

# The GLOCEPS

## Weekly Influential Brief

Research and Analysis in Development

### Revitalizing green spaces for sustainable development in Kenya

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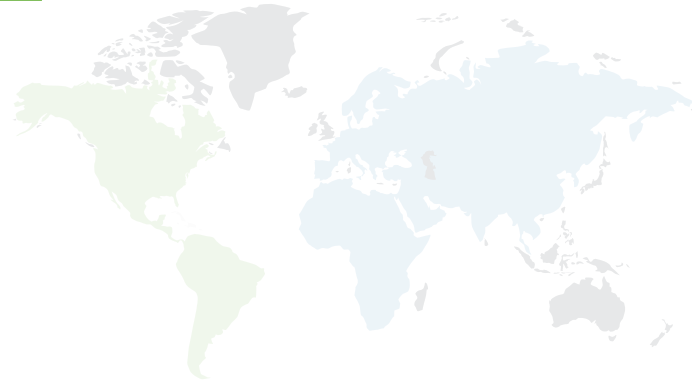
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#### Executive Summary

This brief evaluates financing and governance challenges pervasive to the revitalization of green spaces for sustainable development in Kenya. These issues impede the country's ability to conserve the environment and preserve the livelihood of communities. The paper recommends the adoption of robust financing models that augment resources from both

government and private actors. It further recommends that infrastructural projects should be implemented following national and county environmental policies. Consequently, alternate ideas around multi-agency governance arrangements for the development, preservation, and management of urban green spaces in Kenya should be promoted and supported.





## Context

The development of inclusive and sustainable urban green spaces occupies a central place in the discourse of sustainable cities and communities. With the global population increasingly being urbanized due to rapid migration into cities, concerns abound on the adequacy of resources and opportunities. The United Nations estimates that more than half of the world's population already resides in cities. This figure is likely to rise to 66% by 2050. Due to these dynamics, pressure on urban spaces and resources has been increasing. This situation is of concern in Kenya, which is located in the world's fastest urbanized region of sub-Saharan Africa. Urban informal settlements are sprawling and leading to the deterioration of urban green spaces, and social and economic

wellbeing. Stress, anxiety, depression, ill-health, and social disorder are becoming prevalent. Likewise, urban pollution is on the increase. The paucity of green spaces negates the environment's ability to filter dust particles and greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, further exacerbating the effects of climate change. Reviewed literature indicates that limits to urban green spaces development are majorly due to inadequate financing and governance. Eco-friendlier policies and practices that are supported by ample financing and governance mechanisms remain central to safeguarding green spaces. These will yield environmental, and socio-economic benefits in an urbanized Kenyan economy.



Photo credit: Wangari Maathai Foundation





## Key Issues

The section discusses green urban financing and governance which are key to the revitalization of green spaces for sustainable development in Kenya.



## Green space financing

Competition for resources for the delivery of public services poses a significant impediment to the sustainable development and preservation of urban green spaces. In most cases where public finances are strained, politically unattractive services like urban green spaces are obvious targets for austerity. In Kenya, green spaces projects are often lowly prioritized. The Kenya Land Alliance in the year 2021 published a budget analysis on development expenditure by public entities managing lands and natural resource functions. The report indicates that the disbursement for the 2018/19 financial year stood at KES 278 million. This figure was later reduced to KES 39 million in the following financial year. In the scant and shrinking expenditure, it is unclear what amount was allocated for the management of urban green spaces.

Equally, these seemingly unappealing projects are subject to intense negative lobbying compared to those related to health, education, housing, social infrastructure, and economic development. The persistence of these challenges, has necessitated a rethink on

alternative funding mechanisms for current and future urban green spaces development.

Financing through the private sector is one such option. Through public-private partnerships, green space infrastructure can be developed and maintained. Likewise, these spaces can leverage skills and innovations that can be gained through partnerships with the private sector.

The spaces can be leased or rented to generate income. Sponsorships by charitable and commercial institutions in exchange for naming rights can also be explored for sustainable financing, expansion, and maintenance. Residents who utilize these spaces for sports, weddings, and corporate events would be required to pay fees that would be used for maintenance. Likewise, funds from these activities could secure and repay green bonds and loans used to fund green projects. The option of carbon credits being marketed and sold in the global markets to supplement income streams can be explored.



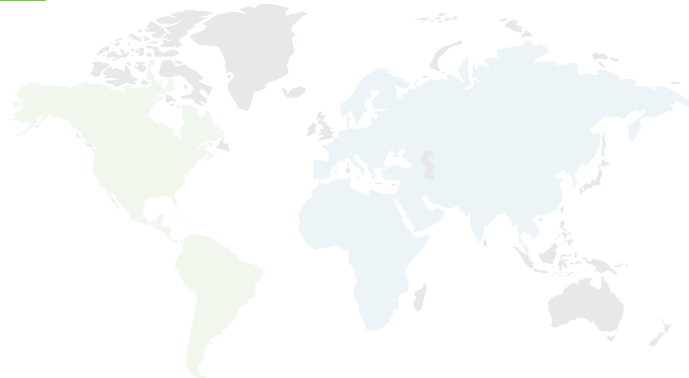


Photo Credit: [nairobiarboretum.org](http://nairobiarboretum.org)

President Uhuru Kenyatta toured Nairobi Arboretum on June 5, 2020, to mark World Environment Day

## Governance of green spaces

The governance of green spaces is a complex affair that requires collaboration between public authorities and the private sector. The management of these spaces requires the harmonization of contested interests and responsibilities between multiple sets of stakeholders. However, whatever governance arrangements are pursued in urban green spaces development, they should be holistic to safeguard current and future welfare. All initiatives on governance should be anchored on legislation and policies specific to urban green spaces. This is currently missing in Kenya.

The Integrated National Land Use Guidelines (INLUG) under the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) framework of 2011 provides the guiding schema for the management of the spaces countrywide. It is

however subordinate to the public sector and its enforcement is uncertain. A similar scenario is witnessed with guidelines on zoning and the promotion of compact development. The latter consolidates settlements with allocations for social amenities like parks, schools, playgrounds, and hospitals. The guidelines are intended for the zoning out of environmentally protected areas that provide for social amenities and recreation.

However, urban planning which involves the management of the urban green spaces is dogged by poor governance. Planning decisions are anchored on vested interests which result in illegal developments contrary to established zoning ordinances. Thus, the spaces have continually been degraded through excision, privatization, deforestation, and development.





They are in precarious conditions with little or no attention from governing authorities.

To tackle issues undermining effective governance and enforcement of regulations related to these spaces, a collaborative approach is needed. The inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process plays a vital role in the protection of the spaces from encroachment and privatization.

Moreover, consensus building and dialogue will help to arrive at commonly agreed decisions that reflect the views of all stakeholders. Collective decisions create capacity for joint action and commitment to the set objectives among stakeholders.

Equally, mutual understanding and sharing of information on urban green spaces among various stakeholders will promote its free flow. This makes them abreast with issues surrounding

management of the spaces. Organizations such as the Friends of Karura Forest (FKF) Association, provide a platform that facilitates stakeholder collaboration. These groups provide direct financial and non-financial contributions, including tree seedlings and tools, or volunteer labor for planting maintenance and monitoring. The resulting strong coordination and cooperation are desirable qualities for the management of urban green spaces.

Additionally, promoting community participation and consultation provide opportunities for the effective framing and implementation of policies on green spaces. Informing the local people about various initiatives on urban green spaces creates awareness. This leads to the development of a broad sense of ownership and community stewardship. More so, empowering the local people to independently or jointly take initiatives to preserve green spaces in their localities will be essential. Community

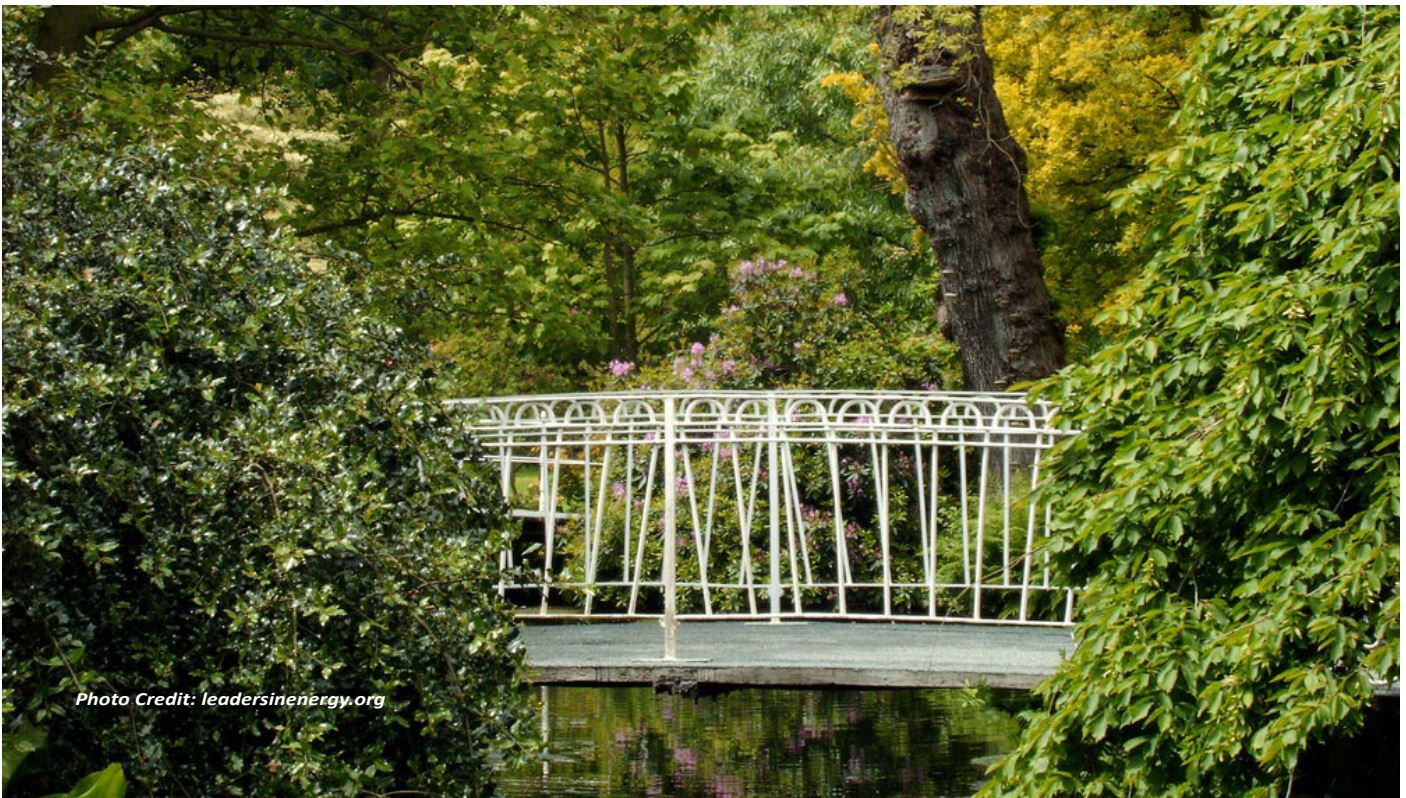


Photo Credit: [leadersinenergy.org](http://leadersinenergy.org)





participation can help change the uncooperative attitude of the locals thus promoting inclusive green space conservation.

Finally, decentralization of authority is needed to address power imbalances between stakeholders in Kenya. Currently, local authorities are responsible for the management of green spaces, leading to the monopolization of power. Most county authorities solely take decisions on these ecological spaces with little or no input from other stakeholders such as

non-governmental organizations and the local communities. To address these challenges, Kenya can learn and adopt best practices from cities like Leipzig in Germany which adopted a cooperative and collaborative approach. Different stakeholders collaborate and contribute to success in the planning and management of sustainable urban green spaces. In turn, it promotes efforts towards the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable communities and cities.



## Conclusion

Green urban spaces are depleting due to the rapid urbanization and inadequacies in financing and weak governance. Governing authorities are overly reliant on dwindling public sector funding, leading to mismatches between demand for more green spaces and available infrastructure. To resolve this discordance, there is a need for a re-engineered approach to the management of green spaces. This will require collaboration between the relevant authorities, private sector, and host communities in the conception, development, and management of the spaces. The approach is integral to the revitalization of urban green spaces for the sustainable development of cities and communities as envisioned in the SDG 11.

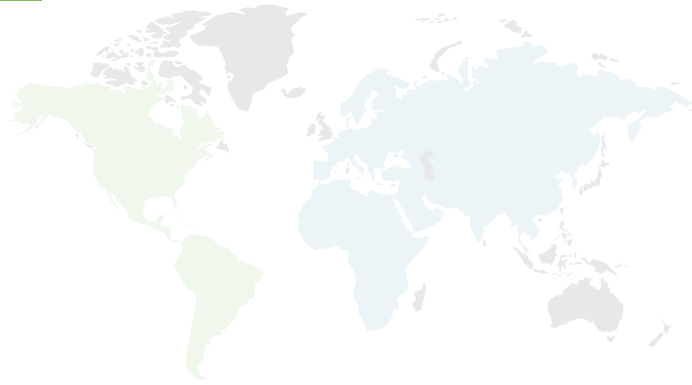




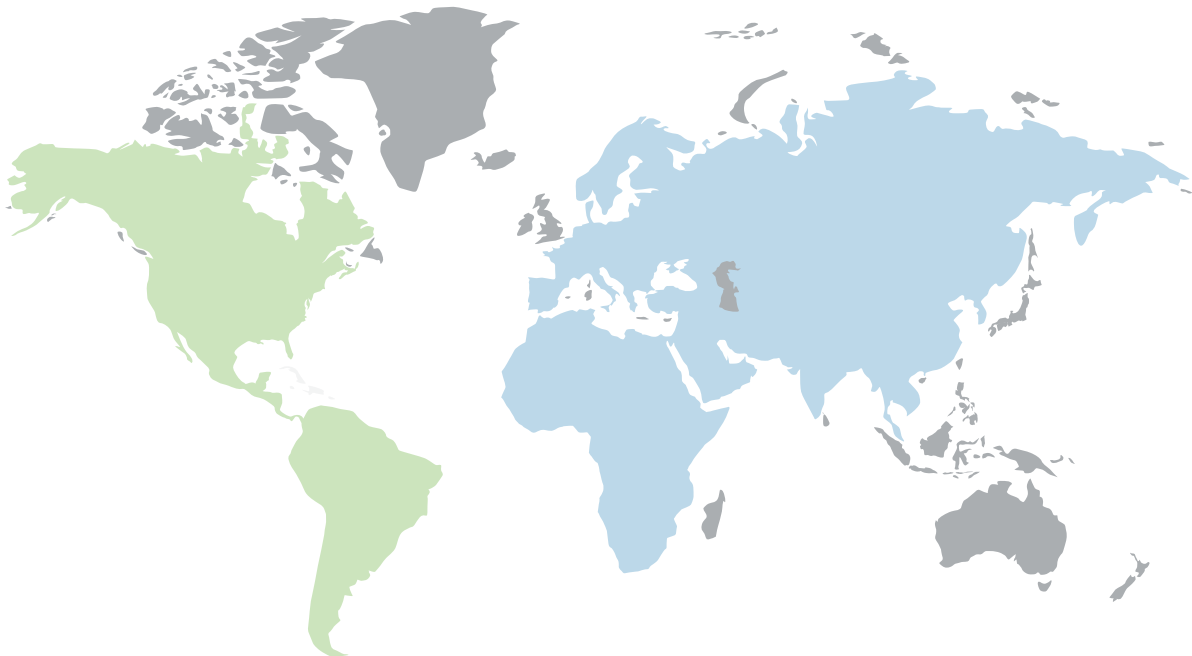
## Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Environment should lead a multi-sectoral team to develop comprehensive and inclusive legislation and policies on the management of green spaces in Kenya.
2. The national and county governments should promote supplemental funding models for green spaces development through public-private partnerships to augment the scarce budgetary allocations.
3. The Ministry of Environment and county governments should involve local communities, development agencies, and the private sector in the governance schema of urban green spaces.
4. The Ministry of Environment through NEMA should oversee the strict enforcement of guidelines for zonina rural communities and urban developments.





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