

## ZIMBABWE

### BENEFITING COMMUNITIES BY RECYCLING WASTE IN MUTARE

*Measures to recycle or re-use solid waste help to protect local environments through minimising use of natural resources and limiting the demand for sites for landfill. If properly managed, such initiatives can also make an important contribution to poverty alleviation and community building. One example of efforts to link environmental objectives with social goals are the LA 21 efforts of the city of Mutare in Zimbabwe.*



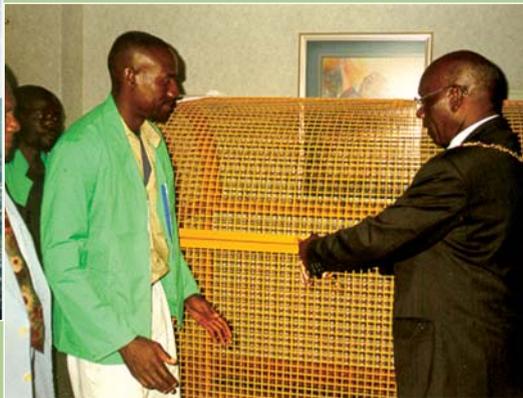
Julio Davila

Mutare, the third largest city in Zimbabwe with a population of approximately 200,000 people, is situated in the foothills of the Eastern Highlands and relies on a diverse resource base in forestry, agriculture industry and tourism. In 1997, Mutare City Council, with the support of ICLEI, formed the Mutare LA 21 Forum, a multi-stakeholder group, set up to implement a LA 21. Previous attempts had been made to tackle local environmental issues through an Environment Committee, set up in 1994, which had concentrated on environmental issues (with a focus on the handling of industrial waste), but not on broader aspects of sustainable development such as income generation or community development. In contrast, when the Mutare LA 21 Forum and the city received funds from the Incentive Grants Project (IGP)<sup>1</sup>, they approached the environmental issues of solid waste with a broader view, which also focused on the need to tackle poverty and community development.

The IGP funds were used to develop and implement projects to deal with the city's solid waste problems, an area identified as a priority by local stakeholders through the Mutare LA 21 Forum. Squatting and sub-letting of formal settlements in the

city makes household garbage collection difficult and solid waste is often dumped on road sides and burnt. Furthermore, the city does not have enough refuse collection vehicles and those that it does have frequently break down. As 79% of the city's waste is organic material, with an additional 8% made up of paper, developing recycling and composting measures represent an opportunity for the city to reduce the volume of waste going to the landfill site, thereby taking pressure of the collection system and increasing the life-span off the dump site.

In view of these issues the LA 21 Forum decided to start recycling projects in an effort both to tackle the need to recycle solid waste and to benefit poor groups from the city. Activities focused on the area of



Mutare City Council

Sakubva in particular, the oldest low income suburb of the city, located close to the dumpsite, industries and the site of the city's traditional recycling activities. Initiatives included a composting scheme, which targeted groups of low income women who were trained to produce compost for sale from organic waste. In addition, the initiative included a paper recycling scheme through which youth groups collect paper from newly created collection points in businesses and government office and then transport it to paper mills for sale, thereby earning more than the government specified minimum wage.

While the impact on solid waste in the city is still fairly small, the experience has both helped to build communication between the local authorities and residents, including marginalized groups such as poor youth and women, and has shown how local environmental initiatives can also be designed to create economic opportunities for the poor.

<sup>1</sup>funded by the Open Society Institute and implemented by ICLEI - see: [www.iclei.org/la21/igp.htm](http://www.iclei.org/la21/igp.htm)



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