

# U-TENA YOUTH ORGANISATION, NAIROBI, KENYA

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## INTRODUCTION

Supported by the ARISE responsive challenge fund, the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) worked with the U-Tena youth organization to address solid waste management (SWM). SWM entails collecting, treating, and disposing of solid material that is discarded because it has served its purpose or is no longer useful. SWM is a challenge in informal settlements because of the following: absentee landlords who flout development control orders; inadequate storage containers; indiscriminate disposal by households; unreliable collection by county government; low household incomes; and limited public education. While working in the SWM space, we realised that water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is closely linked with SWM activities. Activities were carried out in Mathare and Viwandani communities in Nairobi, Kenya. This brief presents activities, key outcomes, lessons and recommendations.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. Inception meeting

ARISE kicked off with an official launch on May 11, 2023, in Viwandani. The launch drew around 300 stakeholders from civil society, the community, government and the private sector. The main aim of the launch was to bring stakeholders together to address accountability for equity in informal settlements and matters of SWM and WASH.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increased stakeholder engagement:** There is a need to involve more stakeholders in the community outreaches to enrich the community dialogue/discussion;
- Support communities:** There is a need to continue supporting the community in reaching out to their leaders, where they can raise issues of concern.
- Sustainability:** There is a need for sustainable projects in the community. For example, SWM actors should collaboratively develop a long-term waste management plans that account for population growth, urbanization trends, and environmental sustainability.
- Integration:** There is a need to consider integrating informal waste pickers into formal waste management systems to improve livelihoods and resource efficiency.
- Infrastructure development:** There is a need for actors in SWM to invest in infrastructure such as waste collection points, transfer stations, and recycling facilities tailored to the specific needs and constraints of informal settlements.

**“The artists sought to find out whose responsibility it is to keep the environment clean. The response from community was that, the responsibility to keep the environment clean started with them, but government and other actors also have a role. Our biggest achievement is in leading the co-identification of a SWM separation point, formation of a committee on SWM and WASH and environment champions at the community.”**

U-Tena, Executive Director

## 2. Consultative meetings and formation of a solid waste transfer station

We had a series of high-level consultation meetings with partners that resulted in collaborations with Child Fund and the Winnie Atieno Foundation in SWM and WASH. The project engaged the community, government officials, non-government officials, performing artists, youth, women, land owners, local partners, and elected leaders in advocating for SWM and WASH. Consultative meetings set a clear path for community outreach, stakeholder meetings, dialogues, artistic outreach, and committee consultative forums. From the consultative meeting process, we collaboratively identified the need to construct a solid waste collection and separation transfer station at the community level. This decision was validated by the community and solid waste workers.



## 3. Community outreach and identification of a solid waste separation point

Community outreach was conducted with performing artists from June to September. The artists did a series of crowd-moving performances with key messages on WASH and SWM. For example, the artists sought to find out 'whose responsibility it is to keep the environment clean'. The

response was that, 'the responsibility to keep the environment clean started with community'. However, there were other actors that included landowners and the government. We had a goal of constructing a waste collection point, but the construction could not take off due to county government designation of the proposed site as a road reserve. We collaboratively identified a SWM separation point.



## 4. Formation of a community committee as champions of sustainability

An initial consultative meeting was organised with community representatives, community leaders, youth representatives, and village head representatives. During the meeting, we discussed the best way possible for the formation of a committee to assist with issues of SWM and WASH in the community. These representatives supported in identifying key people to be invited to form the committee. The committee include the senior chief, assistant chief, WASH and Health sub-county representatives, a ward administrator, village chairperson, youth representative, community health promoters, community-based organisation (CBO) representative, landowners, and representatives of persons with disabilities. Diversity and inclusion were key considerations in the committee formation.





### 5. Induction of sanitation committee champions

A meeting with various stakeholders to introduce the committee to the community and other actors. The committee were taken through the project objectives and expected outcomes. The two key objectives were highlighted as fostering accountability in the informal settlement and having a sustainable waste management system.



### 6. Marathon/Sports Day

A sports day were organised and carried out in August where different stakeholders were involved. Community leaders, village leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, community members, village heads, chief, the assistant chief, the ward administrator, political leaders, representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, county commissioner, assistant county commissioner were all in attendance. During the activities artists presented theatre performance to educate the community on the causes, signs and symptoms, and prevention of cholera. The artist also portrayed the need for accountability and responsiveness in SWM and WASH service delivery.



### 7. Dialogues

Community dialogues were held with established committee and local leaders. The champions reported challenges raised by the community that included: insufficient water supply and the lack of a sewer line, a lack of sufficient equipment for WASH and SWM service provision, and a lack of a water storage tank for use when the supply was not available. Above all is that one CBO was utilising spaces previously used for dumping in urban farming, exacerbating challenges in SWM. Hand-washing stations and a borehole were suggested as things that would assist in improving issues of water and sanitation in the community.



### 8. Global Handwashing Day 2023

In collaboration with Nairobi County, the project team at U-tena and APHRC commemorated Global Handwashing Day in Mathare, Nairobi. The event officiated by Health, Environment, and Education County Executive Committee members, was themed “Clean hands are within reach”. During the event, we participated in exhibitions, performing arts and debates on hand washing.



## KEY OUTCOMES

- Urban marginalised people are better able to come together, identify their priorities on health and well-being, and develop action to achieve these.
- Stronger relationships between community organisations, between urban marginalised people and government/other organisations/community.
- Sustainable solid waste separation station, with co-identified champions.
- Co-identification and formation of a community committee to champion SWM and WASH service delivery.

## KEY LESSONS

- **Partnership is key in SWM and WASH:** Key outcomes and activities would not have been achieved without collaboration and networking.
- **Magnet Theatre:** The arts, particularly the use of theatre and visual arts, are a strong tool for awareness creation and engaging the community. Feedback is solicited and amplified hence the community is not only a consumer of information but also a generator of the same. It also gives community and opportunity to participate in addressing the challenges they are facing.
- **Community engagement and dialogues:** Tapping into the diverse knowledge and experiences of the community members could go a long way in finding sustainable solutions to community issues.
- **Government support in community initiatives** is critical for longevity and sustainability of programmes.
- **Key community focal persons:** Identification and involvement of key focal persons is key in the success of any community initiative. Their understanding and willingness to support determines the success the failure of the project.
- **Multi-disciplinarity at the local level:** When community leaders in different fields/areas work closely together, it becomes possible and easier to identify a key challenge and seek solutions. Working closely, the leaders can begin to address the issues in the community at their level before they escalate to higher levels.
- **Planning and coordination:** Early planning and invitation of more stakeholders to increase the impact is key.
- **Community empowerment and accountability:** When a community is empowered, they demand their rights. For example, the community was demanding quality living conditions and a clean environment from landowners, elected leaders, and local partners through U-Tena and other CBOs.
- **Responsiveness:** The local stakeholders led by local political leaders and partners took the initiative to allocate space for waste collection points, expand the road network with proper drainage, and promised to bring affordable water to Viwandani.
- **Inclusion is key:** All stakeholders from the community, national government, and county governments were engaged in discussions on SWM and WASH. This enhanced the uptake of implementation.

## SUGGESTED CITATION:

Ivy Chumo, Nicholas Kyalo, Jackline Syonguvi, Anthony Mutuku Nthenge, Peter Mokaya, Emilly Otieno, Hayley Stewart, Blessing Mberu, Caroline Kabaria (2024) An ARISE Responsive Fund Case Study: U-Tena Youth Organisation, Nairobi, Kenya; ARISE Consortium.

## ABOUT ARISE AND THE RESPONSIVE CHALLENGE FUND

The ARISE Hub – Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity – is a research consortium, instituted to enhance accountability and improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised populations living in informal urban settlements in low-and middle-income countries.

The ARISE vision is to catalyse change in approaches to enhancing accountability and improving the health and wellbeing of poor, marginalised people living in informal urban settlements.

ARISE is guided by a process of data collection, building capacity, and supporting people to exercise their right to health. ARISE works closely with the communities themselves; with a particular focus on vulnerable people living in the informal settlements; often overlooked in many projects and initiatives.

ARISE was launched in 2019 and is a 5-year project. It is implemented in four countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Sierra Leone. Through a £1 million Responsive Challenge Fund, ARISE provided small grants to organisations that test innovative approaches to improving health and wellbeing linked to the ARISE Theory of Change.

## ABOUT APHRC

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is a leading pan-African research institution. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, the centre seeks to drive change with evidence led by a growing cadre of research leaders from across Africa.

APHRC has for the last two decades run numerous research projects and generated evidence that has shaped policy and practice across African countries. The center has actively engaged policymakers and other key stakeholders to achieve measurable policy impacts informed by rigorous evidence-based research.

## ABOUT U-TENA YOUTH ORGANISATION

U-Tena Youth Organization is an NGO based in Nairobi County, Kenya that works to promote health through the exploration of arts and dance. Since 2006, U-Tena has partnered with several schools and community groups to focus on expanding programs promotes healthy living, education, livelihood and social responsibility. U-Tena uses art and theatre in mentorship mentorship and advocacy projects.

The UKRI GCRF Accountability for Informal Urban Equity Hub is a multi-country Hub with partners in the UK, Sierra Leone, India, Bangladesh and Kenya which we call ARISE. The Hub works with communities in slums and informal settlements to support processes of accountability related to health. It is funded through the UKRI Collective Fund.



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