

MBALE

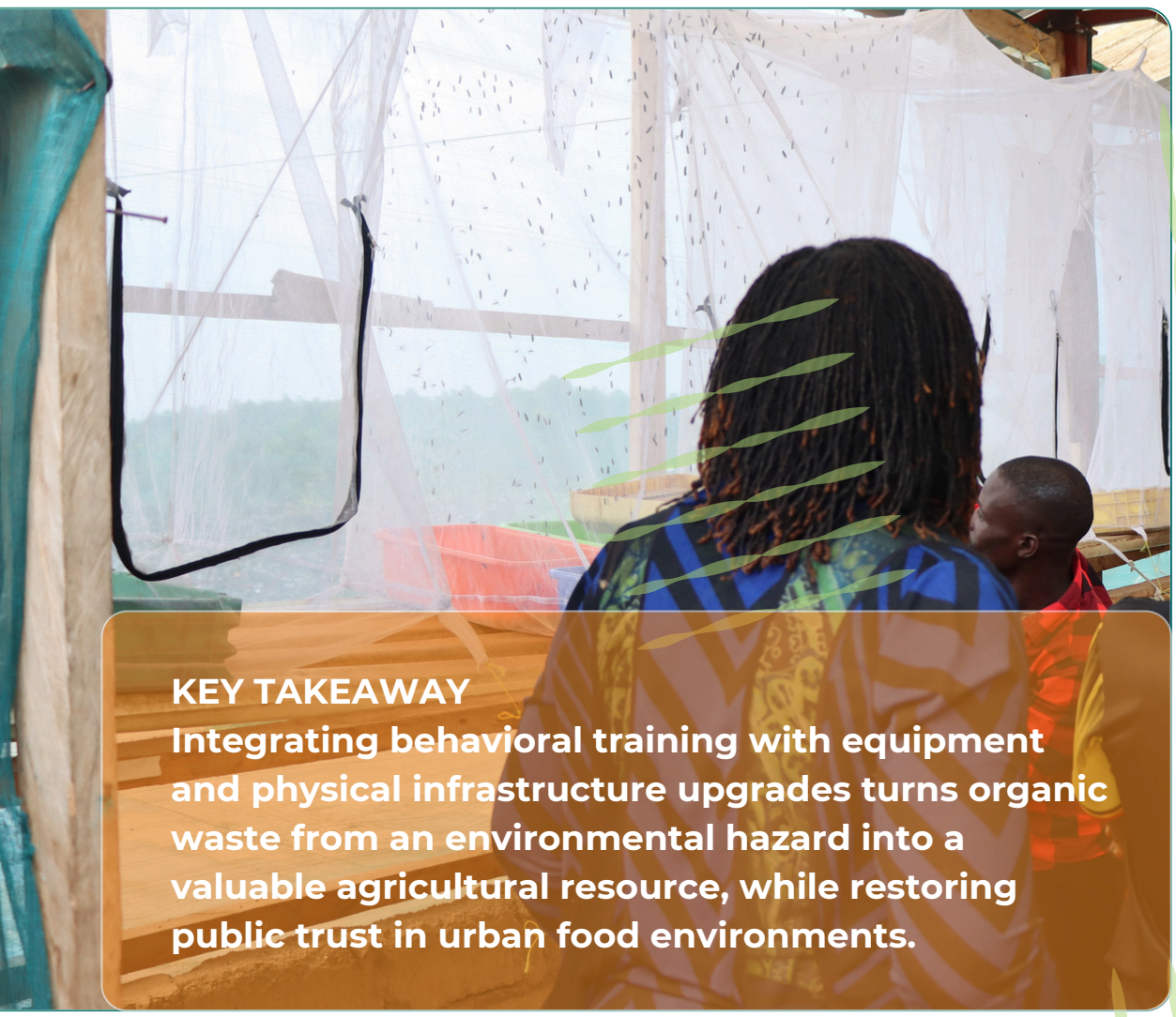
PROMOTING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND IMPROVING FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT IN MBALE CENTRAL MARKET

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KEY TAKEAWAY

Integrating behavioral training with equipment and physical infrastructure upgrades turns organic waste from an environmental hazard into a valuable agricultural resource, while restoring public trust in urban food environments.



REASON FOR THE PILOT AND ACTORS

Mbale Central Market (MCM) generates approximately 7 tonnes of waste daily, mostly organic, which was historically openly dumped, causing pests, foul odors, and severe food contamination risks. To address this challenge, Rikolto worked with FRA, CONSENT, Mbale City Council, market vendors, and private waste processor Bamukwasi Group with the focus of improving the management, recovery, and reuse of food waste within Mbale Central Market.

THE INTERVENTION

The pilot focuses on establishing a functional waste segregation, collection, recovery, and value addition system. It supported the private sector waste processor with equipment and BSF technology. It supplied 40 waste bins and safety gear (overalls, boots, gloves, masks, rakes, spades, and hoes). Over 200 vendors were trained in waste segregation and management. Separated organic waste is now composted or converted into animal feed using Black Soldier Fly (BSF) technology.

RESULTS AND LEARNINGS

The intervention is enabling the recovery and processing of about 800 kg to 1.2 tonnes of organic waste daily, with 25–35% converted into animal feed. Waste management practices improved, with 75% of Central market vendors consistently using waste bins for waste collection and 51 of 57 regularly sorting their waste.

During the pilot evaluation, 27% of the central market stakeholders identified training, equipment, and physical infrastructure as critical to effective implementation.

However, limited downstream processing capacity leaves approximately 5.8–6.2 tonnes of waste unrecovered daily. Sustaining the intervention will require dedicated municipal funding, expanded processing capacity, and stronger public-private partnerships.

Contact
Wilber Kakaire, Project Coordinator, Rikolto,
wilber.kakaire@rikolto.org



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ENHANCING NUTRIENT-DENSE DIETS IN MBALE CITY SCHOOLS THROUGH FOODWAYS AND EDIBLE LANDSCAPES

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KEY TAKEAWAY
Edible school landscapes have the potential to foster lifelong nutrition habits, transforming learners into active agents of change who transfer sustainable food practices directly back to their communities.



REASON FOR THE PILOT AND ACTORS

Most schools in Mbale City do not have organized school feeding programs and, where available diets are mostly monotonous, consisting of posho (maize flour) and beans, despite some schools having land that could potentially be used for farming and food production. Awareness about the importance of dietary diversity was also very low. To address these challenges Rikolto worked with the City Education Office, Mbale City Nutrition Coordination Committee, school administrations, 10 selected schools, teachers, cooks, parents, and learners to promote the production and consumption of nutritious green vegetables in schools and raise awareness on the importance of dietary diversity.

THE INTERVENTION

The pilot established kitchen gardens (0.25–0.5 acres) as edible landscapes in 10 schools (8 primary, 2 secondary), growing leafy vegetables (spinach, nakati, amaranthus, kale), legumes, and fruits. Standardised toolkits (hoes, rakes, sprayers, watering cans, wheelbarrows, bins) and seeds were provided. A total of 22 teachers were trained as Trainers of Trainers in food safety and garden management. Ten School nutrition clubs were formed with 40–60 learners each, leading assemblies, peer sensitization, and inter-school debates. Cooks were trained in food safety, and school menus were revised to introduce more diversity.

RESULTS AND LEARNINGS

All participating schools grew vegetables, up from 30% at baseline, and incorporated them into daily school meals. Learners gained practical skills in composting and gardening, while nutrition and agricultural knowledge also spread to households, with some parents of the participating schools adopting container and sack gardening. Embedding activities into school timetables and clubs, alongside competitions and peer learning, strengthened learner ownership. However, water shortages, pests, crop damage, limited land, and teacher workloads constrained production. Sustainability will require dedicated budgets for seeds and tools, continued parent engagement, and integration of gardens into city budgets.

Contact
Wilber Kakaire, Project Coordinator, Rikolto,
wilber.kakaire@rikolto.org



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ENSURING SAFE, NUTRITIOUS, AND SUSTAINABLE FRESH AND COOKED FOOD IN MBALE CENTRAL MARKET AND CITY ABATTOIR

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KEY TAKEAWAY
Market food safety cannot be achieved through training alone; it requires combining physical upgrades with participatory governance to eliminate environmental barriers and align compliance with economic benefits.



REASON FOR THE PILOT AND ACTORS

Since 85% of Mbale households rely on traditional markets, hygiene and food safety in Mbale Central Market (MCM) and the City Abattoir are critical. Previously, unhygienic practices, lack of clean water, open drainage, and waste accumulation in congested vending spaces increased contamination and disease risks. Dilapidated abattoir infrastructure compromised meat safety prompting many butchers to abandon it. To address these challenges, Rikolto worked closely with Mbale Municipal Council, City Health and Commercial Officers, abattoir workers, market vendors, and relevant market actors.

THE INTERVENTION

The pilot delivered food safety and waste training to 250 market vendors and 50 abattoir workers. It upgraded infrastructure by constructing 150 structured food stalls, a cooking shed for 20 women-cooked-food vendors, and an abattoir perimeter wall. Terrazzo flooring was installed in the abattoir, the drainage system was rehabilitated, and water user points were extended. It also distributed 46 waste bins and protective equipment such as aprons, gumboots, masks, and established a participatory "food parliament" governance structure to strengthen dialogue, accountability and collective responsibility for food safety.

RESULTS AND LEARNINGS

Waste management and hygiene practices improved among vendors, with 89% consistently sorting waste, 77% wearing aprons, and 39% regularly washing their hands. Most vendors reported substantial improvements in market cleanliness and hygiene.

The provision of structured stalls and a dedicated cooking shed created a cleaner and safer environment for selling and food preparation, contributing to increased customer confidence. The rehabilitated drainage, terrazzo flooring, and improved water access abattoir upgrades improved conditions for hygienic meat handling and reduced contamination risks. The intervention demonstrated that food safety improvements are most effective when training is combined with appropriate infrastructure, equipment, and participatory governance. However, high vendor turnover and limited infrastructure remained barriers. Sustaining progress requires continued training, clear management responsibilities, and dedicated municipal maintenance budgets.

Contact
Wilber Kakaire, Project Coordinator, Rikolto,
wilber.kakaire@rikolto.org