or public space. Regreening activities should be designed to bridge divides by offering shared benefits and participatory entry points across groups.
- Identify historical and current sources of urban fragility (and any dividers) – including forced evictions, land disputes or gang influence – that may create distrust, competition or fear around the use and control of green spaces or natural assets. Understanding these risks helps avoid unintended harm and ensures that regreening contributes to a more stable, inclusive urban environment.
- Surface local connectors and peace enablers, such as grassroots groups, youth movements, or religious institutions, that can facilitate dialogue and collaboration around nature-based initiatives. Engaging these actors in the design and maintenance of greening interventions strengthens community ownership and supports post-crisis recovery and reconciliation processes.

3.5.Public space, land use and green infrastructure[8]

- Review existing spatial and regulatory frameworks – such as land use plans, zoning policies, green corridor strategies or slum upgrading initiatives – to identify where RGC activities can align with broader city visions and where they can fill gaps in underserved areas. Embedding regreening into these plans enhances environmental sustainability and institutional ownership.
- Analyse land availability and tenure dynamics, especially in informal settlements or peri-urban zones where land use is contested or insecure. Ensuring that RGC interventions do not trigger displacement or elite capture is essential for promoting equity and avoiding harm. Conversely, regreening can be used to strengthen inclusive land claims and improve tenure security when co-designed with communities.

7 For World Vision internal use, utilise CWA Step 7 (Conflict Analysis), Step 8 (GEDSI Assessment) and data from the Social Cohesion and Urban Governance pillars to understand how fragility and social division may affect, or be affected by, regreening efforts. The below is especially critical in urban fragile contexts.

8 For World Vision internal use, utilise the CWA guiding questions under the Urban Planning & Design and Just Cities pillars and Step 13 (Analysis) to assess how urban form, access and planning systems can support or hinder RGC implementation.

- Evaluate the safety, accessibility and functionality of public space, with special attention to the needs of women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Prioritising universal access in greening design enhances child well-being, social inclusion and everyday use – turning open spaces into productive, restorative and socially cohesive environments.

3.6. Partnership potential and knowledge ecosystem[9]

- Map existing actors working in climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, WASH, or food security, including municipal departments, civil society organisations, research institutions, and community-based structures across all levels of the city. Leveraging their experience and trust within communities ensures that regreening efforts are contextually grounded, technically sound and efficiently delivered.
- Explore opportunities for public–private partnerships and innovation hubs, particularly those that can support nature-based livelihoods – such as composting cooperatives, upcycling ventures, rooftop gardens or youth-led green enterprises. These collaborations can help integrate RGC into local value chains, contributing to both economic empowerment and environmental outcomes.
- Assess monitoring, learning and accountability systems, including citizen feedback mechanisms and digital platforms, to enable adaptive management of RGC activities. Transparent and participatory monitoring helps build trust, ensures relevance, and strengthens community ownership of restored ecosystems and shared assets.

4. FROM CONTEXT UNDERSTANDING TO RGC IMPLEMENTATION

Effective design of RGC initiatives in urban and peri-urban settings depends on a thorough understanding of the local context. Section 3 of this guidance provides a structured framework for diagnosing the key dimensions that shape urban vulnerability, resilience and opportunity – ranging from environmental degradation and livelihood dynamics to governance systems and social cohesion. These diagnostic areas were drawn from the CWA tool.

The next step is to apply this understanding across the five steps of the RGC implementation cycle, ensuring that interventions are locally relevant, system-aware and inclusive. The steps below outline how the elements of context understanding directly inform each step of the model and link them to the relevant pillars of the Urban Programming Approach[10] for coherence with World Vision's broader urban strategy.

9 For World Vision internal use, utilise CWA Steps 3 (Stakeholder Mapping) and Step 12 (Market Analysis) to identify actors, networks and systems that can enhance the design, implementation, and long-term sustainability of RGC interventions.

10 World . Vision International (2021), FO&RO urban capacities - Session 2_UPA_Part1_23Sep2021.pptx
Note: This is a World Vision internal tool to guide urban programming.

Figure 2.Regreening Communities process

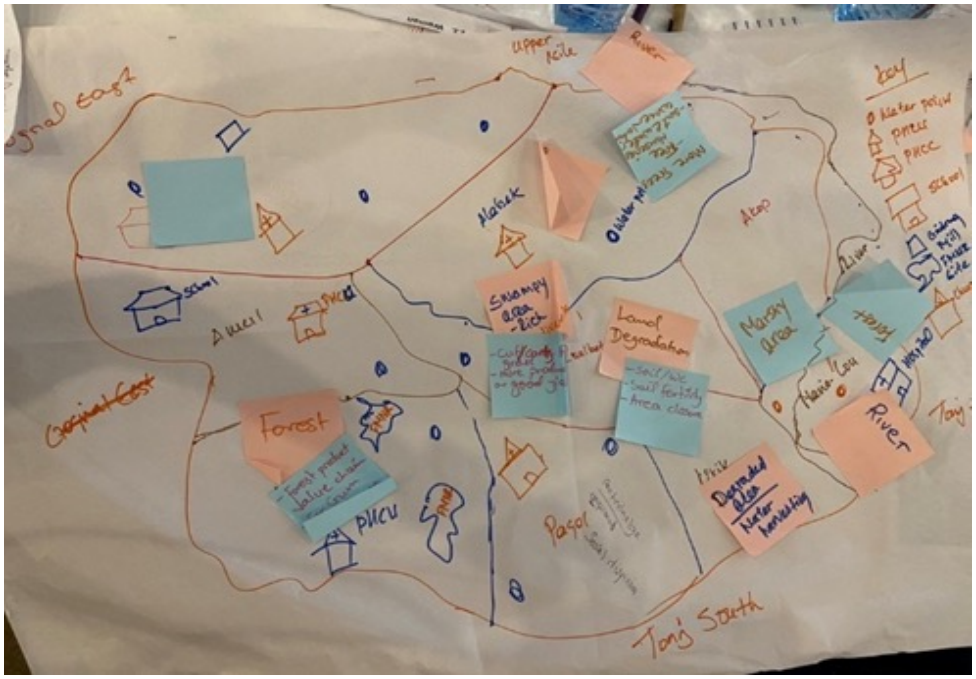
4.1. Step 1: Map – Community consultation, awareness raising and landscape mapping

This step lays the foundation for community-driven regreening by enabling diverse urban stakeholders – residents, institutions and service actors – to co-develop a shared understanding of local environmental challenges, assets and opportunities. In urban settings, where environmental risks overlap with tenure insecurity, spatial fragmentation and governance complexity, mapping must go beyond physical space to also illuminate systems, power and voices. In cities, landscape mapping is not only about green spaces, high risks of pollution and chemical contamination, or controlling the urban heat island effects – it's also about access, exclusion and visibility. Urban 'landscapes' include informal settlements, degraded parks, alleys used for dumping, schoolyards with bare ground, and waterways choked by waste – and exclusive access to green spaces in many cases. Stakeholders may have unequal knowledge or power over how space is used and claimed, especially where informal systems operate alongside formal planning. Participatory mapping helps surface these layers, ensuring that regreening solutions are responsive and equitable. The participatory mapping process provides an opportunity for further sensitisation of the stakeholders about Regreening Communities, being able to visualise and draw their map as well as create a map of their vision for the future. It is at this step that the community begins to understand key environmental issues, what must change and what can remain the same. Uniting everyone around a shared vision is the most important outcome of the mapping step.

> ❗ *While conducting this step, be sure to differentiate between participatory mapping on a neighborhood-level scale with the urban communities versus city-level spatial mapping that was conducted in the previous steps with the relevant stakeholders. This will help you connect the micro to the macro and design relevant interventions that align with the wider city dynamics and plans.*

Urban considerations

- Conduct urban communities' consultations using participatory mapping to identify and assess underutilised, degraded or contested spaces. Use accessible tools (e.g. paper maps, chalk drawings, digital GPS apps) to capture both physical and social dimensions – such as who uses space, who avoids it and why. Consider both formal and informal spaces to ensure that no urban groups are excluded in this step.
- Utilise the spatial city mapping conducted in the previous step to layer existing data with lived experiences of neighborhood residents, especially youth and informal groups who often hold unique spatial knowledge. In Regreening Communities for urban contexts, the spatial city mapping could apply an administrative mapping approacha community-defined mapping approach, or a resource user-based approach.
- Raise awareness about urban ecosystem issues – such as heat islands (e.g. overheating hotspots without shades, excessive air conditioning ventilations), blocked drainage, air pollution, plastic pollutions, or garbage dumps – and green space disparities, framing these in terms of child health, safety, livelihoods and lack of equal access to urban green spaces. Urban contexts offer a range of opportunities to be innovative during this step (e.g. usage of technological tools like mobile apps or online technological platforms, virtual reality, digital storytelling, etc.)
- Surface communities' perceptions of environment and climate justice: Explore how different groups (e.g. tenants vs. landowners, long-time residents vs. recent migrants) experience the landscape. This helps define entry points that are locally meaningful, inclusive and conflict sensitive, and use that during root cause analysis.
- Collaborate with universities or local technology hubs to develop layered digital basemaps that support visual advocacy and planning throughout this step.



Peri-urban sketch map from Democratic Republic of the Congo

Table 1: Data utilized from CWA steps for RGC Step 1 (Map)

	Domains from this guidance	Data utilised from CWA steps
RGC Step 1: Map	Domain 2.3 – Urban Environmental Stressors and Ecosystem Gaps	-Climate & Disaster Risk Assessment Biophysical Assessment -Governance Analysis -Conflict Analysis -GEDSI Assessment -Stakeholders Mapping -Market Analysis -Spatial Analysis
	Domain 2.4 – Social Cohesion, Displacement and Urban Fragility	
	Domain 2.6 – Partnership Potential and Knowledge Ecosystem	

4.2. Step 2: Organise – Support or set up community collaboration structures

This step focuses on establishing or strengthening local structures that can lead, coordinate and sustain regreening efforts across different city levels. In urban settings, social organisation is often fragmented and fluid – marked by transience, informal arrangements and parallel systems of authority. Therefore, organising' in cities requires both recognising existing social infrastructure and intentionally creating inclusive mechanisms that reflect the diversity and complexity of urban life.

Regreening Communities in urban contexts is more likely to succeed and be sustained when responsibility is shared across a range of actors – from residents and local associations to property owners, facility managers, informal leaders, and public institutions. In fragile or rapidly changing urban areas, the organising process must be deliberate, negotiated and flexible, especially in contexts where trust is low, and previous participation efforts may have failed or excluded certain groups.

The essence of the 'organise' step is that it gives an opportunity and enables the local actors and partners to take leadership in the regreening process; this is very important for the sustainability of the regreening beyond the project or programme. More importantly organisation, when properly done, facilitates decisions on the most appropriate regreening options for the neighborhood and the urban communities.

Urban considerations

- Build on existing neighborhood structures where possible, such as ward committees, school councils or tenant groups. Map who already organises around environmental or social issues and identify where gaps exist (especially among renters, new migrants or youth).
- Form inclusive Regreening Committees or working groups that represent different user groups and reflect gender, age, ability and social diversity. In urban areas, this may require dedicated outreach and multiple small-format discussions to bring in voices that are often overlooked.
- Clarify roles, expectations and authority early on. In cities with overlapping mandates and informal systems, ambiguity can create confusion or tension. Co-develop terms of reference and conflict resolution mechanisms from the outset to cater for any existing tensions, fragmentation or conflicts.

- Ensure connections between the neighborhood-level structures and broader district or city planning processes. This avoids duplication, helps embed RGC into formal planning systems, and can unlock co-financing or technical support from city actors. Cities are spatially huge, thus for effectiveness, planning micro committees can operate on prioritised neighborhoods, while also connectingto the city-level committees for wider advocacy.The city-level committes can also contribute to city planning using CVA approach.
- Leverage urban social infrastructure like schools, markets, health clinics and religious institutions as platforms for organising – not just for outreach, but also for anchoring and sustaining regreening activities long term.
- Identify local champions and boundary-spanners – individuals who can connect different communities or link grassroots efforts to institutional actors. These may include youth leaders, faith figures, sanitation workers or digital influencers.
- The roles of the Regreening Committee or the structure organised to lead regreening should be clear – e.g. who develops the Regreening Action Plan, conducts annual reviews and monitoring, liaises with partners, leads and mobilises the community in regreening, manages conflicts, ensures shared benefits, etc.

Table 2: Data utilized from CWA steps for RGC Step 2 (Organise)

	Domains from this guidance	Data utilised from CWA steps
RGC Step 2: Organise	All Domains (2.1 to 2.6)	Review the analysis from the CWA steps to make informed decisions

4.3. Steps 3 and 4: Plan and Regreen – Co-design and implement practical solutions

This step brings together planning and implementation as a continuous, iterative process. In urban settings, where access to space is negotiated, institutional systems are layered, and needs are urgent, regreening efforts must be designed and delivered in parallel – testing, adapting, and scaling practical solutions with communities' and stakeholders' input at each stage.

Rather than prescribing a single model, this step emphasises flexibility, inclusion and strategic alignment. Practical regreening solutions – such as vertical gardens, community gardens, composting cooperatives, rainwater harvesting or urban pocket parks – will vary by context, but all must be selected and implemented in a way that strengthens the city's environmental systems, governance capacities and social fabric.

Regreening involves implementing the solutions proposed in the planning step for issues that were mapped and analysed in the first step. The solutions form the building blocks of a successful regreening vision, and they are supported by three pillars:

1. Scaling up local and indigenous practices: In the urban setting such practices would have been identified through the CWA or during mapping and can include types of activities that are popular in that part of town or solutions built around the common livelihoods, knowledge or experiences of the urban communities.

2. Fostering an enabling environment: This is done through the strategic pillars of the Urban Programme Approach.
3. Utilising the Regreening Toolbox: This is a toolbox with scores of solutions presented in a detailed format categorised under 'urban' and other themes.

The Regreening Toolbox offers practical and scalable solutions to promote RGC in urban and peri-urban settings. The selected solutions span a range of implementation costs, biodiversity linkages and spatial characteristics, and can contribute to addressing interconnected urban challenges such as waste management, livelihood insecurity and the scarcity of inclusive public spaces. Regardless of which of the solutions will be utilised, the below urban considerations should be kept in mind:

Urban considerations

- Align implementation with relevant strategic pillars from the Urban Programme Approach: For example, in fragile or socially fragmented contexts, prioritise social cohesion and participatory governance. In high-density areas with food insecurity, focus on livelihoods and child well-being. Clarify which pillar your practical solution is contributing to and design activities accordingly.

- Use implementation to generate and share local knowledge: Document what works and why, gather feedback through citizen monitoring, and partner with universities or youth groups to conduct simple studies. This localised evidence not only supports learning but strengthens the case for replication and integration into formal city planning.
- Partner with strategic stakeholders across city levels: Engage local authorities, utilities, private actors, civil society and technical experts who can support the rollout of the solution – and later amplify it. These actors can offer technical input, legitimacy, funding or influence to help the solution scale beyond the pilot area.
- Connect the intervention to wider city and national priorities: Frame and align the regreening solution with existing plans (e.g. city resilience strategies, green infrastructure plans, national climate adaptation goals). This helps attract buy-in, reduces duplication and supports sustainability.
- Leverage available urban resources: Tap into local innovations – such as digital monitoring tools, mobile payment systems, university incubators, or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding from businesses. Using what's already present in the city can significantly enhance implementation efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Ensure the solution supports improved urban governance and accountability: Create mechanisms for citizen input, transparency and feedback – especially where regreening involves shared land or public services. This builds trust and ensures that the intervention strengthens, rather than bypasses, local systems.
- Deliver immediate, visible impact while laying foundations for longer-term change: Link the chosen practice to direct improvements in the lives of urban families – for example, increasing household food production (e.g. vertical gardens), income (e.g. green jobs or waste sorting) or safer play areas for children. Simultaneously, ensure that these outcomes are connected to broader city goals.

Table 3: Data utilized from CWA steps for RGC Steps 3 and 4 (Plan and Regreen)

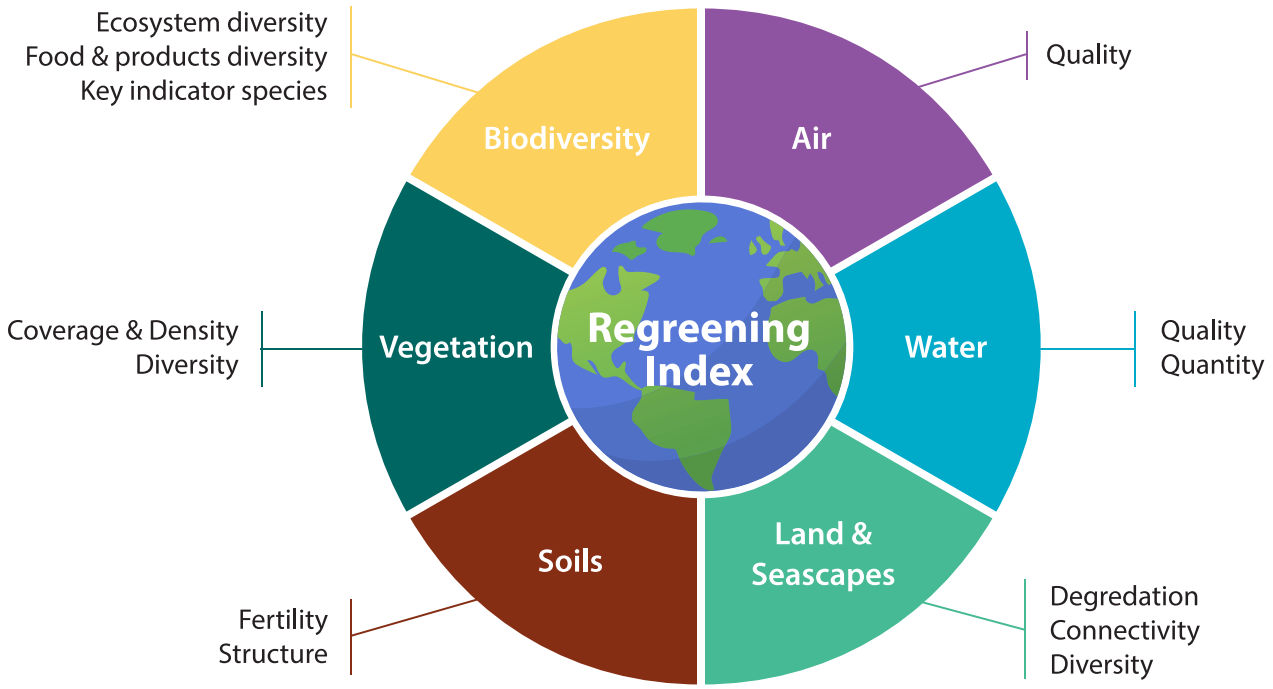
RGC Steps 3 and 4: Plan and Regreen	Domains from this guidance	Data utilised from CWA steps
	All Domains (2.1 to 2.6)	Mainly Spatial Analysis and Policy Analysis. Also refer to the Regreening Toolbox

4.4. Step 5: Monitor and celebrate – Track change, share results and recognise champions

This step emphasises the importance of ongoing reflection, adaptation and celebration. In dynamic and often politically sensitive urban environments, monitoring at the project level must go beyond tracking trees planted or compost produced on a neighborhood level – it should assess shifts in access, equity, governance and lived experiences of urban residents. Monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure accountability to the urban communities, and to help decision-making and learning. It's also important to share evidence with donors, stakeholders and decision makers.

It is the responsibility of the Regreening Committee or a relevant subcommittee to develop a community-level monitoring plan that is separate from the monitoring done by World Vision at baseline, midline and endline. This plan should identify indicators that are meaningful to the urban communities that they can track to get feedback on the progress and effectiveness of their regreening activities. An important aspect of monitoring is the need to assess the condition and trend for the different areas of focus. This is done in a participatory approach at the start of the regreening journey – during their planning process led by the committee. The six different areas of focus for assessment constitute what is referred to as the Regreening Index. The index mainly supports monitoring environmental dimensions of regreening. However, in urban areas, other aspects of regreening need to be considered, and it will be necessary to monitor beyond just environmental outcomes, possibly by using other relevant tools. Figure 3 highlights the six different areas covered by the Regreening Index, most of which are appropriate for the urban context.

Figure 3. Regreening Index



Urban regreening efforts thrive when results are visible, progress is co-owned and champions are celebrated. Monitoring also enables learning that supports scaling and replication, while celebrating successes builds momentum, public trust and long-term commitment. This should be backed up by evidence, strategic partnerships, and linkages to city and national government priorities. The Regreening Index categorises several practices under the urban and peri-urban context category that can be considered and highlights the relevant Regreening Index dimension for each. For example, waste management can be implemented in all urban locations and climates and falls within the land/seascape management dimension on the index.

Table 4 Regreening Index domains with examples of practices from the urban and peri-urban context

Regreening Index monitoring areas	Urban examples of practices	Examples of community indicators
Air	• Adoption of efficient stoves and cleaner fuels by households – especially in peri-urban areas where fuelwood and kerosene stove use are still common – helps reduce household emissions, contributing to better respiratory health and reduced climate emissions. • Waste management in urban environments contributes to less emissions from waste (e.g. of heavy pollutant gases like methane and carbon dioxide).	• Number of households using improved cooking facilities for reduced smoke inhalation • Number of days with dangerous air pollution/ smoke • Number of community reports of smelling pollution
Biodiversity	Tiny forests within urban settings can pack dense layers of trees, shrubs and other plants, and form habitats for many animal, bird, and insect species. The same role can also be played by urban parks and bigger forests either within the urban area or in their neighborhoods.	• Number of different tree/ shrub species present in set locations • Number of bird species observed • Number of other wildlife species observed
Landscape/ Seascape	Practices that are implemented in urban landscapes areas or the seascapes bordering urban areas are also important for regreening. For example, parks and urban street greening in general are important for reduction of the urban heat island, same as urban marine forest conservation (e.g. mangroves and seagrasses which conserve biodiversity).	Area of bare, waste or underutilised land in the community
Soil	Soil quality improvement after the use of composting or mulching especially for kitchen gardens or flowers; high quality soils have better texture and are rich in biodiversity. They also support vegetation and help in reducing runoff.	• Observation of soil water holding capacity (how long after rain until the soil is dry again) • Observed changes in soil colour and feel
Vegetation	• Mandala gardens not only help urban households capture runoff water but also enable them to grow plenty of vegetables, herbs, etc. in small spaces. • Vertical gardening provides opportunities for urban agriculture while improving urban green areas and supporting biodiversity.	Number of community members with access to a garden

Water	Urban areas are known for producing huge amounts of wastewater that can be risky for sanitation and human health but also polluting water bodies, including surface and ground water. Wastewater management aims to collect, treat and reuse wastewater. It also ensures the water is clean enough to be released safely into oceans, lakes, rivers and streams to prevent public health hazards and harm to aquatic and marine life.	• Water quantity or levels in dms/bores/wells/springs • Water colour, cloudiness and smell • Frequency/extent of flooding after rains (record rainfall as well as flooding)

Urban considerations

- Monitor beyond environmental outcomes: In cities, the success of regreening depends on its broader impact – on livelihoods, safety, participation and inclusion. Track the relevant indicators that reflect changes in how people use public spaces, who participate in maintenance, or whether local institutions have improved engagement or responsiveness.
- Use simple, participatory and tech-enabled tools: Leverage digital platforms (e.g. mobile surveys, geotagged photos), community scorecards or storytelling approaches to make monitoring accessible and empowering. Involve youth, schools, and informal leaders in data collection and interpretation to build ownership.
- Link learning to urban systems: Feed monitoring data into city decision-making by sharing insights with ward committees, city planning units or resilience task forces. Where possible, align with municipal or academic monitoring frameworks to improve credibility and integration. Share these findings in relevant city and national forums and networks for example.
- Recognise local champions publicly: Celebrate individuals and groups who contribute to the initiative's success. Public recognition fosters pride, attracts others to join and bridge gaps between different city spaces. In urban contexts, visibility matters. Use art, music, public events, or community festivals to mark key neighborhood or city moments (e.g. first compost batch, reclaimed park opening). This helps anchor the work in place and culture.
- Build feedback loops for continuous improvement: Share findings with participants, listen to critiques and adjust as needed. Adaptive learning strengthens trust, increases effectiveness and prepares the ground for scaling.

5. SPOTLIGHT: CASE STUDIES

Spotlight 1: NOURISH Project, Port Vila, Vanuatu

REGREENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE NOURISH PROJECT

Overview

As part of its broader effort to reduce poverty and hunger, the NOURISH project is leading regreening initiatives to improve urban food security in four communities across Port Vila, Vanuatu. In response to the growing impacts of climate change, economic instability and urban overcrowding, the project promotes sustainable backyard gardening as a practical solution to enhance household resilience and access to nutritious food. Targeting 5,790 individuals, including women, men and children, the project supports the establishment of horizontal and vertical gardens, adapted to limited urban spaces. To date, over 56% of beneficiaries have successfully established backyard gardens, with some harvesting enough surplus to sell produce or share with vulnerable neighbors. Households receive training in climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive gardening technique and are equipped with seeds, seedlings and ongoing technical support. These regreening efforts are transforming urban spaces into productive, green environments while building self-reliance and promoting healthy diets. By empowering vulnerable families – especially those led by women or people with disabilities – to grow their own food, NOURISH is fostering climate-resilient livelihoods and community-led sustainability in Vanuatu's growing urban centres.

Regreening impact of the NOURISH project

The NOURISH project has transformed urban spaces in Vanuatu by promoting backyard and container gardening, helping families grow fresh, nutritious food at home. These gardens have increased green cover in densely populated areas, improved air quality and supported local biodiversity. By using recycled household items for planting, communities are reducing waste and adopting more sustainable habits. Gardening has also become a low-cost livelihood option for many families, with some earning extra income from selling surplus produce. Beyond food and income, the initiative has strengthened community pride and inclusion – especially for women and youth – while fostering long-term environmental responsibility and climate resilience.

Urban backyard garden, Port Vila (Credit: Florence Joana Bule)

'Using recycled containers and garden beds, my first harvest helped me feed my family, pay school fees, and pass on a valuable skill to my children – so they'll have something to rely on, even when I'm no longer here.' Cynthia Kalo (30), Manples Community

Supporting regreening through urban gardening

- Water access: Due to lack of access from water points into the demo plots, basic water-efficient irrigation systems were introduced to enable water access and conserve resources.
- Soil restoration: Before the project, seasonal rains washed away fine particles, depleted soil nutrients and undermined plant health. The project encouraged composting to improve soil health.
- Community engagement: Changing ingrained cultural views on urban gardening demands a holistic, sustained educational approach including hands-on demonstration gardens and home visits. These cultivate lasting community buy-in for sustainable urban gardens.
- Sustained participation: Ensuring long-term commitment from participants requires community trust, and the ongoing engagement with communities and provision of incentive enables relationship building.

The NOURISH project's focus on regreening through backyard gardening has significantly enhanced food security and household livelihoods, while also empowering women and youth to take active roles in sustainable urban development. By promoting environmentally friendly practices and fostering strong community engagement, the initiative has created a replicable model for integrating nature into urban living. This approach not only strengthens resilience to climate-related challenges but also builds community pride and self-reliance. Continued monitoring and support remain vital to ensure long-term success and lasting impact.

Spotlight 2: PHINLA Project, Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka

Regreening the urban community through PHINLA, a cross-border livelihood and waste management programme

The PHINLA Phase II is a global programme that scales up multisectoral sustainable waste management systems and strengthens livelihoods for poverty-affected populations in the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. It is implemented across various areas in the three countries including several cities.

The programme seeks to improve livelihood opportunities through enhancement of waste management policy implementation and to promote best practices in sustainable waste management by achieving three key outcomes:

Outcome	Activity
Outcome 1: Sustainable income through community-based waste management	Community-based Sustainable Waste Management infrastructure • Resource Collector Association • Material Recovery Facility • Resource Bank/Waste Bank • Value chain improvement • Savings for Transformation
Outcome 2: Improved SWM policy implementation through public participation	• Improving local government accountability • Civic education and behavioral change programme. • Social accountability through Citizen Voice and Action programme
Outcome 3: Scale up and replication of sustainable programmes	• Functional multi-stakeholder, cross-border collaboration platform Global Waste Management Committee • Cross-border Joint Management Plan implementation and monitoring • Knowledge Hub (digital library for knowledge exchange)

PHINLA is not just about managing trash, it is intrinsically a **Regreening Communities programme**.

Waste sorting at a waste bank

How does PHINLA, as waste management programme, contribute to regreening?

1. PHINLA promotes environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Waste management is a fundamental piece of a larger strategy to combat climate change and environmental degradation, crucial for creating a healthier environment.
2. PHINLA encourages community-led advocacy through Citizen Voice and Action (CVA). CVA is a World Vision programme that strongly emphasises community-led inclusive models to ensure community involvement in planning, implementing and monitoring environmental protection. This is done through advocating implementation of proper waste management.
3. PHINLA encourages livelihood Improvement for vulnerable populations. PHINLA creates income opportunities through efficient waste management by multiple stakeholders (e.g., waste banks, waste collection).

This programme cultivates a mindset of responsible consumption and environmental care through behavioural change programming, leading to sustained behavioural change towards waste management. It also fosters systemic improvement through active community participation and the Citizen Voice and Action programme model. By transforming waste into a valuable resource and empowering communities to lead this change, PHINLA actively makes landscapes greener, livelihoods stronger and community more resilient.

Door-to-door education on waste management in Indonesia

6. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

World Vision resources

- The Cities for Children Framework
- The Citywide Self-Sustaining Model
- Citywide Assessment (only available internally for World Vision staff)
- RGC Fragile Context supplementary guidance (only available internally for World Vision staff)

External resources

- Strategic NBS Framework Guidelines (2024), World Resources Institute. https://www.afd.fr/sites/default/files/2025-06/wri-strategic-nbs-framework-guide-and-catalogue-may-2024-red.pdf
- Nature-based Solutions in Cities (2024), Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery, Nature-Based Solutions: Guidance for Municipalities and the Private Sector | GFDRR. https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/2024/nbs-for-cities-solutions-and-examples-for-municipalities-and-private-sector.pdf