
Advancing Waste Projects in Africa

Insights report





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Executive Summary

The Gap Fund Step-Up Project (SUP), implemented by ICLEI Africa with support from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and GIZ, supported nine African municipalities in strengthening waste management initiatives and advancing projects toward implementation. Cities faced common challenges: low waste collection rates, limited financing for infrastructure projects, weak technical capacity to implement and co-ordinate projects, and fragmented governance, which has left many initiatives stalled at early stages. The expert advisory support, peer exchange, financial capacity building and investment readiness support

provided by the Gap Fund helped cities explore practical solutions to implementing waste projects and highlighted the importance of regional cooperation to access long-term finance.

This report highlights key lessons on developing infrastructure projects that are aligned with each city's needs, engaging key stakeholders, and positioning projects for improved access to finance. By combining local experience with technical insights, the Gap Fund SUP project created pathways for bankable, climate-aligned waste solutions in African cities.

This report highlights the urgent need to transform waste management in African cities by addressing systemic barriers to investment. It aims to demonstrate how tailored technical guidance, stakeholder engagement, and scalable circular economy solutions can strengthen municipal capacity, unlock financing opportunities, and build the foundations for resilient, climate-aligned urban systems.

Recommendations for cities developing waste projects in Africa:

- 1 Ensure Project Design Matches City Realities¹**
- 2 Drive Regional Co-operation and Bundling**
- 3 Strengthen Data, Technical Capacity and Partnerships**
- 4 Build Strong Enabling and Governance Environments**
- 5 Align Funder Expectations with Local Realities**

¹ The recommendations are explained later on in the report



Introduction

Waste management is a critical service for African cities, underpinning public health, environmental sustainability, and urban resilience. According to the World Bank (2018), waste management is one of the most resource-intensive municipal services, often accounting for between 20%–50% of local government budgets in low- and middle-income countries. However, these allocations often fall short of covering the capital and operational costs required, leaving waste systems fragile and under-resourced. Rapid urbanisation has further intensified pressure as growing populations and expanding cities generate larger volumes of waste, often characterised by harmful materials and unsustainable consumption patterns, which drive up the cost and complexity of service delivery.

Additionally, weak revenue generation models mean most municipalities struggle to recover even basic operational costs, let alone finance new infrastructure. This persistent funding gap has led to widespread underinvestment, reliance on external grants, and unsustainable practices such as open dumping and burning. With limited budgets for enforcement functions, local governments often lack the capacity to apply waste regulations effectively, further constraining progress toward more resilient systems. As a consequence, many projects remain stuck at the earliest stages of the infrastructure pipeline, unable to attract financing or move toward implementation.

In response, many African cities are turning to project preparation facilities (PPFs) to access the expertise and support needed to structure sustainable, bankable waste management projects. These facilities play a vital role in helping cities move from vision to viability and, ultimately, implementation. The City Climate Finance Gap Fund, itself a dedicated PPF, has since 2020 supported cities in developing and emerging countries by turning climate-resilient, low-carbon ideas into actionable strategies and well-structured

project concepts, thus increasing their investment readiness. Beyond project preparation, the Gap Fund enhances projects through knowledge-sharing, peer learning, and stakeholder facilitation equipping cities with effective tools to identify and adapt innovative solutions to shared challenges.

Through the SUP, ICLEI Africa applied a tailored methodology of pairing cities with one another whilst also facilitating engagements with sector specialists. This approach created a dual channel for support: peer-to-peer exchange allowed cities to share lessons from their own contexts and identify avenues for scaling projects, while technical experts provided targeted guidance to refine solutions and address specific challenges. The combination ensured that learning was not abstract but rooted in local realities and practical experience, enabling cities to co-develop solutions that were both feasible and scalable.

To support cities, the project applied three complementary approaches

- **City Pair Activities:** Partnering cities based on regional location and common challenges allowed them to learn from one another while also exploring how to combine stand-alone initiatives into larger, more investable projects.
- **Regional Communities of Practice:** Facilitating sessions that introduced cities to sector specialists and regional peers, laying the foundation for ongoing engagements that provided technical guidance and shared learning.
- **Regional and International Engagements:** Larger convenings that connected cities to financiers, technical experts, and global peers, helping them validate and scale their ideas into projects ready to attract investment.



1 Project Overview and City Profiles

The Gap Fund Step-Up Project (SUP) was launched in December 2022 to provide targeted, follow-on support to fourteen municipalities across Africa and South America². Some of these cities had previously received, while others were in the process of receiving technical assistance from the

Gap Fund for projects focused on waste management and/or nature-based solutions (NbS). Building on this foundation, the SUP helped cities to strengthen their project concepts and advance towards investment readiness. Funded by the EIB/ GIZ partnership through the Gap Fund, the initiative supported local governments in developing more robust, technically sound, and finance-ready waste management and NbS projects.

The City Climate Finance Gap Fund

The Gap Fund was established in 2020 with a focus on supporting cities in developing and emerging countries to transform climate-resilient, low-carbon ideas into strategies and bankable projects. Its primary goal is to help cities overcome technical barriers and lower the risk of project failure in the early stages of project development, ensuring they can attract further investments and support for climate-smart urban infrastructure. The Gap Fund is a collaborative initiative backed by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Luxembourg's Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development. It is jointly implemented by the World Bank (WB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, in close partnership with city networks and other key partners, including ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI).

City Profiles

In Africa, the SUP provided waste management support to nine local government authorities highlighted in the map below.



² In Africa: Kisumu (Kenya); Chefchaouen (Morocco); Makindye Ssabagabo, Entebbe, Nansana and Kira (Uganda); La Marsa, Carthage and Sidi Bou Said (Tunisia).
In South America: Campinas, Palmas and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil); Cuenca and Portoviejo (Ecuador)

“Engaging with other cities and organizations through initiatives like the Gap Fund Step-Up provides a valuable opportunity to leverage external experiences, expertise, and resources to improve the success of our own project.”

(Ouail Tabiti, Head of Environment, Climate and Energy Efficiency, Municipality of Chefchaouen, Morocco)

In East Africa, participating local governments included Kisumu County in Kenya and the Ugandan municipalities of Makindye–Ssabagabo, Kira, Nansana, and Entebbe. In North Africa, the project engaged Chefchaouen in Morocco and the Tunisian municipalities of La Marsa, Carthage, and Sidi Bou Said. Common challenges across cities included behavioural change, financing gaps, and limited access to sustainable waste infrastructure.



KENYA: Waste to Biogas

The Kisumu County Government, located in the north-western region of Kenya, has been committed to introducing sustainable solid waste management projects that improve community wellbeing and environmental resilience. To advance this commitment, the County government requested support from the GAP Fund on their ‘Waste to Biogas Reducing GHG Emissions and Production of Clean Energy for Kisumu County’ project.



Africa Regional Event: Evans Gichana, Climate Change Director, Kisumu County Government

The project aimed to divert organic waste from landfill sites, contribute to Kenya’s national greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation goals, and strengthen climate resilience through innovative solid waste management practices aligned with local and national policy.

Key challenges identified by the Kisumu team included ensuring a consistent supply of feedstock for the biogas facility, building technical capacity for operations, and mobilising financial resources for project development.

In response, the Kisumu project focused on building local capacity and demonstrating how organic waste could be transformed into a valuable resource. By producing affordable biogas as a clean alternative to charcoal for cooking, the project aimed to reduce landfill dependency, cut emissions, and create a sustainable energy solution with direct benefits for local communities.



UGANDA: Circular Economy

Makindye–Ssabagabo, together with the municipalities of Kira, Nansana, and Entebbe in Uganda’s Wakiso District, came together to tackle growing waste management challenges through the ‘Circular Economy in Municipal Solid Waste Management’ project.



Africa Regional Event: Alex Kivumbi, Head of Innovation and Resource Mobilization, Makindye–Ssabagabo Municipal Council

Improper dumping, burning, and landfilling have long undermined environmental and human health in the Greater Kampala Region. The project

therefore sought to promote recycling, embed circular economy principles, and reduce soil pollution by investing in anaerobic digestion infrastructure, black soldier fly farming, and briquetting technologies.

The Ugandan project was designed to generate multiple co-benefits: environmentally, by reducing pollution and pressure on landfills; socially, by creating formal jobs in waste recovery and treatment; and economically, by generating municipal revenue through the sale of by-products such as biogas, compost, and briquettes.

Recognising that waste challenges transcend municipal boundaries; the participating councils identified the value of regional cooperation to strengthen system-wide solutions.



TUNISIA: Waste Valorisation

The municipalities of La Marsa, Carthage, and Sidi Bou Said, all within the Governorate of Greater Tunis, aimed to transition toward more sustainable waste practices and develop a project that was part of the broader national goal to 'Build a Sustainable City'. Grounded in intermunicipal cooperation, with La Marsa as the lead municipality, they developed a



Africa Regional Event: Mongi Ben Abdallah, Director of Environment, Municipality of La Marsa (right); and Larbi Ben Tili, President of the MEGARA Association & Smart City Manager La Marsa Municipality (left)

plan for an integrated waste valorisation system aligned with Tunisia's national waste management strategy. The initiative further explored the establishment of a dedicated Municipal agency under the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment to coordinate implementation, ensuring efficient management and optimal resource use.

The project aimed to address critical challenges related to saturated landfills, insufficient composting facilities, and low levels of waste separation at source. Its first phase focused on a proof of concept through the construction of a composting station, supported by a pre-feasibility study. The project included the development of municipal waste management plans for the three areas. Additionally, complementary awareness campaigns, led by the Tunisian Environmental Conservation Company, reinforced behavioural change strategies by promoting proper bin use and the benefits of waste separation.

Beyond addressing immediate infrastructure needs, the project aimed to generate wide-ranging co-benefits. Environmentally, it sought to divert organic waste from landfills, improve compost quality for urban agriculture and green spaces, and integrate informal sector actors into the recycling value chain. Socially, it was expected to improve cleanliness in urban areas, foster environmental stewardship, and formalise waste picker participation through cooperatives or social enterprises. Economically, it was expected to support green job creation in composting, collection, and recycling, whilst also encouraging cost-sharing across municipalities, and building the foundation for a viable, investable waste management system.



MOROCCO: Solid Waste Recovery and Valorisation

The Municipality of Chefchaouen, located in the Rif Mountains of northern Morocco, developed a comprehensive waste management project. The initiative focused on assessing the feasibility of a material recovery facility (MRF) and an anaerobic

digestion unit for organic waste, supported by complementary measures to strengthen local systems. The city faced several pressing challenges: its landfill was nearing saturation, waste recovery rates remained low at just 11% with limited source separation, financing for new interventions was constrained, and municipal capacity to develop funding partnerships or access carbon markets was limited.

To address these issues, the Moroccan project aimed to construct a central composting facility, the distribution of shared compost bins in neighbourhoods, and the creation of “Eco-points” for recyclable and hazardous waste collection. It also included a bio-digestion unit to convert organic waste into energy and digestate, reducing landfill dependency.

The expected benefits were wide-ranging. Environmentally, the project aimed to divert up to 20% of waste from landfills by 2030, cut methane emissions, and improve soil, water, and air quality. Socially, it was set to create jobs while fostering cleaner neighbourhoods and greater public

awareness of sustainable practices. Economically, it was expected to reduce long-term waste management costs and generate revenue from compost, biogas, and recyclables.

GAP SUP in Africa

The technical assistance provided by the Gap Fund to participating African cities focused on enhancing the design, feasibility, and scalability of their waste management projects. Support across the project spectrum included refining project concepts, exploring city readiness, identifying appropriate technologies, and assessing infrastructure requirements. Cities also received guidance on stakeholder engagement, financial planning, behavioural change and structuring projects to attract investment.

The project pre-feasibility studies developed with support from EIB/GIZ included developing a baseline assessment in each country, exploring potential revenue streams and estimating operational costs. Under the SUP, cities in each country



Africa Regional Event (left to right): Martin Luther Kagimu (Kira Municipality), Rabia Parker (ICLEI Africa), Bisirikirwa Matia Lukyamuzi (Makindye-Ssabagabo Municipality), Stella Nalumansi (Nansana Municipality), Alex Kivumbi (Makindye-Ssabagabo Municipality)

“The discussions with other cities introduced us to new waste valorization models that can support the development of our own project.”
(Mongi Ben Abdallah, Municipality of La Marsa, Tunisia)



Africa Regional Event: Stella Nalumansi – Senior Environment Officer, Nansana Municipality

were supported to identify key opportunities with private sector and development banks, thus strengthening access to finance and co-ordination of value chains.

To ensure the support provided was contextually relevant and actionable, ICLEI Africa facilitated peer exchange and knowledge sharing between

cities, regional technical experts, financiers and local private sector players, enabling city officials to adapt best practices to their own local realities.

Building the capacity of city officials included regional engagements and Africa-wide co-learning initiatives. The methodology also benefitted from a reciprocal and adaptive approach as facilitators continuously learned from the city officials and refined the approach to better respond to local government needs.

A Regional Community of Practice (RCoMP) was established through both in-person engagement and virtual webinars, featuring expert inputs on waste management, finance, behavioural change, stakeholder engagement, and communication. These sessions aimed to address common knowledge gaps across African municipalities and were open to cities beyond the Gap Fund SUP, encouraging broader participation, networking, and sharing of best practices. Finally, continental and international in-person workshops brought cities together for direct engagement with specialists through curated sessions and site visits.

PLASTIC ONLY



2 SUP Implementation Findings

Findings from SUP Activities

City Pair Sessions

City pair activities formed a key component of the SUP, designed to facilitate peer learning between local government officials navigating similar waste management challenges and enable project officials to identify areas of co-operation with neighbouring cities. Each session introduced useful tools to support regional integration and scaling of waste projects.

The thematic focus areas for these activities were identified through a needs assessment, which drew on the initial expressions of interest submitted to the Gap Fund, as well as consultations with participating cities and the Gap Fund technical secretariat. Two priorities emerged across all project cities in Africa: behavioural change and waste management financing.

The sessions were designed to respond to these specific needs identified by participating municipalities. Each theme addressed a key dimension of project development to support cities in advancing their waste management initiatives.

- **Local context and concept development sessions** enabled officials to present the status of their waste systems, outline key challenges, and reflect on the progress of their project concepts. Discussions grounded participants in the regional context, allowing them to compare governance, regulatory, and operational realities. The exchanges built mutual understanding and identified opportunities for collaboration and partnership between municipalities.
- **Behavioural change and systems thinking sessions** explored common behavioural challenges and explored how strategies should be aligned with municipal priorities, budgeting, and service delivery. The sessions emphasised household engagement, awareness campaigns, and community-led approaches to encourage source separation. Cities recognised that socially inclusive waste systems are essential to building local ownership and investment readiness.
- **Financing and investment readiness sessions** introduced operational models, ownership structures, and financing strategies suited to regional contexts. Cities mapped essential stakeholders, addressed regulatory and institutional barriers, and identified intermunicipal collaboration as a practical pathway to reduce costs, share resources, and enhance bankability.

Several city pair sessions were convened for both East African and North African city officials from Jan 2024 and Jan 2025. Each session centred on specific sub-themes with the key takeaways highlighted below:

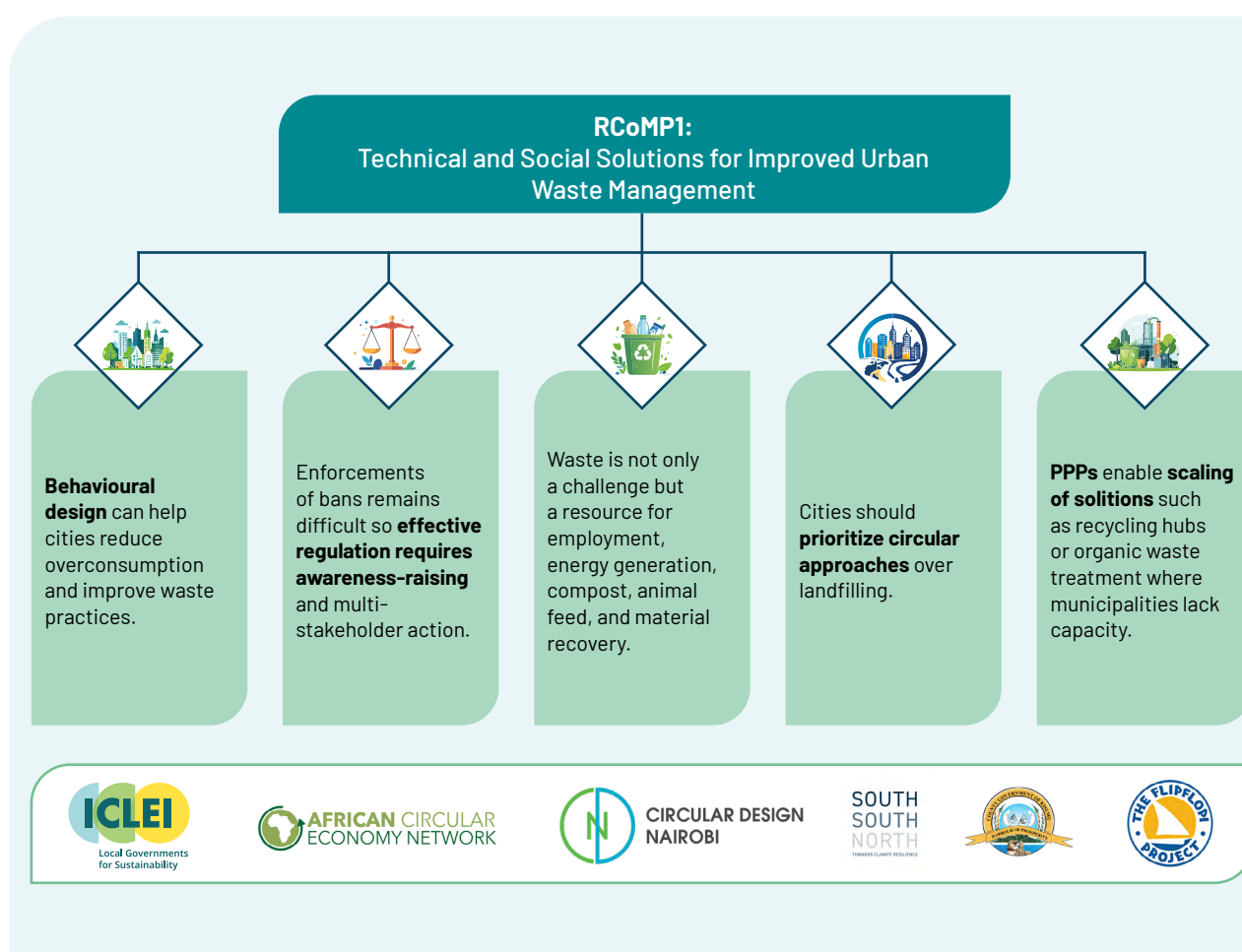
Theme	Area of Focus	Takeaways
City Pair Introductions	Local Waste Management Contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities across both regions share similar structural challenges such as limited waste collection, high organic waste content, weak enforcement, and constrained municipal budgets • Cities are still defining the scope of their projects, balancing ambition with operational realities and available resources. • Cities recognised that waste challenges are not unique, which allowed them to work on adapting proven solutions from other contexts rather than starting from scratch. • Behavioural change and stakeholder coordination emerged as shared priorities, with cities agreeing that public participation and political commitment are central to implementation success. • Starting with small, neighbourhood-level pilots was seen as essential before scaling to entire municipalities
	Concept Development: Sharing City Experiences and Challenges	
Behavioural Change	Value and impact of behavioural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities recognised that infrastructure alone cannot solve waste challenges, changing citizen habits, improving awareness, and addressing cultural and social norms are equally critical • Emphasis on household-level engagement, awareness campaigns, and community-driven approaches to encourage source separation. • Collaboration with neighbourhood associations and informal waste collectors was identified as key to sustaining behaviour change. • Interventions must be tailored to local realities, including literacy levels, housing types, and community structures. • Community engagement drives results. Training residents, working through syndicates, schools, and youth groups, and leveraging local and religious leaders are key to influencing household waste practices and building trust • Frameworks enabled cities to identify root causes of poor waste practices, map interventions, and understand system feedback loops that reinforce behaviours
	Behavioural change wheel	
	Systems thinking	
Financing Waste Management	Investment Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities recognised that projects must match local capacity and feedstock availability • Flexible, scalable infrastructure models are most viable. Participants discussed leasing and temporary infrastructure options to reduce upfront capital costs and maintain flexibility for growth and adaptation over time • Cities agreed that working with national agencies, private firms, and local community structures are essential to enhance project credibility and align with broader investment frameworks • Cities need to bundle smaller initiatives or collaborate regionally to achieve the scale financiers seek, without losing local relevance • Strengthening financial literacy and project communication helps attract investors.
	Multi-stakeholder partnerships	

Regional Community of Practice (RCoMPs)

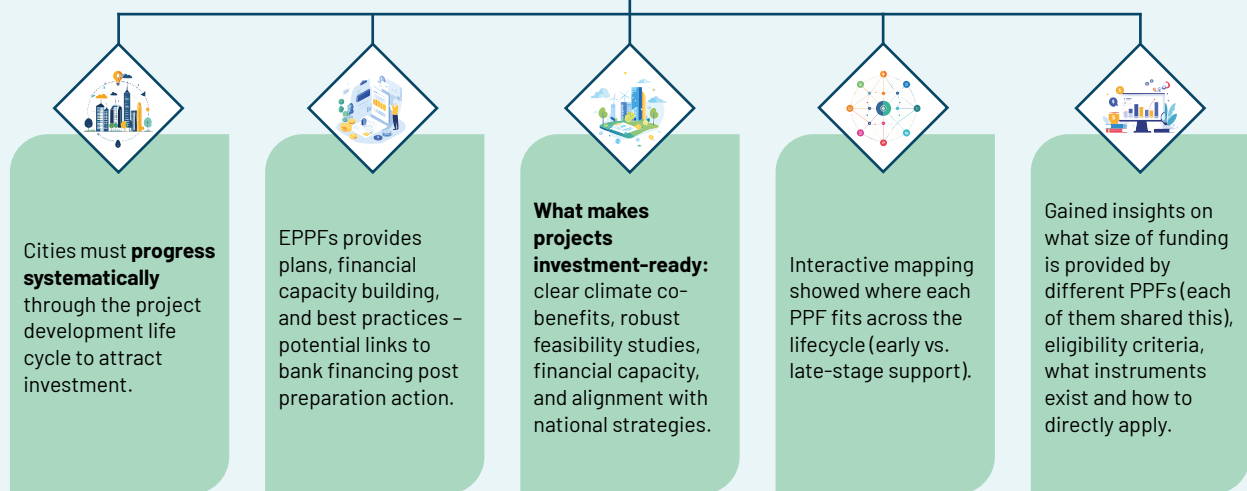
The RCoMP sessions were designed to bring together municipal officials, sector experts, and other stakeholders such as city officials, technical assistance agencies, corporate entities and financial institutions to exchange knowledge on key urban development and waste management challenges. Unlike the city pair activities, RCoMPs offered a broader platform for engagement, open to municipalities beyond the SUP, thereby expanding opportunities for shared learning and regional networking.

Each of the four RCoMP sessions was curated around priority themes identified. Sessions featured expert-led presentations, interactive

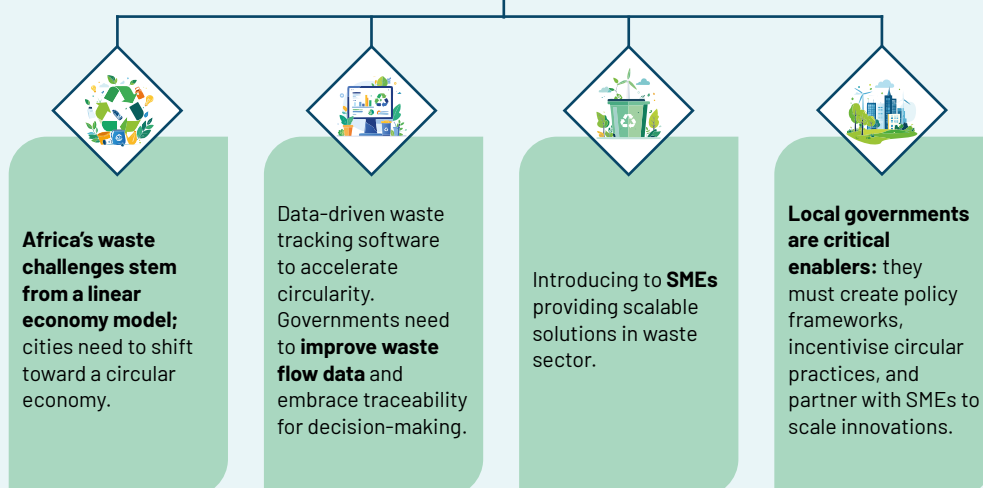
discussions, and targeted breakout sessions to allow for focused engagement. Local officials were invited to participate either as discussants or through group dialogue, enabling them to reflect on presented insights and share their experiences. The inclusion of diverse stakeholders – such as SMEs, financiers, and technical experts – provided a richer perspective and supported practical, context-specific learning. The diagram below highlights key messages during each of the RCoMP sessions and lists organisations who led each of the discussions.

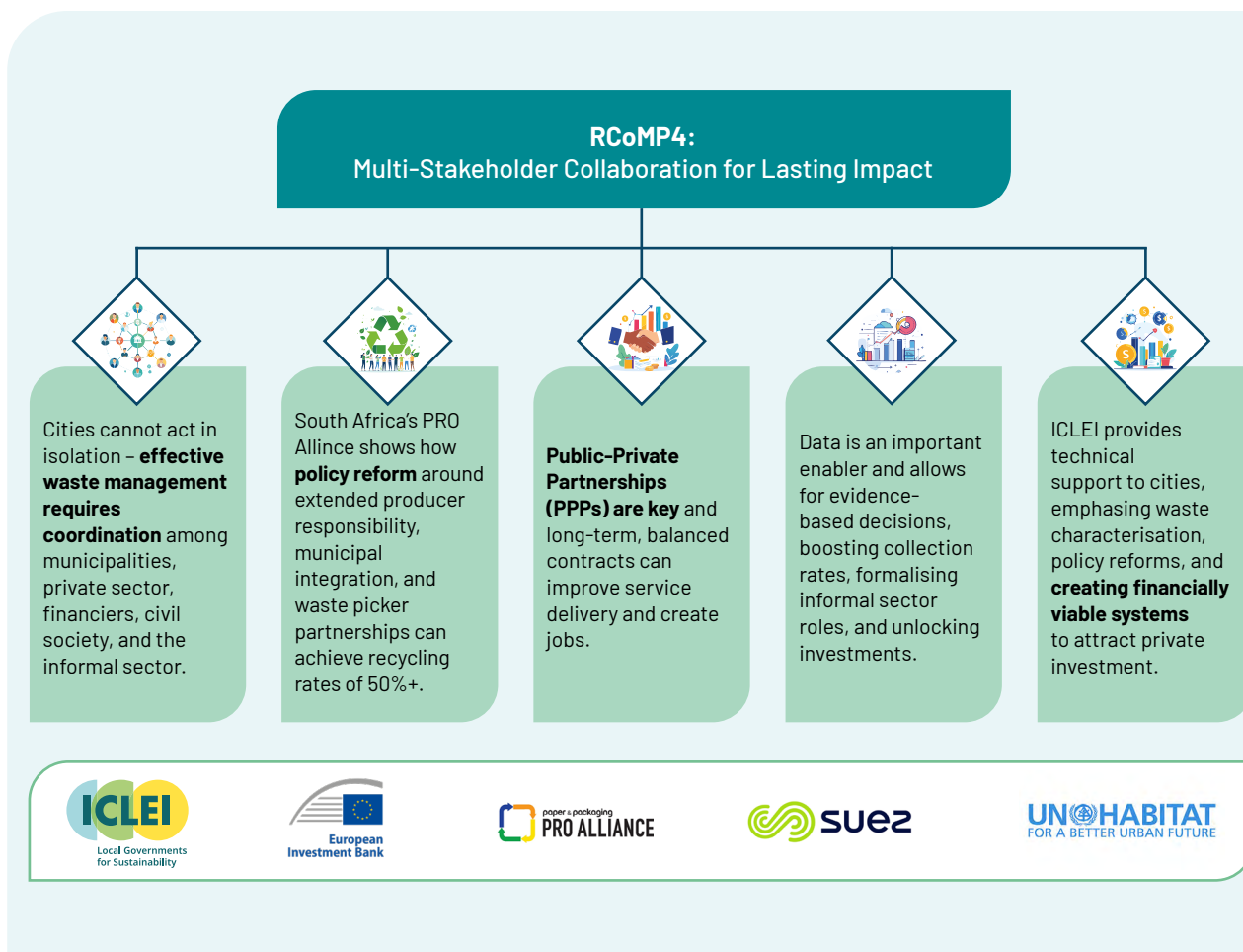


RCoMP2: Taking City Projects from Pre-Feasibility to Investment-Ready



RCoMP3: Circular Economy in African Cities – An Exchange Between SMEs and Municipalities





Africa Regional Event

The Africa Regional Event took place in September 2024 in Cape Town, South Africa. It brought together representatives from Gap Fund SUP cities to engage with sector experts, from city officials and global networks to financiers and private sector entities. This allowed them to exchange insights on tackling key waste management challenges. The workshop focused on issues such as managing waste with limited resources, overcoming infrastructure constraints, and developing sustainable, finance-ready waste systems tailored to local contexts.

Participants benefited from a series of expert-led sessions covering technical, policy, and financing perspectives. ICLEI Africa introduced systems thinking to help cities understand the root causes of waste challenges and design integrated



Africa Regional Event: Noel Johannessen, Waste Minimisation Unity, City of Cape Town

responses and highlighted the importance of communication strategies for shifting public behaviour and building support for waste

initiatives. This was followed by a deep dive into prime waste management topics as listed below:

- The City of Cape Town shared experiences from its waste minimisation journey, emphasising how legislative frameworks and enforcement mechanisms can position waste as a resource.
- Lloyd's Register Foundation presented findings from the World Risk Poll, providing a global view on waste-related risks and opportunities.
- The Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) facilitated a masterclass on preparing bankable waste projects, outlining the steps involved in project preparation and securing funding.
- A waste management expert also shared insights on innovation and financing in the sector, focusing on challenges such as export barriers, currency volatility, and extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation.



Cape Town Biogas Facility

The event also featured two site visits to enhance practical learning. The first was to Cape Town Biogas, a privately-operated biogas facility that had transitioned from municipal to private ownership. Participants explored lessons on operational sustainability, funding strategies, and how such a system can be maintained and scaled.

The second visit was to Amesect, a company developing innovative, solar-powered technologies in black soldier fly (BSF) farming. As BSF farming offers a viable solution for organic waste, the visit gave cities useful insights into this approach.



Visit to Amesect in Stellenbosch, South Africa

Lessons from the regional event

System thinking

Adopting a Systems Thinking approach to waste management encourages holistic thinking which considers social and economic factors contributing to bottlenecks in waste management.

Project preparation

Effective project preparation is necessary for successful implementation; thus, a clear understanding of the different phases and resources required supports governments with proper planning, access to financial support, and eventual implementation.

Waste management

While learning and adopting solutions from different contexts is valuable, it is important for waste management strategies to be contextually tailored in order to achieve successful implementation.

Site visits

Experiential learning creates opportunities to directly engage with implementers. Site visits to Cape Town based initiatives shed light on the importance of contextually relevant models, the value of partnerships, and the important role local governments play in creating enabling environments for the right interventions to thrive.

Awareness raising

Awareness raising is a long-term continuous process which can support behavioural change. Leveraging effective storytelling and simplifying complex information is necessary for impactful awareness raising initiatives.

International Event

The Gap Fund SUP International Event took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 4–8 November 2024, alongside UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum 12 (WUF12) – more detailed information on this event can be found in the [Empowering Cities, Transforming Futures report](#). The event brought together city representatives from Africa and South America for a week of hands-on training, peer exchange, and engagement with global experts in climate and urban finance. It served as the culmination of the Gap Fund Step-Up Project (SUP), providing an opportunity for participating cities to consolidate lessons, build partnerships, and advance their projects toward implementation.

Throughout the event, participants strengthened their understanding of financial planning, public-private-people (PPP+P) models, de-risking mechanisms, and access to Project Preparation Facilities (PPFs). Through interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical exercises, city officials identified key gaps in project readiness, refined their financial and technical models, and mapped next steps toward investment. The sessions also created a space for cities to exchange experiences, explore innovative solutions, and reflect on how to make waste and nature-based infrastructure projects more resilient and finance-ready.



World Urban Forum 2024 – Exchange between East African and North African city officials

A central message throughout the event was the importance of embedding financial planning and community participation early in project design to build credibility and attract investment. Cities shared how involving finance departments from the outset strengthened project ownership and improved alignment with funder expectations. Participants also recognised the importance of developing strong enabling environments – including governance stability, data systems, and private sector engagement – to support long-term project sustainability.

The programme also included on-site visits and networking opportunities, allowing participants to witness sustainable urban infrastructure in practice and connect directly with financial institutions, development agencies, and technical partners. The integration of these practical experiences with high-level engagement at WUF12 reinforced the value of cross-regional collaboration and peer learning.



Africa Regional Event: Ken K'Oyooh, Director of Environment and Natural Resources, Kisumu County Government

Ultimately, the Cairo event demonstrated that achieving bankable, climate-aligned urban projects requires more than access to finance. It depends on robust municipal capacity, inclusive governance, and the ability to translate local needs into investable opportunities. The Gap Fund SUP International Event left cities better equipped – both technically and strategically – to advance their climate and waste management initiatives from concept to implementation.

Overarching Thematic Insights

The Gap Fund SUP revealed the diversity of ambition and readiness across African cities, reflecting both opportunities and constraints in waste management. Organic waste often accounts for over half of the total waste stream in African cities, prompting most cities to explore valorisation technologies such as composting, anaerobic digestion (AD), and black soldier fly (BSF) systems.

While political will and enthusiasm were evident, many cities struggled to balance ambition with practical realities. Low collection rates, inconsistent feedstock supply, and limited institutional capacity often constrained progress. The Gap Fund helped address these challenges by providing early-stage technical assistance that strengthened project concepts, ensuring they were realistic, scalable, and better positioned for the next stages of development.

Another cross-cutting lesson was that technology choice is secondary to the enabling environment. Cities embedded in larger regional economies were often better positioned to access markets, attract private actors, and benefit from inter-municipal integration.

The technical assistance provided underscored the critical role of data and stakeholder coordination. To succeed, cities need stronger governance, technical capacity and partnerships – positioning themselves not only as project developers but also as enablers of investment.

Implementation Readiness

Readiness levels varied widely across the portfolio. A recurring lesson was that defining clear regional engagement pathways was particularly important for smaller cities with low levels of capacity, which would allow them to implement projects that were

“The technical insights gained during the event were particularly valuable for advancing our local initiatives.”

(Mohamed Salah Omrani, Secretary General,
Municipality of Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia)

both relevant to their context and investable at scale. Cities would thus benefit from approaches that:

- Engage multiple partners,
- Allow systems to expand with demand and capacity, and
- Build credibility with funders through proven, stepwise results.



Africa Regional Event: Melissa Kerim, Regional Engagement Lead for the GCoM-Gap Fund Partnership in Africa

Barriers to Research, Capacity Building and Project Development

Several systemic barriers constrained project development across the portfolio, and these were the areas the Gap Fund SUP aimed to directly support:

- **Insufficient waste data:** outdated or absent characterisation studies limited informed decision-making. The technical assistance provided by the Gap Fund aimed to enhance the baseline waste data available for project cities.
- **Limited technical capacity:** weak in-house expertise on project structuring, circular economy models, and operations.
- **Overlooking private sector actors:** risk of duplication where existing providers were not integrated into planning.

- **Governance fragmentation and turnover:** unclear mandates and political changes disrupted continuity.
- **Stakeholder churn:** reliance on external consultants or donors meant knowledge often left with individuals.

Funding Pathways

A persistent tension was the misalignment between **local realities and funder expectations**. Many financiers prioritise large-scale projects or set minimum funding thresholds. This highlighted the need for dedicated interventions that supported cities with engaging across their regional network, identifying opportunities for aggregation and pairing with neighbours to increase the scale of their projects.

In addition, funders have been shifting toward performance-based financing and private sector-led delivery models, redefining the role of local governments. Rather than acting solely as infrastructure providers, municipalities need to enable investment environments through regulation, coordination, and stakeholder engagement.



Africa Regional Event: Joshua Palfreman, Waste Management Expert, ICLEI Africa (left); Martin Luther Kagimu, Senior Environment Officer, Kira Municipal Council (right)

“When we were beginning the process we thought it was just easy. We do a proposal and we get people to fund it. But with the journey that we have walked under this programme, we have realised that it really needs a lot of thinking. Especially with regards to the pre-feasibility study ... we realised that anywhere we knock, data is required. So it has been an enlightening experience.”

(Ken K’oyooh, Director: Environment and Natural Resources, County Government of Kisumu)



3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The Gap Fund Step-Up Project has made a significant contribution to strengthening the ability of African municipalities to design and advance climate-aligned waste management solutions. By combining targeted technical guidance, peer-to-peer learning, and tailored advisory support, the programme enabled officials to refine project concepts, build stakeholder coalitions, and better navigate the complexities of project preparation. Importantly, cities were supported to align their ambitions with local realities – recognising the financial, institutional, and operational foundations needed to make projects both viable and sustainable.

The project underscored that **transforming waste systems requires more than technical solutions**. Long-term collaboration, strong enabling environments, and regionally grounded approaches are essential. While persistent challenges remain – such as weak collection systems, limited financing, and capacity constraints – the experience of the participating cities demonstrated that when municipalities are equipped with the right tools, partnerships, and support, they are willing and ready to lead meaningful change.



Africa Regional Event 2024

Overarching Recommendations

To build on the progress achieved through the Gap Fund SUP and accelerate the development of bankable, context-appropriate projects, the following actions are recommended:

- 1 Ensure Project Design Matches City Realities:** Effective projects are those grounded in a city's current capabilities, governance systems, and financial context. Designing within these parameters enhances feasibility, supports long-term system strengthening, and builds the confidence of both communities and investors.
- 2 Drive Regional Co-operation and Bundling:** Increase collaboration with other cities to pool resources, align priorities, and bundle smaller projects, achieving the scale investors need while aligning with national or regional strategies.
- 3 Strengthen Data, Technical Capacity and Partnerships:** Cities must invest in localised waste characterisation data, build in-house expertise to better co-ordinate projects, and cultivate partnerships with technical agencies and private sector actors to increase technical and financial efficiency of projects.
- 4 Build Strong Enabling and Governance Environments:** Reduce political and operational risk by prioritising governance stability, transparency, clear institutional roles, and robust monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems that ensure accountability and long-term project continuity.
- 5 Align Funder Expectations with Local Realities:** Financiers and city leaders must work together to balance investment criteria with community priorities – recognising the value of context-sensitive, inclusive, and phased projects that can evolve into larger, commercially viable waste value chains over time.

Importantly, the SUP created a valuable opportunity for collaboration between the Gap Fund Technical Secretariat and ICLEI to support cities in peer learning throughout their investment project preparation journey. During the SUP, the Gap Fund Technical Secretariat contributed by clarifying project scopes to ensure they were appropriately scaled to local realities and by shaping early financial logic to help cities effectively engage with potential investors.

The SUP has laid a strong foundation for future action. With continued support and collaboration of Project Preparation Facilities and city networks, African cities can build on these lessons to deliver resilient, circular waste systems that generate social, environmental, and economic benefits for their communities.

“I personally appreciate the support provided to Nansana Municipality and capacity built. I would like to commit to be a change agent to what I have gained.”

(Stella Nalumansi, Senior Environment Officer, Nansana Municipality)



Annex

Project Timeline

Period	Activity
Jan – Mar 2023	Global project inception and kick-off co-ordination between ICLEI regional secretariats
Mar – Jun 2023	City needs assessments completed
Oct – Nov 2023	Finalisation of city selection
Nov 2023	RCoMP 1 – Technical and Social Solutions for Improved Waste Management
Jan 2024	Africa city pair 1 – East African cities; North African cities
Feb 2024	RCoMP 2 – Taking Projects from Pre-feasibility to Investment Ready
Feb – Mar 2024	Africa city pair 2 – East African cities; North African cities
May 2024	RCoMP 3 – Circular Economy in African Cities: Exchanges between SMEs and Municipalities
Jul 2024	Africa city pair 3 – East African cities; North African cities
Sep 2024	Africa Regional Event
Nov 2024	Global International Event at WUF12
Jan 2025	Africa city pair 4 – East African cities; North African cities
Apr 2025	RCoMP 4 – Multi-stakeholder Collaboration for Lasting Impact
Sep 2025	Project finalisation and close-off



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Since its launch in 2020, the City Climate Finance Gap Fund provides technical assistance to cities in low- and middle-income countries to support the early preparation of climate-smart infrastructure projects, including energy, transport, waste, water, wastewater and Nature-based Solutions (NbS).