

RUAF Mid-Term Progress Review

During the past nine months, RUAF partners have been actively engaged in reviewing and evaluating RUAF's activities with the support of an external review mission.

The pre-review process began in mid 2002. All seven regional RUAF partners prepared self-evaluation reports, using the results indicators established at the start of the programme. Meanwhile ETC conducted a ten-percent sample survey amongst the users of the RUAF services that had email addresses, and another evaluation questionnaire was circulated to fifty urban agriculture experts (see page 43), to the participants of major RUAF events. The findings were consolidated by the programme coordinator into a comprehensive pre-evaluation report, which is published on the RUAF website: www.ruaf.org

THE REVIEW PROCESS

An external review team, set up by IDRC, consisted of Michael Graham, Canada and Axel Drescher, Germany. The team was requested to review the performance data, compile the 'lessons learnt' and provide recommendations for the remainder of the project as well as on an eventual phase two of the RUAF programme. Both, RUAF products and processes were considered.

In the period between November 2002 and January 2003, one of the two external reviewers paid short visits to three of the regional focal points (MDP, IAGU and UMP-LAC/IPES). In February 2003, both external reviewers visited ETC in the Netherlands for two weeks to review the products and services developed by RUAF, analyse the pre-evaluation report and the materials on which it is based, and to have individual and joint discussions with the RUAF partners. Towards the end of the second week, the external review team presented their preliminary findings and recommendations to the RUAF partners. This led to valuable discussions on results realised, the effectiveness of the various RUAF strategies, and moreover, on the need and priorities of the eventual second phase of the RUAF programme.

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The external review team summarises the **impacts** of the RUAF project as follows:

"... a large number of high-quality products have been produced in topics related to urban agriculture. These products and services provide a wide range of information to identified stakeholders as demonstrated by their self-assessments and confirmed by the field visits.The project has achieved success with regard to the production of products and services and the establishment of process outputs that have resulted in clear but initial impacts on local authorities, researchers, NGOs, and international programs. However, much more work needs to be done, especially with regard to the integration of urban agriculture in the policies and programs of national and local governments and other relevant actors.Awareness has been raised effectively. ...The RUAF partners have advanced local networking and advocacy to different degrees. Latin America is most advanced; whereas, in Africa, and especially in most parts of Asia, and the Middle East these efforts are just starting".

As the major **product outputs** of RUAF, the external review team highlights the:

- ❖ Eight thematic issues of the Urban Agriculture magazine, produced in five languages and which addresses the priority topics identified by the main client groups.
- ❖ Bibliographic database of over 5600 entries.
- ❖ Contacts database of over 4500 names and addresses of individuals and organizations with experience in urban agriculture.
- ❖ Main RUAF website as well as websites established by the regional focal points in English, Spanish, French, and Chinese.
- ❖ Various publications on urban agriculture, including an annotated bibliography, a resources guide, the leading publication "Growing Cities Growing Food, the video "Urban Agriculture", a CD-rom "Urban Agriculture Today". These products have also been translated into several languages.
- ❖ Round table discussions, poster sessions, presentation of papers and the distribution of three special issues of the UA-Magazine during international conferences.
- ❖ International and regional workshops, electronic conferences and expert meetings, often in cooperation with an international organisation.
- ❖ Assistance on the development and dissemination of policy guidelines and instruments.
- ❖ Collection and dissemination of reliable data on the presence and impacts of urban agriculture.
- ❖ Assistance on the preparation and evaluation of urban agriculture projects.
- ❖ Question and answer services.

As the main **process** outputs, the external review team identifies the:

- ❖ Seven Regional Focal Points on urban agriculture
- ❖ Capacity, commitment and local ownership of regional focal points, which were strengthened through:
 - training regional partners on the joint management of the RUAF databases,
 - involving the regional partners in the editing and publication of the UA-Magazine,
 - involving all RUAF partners in the yearly evaluation and planning of RUAF activities and in obtaining additional funding.
- ❖ Implementation of the regional analysis of information and communication needs, which led to the unearthing of ongoing initiatives and the subsequent identification of priority areas for future study and action.
- ❖ RUAF Partners contributions in strengthening of regional and national networks.
- ❖ Establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms, interdepartmental working groups, and city networks for situation analysis and action planning.
- ❖ Support provided to bilateral and international agencies and the RUAF response to their requests for information and technical support.
- ❖ Support provided on:
 - integration of urban agriculture into the international research system (CGIAR) and in regular programs of UN-FAO,
 - facilitating internal discussion on urban agriculture in UNCHS-UNDP, and the European Community (EC),
 - and stimulated the participation of bilateral and international agencies in the SGUA.
- ❖ Continuous cooperation with international organizations in the planning and implementation of RUAF activities and promotion of complementary funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The external review team made the following main recommendations for the future work on RUAF:

- ❖ Increase the visibility of the RUAF programme and its regional partners and publish the results of the first phase of the programme to a broad international audience.
- ❖ Further strengthen the information and knowledge management capacities of the regional partners as well as their capacities to assist local partners in the formulation and funding of development projects, to implement lobbying and advocacy activities and assist in policy review and policy formulation.
- ❖ Focus on the preparation and distribution of the most appropriate material to specific target audiences as a response to their specific needs.
- ❖ Develop methodologies for systematic monitoring of urban agriculture activities and quantification of urban farming activities and their economic impact.
- ❖ Upgrade the contacts database and to further enhance access to full text documents and abstracts of grey literature.
- ❖ Create an advisory group of persons with experience in gender and urban agriculture to advise RUAF partners on the mainstreaming of gender in urban agriculture and on the planned expert consultation on gender and urban agriculture related thematic issue of the UA-Magazine.
- ❖ Strengthen the efforts to facilitate policy change, including local policy lobbying, stimulation of the establishment of local stakeholder platforms and support to their development, as well as improved international links with such organizations as FAO, UN-Habitat, and other organizations that are implementing the Local Agenda 21 (LA 21).

- ❖ Launch a second phase of the RUAF programme. The main objectives should be to provide
 - training and capacity development,
 - information to support policy development and implementation.

During this second phase, a real effort must be made to further devolve responsibility and accountability to the Southern partners as well as increase the funding of the activities in the South. Also, further reflection is needed on what mix of partners would be best and what their roles should be. Capacity development and policy advice might require the involvement of new partners in the future.

- ❖ Review the position of RUAF among other international organizations engaged in urban agriculture (e.g., FAO, SIUPA, IDRC, and UMP-Habitat and the International Support Group on Urban Agriculture (SGUA)). The role of the latter in ensuring coordination between such programmes has to be reviewed and perhaps revised.

CONCLUSION

The mid term review demonstrates the progress made in the past three years and the need to build on the results realised. It also clearly indicates the need and potential of the international RUAF network in capacity development, enhancing public – private partnerships and supporting policy development and implementation.

We sincerely thank all our partners and users' for their support and look forward to continued collaboration and exchange in building and expanding RUAF in the years to come.

RUAF Users Surveys

A sample of the users of the RUAF services and products were invited, through an e-mail survey, to comment on the relevance and quality of the RUAF materials and to describe how they use this information in their work. They were also requested to indicate their priorities for RUAF activities in the coming years.

The majority of the respondents were very positive about the RUAF products and services and requested that the programme be continued. Valuable comments on how products and services could be improved were also received.

When invited to rank 12 given RUAF services and products that were most used, the respondents ranked the *UA-Magazine* as highest followed by the E-mail Conferences; and the publication "*Growing Cities, Growing Food*". Responses indicated an average readership of 10 for each copy of the

UA-Magazine. Highest impact of the RUAF programme was regarded as: increasing exchange and discussion on urban agriculture, improving access to information and enhancing networking and capacity building. The three services identified as areas for improvement are: the organisation of 'Multi-stakeholder platforms', the upgrading of the Contacts Database and the supply of 'Direct Information and Support' to local initiatives.

These findings fit in neatly with the development objectives of the RUAF programme. At the onset, most

attention was given to building adequate information systems and enhancing access to empirical information, awareness raising, networking and facilitating discussion. More attention is now being given to promoting local platforms for multi stakeholder dialogue and action, as well as the continuous review and updating of RUAF policies.

USE OF INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY RUAF

Respondents mention that the RUAF services provide them with **inspiration**. For example, one respondent from the Philippines writes that RUAF inspires them to the information provided to "bring real improvements for the urban poor i.e., more food on the table, lower costs and increase disposable income for other basic necessities such as education,



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The RUAF Partners met in Johannesburg to discuss future activities

health and housing”. Another respondent indicates, “knowing that similar actions are taken elsewhere inspires us to use the information provided by RUAF to validate our own experiences”.

Many respondents frequently visit the website and use the UA-Magazine to **keep up to date** on recent developments, ongoing debates, new publications, upcoming events and results, etc. “RUAF assists us in defining the cutting edge in urban agriculture and resource availability and expertise”. Many users also refer to the bibliographic and contacts information to **find relevant literature and resource persons**.

Respondents indicate that the RUAF services **facilitate networking**, finding partners and exchange of experiences, both within countries and internationally. For example, Action Aid in Ghana states that they used information provided by RUAF to establish working relations with organizations in Kumasi, Accra and Dar es Salaam.

Many respondents emphasised RUAF’s function as a **platform to share experiences and new ideas**. The UVVP project in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania writes us “an initiative like RUAF is necessary and very useful to complement ongoing UA activities and initiatives on local and partially regional level. It can provide the environment for sharing of experiences and ideas beyond the local level. RUAF has helped to broaden the Dar es Salaam UA experiences and make them accessible to a wider and interested audience. This

would not have been possible in this extent without RUAF and the channels maintained by them”. A partner in Vietnam indicates that the information supplied allows to compare the situation in their own cities with those in other countries and to compare technical and institutional solutions.

Several respondents indicate that they use the information supplied by RUAF to further **develop or adapt research publications and to prepare research proposals**. A respondent from the Netherlands writes: “It broadened our perspective. We use this information to put our ongoing and new research projects in a wider context and to include certain research questions we would otherwise not have thought about. Through your network, we make contacts with potential research partners or clients, and collect case study material”.

When asked **how RUAF information is used**, respondents frequently stated **staff training and teaching**, in the preparation of lectures, as reading and research material for students and for preparing presentations and papers for seminars and workshops. Ryerson University, Canada, extensively used the RUAF materials to develop modules and materials for their course on Food Security.

Some respondents, like ECHO in the USA, use the RUAF- materials for providing **Question & Answer services** in the field of urban agriculture. RUAF also learned that its materials are distributed **and used in other networks**. For example, CARE, in Peru, diffuses RUAF information in

the environmental network GRUTA, and in Nepal, a respondent distributes the information to 12 partner municipalities of the Rural-Urban Partnership Programme.

Various users indicate that the information supplied by RUAF gives them more **leverage to convince local decision makers**. A respondent from Tanzania reports “The information provided by RUAF assisted us (the project) to intensify awareness of policymakers of the importance of urban agriculture, especially officials from the Ministry of Agriculture who did not believe in its potential”. A partner from Uganda states: “A number of articles from the *UA-magazine* were distributed and discussed with the district policy makers during a sensitisation workshop on the situation in Kampala City”.

A large number of respondents reported to use RUAF information to **facilitate policy and programme development** on urban agriculture in their organisation, municipality or country. As one respondent from the Philippines writes, “The information was useful as inputs in refining, detailing, moulding and grounding the concept of urban agriculture into practical, adaptable and realistic steps for implementation in urban poor food security”. A respondent from Botswana reports “I have incorporated some of the knowledge acquired into the preparation of long-term physical development planning for one of the cities in Botswana (Francistown)”. In Nepal the information received from RUAF is used in discussions with the Planning Commission of the Ministry of Planning in Kathmandu, leading to the incorporation of urban agriculture in the work plans.

A partner from Brazil writes “I have used the information provided to plan development policies for the North East of Brazil”. An NGO in Burkina Faso writes: “The findings and recommendations of the workshop on reuse of wastewater in Ouagadougou helped us to reorient our work”.