

Nature-Based Solutions for Urban Resilience

A Call to Action for Rwanda and the Region

Emerging from the Forum on Urban and Peri-Urban NbS • Kigali, March 2–4, 2026

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Nature-Based Solutions are not an environmental add-on — they are strategic urban infrastructure. Rwanda and its partners have the foundations, the evidence and the momentum to act. The choices made now will shape the resilience of cities for generations to come.

THE CHALLENGE

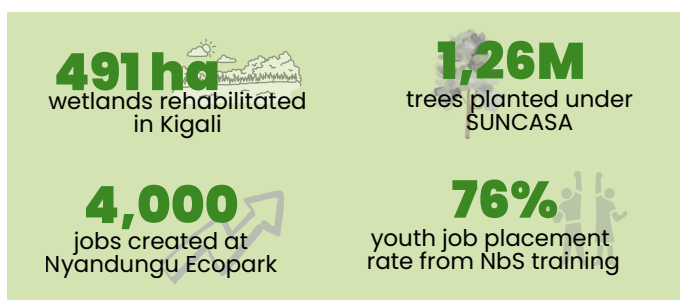
Africa's cities are growing fast — and climate change is intensifying the risks: flooding, heat stress, water scarcity, environmental degradation. Traditional grey infrastructure alone cannot respond.

Rwanda is no exception. As Kigali and secondary cities expand, the decisions made today will define their resilience for decades. Nature-Based Solutions — restored wetlands, green corridors, urban forests, nature-sensitive drainage — still too often exist as isolated projects. **Scaling NbS requires systemic change.**

Moving from ambition to action is the defining challenge.

EVIDENCE FROM RWANDA

Rwanda's experience demonstrates what NbS can deliver at scale:



The Nyandungu Ecopark (121 ha rehabilitated) created 4,000 jobs and a landmark public green space.

Wetland restoration across Kigali is expected to generate up to 7,500 full-time equivalent jobs. SUNCASA restored over 2,400 hectares of degraded landscapes with gender inclusion built in.

Rwanda's national frameworks — the Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy, National Urbanization Policy, NDC and NST2 2024–2029 — all position ecosystem restoration at the heart of long-term development.

THE REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Investment in NbS is already growing across Sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2012, more than **300 NbS projects** have been initiated across the region, representing an estimated **USD 12.5 billion in investments**, with average annual growth of 15%. NbS are no longer pilot experiments — they are proven, bankable infrastructure.

Rwanda is positioned to lead this regional movement — and to demonstrate that economic development and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand.

EVIDENCE BEYOND RWANDA

The Addis Ababa Green Corridor Initiative shows NbS at transformational scale:

179,066 jobs created
11,283 households rehoused
300 ha of replacement land provided

What is possible in Addis Ababa is possible across the region — with the right governance and investment frameworks.

4 POLICY LEVERS AVAILABLE TO DECISION-MAKERS

REGULATORY

Embed NbS in master plans, land-use regulations and district plans

ECONOMIC

Subsidies, tax incentives and grants aligned with environmental objectives

INFORMATIONAL

Technical guidelines, planning standards and design manuals

VOLUNTARY

Community stewardship and watershed partnerships

6 TRANSFORMATIONS: THE AGENDA FOR ACTION

01 PILOT PROJECTS → URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Embed NbS in master plans and watershed strategies across Kigali and secondary cities.

02 FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE → COORDINATED POLICY

Align MININFRA, Ministry of Environment, REMA, implementing agencies and district authorities. Priority: cost-benefit tools and bills of quantities.

03 PILOTS → BANKABLE INVESTMENT PIPELINES

Strengthen project preparation and valuation. FONERWA and Green City Kigali are key national instruments. MININFRA is now internalizing NbS within its own mandate.

04 TECHNICAL PROJECTS → COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Involve communities, women and youth from the outset. Professional bodies, CSOs (ARCOS, AVEGA-AGAHOZO) and RYWP are critical bridge actors.

05 ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS → GREEN ECONOMY

Link NbS to employment and entrepreneurship. NbS generate 2–5x more jobs per dollar than grey infrastructure. RICA/MASS Design Group show the peri-urban potential.

06 PROJECT MONITORING → KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Standardized indicators, GIS tools and cross-institutional data sharing to track outcomes and unlock climate finance.

CALL TO ACTION

The tools, the knowledge and the will already exist. Every actor has a role:

- **National institutions** — strengthen policy coordination, align governance across MININFRA, Ministry of Environment, REMA and implementing agencies, and create enabling conditions for NbS to scale.
- **Cities and districts** — embed NbS into master plans, infrastructure investments and climate adaptation strategies from the outset — using all four policy instrument categories.
- **Development partners** — sustain support for project preparation, investment readiness, financing and knowledge exchange across the 2026–2030 roadmap.
- **Communities and civil society** — take ownership of restored ecosystems and ensure equitable, long-term benefit-sharing.

ROADMAP 2026–2030

2026–2027 **1**



PHASE 1

Enabling foundations

- Governance alignment across MININFRA, Ministry of Environment, REMA
- NbS integrated into master plans and district frameworks
- Investment-ready project pipeline built (WRI, GIZ, EU, World Bank, GGGI, IISD)
- Capacity building: cost-benefit tools, bills of quantities for NbS

2027–2028 **2**



PHASE 2

Scaling implementation

- NbS scaled across Kigali, secondary cities and districts
- Financing via FONERWA, climate finance and blended models
- NbS linked to green jobs for youth and communities
- Community stewardship and participatory planning embedded

2029–2030 **3**



PHASE 3

Institutionalization

- NbS fully integrated in national infrastructure planning
- Long-term ecological, social and economic outcomes tracked
- Rwanda established as regional NbS model — sharing knowledge across Africa

The future of cities will be built with nature, or it will not be resilient.

Rwanda has an opportunity that few countries have — and it will not last indefinitely. Urban patterns, once set, are difficult and costly to reverse. No single institution can deliver this transformation alone. It requires national governments setting the direction, cities and districts embedding NbS into every planning decision, development partners sustaining investment and technical support, communities taking ownership of restored ecosystems, and young professionals building the green workforce of tomorrow.

Through the Urban and Peri-Urban Nature-Based Solutions Forum Manifesto, Rwanda and its partners make a collective commitment: to align these efforts, to move from dialogue to delivery, and to build cities that are not only more resilient to climate change — but more just, more vibrant and more worthy of the generations who will inherit them.