

Summary report: Intergenerational dialogues [D6.16]

Bringing together youth ambassadors and city officials, this dialogue fostered cross-generational collaboration, for more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban food systems.



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Intergenerational Dialogue Summary Report [D6.16]

The 2024 AfriFOODlinks Consortium meeting held in Cape Town between 24-29 November 2024, brought together diverse stakeholders, including youth ambassadors, city officials, researchers, and project partners, to address the urgent need for transformative urban food systems. As a flagship initiative connecting African and European cities, AfriFOODlinks aims to create sustainable, inclusive food systems through collaboration, innovation, and local action.

The consortium meeting served as a milestone in this journey, focusing on reflecting on progress, sharing knowledge, and planning actionable strategies for the future. The intergenerational dialogue was at the heart of the event, which uniquely **bridged generational and institutional gaps by enabling youth ambassadors and city officials to collaboratively explore challenges and opportunities in urban food systems**. This report contextualises the intergenerational dialogue within the broader scope of the consortium meeting while highlighting the critical role of youth engagement in driving meaningful change.

The AfriFOODlinks Youth Programme

The AfriFOODlinks youth programme is a cornerstone of the project, designed to empower young people to become change agents in their cities. The programme provides leadership training, facilitates knowledge exchange, and supports city-level activations. It ultimately equips youth ambassadors with the tools and platforms they need to advocate for sustainable food systems.

With representation from Africa and Europe, the youth ambassadors lead impactful initiatives such as urban farming projects, community-based food dialogues, and innovative food waste management campaigns. The programme is grounded in inclusivity and seeks to amplify the voices of young people as co-creators of solutions. By integrating youth into policy and decision-making processes, the programme bridges the gap between grassroots innovation and institutional change.

Key Objectives

- Empower youth to lead initiatives addressing city-specific food system challenges.
- Foster cross-city collaboration and learning among ambassadors.
- Advocate for systemic change by amplifying youth perspectives within institutional settings

Intergenerational Dialogue: A Blueprint for Collaboration

Purpose and Structure

The intergenerational dialogue, held on the third day of the event, was designed to foster meaningful engagement between [youth ambassadors](#) and city officials. Through innovative facilitation techniques, participants were encouraged to step into each other's roles, creating empathy and understanding of the unique challenges faced by different stakeholders in urban food systems.

The session began with a plenary discussion, where youth ambassadors shared their lived experiences of food system challenges, ranging from affordability to environmental sustainability. City officials, in turn, offered insights into policy and governance complexities. Role-switching exercises followed, enabling participants to envision solutions collaboratively.

“WE ARE NOT JUST SOCIAL INFLUENCERS; WE MUST ENGAGE AS PROJECT MEMBERS AND CITIZENS TO CONNECT WITH POLICYMAKERS AND YOUTH.” - FERNANDO SOZINHO, YOUTH AMBASSADOR FROM QUELIMANE



Key Themes and Takeaways

Participatory Governance

Youth ambassadors passionately advocated for participatory governance that ensures their voices are actively embedded in decision-making processes. They highlighted specific examples, such as the need for youth representation on local food councils and advisory boards, as a means to ensure policies reflect the realities on the ground. City officials echoed this sentiment, acknowledging that sustainable food systems require governance frameworks that are inclusive of diverse perspectives and adaptive to changing urban needs. The session reflected real challenges and priorities shared by participants. For example, there was consensus amongst participants that digital literacy and tools in local government would enable better communication with younger constituents and also improve bureaucratic efficiency. It was further agreed that young people are extremely well-placed to introduce and utilise technology in governance processes.

Sustainability: Circular economy

Sustainability emerged as a central focus, with discussions covering strategies to embed circular economy principles into local food systems. Participants emphasised the importance of reducing food waste through scalable initiatives like community composting and surplus food redistribution networks. Local food production, particularly urban farming, was also spotlighted as a means to enhance food security while fostering economic opportunities within cities.

Co-creation

The dialogue underscored the critical role of partnerships in addressing systemic challenges. Both youth ambassadors and city officials stressed the importance of fostering collaborations that bridge grassroots initiatives with institutional policies. Examples included co-designing urban agriculture programmes and establishing public-private partnerships to enhance market access for smallholder farmers. The emphasis was on creating actionable, locally-tailored plans that can be piloted and adapted across various urban contexts.

During the dialogue, the fishbowl method was used to foster conversations between the youth, the project partners and the city focal points. Photo by Filbert Minja



Action Steps

- 1. Create inclusive platforms** that prioritise youth participation alongside other stakeholders, such as policymakers, local farmers, urban planners, and community leaders. These platforms will serve as forums for ongoing dialogue, ensuring that youth voices remain central to decision-making and that their insights inform food policy reforms.
- 2. Tailor action plans** to address the unique food security and sustainability challenges of each city. This includes setting measurable goals, such as reducing food waste by 30% within two years or increasing local food production through urban agriculture initiatives. These plans should be co-created with local communities to ensure they are realistic, actionable, and impactful.
- 3. Build stronger channels of collaboration** and communication between sectors, such as education, health, agriculture, and private enterprise. By linking youth-driven initiatives with institutional support, these partnerships can amplify impact. For instance, partnering with local schools to integrate food education into curriculums or working with businesses to fund community gardens can create a sustainable foundation for systemic change.

Youth Dialogue: Charting a Roadmap

In a separate youth-only held on the second day of the consortium meeting, youth ambassadors delved into shared challenges and opportunities in their urban food systems. The session fostered peer learning and laid the foundation for future storytelling and city-level activations.

Key Outcomes

Youth ambassadors participating in the dialogue highlighted a range of critical challenges facing their urban food systems, alongside innovative strategies to address them.

Across the cities, youth identified the pervasive lack of access to affordable nutritious food as a fundamental barrier, limiting their communities' ability to achieve food security and overall well-being. This challenge was compounded by systemic issues such as high levels of food waste and the absence of robust policy frameworks to support local food systems. Ambassadors noted that these challenges are deeply intertwined with broader societal inequities and require both grassroots and institutional action.

FILBERT MINJA, YOUTH AMBASSADOR FROM ARUSHA, “THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES. WE MUST EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT GROWING POPULATIONS.”

In response to these challenges, ambassadors proposed practical and forward-thinking solutions. **Leveraging traditional food** knowledge emerged as a key strategy to preserve cultural heritage while promoting sustainable practices. **Expanding urban agriculture** was identified as a vital tool to increase local food production, particularly in densely populated areas. Additionally, **creating community-driven initiatives**—such as local food co-ops and education campaigns—was seen as a way to build resilience and foster collaboration among stakeholders. These approaches collectively provide a roadmap for cities to create equitable and sustainable food systems.

Spotlighting Local Challenges

Through in-depth reflections, participants addressed specific challenges in their cities. For instance, they discussed the affordability of nutritious food in urban Dakar, where rising costs have disproportionately impacted low-income families. Staples such as rice, sugar, oil, pasta, and meat have become increasingly expensive, forcing many households to reduce both the quantity and quality of their meals. Some families have even eliminated meat from their diets due to soaring prices, while others have simplified meals, such as having only bread for breakfast. These rising costs, compounded by increased transportation expenses, have further restricted access to essential and nutritious foods. In Mbale, the need for improved market infrastructure was highlighted as a critical issue, with ambassadors suggesting investments in storage facilities and better market access for smallholder farmers to reduce post-harvest losses and support livelihoods.

These insights and proposals underscored the critical importance of including youth perspectives in shaping urban food systems. Their contributions were not just theoretical but grounded in practical solutions, offering a fresh lens through which systemic challenges could be tackled.



During another session, the youth ambassadors co-designed a draft six-month campaign plan aimed to run from January to June 2025. The ambassadors were divided into groups of 3 or 4 and presented their initial ideas. Photo by Filbert Minja

“My view of the food system has broadened. I’m in architecture, but now I’m thinking about where food is coming from and where it’s going.” - Kaylah Cordon, youth ambassador from Windhoek

Broader Contributions by Youth Ambassadors

Throughout the consortium meeting, youth ambassadors played a central role in enriching discussions and bringing new perspectives to light. Their contributions demonstrated not only their deep understanding of the challenges in urban food systems but also their ability to propose actionable solutions and inspire others. Key contributions included:

Advocating for Alternative Financial Models

Youth ambassadors offered innovative suggestions to fund vital programmes, such as school feeding initiatives. These included leveraging public-private partnerships and exploring community-driven microfinance models to ensure sustainable funding for initiatives that combat food insecurity. They also highlighted how technology is transforming local food systems and increasing access to markets. In Arusha, the Sambaza app connects smallholder farmers directly with consumers, reducing dependency on intermediaries and ensuring fairer prices. Similarly, in Lusaka, BargnBay facilitates direct trade between farmers and urban buyers through a digital marketplace, making fresh produce more accessible while supporting local producers. These tech-driven solutions not only enhance market efficiency but also contribute to more inclusive and resilient food economies.

Storytelling for Advocacy

Storytelling is a powerful advocacy tool. Across project cities, youth ambassadors use digital platforms to highlight challenges, showcase solutions, and drive change in food systems. Their narratives reach tens of thousands online, raising awareness, and inspiring action by bringing key issues into focus.

Youth ambassadors spotlight issues they find crucial—food security, sustainability, and cultural preservation. *Farida Tiemtore* from Ouagadougou highlights *Soumbala Kolgo*, a fermented condiment vital for nutrition and livelihoods but threatened by deforestation, advocating for sustainable harvesting. *Omar Rahmouni* from Chefchaouen documents *La Maison de la Diète Méditerranéenne*, reinforcing the role of food heritage in sustainable diets.

Sam Wesamoyo from Mbale shares the nutritional and cultural significance of *Malewa*, a bamboo shoot dish central to Bagisu traditions, promoting indigenous foods as sustainable dietary options. *Womba Mufundi* from Lusaka highlights *BargnBay*, a tech-driven marketplace linking consumers to fresh produce, demonstrating how digital solutions support small-scale vendors and reduce food waste. These stories don't just inform—they reshape how people engage with food systems.

Youth ambassadors are more than storytellers—they drive change. Their narratives amplify overlooked issues, engage large audiences, and shift perceptions of urban food systems. Through digital advocacy, they preserve traditions, document innovations, and shape the future of food systems across project cities and beyond.

Social Innovation for Food Systems Transformation

Beyond advocacy, the youth ambassadors are actively driving social innovation to transform food systems in their cities. In Lusaka, Womba Mufundi played a key role in the Chilenje Market pilot project, which introduced waste management solutions and infrastructure upgrades to create a cleaner, more efficient marketplace. In Mbale, Sam Wesamoyo worked directly with market vendors and the local community to implement hygiene education initiatives, fostering safer food environments and reducing health risks. In Kisumu, Christine Bonareri collaborated with county officials in co-creation workshops to upgrade food markets, ensuring that policies and infrastructure developments addressed the needs of vendors and consumers alike. She also facilitated community sensitization workshops in schools, equipping teachers and stakeholders with knowledge on sustainable food practices. By amplifying the voices of farmers and vendors, she bridged grassroots challenges with policy dialogues, advocating for capacity-building programs that empower youth and women in food systems.

“The last few days gave me a broader view of AfriFOODlinks – there were many aspects I didn’t know. Now I know how to speak about AfriFOODlinks. This week has given me inspiration for ideas that can be implemented everywhere.” Johary Tsiory Rakotondrainitomaho (Tiakaly), youth ambassador from Antananarivo

Amplifying the Message

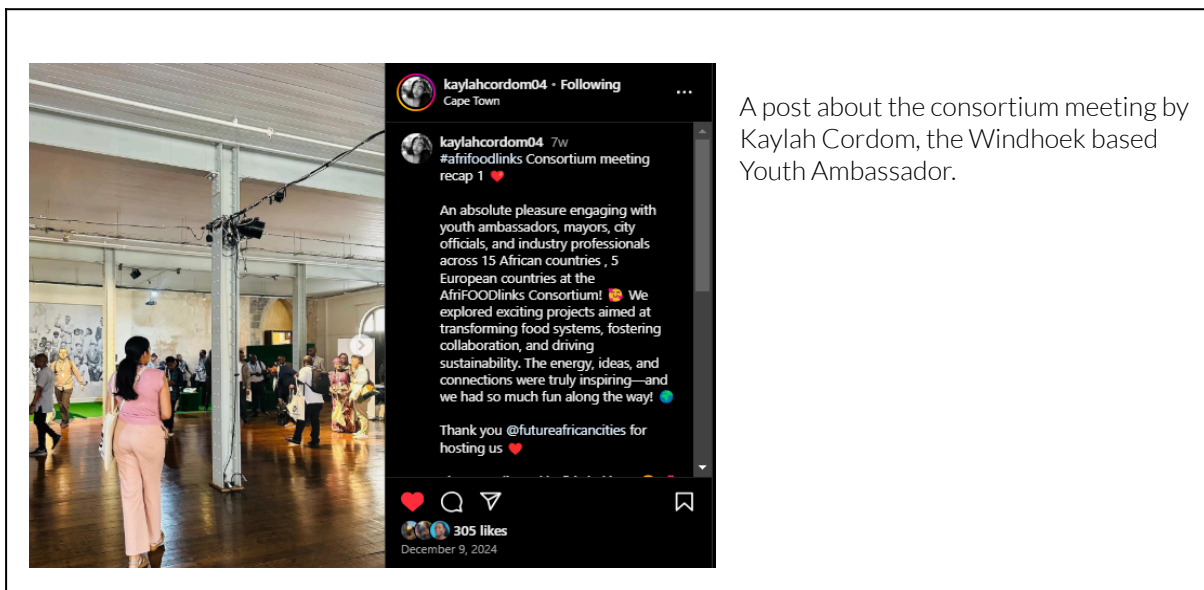
Role of Social Media

Social media played a recognisable role in extending the reach and resonance of the consortium’s impact. The ambassadors actively harnessed platforms like Instagram, and Facebook to chronicle their experiences, spotlight critical discussions, and galvanise support for food systems transformation. This is captured in the screenshots pictured in the section. By sharing candid moments from the intergenerational dialogue, powerful reflections, and snapshots of ongoing initiatives, they turned online spaces into hubs for awareness and advocacy.

Posts resonated across a diverse audience base, from local communities to global stakeholders, and ignited meaningful conversations about the importance of inclusive, sustainable food systems. This digital engagement not only amplified the voices of the ambassadors but also showcased their leadership in leveraging modern communication tools to inspire collective action.

Highlights

The strategic use of hashtags such as #AfriFOODlinks, #YouthForChange, and #InclusiveFoodSystems created a unified digital narrative, connecting ambassadors' stories to a growing movement for systemic reform. This narrative drew in additional stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and international audiences, amplifying the reach and impact of the consortium meeting’s outcomes. Screenshots of these posts will be included in the report to illustrate the role of digital advocacy in amplifying youth voices. The graph below captures the number of posts made throughout the consortium meeting, as well as the collective reach of these posts.



A post about the consortium meeting by Kaylah Cordon, the Windhoek based Youth Ambassador.

“We need to use our voices to wake people up and stir up the movement. Change must happen today.” - Womba Mufundi, ambassador to Lusaka

Conclusion and next steps

The intergenerational dialogue showed the tangible value of creating spaces where youth ambassadors and city officials could engage openly and collaboratively. The session fostered generational empathy and mutual understanding, highlighting the potential of bridging diverse perspectives to find actionable solutions for urban food systems.

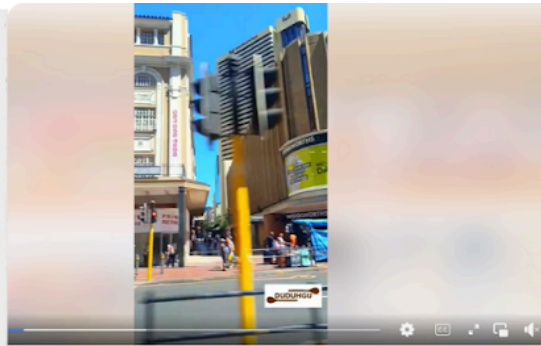
The insights from this dialogue underscored the need for practical, grounded approaches to inclusive governance, youth leadership and participation. Youth ambassadors are not just contributors but active change-makers, bringing a sense of urgency and innovation to critical issues like food security, sustainability, and equitable access.

Moving forward, the AfriFOODlinks project will focus on turning these insights into measurable actions. The momentum built during the consortium meeting will drive targeted initiatives and follow-up engagements within their cities that address the pressing needs identified by participants. These efforts aim not just for visionary outcomes but for changes that are deeply rooted in the realities of the cities and communities involved. The youth ambassadors remain central to this journey, using their lived experiences and dedication to push for solutions that are meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable in a way that is well grounded in their urban context.



A group picture of the youth ambassadors at the consortium. Link to their bios can be found here: <https://afrifoodlinks.org/youth-ambassadors/>

Snapshot of social media posts made by the ambassadors during the consortium meeting



I'm your AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassador, proudly representing our two city officials from the Tamale Metropolitan at the AfriFOODlink...

