

The validation of the Harare Urban Markets Action Research Study was held on the 28th of September 2026, at Cresta Hotel-Msasa in Harare.

Funded by the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC)([CQ LINK](#)), coordinated by Dialogue on Shelter Trust([CQ LINK](#)) and led by Development Governance Institute (DGI)([CQ LINK](#)) in partnership with the City of Harare([CQ LINK](#)),the study reframes urban markets not as temporary informal spaces, but as essential metropolitan infrastructure for food distribution, livelihoods, public health and municipal finance.

Why It Matters?

The research investigated how land, workspace, infrastructure and financing are governed across Harare. Fieldwork covered 66 market locations and over 8,000 traders from Copacabana and Sunningdale to Siyaso and Glen View 8, using trader surveys, WASH audits, interviews, focus groups and GIS mapping.

Four Headline Findings:

1. **Indispensable but precarious.** The informal economy is 76.1% of national employment, 72.2% of it in Harare. Markets are permanent hubs, yet 48% of businesses remain stagnant with insecure tenure and fragmented municipal authority.
2. **Gendered and sectoral divides.** Heavy manufacturing nodes like Siyaso and Glen View 8 are male-dominated, earning \$1,000+/month. Retail and fresh produce markets like Sunningdale and Hatcliffe Dust are up to 84.6% women, earning ~\$350/month, with extreme WASH deficits.
3. **Clearance does not work.** Operations like ‘Chenesa Harare’ without viable, serviced alternatives trigger resistance and rapid reoccupation. Enforcement cannot remove economic necessity.
4. **Differentiated investment works.** A differentiated approach across markets, leverages existing water and sewer lines, unlocks major private trader reinvestment, and enables ring-fenced municipal fee collection.

What was validated on the day?

Shift to a 3-Tier Tenure & Investment Framework:

Band A: Basic Water Sanitation Hygiene (WASH), security and permits for neighborhood nodes

Band B: Serviced infrastructure and intermediate leases for commercial markets

Band C: Multi-storey redevelopment and long-term joint ventures for hubs like Mbare Musika, Siyaso and Glen View 8

All anchored on verified digital trader registers to end space baroning — identified yesterday as the key bottleneck.

Gender-responsive co-governance and blended finance:

*50%+ female leadership quota in market committees with women in executive roles, plus a ring-fenced financing vehicle (City Markets Microfinance Bank - CMMB) to fund maintenance and affordable credit.

*Establishment of Joint Market Management Boards (JMMB's) at City and at Market level.

Next Steps

The team will now finalize the report with received feedback, peer review it, produce three outputs; academic report, policy briefs for Cabinet and City leadership, and popular versions for traders — and deposit copies at the City of Harare, Ministries of Local Government and Women Affairs & SMEs, and academic institutions.

Harare's markets have already built savings systems, distribution chains and 24/7 economies. The task now is to make the city work for them.