

**PI External Reviews: Summary of Report
Cities Feeding People (CFP)**

Report to IDRC Board of Governors
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PI Aims

1. CFP defines its mission as supporting development research, providing strategic advice and disseminating information for the development of sustainable urban agriculture systems as a tool for improving the quality of life for the urban poor. CFP's objectives are:
 - 1.1. To strengthen *local research capacity* and generate household and community level data for city level policy and technology options;
 - 1.2. To strengthen *regional capacities* for common policy and technology options through training and networking;
 - 1.3. To influence governments, policy-makers and international agencies to incorporate urban agriculture into their development programs.
2. CFP has three research areas: space-confined production systems for low-income producers, wastewater treatment and re-use, and urban agriculture policy and processes. CFP works in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Given the small size of CFP, a decision was taken not to implement projects in Asia.

Review Methodology

3. The review is based on interviews and surveys, review of files, websites, and documents, statistical analysis of projects funded from 1993 to 2002, and field visits in West Africa. The review team examined a sample of projects, themes and strategies that cut across the PI's three research areas and three regions. Fifty-five people were interviewed for the review and another seventeen responded to an e-mail survey.

Review Findings

4. CFP is currently the only global research program addressing urban agriculture in developing countries. CFP occupies a **leadership role** that is recognized by its main international partners - the CGIAR, FAO and UN-HABITAT - as having largely shaped the urban agriculture field within the development community. It was the prime architect in building the international Support Group for Urban Agriculture (SGUA) and has **influenced the programs** of its main international partners along with those of many regional and national institutions.
5. CFP has played a pivotal role encouraging the key **international players** in urban agriculture to pay attention to and invest in urban agriculture. For example, CFP played a key role in the FAO's decision to have an Inter-

Departmental Working Group and a designated Focal Point on Urban Agriculture. It is a major achievement for IDRC, through CFP, to have such an impact on large international organizations.

6. CFP has an **impressive track record and sphere of influence** that belies the small team and budget with which it operates. It has successfully achieved this record through delineating and following a **clear strategy** of building regional networks and effectively linking researchers with policy advisors and urban planners at city and regional levels. CFP's prominence globally is evidenced also by the number of visitors to its website, which is almost double that of any other IDRC Program Initiative. CFP brings credit to IDRC and it is important that its visibility as an urban agriculture program continues in the future.
7. CFP has achieved its **objectives**. It has strengthened local and regional capacities, and made a good start to influencing policy makers. For example, some cities where CFP has worked have established mechanisms, such as the creation of an "urban food security department", to include urban agriculture in their institutional structures.
8. CFP has been consistent with its **regional strategy** as outlined in its Prospectus (this was to phase out programming in LAC in favour of concentrating its small budget and staff resources in SSA and MENA). This phasing out is not without problems and IDRC might wish to consider revisiting earlier corporate decisions in view of a possible partial loss of its investment in the region. CFP's strategy to involve key LAC partners in global and inter-regional activities is being successfully implemented. Through the global networks, CFP's work is also shared in Asia.
9. The review's analysis of CFP's **project portfolio** shows that the biggest shift has been towards greater expenditure in space-confined production systems. This appears to be in contrast with the Prospectus objectives, but there are reasons for the discrepancy. CFP has spent an average of 36% of project funds on research support activities (capacity building, creating networks, synthesizing lessons learnt, and "closing the loop"), demonstrating the pioneering role of CFP in a new field.
10. CFP's project **recipients** are mostly strong international or regional organizations, many with an emphasis on implementation rather than research. Recipients' success in reaching out to municipal authorities and to urban farmers has varied.
11. In Latin America and MENA, CFP has targeted the right groups (mainly municipal and national governments respectively) and is **reaching** them successfully. In Africa, the situation is more challenging and the evidence more mixed. CFP and its partner institutions have not yet achieved a smooth

implementation of the West African Network on urban agriculture, nor has CFP yet been able to reach beyond the research institutions to influence national governments, or engage much with NGO and community groups (although some NGOs have been strengthened to work with a broader perspective in their cities).

12. The review analysed the **outputs** of the thirty-five projects funded by CFP since 1998 and found it takes between two to five years (or more) for outputs to appear after a project begins. Projects differ greatly in the *quantity* of outputs produced. Most are directed at other researchers, although projects in this prospectus period produced more policy tools and practical information than previously.
13. CFP has achieved some notable successes in policy and other **outcomes**. The review of wastewater treatment projects shows that with a small investment (CAD \$2.5 million over ten years), IDRC can make a difference, in both the **development of new technologies** and in **policy impact** at a national level:
 - 13.1. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee project (004211) developed a low-cost, household level **wastewater treatment system** that requires low maintenance, very low energy consumption and minimum skills to operate and maintain, providing almost immediate benefits in household nutrition and food security and in women's improved productivity from home gardens. CFP has enabled researchers elsewhere in the region to share this.
 - 13.2. Projects in Palestine and Jordan have had considerable success in providing the **evidence base for policy reform**. The Palestinian Water Authority has adopted the development of household greywater treatment systems. The greywater reuse project in Tufileh, Jordan (100880) is one of the most successful CFP projects in terms of **policy impact, scaling up and sustainability**. It produced four outputs aimed directly at beneficiaries as well as policy makers and two journal articles for other researchers. The project leader lobbied effectively with several government ministries to get policies changed. The Ministry of Planning provided the funds for upscaling the technology to 700 treatment units, with another 700 under negotiation. The Ministry of Water is considering developing similar systems elsewhere in the country, and the government is currently revising its Building Code to facilitate introduction of the technology. These are remarkable policy impacts for a pilot project started in one community in 2000. They not only speak to the value of the technological innovation, but to the success of CFP in seeing the potential in the technology and identifying other researchers and institutions that could contribute to its further development. The project is a good example of a small project that

produced technological innovations, broke down cultural taboos, and achieved policy impact. It is also an exemplar of the value of an integrated approach that included the CFP book on *Water in Islam*.

- 13.3. The Dakar-based project researching the use of water lettuce in wastewater treatment appears to have had a less successful experience in linking its results to practical application. One of the key **challenges** is health concerns about the quality of the treated wastewater. However, there are positive impacts of the project on other donors like the World Bank and UN-Habitat; the latter considers the project amongst its “best practices”, and the former was convinced by the project team to adapt the system to existing projects.
- 13.4. CFP can be congratulated for envisaging and implementing the international process that led to the *Hyderabad Declaration*, which was cited by project leaders as **facilitating dialogue** on water quality standards with national health authorities.
14. Most of CFP’s **capacity building** directly benefited project researchers and to a certain extent policy makers, both through training courses and through participating in CFP funded activities. The review also identified some cases where the experience of managing an IDRC project also led to *institutional* learning and change. There are some areas where capacity building activities can be strengthened to be more responsive to needs, such as improving skills in project proposal development and fundraising, gender analysis, and action research methodologies.
15. The **Agropolis** project is uniquely addressing the need for a critical mass of researchers in urban agriculture. Agropolis is an awards program that supports innovative master’s and doctoral level research. It aims to add to the body of knowledge of urban and peri-urban agriculture, and thereby to support interventions that address critical areas in the industry. The main goals of the program are being achieved.
16. Through the Resource Centre for Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF), which is essentially the global and regional networking and information-sharing agent of the SGUA, CFP has outsourced much of its **dissemination** activities. This is a good strategy for a small PI with very limited human resources working in an emerging field where access to resources and networks are crucial to capacity building. RUAF has created a unique source of information that has contributed to a much greater awareness and knowledge on UA worldwide.
17. One strategy that CFP is successfully pursuing is the enunciation of “**Declarations**” at the end of its more high profile meetings. Originally skeptical about the usefulness of these statements, the review team found

that CFP's project leaders and international partners find them to be important means of influencing policy.

18. One of CFP's main instruments to reach policy makers is the "UA **policy briefs**". The briefs are an output of a participatory process with stakeholder involvement, so are both outputs and processes of CFP. However, the briefs need other processes and guidelines to facilitate their acceptance by government, as well as appropriate institutional frameworks at city level. CFP has been successful in facilitating these in Latin America. CFP's strategy to transfer the policy briefs from Latin America to Africa is a lesson in both the potential and pitfalls in transferring policy mechanisms from one region to another with very different government structures and capacities.
19. One key to governments – whether municipal or national – taking up the results of CFP supported research is the gathering of a **critical mass of evidence** to convince them of the benefits of urban agriculture and therefore the policies that promote it, and to reduce their concerns over any risks or costs that urban agriculture might entail. Governments are also concerned about cost-effectiveness and a minimum scale of operations. CFP has increasingly involved urban planners and other practitioners in its activities and this has focused its work on problem-solving research in the context of specific cases.
20. CFP has strengthened its own capacity in **gender/social analysis**, more systematically required gender issues to be addressed in projects, and made gender analysis tools, training and resources available. While we commend CFP on its progress on integrating gender within its program at all levels, gender/social analysis in CFP projects remains a work in progress while many of the organizations that CFP works with have not yet institutionalized gender sensitivity within their own structures and management. We suspect that CFP has built gender *awareness* among many of its recipients but they have not yet internalized the need for carrying out gender and social analysis.
21. Interviews with project leaders produced very positive reviews about the work of the CFP team. Its technical support, flexibility and contribution of ideas are much appreciated. The main concern was that the team was not able to visit the projects as often as desirable and that the team is too small. This situation is exacerbated by team turnover.
22. The reviewers were impressed with CFP's demonstrated commitment to **continuous learning** by building in lessons learned from evaluations to future activities. CFP also made considerable effort to respond to the recommendations of the 1999 external review.

Issues for Consideration

23. The review makes a number of suggestions, including a possible recasting of the overall problématique for CFP, a rebalancing of its regional strategies and a greater focus on health impacts and the economics of urban agriculture.
24. Two types of research may be needed to achieve policy impact that CFP is not presently supporting. One is more “hard” scientific research on health risks and benefits. The other is more economic analyses to provide the cost/benefit numbers policy makers need. Major bottlenecks for CFP, especially regarding economic questions, are human resources and expertise.
25. The reviewers have some ideas for CFP to better reach urban agriculture stakeholders. CFP might explore working directly with producers’ associations or organized farmers’ groups, although there would be major implications if CFP were to work more directly with CBOs and NGOs. CFP also might engage national government ministries more directly.
26. One of the most visible roles of CFP since 1995 has been in global advocacy and alliance building for urban agriculture. There is a need to renew this process and one of the challenges that CFP faces is how to do this. We suspect that the international arena will demand more attention in the future and IDRC will be asked to play a more proactive role in international networking again, because of the leadership position it has.
27. We would suggest that in the next prospectus period, two actions are taken. One is that IDRC consults with its present and potential partners for urban agriculture to see if a reinvigorated and wider partnership is possible over the next few years, and the SGUA ‘club’ is opened up. Another is that IDRC seriously examines how it can work with the new sector-wide and Program Based Approaches being followed by bilateral donors in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals, as a means of securing stronger partnerships, and that it specifically engages in discussions with CIDA on both counts.