

Chapter 5

Gendering the Urban Agriculture Agenda

Urban agriculture has been embraced and promoted by the international development community as a means for urban dwellers to achieve sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic advancement. Many low-income households who farm in the cities gain a more consistent source of food and better nutrition. They can also earn or free up cash for non-food items. Advocacy for urban agriculture was initially focused on the policy agenda, but has moved recently into the realm of municipal development. Now that municipal authorities increasingly recognise this pivotal activity, it is easier for urban agriculture practitioners to integrate it into planning and decision-making mechanisms at the city level. This chapter seeks to make clear why this trajectory must be conceptualised along gender lines, since gender dynamics are central to the form, function, organisation and structure of urban farming.



and security. Guyer (1987b) found that, in 1888–1912, women farmers would bring the small surplus they generated from family food production for sale in the town of Yaoundé. Mitullah (1991) describes something similar in early colonial Nairobi, and this is much more extensively treated in Robertson’s (1997) work on men, women and trade in Nairobi. By the 1920s and 30s, the colonial division of labour meant men were working as urban or plantation labourers, whereas it was generally women who were farming and bringing in the urban food supply. In Dar-es-Salaam, Bryceson (1987) found urban wage-workers were fed by their wives in the 1930s. In Yaoundé, male chiefs took advantage of this division of labour by “marrying” hundreds of “wives” who constituted unpaid work crews to supply urban food and profits for them (Guyer, 1987b). After independence in the 1960s and early 70s, rural women were both farming and trading to bring food to the city of Yaoundé.

In Kano, Nigeria, Hausa women’s food supply remained outside the purview of policy (and official attention) whereas Hausa men’s production and sale of staples on a small scale brought them into conflict and competition with large-scale traders and the authorities (Watts 1987). Studies of post independence food supply in both West and East Africa document how food production policies failed to take into account this gender division of labour and actively promoted men as opposed to women farmers (Guyer, 1987; Tripp, 1997). In the 1970s in Yaoundé, women continued to grow food for their families and sell the surplus, though this remained outside the purview of national food and agriculture policy. The national policy focus on rural agriculture may have actually increased urban agriculture production in Dar-es-Salaam according to Tripp (1997). In Dar-es-Salaam, where the women were bringing in food for the men in the early colonial city, only seven percent of labourers had farm plots in 1950. By 1974, when official food supply and distribution systems were in operation, 70 percent of households in an urban low-income settlement had urban agriculture plots, and in 1980 this had increased to 80 percent, with two thirds of the farmers being women. This is attributed to the malfunctioning of the official schemes, which failed to match supply and demand (Tripp, 1997).



Alice Hovorka

Men tend to have access to greater amounts of resources

A little-known but extensive study in periurban Kumasi, Ghana, raises interesting questions about the relationship between gender, land rights and food production (Kasanga 2001). In examining how women have lost out in the control of land in the urbanisation process, even where matrilineal inheritance of land is the norm, Kasanga states that:

“There are more women farmers than male farmers in the peri-urban villages. They are also more likely to farm on family lands using a low-input bush-fallow system to grow food crops. These farmers are vulnerable to losing their farms to residential development. They are also constrained by a cycle of low productivity from investing in further farm development.” (Kasanga 2001).

Clearly, the relationship between women’s association with providing food for the family as opposed to men’s association with growing cash crops, encouraged by official policy and social norms, has led not only to the current data about the prevalence of men in urban farming in Kumasi, but also to the disempowerment of women in a society that traditionally empowered them.

Many married women were supporting their households, as men's wages were very low (Tripp, 1997; Tibaijuka, 1988). The policy was clearly counter-productive and, by 1986, a statement was released that informal sector traders should "come out of hiding" – an ironic comment no doubt since it referred to 95 percent of the city's population. By the mid 90s, the policy climate had changed, with support for the informal sector and women traders being established. By this time, women had set up organisations and networks, giving them some greater political clout. However, formal plans and policies still fail to take account of the way women's businesses are run, as part of their work in household maintenance and not simply as profit-making enterprises. Women's work continues to be disadvantaged (Tripp, 1997).



Azage Tegegne

An urban dairy farmer in Addis Ababa

Claire Robertson's studies of women food traders in Accra in West Africa and Nairobi in East Africa contain meticulous ethnographic and historical information on how such patterns of behaviour, power and control operated. She focuses on the perceptions and reactions of the women themselves, and traces how they have responded by organising as collectives and by finding an increasing political voice (Robertson 1990, 1997).

Contemporary trends

Contemporary research on gender and urban agriculture documents clear gender dynamics in food production and trade in and around cities. There is now quite extensive case-study data on the prevalence of women as urban farmers in East and Southern Africa whereas, in West Africa, more men than women are found in urban agriculture as a rule. Thus, women predominate among urban farmers in Uganda, Kenya and Namibia, for example, whereas men predominate in Ghana and Nigeria (Obuobie et al., 2004; Kessler et al., 2004). Studies from Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and Senegal, however, note that women predominate as agricultural labourers and men as owners of horticultural enterprises (Oruwari, et al. 2004).

In Latin America, the pattern appears equally diverse, with women forming the majority of urban farmers in Rosario, Argentina (where emergency strategies in the face of economic crisis prevail) and men in Lima, Peru (where men are traditionally the cultivators). However, as articles in the issue of the *Urban Agriculture Magazine* devoted to Gender and Urban Agriculture show, things are changing in Lima as part of ongoing interventions and organised action by women themselves (Hetterschijt, et al. 2004). Little information is available from Asian cases, but the study from Nepal in the above-mentioned issue indicates periurban farming in Nepal is a family activity, with men and women playing different roles, but men controlling the land and the surplus production. The same appears true in Kolkata, India, where there is again a division between women's unpaid work and men's (assumed) role as income earners (Mukherjee et al., 2004; Sapkota, 2004).

Generally speaking, while both men and women are active participants in urban farming, the nature and extent of their participation varies in different contexts. The predominance of women urban farmers in many parts of Africa, for example, is ascribed to the fact that women still bear the main responsibility for household sustenance and well-being. Women also tend to have lower educational status than men and therefore more difficulties in finding formal wage employment (Hovorka 2005). At the same time, the predominance of men urban farmers in many parts of Asia is attributed to the commercial nature of agriculture

in and around cities. Men and women may differ strongly in their preferences and priorities related to their main roles and responsibilities, for example regarding production goals (enough food for consumption versus surplus products to sell at the market), preferred location of plots (women with young children often prefer to work close to the home), preferred mode of production (single versus multiple cropping) etc. (Wilbers et al., 2004). Men and women also have different responsibilities related to production and reproduction, depending on socio-economic and cultural circumstances. This division of labour relates to the types of tasks assigned associated with certain crops (eg. cash crops or larger livestock versus food crops and smaller animals) and objective of cultivation (eg. subsistence versus income generation). Beyond actual cultivation, men and women farmers participate in governance, local politics, and community groups, linking social activism with food security issues (Wilbers et al., 2004).

Gender dynamics also influence access and control over productive resources (including land, credit, labour and information), as well as access to and control over the benefits of production. While both women and men face constraints regarding access to land, women are often further disadvantaged because they traditionally have less access to and control over land than men. Men tend to have the first choice of any available vacant plots of land, which leaves women with low-quality, less secure plots of land, or plots that are located far from their homes. Much time and effort must then be devoted to travel, which proves to be a significant constraint for women, especially the elderly or those with young children. Farming in remote and insecure places can also increase the risk for women farmers (Wilbers, et al. 2004). Thus, it is important to acknowledge that increasing access to land as such may not solve the problem of inequitable access to urban land between women and men (Hovorka 1998). There is often also inequitable access between men and women regarding other

agricultural inputs, labour, and information. Men and women differ with regard to their knowledge of, for example, the husbandry of certain crops and animals, the application of certain cultural practices and the use of certain technologies. Limited information on and exposure to the use of modern inputs and technologies may also be the result of limited access to training courses offered by institutions or NGOs. The fact that women are less likely to benefit from research or extension services that fail to consider gender-specific differences regarding methods of plant production, crop species and use of compost, manure and fertiliser also plays an important role (Wilbers 2004).



Alice Hovorka

Both men and women view the sector as a means of economic or socio-cultural empowerment

Gendered access and control over productive resources are rooted in socio-economic conditions and legal arrangements whereby women are often disadvantaged through institutionalised gender inequities related to access to capital, education, and off-farm employment opportunities, as well as laws governing inheritance and land transfer. Moreover, women often have rights to use renewable products (for example, harvesting leaves from trees), while men have rights of consumptive use (harvesting the tree itself). Decision-making patterns are also highly gendered on account of differences in men's and women's ability to exert power and control within the household, community and municipality. Beyond recognising such gendered experiences, access to resources and decision-making capacities, it is important to design an urban agriculture agenda that has gender needs at its core. As urban food markets evolve, women often continue to be disadvantaged.

Considerable research, policy and advocacy initiatives are needed to ensure women are able to compete on an equal basis with men in urban and periurban food markets (Mitullah, 1991, Robertson 1997, Purushothaman et al., 2004). To this end, key elements of a gendered sustainable urban development agenda are outlined in the section below.

Towards Gendered Sustainable Urban Development

As an emerging development strategy, the urban agriculture agenda is well poised to accommodate just and equitable guidelines for addressing the needs and interests of both men and women. But this can happen only when there is clarity about what gender means and how to “do it”. As recently noted in the UNDP (2003) report on gender mainstreaming, nowhere is the gap between stated intentions and operational reality as wide as it has been in the promotion of equality between men and women. While organisations and institutions continue to grapple with the incorporation of gender dynamics, the needs and priorities of one half of humankind have yet to make it to the centre of the development agenda. Emerging largely in the 1990s, the Gender in Development (GID) approach aims to challenge the dominant and widely held development directions shaping choices and practices amongst the international community. It largely focuses on the analysis of different roles of men and women, and their respective access to and control over resources and decision-making (UNDP, 2003). This approach is broader than the original focus on Women in Development (WID) that tended to isolate women’s interests without considering the power relations and dynamics between men and women in the development process. Beyond embracing this approach, achieving a gendered sustainable urban development agenda requires a concerted effort around five elements of mainstreaming, namely conceptual clarity, identifying practical and strategic needs, political will and commitment, capacity building and resource allocation, and scientific research.



Gunther Merzhtal

Women are forced to take up a productive role

The first element of a gendered sustainable urban development agenda is conceptual clarity. It is difficult to find a group of development practitioners other than “gender experts” with a shared understanding of what gender mainstreaming actually is and how it is done (UNDP, 2003). Adding to the confusion is the over- or mis-use of the term “gender” in policy documents and strategic frameworks, which muddles the conceptualisation of such an approach. Gender can be defined as the socio-cultural construction of roles and relationships between men and women. Gender analysis involves the examination of their roles, responsibilities and social status in relation to local cultural perceptions of masculinity and femininity that delineate access to opportunities and resources in a particular context (Hovorka, 1998). Gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps via gender-disaggregated data, developing strategies to close those gaps, putting resources into implementing the strategies, monitoring the implementation, and holding individuals and institutions accountable for the results (UNDP 2003). A gendered sustainable urban development agenda recognises that concrete, positive structural change can emerge only if both men and women make concerted efforts to addressing gender inequities. Unfortunately, the concept of gender has come to be widely simplified to be just another word for women, instead of denoting a human rights based approach.

become nobody's job. Budget implications are significant, given that cross-cutting issues seldom sit atop dedicated pots of money for hiring staff and experts, and agenda pushing is easier done if money is attached to political will (UNDP, 2003). There is also need to develop ways to measure success in mainstreaming. At the moment, it is too easy to sprinkle the necessary references to women, gender, participation and equality through documents and then claim to have "done gender mainstreaming". The shift to results-based management provides way to address this problem (UNDP, 2003).

The fifth element is continued access to rigorous and insightful scientific research on gender dynamics. Creating a foundation for gender mainstreaming around urban agriculture requires a solid research base, which explores conceptual issues and provides empirical evidence of men and women's differential and often inequitable experiences with food cultivation and livestock rearing in different cities around the world. Research can reveal these differences, identify the mechanisms that often keep women in a disadvantaged position, and establish the significance of urban farming in people's everyday lives. Gender research, as detailed in Box 5.1, provides an entry point into such investigations, including gender-disaggregated data collection, interpretation and analysis of results, and allows researchers to uncover the "underlying power relations and structures that create imbalances and inequities between men and women" (Hovorka, 2001). An action-oriented research agenda that incorporates continuous interaction with and feedback to communities is essential in this regard. Theoretical and empirical research on gender and urban agriculture provide a springboard for programming, planning and policy initiatives, whereby researchers can identify the practical and strategic needs of men and women in order to formulate action plans to support urban agriculture.

Conclusion: Gendered Urban Agriculture Strategies

There are numerous examples of urban agriculture strategies that address and incorporate, to a greater or lesser degree, the above-detailed elements of a gendered sustainable urban development agenda (see for example, cases in the *Urban Agriculture Magazine* No. 6 and No. 12). The three case studies featured here include Peru's Resources for Development Association, which promotes communal gardens through a GID approach; India's collaborative government-NGO effort, which promotes increased market access together with increased entrepreneurial skills development, and Senegal's GIE Bokk Jon cooperative movement, which



Gunther Merzthal

Marketing of produce at a farmer's market in Rosario

promotes community-based integrated food production systems. Each demonstrates ways in which gender issues are being incorporated into urban agriculture projects.

The case studies highlight the fact that gender is conceptualised as primarily "women-focused", bringing attention to women's disadvantaged circumstances compared to their male counterparts. The Peruvian case goes beyond this conceptual focus to illustrate the change in gender relations and redistribution of power between men and women that comes about as a result of supporting and encouraging urban agriculture projects. The distinction between practical and strategic gender needs is central to all of the cases, best illustrated in the Senegalese case where local cooperatives are improving women's immediate circumstances, as well as facilitating empowerment and self-fulfilment in the women

themselves, and have been paired with a recently passed law addressing equal access to land. This relates directly to the element of political will and commitment so essential in establishing a gendered sustainable urban development agenda. Both the Senegalese Government and local authorities in Peru are lending legitimacy to urban farming activities, thus facilitating greater success of local initiatives. Capacity building and resource provision is a key element of all of the case studies, largely focused on the local community level, whereby women's empowerment is seen as a two-tiered strategy comprised of both skills training and increased access to capital and infrastructure. Finally, both the Peruvian and Indian cases illustrate the importance of research in documenting and understanding local gender circumstances and dynamics prior to establishing a plan for action.

Box 5.1 *Gender Research*

The incorporation of a gender framework into urban agriculture research involves a two-tiered process of gender-disaggregated data collection, as well as gender interpretation and analysis.

First, researchers must collect information on the different experiences, needs, interests, and access to opportunities and resources of both men and women so as to establish an accurate picture of the local context. This stage of the research aims to answer the questions who, what, when, where, and how urban agriculture systems function with regard to gender dynamics.

Second, researchers must ask why such gender dynamics occur. It is not enough to document differences; rather, researchers must probe deeper and examine the factors that create and influence differential opportunities and constraints for men and women at the local, regional and global level.

It is important to make clear the need for a two-tiered gender framework. While literature on urban agriculture contributes to the understanding of women's roles and responsibilities in this regard, it seldom illuminates or questions the form, significance and impact of gender dynamics. Women farmers are often dealt with in isolation from other research components, resulting in a single sentence or paragraph documenting data on, for example, women's relative lack of socio-economic status compared to men's. Researchers seldom go beyond collecting gender-disaggregated data. Hence, there is a tendency to overlook the underlying power relations and structures that create imbalances and inequities between men and women. It is important to remember that gender does not refer to women alone; rather, it refers to the dynamics between men and women. Researchers who go beyond simply gender-disaggregated data collection to explore gender dynamics in depth have been able to provide some of the most comprehensive, interesting and thought-provoking pieces on urban agriculture (eg. Freidburg 1997, Lee-Smith & Memon, 1993; Maxwell, 1994; Mbiba, 1995; Mianda, 1996; Mudimu, 1996; Rakodi, 1991).

Finally, a gender framework must highlight the issue of scale to unearth the complex linkages involved in understanding gender dynamics. Not only is it essential to analyse intra-household relations, it is also important to explore larger social, economic, political, organisational, legal and ideological structures that shape and reinforce gender differences and inequalities. Rather than considering a particular scale (eg. micro, meso or macro) in isolation, the application of gender analysis leads to the fundamental examination of social structures and institutions that create specific power dynamics at the local level (Rathgeber, 1990). Research may focus, for example, on the gendered effects of urban policy, macro-economics or cultural traditions on the organisation and functioning of local urban farming systems. In turn, localised gender relations can influence structures and processes at the meso and macro scale.

Source: adapted from Hovorka (2001).

India's Collaborative Market Access Initiative

Sangeetha Purushothaman

M.S. Subhas

Mitali Nagrecha

In the periurban interface, immense changes in livelihoods and land use occur. Expansion of cities led by globalisation and privatisation poses risks for existing livelihoods as well as opportunities for new livelihoods that make use of urban employment and markets. In a participatory planning initiative undertaken in 2000 with the twin goals of natural resource management and livelihood enhancement in mind, communities in six villages in the periurban interface of Hubli-Dharwad, India, drew up action plans. One finding was that none of the plans or strategies of the government and NGOs really worked for the poor (Purushothaman & Purohit, 2002). Separate meetings with landless men and women confirmed this gap in the action plans. Landless women were more tied to the villages on account of their reproductive responsibilities and fewer acceptable options for mobility compared to landless men, who have more mobility.

This initiative was followed by meetings with poor women's *sanghas* (groups) to plan more appropriate strategies. These meetings revealed that previous income-generation efforts failed because markets have changed and products made by the women's groups were now obsolete. Unfortunately for potters, plastic pots had flooded the market, and for basket weavers rubber baskets now had replaced bamboo-woven baskets, and so on. Even those who produced food products, such as pickles, were disadvantaged by companies that produced pickles or other products at much lower rates and in more attractive packaging and that used advertising and brand names to corner the market successfully. To create new options for the poor to access markets, the government and NGOs started several initiatives, two of which are examined below.



Sangeetha Purushothaman

Peri-urban women producers sell their produce in an urban market in Hubli-Dharwad

The Hardware: The Farmers' Market

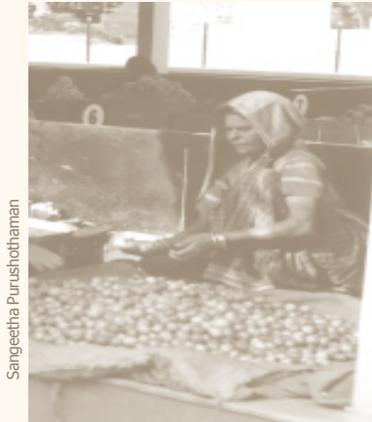
A *raythere santhe* or farmers' market was recently initiated by local government in Karnataka based on the success of similar initiatives in Punjab (Apni Mandi), Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. The farmers' market is conceived of as a forum for farmers to sell their produce directly to the consumer without middlemen. The local government in Hubli-Dharwad wanted a case study conducted to understand the barriers to success faced by the *rayethra santha*, since the state government intended to upscale this initiative state-wide to all districts in Karnataka. Thus a rapid appraisal was conducted in November 2003, including interviews with farmers who had been issued identity cards to use the *raythere santhe* in Hubli Dharwad and Bangalore.

For participating periurban farmers, there are clear advantages, like a market space, a clean environment and a fair rate, as prices are regulated to be "reasonable". However, there are a number of points to improve upon. In the Hubli market, only 20 of the 80 booths were occupied on average. There were enough customers but farmers still sold most of their

produce in the mornings to middlemen. In regular markets, farmers only spend their mornings selling to middlemen (most farmers need to get back to work on their farms). Barriers included inadequate facilities in terms of washroom and childcare facilities and inadequate bus services to the farmers' market, which meant that farmers were unable to transport goods.

The *raythere santhe* is supposed to be attractive to customers because rates are lower than those at the regular market. However, it was found that prices were not consistently lower.

Every morning officials of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC), together with farmers, should set rates between the wholesale and retail rates, so as to benefit the consumer but simultaneously make the market unattractive to middlemen. Another finding was that farmers were bringing large quantities of one product, which could not be sold retail, and were thus forced to sell to middlemen. Farmers should be encouraged to diversify production so that they can sell smaller quantities of different products consistently at the *raythere santhe* at this higher rate, which would simultaneously provide the variety demanded by urban consumers. Finally, not all farmers can engage in direct marketing if it means having to sit at the market from morning to evening. In Madurai, for example, this is not the case. The market starts at 6 or 7 a.m. and all produce is sold by noon. Farmers might have more incentive to sit at the market or have a family member do so if there are more consumers and if they earned a greater profit.



Sangeetha Purushothaman

Three landless periurban women from Mugad being trained in MOVE to become entrepreneurs

The Software: Capacity Development to Access Markets

In conjunction with the above local government strategy, a new initiative entitled MOVE (Market Oriented Value Enhancement), funded by the Natural Resources Systems Programme of DFID (UK Directorate for International Development), brings together marketing management experts and community-based organisations in Dharwad. Under MOVE, a small group of poor landless periurban women were selected and are being trained in the basics of setting up and running small and micro enterprises to make themselves self-reliant in the free market economy. These women are not fully motivated, and depend on subsidies and doles offered by the government and other agencies; on the other hand, they are unable to face hardships and problems. The project team has attempted to evolve a detailed methodology of converting these zero-level potential entrepreneurs into full-blown entrepreneurs by increasing the motivational levels and providing them with skills to understand the market.

Motivational training is done by the NGOs and is something that only NGOs can do. What motivates a woman may be different from what motivates a the traditional male entrepreneur. Women want to be seen as being able to contribute towards household decision-making, especially financial decision-making, and as leaders who can make decisions in their communities. Mobilisation of women into *sanghas* is a first step. These women then need to be taught the value of sharing risks and labour, and that unity among women contributes towards building and sustaining communities.

The *training on markets* is intended to help these women, in part, understand market dynamics in rural, periurban and urban areas, distinguish between qualities of products, enhance their marketing strategies, negotiate with retailers and form direct relationships with consumers.

MOVE started only in 2004 and it will take more time before it can fully materialise. Early results show that the participating women became more conscious of prices after visiting different markets where they learned how to negotiate prices. They have also become more confident, have a better understanding of value addition to products (roasting, sprouting of cereals, packaging, etc.) and, with some encouragement, they also came up with new product ideas. Finally, the women and the NGOs working with them now understand the difference between group-based product identification and market-oriented product identification.

New Hardware and Software Needed

Building poor women's capacities to understand markets, mobilising them into groups to deal more effectively with other actors in the market, creating innovative financial instruments, and providing a marketing infrastructure are the most important components needed to facilitate access to markets for women. Government initiatives typically only provide the "hardware", without providing any training to build marketing skills of those using the *raythere santhe*. While taking the initiative to provide infrastructure, transportation and other facilities, the government activities need to be more tailored to the poor, particularly to women. Government rural credit provision programmes often come to a grinding halt in the periurban areas, the very space where credit is most needed. Access to formal banks and other financial institutions for the poor is declining in the face of the rapid retreat of government programmes, as urbanisation spreads and urban municipalities expand.

In contrast, NGO capacity-building initiatives provide the necessary "software" but often not the hardware. They build people's capacities to understand the market but do not provide the necessary infrastructure or credit. In fact, credit instruments promoted within community-based organisations can be detrimental to production, while extremely beneficial for meeting consumption needs. One major contribution of NGOs, however, is the mobilisation of women producers, which is the building of social capital. There are several successful examples of how women, when mobilised, can negotiate more effectively within the market. It is the combination of the software and hardware that will actually make the best use of the opportunities that the periurban interface and the new markets offer qualities of products, enhance their marketing strategies, negotiate with retailers and form direct relationships with consumers.

Note

¹This article incorporates material from the paper "Women Feeding Cities: Re-focusing the Research Agenda" by Diana Lee-Smith, presented as the Keynote Address at a meeting organized by Urban Harvest and RUAF on Gender and Urban Agriculture in Accra, Ghana, 20–23 September 2004.

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Peru's Resources for Development Association

Marta de Olarte

Urban agriculture has steadily increased in the past few decades in metropolitan Lima, largely brought in by rural migrants. These new urban dwellers have maintained their agricultural ways, planting crops and raising domestic animals on a small scale on their home plots. This context led to the Resources for Development Association (REDE) to promote "communal gardens" in the southern cone of Lima beginning in 1994, as a way to fight hunger and malnutrition. REDE observed that the active intervention of women's organisations in the communal garden projects empowered these women. They participate at different levels in public life, and this results in an increase in consciousness, well-being and available educational opportunities. REDE works with a GID focus in urban agriculture. The roles and the needs of men and women are analysed in order to empower and improve their position as part of the betterment and transformation of society as a whole.



Training of Trainers in Urban Agriculture, AUSAN project

The initiative of the communal gardens was very well received by the population, which is predominantly made up of women who are of child-bearing age and members of large families. As the providers of food for their families, they see urban agriculture as an answer to their practical needs and as a way to fulfil their gender role, e.g. producing vegetables and preparing the daily family diet.

A team of agricultural promoters was selected and trained to implement the REDE project, but also to ensure a multiplier effect through other women's groups in Lima and the provinces. These promoters later became the trainers themselves. The invitation to become promoters was extended to men and women, but it was the women who were the most interested in this type of work. It should be noted here that there is a cultural acceptance by men of the idea that women and children carry out small-scale gardening and remain in their homes. The garden became an empowering place for the women: it improved their self-assurance and self-esteem, heightened their expectations of life, and improved the division of labour with their spouses. At the beginning, some men protested when their wives attended the training or provided technical assistance in school or community gardens. This changed as these men witnessed the progress and the perseverance of the women in the gardens. The public recognition given by the authorities and the community to the work of this group of women provided a lot of weight in the process of legitimisation.

Subsequently, after this recognition, husbands and sons started offering their moral and physical support to the women's groups by helping in preparing the land, collecting manure and irrigating the crops. The families began to appreciate the project as theirs, and to validate it from inside the home. There have been cases in which the husbands or sons replaced the women in the gardens when they had other things to do, like attend meetings of their organisations (eg. Clubs of Mothers, School Committees, Community Kitchens).

This experience motivated REDE to initiate a new stage of work at the end of 2002. With the help of German Agro Action, REDE launched a new initiative on urban agriculture that focuses on women with little children (under the age of five years). This project, which is in its initial stages, promotes the strengthening of women's roles.

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Senegal's Cooperative Movement

Nathan McClintock

In Senegal, urban agriculture has grown rapidly in response to the fragile nature of urban food security and to meet the market needs of the growing urban population. Inadequate access to land, precarious land tenure, and insufficient water and manure make urban farming increasingly difficult. These constraints are often felt more acutely by women farmers whose access to land, manure, and water is even more limited than that of men. Over the last few decades, the creation of *groupements d'interêt économique* (GIEs), or village and neighbourhood cooperatives, as well as the creation of *groupements féminins*, women's groups, has been a vital source of empowerment for women farmers in Senegal, providing them with access to capital and training. In the past several years, many women's groups – urban and rural, official and unofficial alike – have embarked on successful agricultural endeavours, providing participants with income and incentives to stay in their communities of origin.

Two kilometres south of Thiès, Senegal's second largest city, lies Touba Peycouck¹, a village of 2,000 people. The activities of the GIE Bokk Jom of this village provide an inspiring example of grassroots community development. In the integrated system of animal husbandry, agroforestry, gardening, and field crops, women play the major role in maintaining the soil's fertility through their composting activities. Of Bokk Jom's 72 members, 42 are women. Several administrative positions are held by women, including Assistant

Secretary General and Treasurer. A revolving micro-credit programme provides women members with 6-month, 25,000 FCFA loans at 7.5 percent interest. Recipients have used these loans for various business ventures and none has defaulted on payment since the programme began. The incomes of members are higher than those in the rest of the village, and their access to training and status in the community has improved. When asked what women contributed to Bokk Jom³, several male members said the success of the ongoing composting and agroforestry projects is due to the high level of participation of the women.



Nathan C. McClintock

Bokk jom members in one of the experimental gardens

Soon after its creation in 1990, Bokk Jom opened a small grocery shop, supported the village elementary school, and later opened a public telephone booth and a small library. They also built a wood-fired oven for bread baking. In the mid-1990s they raised 500,000 FCFA² and received a 5.7 million F CFA grant from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to embark on an ambitious development project integrating animal husbandry, agroforestry and gardening. The Rodale Institute, an American NGO, provided training in gardening, agroforestry and composting techniques. Bokk Jom started a tree nursery and launched a large-scale reforestation campaign. The group purchased four local milk cows and had them artificially inseminated in order to produce offspring with higher milk production. They then constructed a chicken coop and started to produce poultry, earning more than half a million F CFA in profit per year. With additional technical training from Rodale, Bokk Jom constructed several large composting pits to transform the cow manure and poultry litter into quality fertiliser. The compost is used for tree, garden and field-crop production.

After the fertilisation needs of the group's tree nursery are met, members have the right to take compost produced in the group pits and use it on their personal plots. In addition to this compost, many women have started their own compost pits within their family compounds, which they fill with kitchen scraps, cooking ashes and manure from tethered livestock. Most women in the group own their own animals, on average three to five goats or sheep per person. The use of compost has spread rapidly throughout the village and into neighbouring villages. Ninety percent of produce is sold, usually to other village women who buy in bulk to sell at the markets in Thiès and nearby Rufisque and Bambey. Two-thirds of the remaining 10 percent is given away as gifts, and only a third kept for family consumption. While whatever revenue a woman earns from her gardening is her own, a large portion of it goes to purchasing food for the family.

The shortage of land in Touba Peycouck is a primary constraint. The *périmètre communale*, or village garden area, is divided into a hundred 20x20-metre (400 m²) plots. Based on selection criteria that included salary and available labour, village officials allocated plots to the *chefs de carrés*, male heads of household. Women have access to garden plots only through their husbands or by renting plots for 25,000 F CFA for the October–June gardening season. Currently, only a third of the women in Bokk Jom maintain their own plots, whereas all of the group's men are active in gardening. Women in one focus group complained that they had plenty of compost but no plot on which to use it. In addition, gardeners must pay 4,000 F CFA per month for water. These overhead expenses, as well as start-up costs of seed and equipment, discourage many women from gardening. Others abandon their plots during the gardening season if they are unable to make a profit, and turn to petty trade in order to earn enough to cover expenses the following year.



Bokk Jom members in their office

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As elsewhere in West Africa, women's role as urban farmers is limited by these constraints, leaving the majority of production in the hands of men. Nevertheless, cooperatives such as Bokk Jom improve women's access to land and infrastructure by offering credit at reasonable interest rates, as well as by providing them with opportunities to pool resources. Most important, perhaps, and most difficult to quantify is the sense of empowerment and pride that membership elicits from female members. While Bokk Jom's primary goal is not to improve the livelihoods of Touba Peycouck's women, its success has directly benefited its female members by providing them with a solid organisational foundation and forum for cooperation. Nevertheless, patriarchal traditions within the community on the whole ultimately define the extent of women's participation in urban agriculture. Gender-specific initiatives to provide assistance to cooperatives such as Bokk Jom may ultimately be necessary to overcome these obstacles.

In a final brainstorming session³, the Bokk Jom members came up with the following policy recommendations:

- Guarantee women equal access to land
- Provide incentives for sustainable agricultural production
- Promote womens' groups and facilitate access to funding and credit
- Expand technical training opportunities for women
- Improve public health awareness and infrastructure.

A recently passed law (*Loi d'orientation agricole*) addresses the first concern by guaranteeing equal access to land. The true challenge will be to enforce it. Some of the remaining recommendations may seem impossible to instate on a government level because of cuts to public programmes in the name of “Structural Adjustment” and because of “free trade” regulations prohibiting agricultural subsidies. However, they provide a useful and relevant framework for NGOs and aid agencies working both with policymakers and directly with local people. Groups like Bokk Jom have been successful in addressing some of the very real constraints facing the farmers of Touba Peycouck and women engaged in urban agriculture throughout the developing world.

Notes

¹ Several villagers, exhausted by their financial burden, formed the village GIE, or Bokk Jom, in 1990 in an effort to improve their opportunities. In Wolof, *bokk jom* means to unite for a common cause.

² The F CFA, or West African Franc, is fixed at an exchange rate of 656 F CFA to 1 Euro.

³ Five focus groups consisting of 4–8 people each held meetings in September and October 2003 in Touba Peycouck during the author’s three-month internship at the Rodale Institute in Thiès. Further data come from Akakpo and Ki (2000), who surveyed 100 villagers to evaluate the impact of Bokk Jom.

Reference

Akakpo, K., and J.B. Ki. 2000. Evaluation du projet plurifonctionnel du GIE ‘Bokk Jom’ de Touba Peycouck. Rapport de Stage, Ecole National d’Economie Appliquée, Dakar.

Resources



Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals. a handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders

Naila Kabeer Commonwealth Secretariat/IDRC/CIDA 2003; ISBN 1-55250-067-5; 240 pp.

In this book, Naila Kabeer brings together a diverse set of arguments, findings, and lessons from the development literature that help to explain why gender equality merits specific attention from policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders committed to the pursuit of pro-poor and human-centred development. This book explores the issue of gender inequality through the lens of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the first one of halving world poverty by 2015.

Gender resources for urban agriculture research: Methodology, Directory & Annotated Bibliography *Hovorka, A. (1998). In: Cities Feeding People Series, Report 26. ;Ottawa: IDRC3*

Although there is a growing interest in the factor gender in development research, there is also a general lack of understanding of how this type of analysis can be applied. Purpose of the underlying publication is to provide researchers with simple and systematic methodological tools for practical application of gender analysis within urban agriculture. It has been developed primarily for the Cities Feeding People team members, but can be applied by anyone doing a similar type of research.

RUAF Working papers on Gender and Urban Agriculture

1. Gender in Urban Agriculture, Wilbers, J. (2004) unpublished

This discussion paper was prepared as a start up of the discussions in the RUAF advisory group on gender and urban agriculture, as a first step in the preparation of an expert consultation and as an input for the RUAF-IDRC Workshop on Gender in Urban Agriculture, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 2003.

2. The integration of Gender in the RUAF programme, De Zeeuw, H. & J. Wilbers (2004) unpublished

This second discussion paper was developed to further strengthen the RUAF strategies regarding mainstreaming gender in urban agriculture as well as to begin the development of guidelines regarding the integration of gender in research, policies and action planning on urban agriculture.

3. PRA tools for studying UA and gender, compiled by De Zeeuw, H. & J. Wilbers (2004) unpublished

This document was prepared to facilitate the formulation of the gender case studies to be undertaken by the Regional RUAF centres in 2004 as a training exercise and an input to the gender expert consultation 'Women Feeding Cities', organised jointly by RUAF and Urban Harvest in September 2004 in Accra, Ghana.

These papers have been discussed among the RUAF partners and the RUAF Gender Advisory Group, and are available at www.ruaf.org.

Mind the Gap, Mainstreaming Gender and Participation in Development.

Nazneen Kanji. 2003. IIED, IDS, UK. ISBN 1 84369 466 2

This publication, no. 4 in the series on institutionalising participation, highlights lessons from gender mainstreaming work for those who seek to institutionalise participation. After a discussion on (changes over time of) conceptual frameworks, strategies, and the suggestion that there has been a shift from participation to governance (along with the shift from women in development to gender in development), the tensions between gender mainstreaming and participatory development are explored. Suggestions are made to overcome this tension.

Questions of Difference: PRA, Gender and Environment, A Training Video.

Irene Guijt. IIED. ISBN: in English: 1 904035 83 3 (also available in French and Portuguese).

This two-hour video with provoking images can be used to stimulate discussion and to lead into class-based exercises. A summary is given of the key elements for using PRA to understand gender and environment. The video is structured in thematic segments of 2-14 minutes. In that way users can select those of interest or for specific training. The three case studies show workshop participants using PRA methods to explore gender and the environment.



www.fao.org/gender

This is a Gender and Food Security site of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It contains articles on and a thorough set of statistics and other information on projects and programmes is available.

www.aviva.org/

Aviva is a FREE 'Webzine' (internet magazine), which provides a free listing service for women everywhere who would like to come in contact with each other, and it acts as web site 'host' to Women's Groups and Services globally.