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## Urban Agriculture: Opportunities in Food and Income Security under Environmental Challenges in Bindura Urban, Zimbabwe

DELIWE TEMBACHAKO<sup>1</sup>, ANYWAY KATANHA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Zimbabwe Open University, Agriculture Management, Zimbabwe*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Witwatersrand, Dept. of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, South Africa*

### Abstract

Population increases to urban centres have become the norm in Zimbabwe due to the current melting economic and political situation. People are thronging Bindura town of Zimbabwe in search of better opportunities. Urban agriculture (UA) is well known to provide an alternative source of livelihood to some residents. However, little is known about the extent of UA contribution to livelihoods when it is in conflict with other livelihood activities like gold panning. This paper provides an overview of UA and its role in sustaining livelihoods of the resource-constrained Bindura urban residents. Samples of 80 participants from the purposively selected Chipadze high-density suburb were used. A questionnaire was used to solicit information about the sample based on their socio-economic status, opportunities and environmental challenges, and their views on UA. The findings of this paper illustrate that the UA farmers' income remains low compared to the other agriculture participants such as the rural subsistence and sedentary farmers. Great percentages (80) are not employed and depend on urban farming while engaging themselves in menial jobs for their survival. Most of the respondents (90%) alluded that urban farming is sustaining their cereal food needs as well as plant protein needs while the remaining 10% are still struggling to meet their food needs. Thus, UA farmers are among the poorest in Bindura agriculture activities. The results revealed that gold panning is one activity threatening UA in Bindura. The paper recommends the government to allocate peri-urban small farming areas to the residence in need. Additionally, there is urgent need to raise overall urban farm yields through improved UA management practices. Government support is necessary to address the UA development needs of urban farmers in order to lessen poverty in UA communities. These needs relate to the insufficiency of capital, equipment, tools, market access, information, technical and entrepreneurial skills. Specific actions may involve assembling institutional credit easily reached to urban farmers, providing them UA training on land preparation, seeding, harvesting, marketing and conflict resolutions. In addition, the government needs to put to an end the illegal gold panning activities taking place in Chipadze.

**Keywords:** Environmental challenge, gold panning, livelihood, resource-constrained, Urban agriculture(UA)