Integration of Urban Agriculture in Municipal Agendas: Experiences from Lima, Peru

In Peru urbanisation is intense, especially in metropolitan Lima. Massive migration resulted in urbanisation of poverty, which in the case of Lima is concentrated in the expanding outer zones of the city. In this context of an impoverished urban-rural interface, urban agriculture is a promising alternative that can make an important contribution to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals for fighting poverty and ensuring food security. This article describes experiences in two districts (1) of metropolitan Lima: Villa Maria del Triunfo and Lurigancho-Chosica.

In 1999, the municipality of Villa Maria del Triunfo became involved with the issue of urban agriculture and identified the need to develop a municipal policy to promote urban agriculture as a strategic activity. The process was supported by regional and international organisations that promote urban agriculture, such as the Cities Feeding People Program of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC/CFP Canada), the Urban Management Program (UMP-LAC) of UNDP and UN-HABITAT, IPES – Promotion of Sustainable Development and the Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security (RUAF Foundation).

Since 2003, the Urban Harvest programme located in the International Potato Center in Lima (a CGIAR initiative) has been implementing a project in the municipality of Lurigancho-Chosica and the municipality of Santa Maria de Huachipa with the objective of promoting urban agriculture as a positive, productive and essential component of sustainable cities and its integration into municipal urban management. The purpose of the programme model is to raise awareness, facilitate support, build capacity and offer tools to municipal governments to implement urban agriculture programmes and policies.

VILLA MARIA DEL TRIUNFO

The district of Villa Maria del Triunfo is located 17 km south of Lima (Peru) and has a current population of 367,845 (52 percent women). The urban area occupies a third of the municipal territory, while the rest consists of steep hills. As high as 57.3 percent of the population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition. 77 percent of the economically active population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition. 77 percent of the economically active population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition. 77 percent of the economically active population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition. 77 percent of the economically active population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition. 77 percent of the economically active population lives in poverty (FONCODES 2000), while 22 percent suffers extreme poverty. The malnutrition rate is nearly 15 percent and at least 23 percent of children under eight suffer from chronic malnutrition.

In 1999, the Mayor of Villa Maria del Triunfo (3) and some council members initiated a learning process about the contributions of urban agriculture to the fight against poverty and other problems caused by urbanisation, and to reflect on its potential and risks. They shared lessons learned and participated in regional events and forums for reflection/discussion with various Latin American cities that had already been implementing municipal urban agriculture programmes and projects (4).

URBAN AGRICULTURE IN CITY DEVELOPMENT

The increased knowledge about the impacts of urban agriculture on urban management and the exposure to experiences of other local governments in Latin America encouraged the authorities of Villa Maria to incorporate urban agriculture into the strategic component called “Healthy District” of the city’s Integrated Development Plan for 2001-2010.
The municipality, faithful to its tradition of community organisation, promoted a consensus-based process for the elaboration of this plan with the active participation of organisations, leaders, and representatives of all of civil society. As a result, the Municipal Urban Agriculture Promotion and Environmental Protection Program (PAU) was created in July 2000 under the Human Development Department of the municipality, in order to facilitate the incorporation of the issue into the agenda of the municipal administration.

This process mobilised a broader group of stakeholders around urban agriculture.

In 2004, during a process of internal restructuring, the municipal council and the mayor of Villa Maria del Triunfo decided to give greater emphasis to the promotion of urban agriculture and converted the PAU into a separate unit (Sub-Gerencia, third level administrative unit) of the Local Economic Development Department (see figure 1). In that year, the municipality allocated about US$ 35,000 of its budget as co-financing funds for various UA activities (provision of inputs, agricultural production, processing and commercialisation). This amount does not include the human and logistical resources of the UA unit, which are valued at about US$ 20,000. This contribution represents 2 percent of the municipal budget. In addition, the municipality, in alliance with local organisations, has been channelling resources from local cooperation institutions for the development of urban agriculture projects.

The urban agriculture unit has three lines of work:

Capacity building. This includes activities for promotion, training and orientation of urban producers, documentation of activities, systematisation and elaboration of baseline studies and research projects, and liaison and exchanges with other local, national and international parties.

Productive development. Includes activities tied to technical assistance, implementation of demonstration projects, identification and granting of vacant land, and commercialisation support.

Enhancing the institutional environment. This component deals with the local, national and international alliances which encourage the promotion of urban agriculture-friendly policies and legislation, as well as the activities and financial management involved in priority projects. Also included are the activities of consensus-building and participation in district development plans and the platforms derived from them.

The target constituency of the urban agriculture unit is the urban producers from the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including women heads of households, teenage mothers, working children and the disabled.

Unfortunately, this initial process was based solely on political support and lacked quantitative and qualitative data on the situation of urban agriculture producers themselves. This lack of information limited the results and impacts of the activities since they were not conceived in a strategic way, nor did they always respond to the real needs and priority issues of the different groups of urban producers. On the other hand, financial and human resources were also scarce and thus also limited the efforts to fulfill the needs and demands of urban farmers.

Including urban agriculture in sectoral and thematic plans

In 2004, the municipality of Villa Maria del Triunfo brought together several institutions to elaborate its participatory Economic Development Plan. Participants worked on four areas: commerce, services, production and urban agriculture. The inclusion of urban agriculture as an independent area was very much debated. The final decision was based on the following considerations:

- the political will to promote urban agriculture
- the availability of vacant land
- the existence of urban agriculture practices in all zones as a traditional cultural expression of the population
- urban agriculture as a strategy for generating income with low investment
- urban agriculture as an anti-poverty strategy

The methodology used to elaborate the plan included an initial working session to present the development proposal and an initial SWOT analysis. The presence of urban producers from all areas of the district verified that the decision to highlight UA was the correct one. The producers, principally represented by women, participated actively during the entire plan formulation process and in further dissemination at various other venues. This assisted very much in assuring that all the local stakeholders learned about the problems and alternative solutions proposed. Given that the problems in the various zones were similar, the process also helped strengthen group cohesion and develop a sense of identity among the producers, as they were not (nor had they ever been) formally organised.

The plan focused on commercialisation of produce but did not touch on productive and transformation activities. Moreover, since there was no data on the real situation of urban agriculture in the district, the plan was mainly based on the perceptions of those who took part in its formulation.

Having made some headway on the issue but always aware of the limitations of the process, the municipality of Villa Maria del Triunfo – with the support of IPES/RUAF (through its Cities Farming for the Future Programme) – started revising its urban agriculture policy and began formulating a Strategic Plan for Urban Agriculture as a tool to make that policy operational. This process included the active participation of urban producers and other local stakeholders. The Strategic Plan is based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative
Information on urban agriculture and the assessment of the needs, perceptions and current practices of the urban producers that were conducted during a participatory diagnosis. The process allowed for the definition of key issues and intervention strategies to overcome identified problems and promote the potentials of the current situation of urban agriculture in Villa Maria. The plan looks primarily at how to strengthen and consolidate the existing activities.

It should be pointed out that this process encouraged the formation of the urban farmers’ network, strengthened the capacities (technical, methodological, participatory and gender-sensitive approach, etc.) of the urban agriculture unit staff and mobilised a broader group of stakeholders around urban agriculture. All these stakeholders actively participated in the formulation of the Strategic Plan and will contribute to its management and implementation through the City Forum on Urban Agriculture that was created on June 2006. The City Forum already has a functioning structure and is formed by 20 organisations and institutions (such as universities, NGOs, CBOs, national government institutions, international organisations, such as the FAO, and private businesses). The Strategic Plan will allow for a strategic and consented intervention, optimising human and financial resources in favour of urban agriculture. The final version of the plan is due on September 2006 and its implementation phase (pilot projects, training activities, etc.) is expected to start in October 2006.

In this context, the municipality of the Lurigancho-Chosica district, with the support of Urban Harvest, began a process at the end of 2003 of enacting urban agriculture legislation. The aim was to promote urban agriculture as a means of generating income and increasing food security while contributing to a productive, healthy, green urban environment, all of which are essential components of sustainable cities.

**LEARNING ABOUT URBAN AGRICULTURE**

The process began with the strategy of building awareness among municipal authorities and local institutions about the reality of the families that depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Two international workshops for mayors have been held since 2003, in which different Latin American cities exchanged experiences about the development of urban agriculture for confronting poverty and other problems caused by urbanisation. The mayors participating in these workshops signed agreements committing themselves to promoting urban agriculture in their cities and districts (these workshops were co-organised with IPES-Promotion of Sustainable Development).

The municipality of Lurigancho-Chosica identified the promotion of urban agriculture as a strategic municipal activity. Urban Harvest assisted in:
- creating a programme to identify the key stakeholders and to locate them within the municipality
- formulating an awareness-raising plan, organising workshops to raise awareness, coordinating information-

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**Figure 1:** Organisational flow chart for the municipality of Villa Maria del Triunfo in 2004

**Figure 2:** Organisational flow chart for the municipality of Lurigancho-Chosica in 2004
sharing, workshops within the municipality

- facilitating round-table discussions, organising significant public events (inauguration of the UA sub-section, inauguration of agricultural production activities, fairs, etc.) and visits to model farms, where ecological urban agriculture is practiced.

In this process, the authorities increasingly became convinced of the important role urban agriculture can play in the sustainable development of their cities. The lessons learned also extended to other stakeholders in the municipality. Meetings were also held with the Irrigation Users’ Board, including the provision of training in agricultural production techniques and the organisation of farmer field schools, with 26 farmers involved as promoters.

**CREATION OF THE URBAN AGRICULTURE UNIT**

Before these activities were implemented, the municipality was not aware of the realities of the urban farmers, hence the farmers’ demands remained unheard. However, through sensitisation, advocacy, action research and other learning processes, the local administration recognised the importance of local agricultural production and decided to support it through the creation – in late 2004 – of an urban agriculture unit (Sub-Gerencia de Agricultura Urbana) within the municipal organisational structure (see figure 2).

This unit is a service centre for agricultural producers and the local population by promoting the link between production and consumption. By using the production chain approach, it offers information to the producers about opportunities for training and programmes that support production and sales efforts in the municipality. The municipality managed to put together a budget of US$ 100,000, with co-financing from Urban Harvest, for various activities. The specific objectives of the urban agriculture unit are to:

- intervene in urban planning with new constructive initiatives and legislation for the productive use of vacant lots
- support producers/farmers in building a sustainable, economically viable agro-ecosystem that is less dependent on chemicals
- contribute to producing higher income through improved practices and diversification.

The action plan of the Lurigancho-Chosica urban agriculture unit is similar to that of the urban agriculture section in Villa Maria del Triunfo, and it involves:

- building the capacities of urban farmers and municipal stakeholders
- ensuring productive development, and
- fostering strategic alliances aimed at the integration of urban agriculture in municipal physical and land-use planning and encouraging social integration with attention to gender concerns.

The unit managers were trained with the support of IPES. This helped to complement their practical experience in municipal administration with specific knowledge on urban agriculture and highlighted the need to elaborate a strategy for urban agriculture development. The effort was part of a mutual learning process of unit personnel and staff from Urban Harvest.

**Awareness raising process is crucial in the formulation of urban agriculture policy at city level**

**INTEGRATION INTO THE MUNICIPAL AGENDA**

After training, and with the support of the Urban Harvest programme, the municipal urban agriculture office began to develop a participatory process for strengthening local agriculture. This process integrates all municipal actors, including farmers, consumers, public managers and NGOs, among others.

This participatory and dynamic working process allows the municipality to adapt its structure according to the needs of the population. It has led to the creation of a number of ordinances in support of urban agriculture. To date, three ordinances have been promulgated: 1) creation of the Urban Agriculture Municipal Unit for the Lurigancho-Chosica district and the town of Santa María de Huachipa, which has already been approved; 2) establishment of a “no services no urban taxation” agreement, so that producers who do not receive the urban services of sanitation, drainage and waste collection continue to pay rural taxation rates (approved); and 3) regularisation of the management of restaurant waste for the feeding of pigs (currently under revision).

**Dialogue and identification of needs**

A first step of the municipal management plan was to create forums for constant communication between the sub-unit managers, farmers and local institutions in order to optimally use the managers’ capacities and potential and also to ensure continuous training, generate bonds of trust and encourage transparency. This will allow the creation of a solid programme to benefit the farmers.

A participatory identification of the needs of the producers was carried out with the Irrigation Users Board of the Rimac River, representatives of the producers themselves and municipal authorities. These meetings produced mutual learning among the different stakeholders and resulted in:

- identification of the current problems and the real needs of the farmers of the region
- a SWOT analysis of urban agriculture in the district
- a typology of the urban farmers
- creation of a strategic plan that will feed into a longer term action plan
- implementation of the existing urban agriculture programme.

The information generated was processed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in order to display a spatial analysis of the urban ecosystem and natural resource management. This has led to new proposals for territorial-physical planning.

**A development strategy**

Based on the results of the diagnostic study and the process of social learning, the urban agriculture unit has created a local team made up of representatives of the local population (farmers with land, farmers without land and food pantries), technical staff from Urban Harvest and a representative from an NGO active in the area, who together with municipal technicians started formulating an action plan for the unit for the next few years. The idea is to develop further urban agriculture in the municipality, by incorporating the proposals of the
affected groups into municipal policy. These proposals cover issues such as access to land, land tenure, access to and quality of water, investments (micro-credits), strengthening commercialisation and processing channels, environmental conservation, organic waste treatment and the quality of agricultural products. The initial strategy has been presented to the city council for debate.

The next steps will include the organisation of a series of participatory workshops in which the strategy will be shared with various sectors of the local population for modification and improvement. With this process of consensus-building, it is hoped that the activities of the unit will correspond to the real needs of the population.

CONCLUSIONS
Raising awareness among decision makers and other stakeholders of the potential of urban agriculture to alleviate hunger and poverty is a key activity in promoting urban-agriculture-friendly policies. This can be accomplished through local seminars that present urban agriculture experiences (from other cities in the country or abroad), exchange visits, technical interchanges, etc.

It is also important to raise awareness among decision makers of the situation of urban agriculture and urban producers. Dialogue with and participation of producers in the aforementioned activities is needed to expose gaps and jointly seek solutions.

Although the awareness raising process is costly and requires much time and effort on the part of promoters, this activity is crucial in the formulation of urban agriculture policy at city level.

It is therefore essential to institutionalise urban agriculture, through its incorporation into the normative frameworks of cities (such as in their development plans), through the development of specific policies and legal frameworks (municipal ordinances, laws, regulations) for urban agriculture that facilitate and regulate its practice, and/or through the creation of municipal structures (units, departments, etc.) in order to operationalise the development of concrete activities for urban agriculture promotion.

Equally important is the strengthening of organisational, managerial, technical and networking capacities of urban farmers. A consolidated and strong organisation is better equipped to cope with the withdrawal of political support from the municipality.

While nothing ensures the success of urban agriculture activities, these reflections are presented in the hopes of contributing to the sustainability of urban agriculture beyond any particular municipal administration.

Notes
1) Metropolitan Lima has 42 districts. Each district is a municipality on its own represented by a mayor and a municipal council.
2) The CGIAR is a unique global partnership of governments, multilateral organisations and private foundations that works to promote food security, poverty eradication and the sound management of natural resources throughout the developing world.
4) These events had been organised by IPES in partnership with UN HABITAT’s Urban Management Programme.

References

The development and institutionalisation of an interactive process of policy formulation thus go hand in hand with the development and institutionalisation of urban agriculture. This article has described the principles, phases and challenges of an MPAP interactive policy formulation process developed for urban agriculture. The following articles will describe in more detail experiences gained by RUAF partners in various cities and provide more insights into how to further develop and promote this type of process.

References