Edible Cities Network Conference
17th March 2023

The long game to introduce urban agriculture in unlikely communities

Jess Halliday, Chief Executive

j.halliday@ruaf.org

© CONQUITO

Urban Agriculture in Dhaka

Government of Bangladesh is promoting expansion of UA

E.g. Dhaka Food Systems project (FAO and WUR)

- 1050 (mostly women) slum dwellers received **urban gardening and nutrition awareness training** in a pilot during pandemic.

- Scaled up to 500+ households since August 2022

- 20 **rooftop demonstration plots**, scaled up to 1500+ rooftop gardeners

- Seminars of experts to **showcase role of UA in reducing food and nutrition insecurity**

- Dec 2022, Dhaka North Corporation considering **10% tax rebate** for residents practicing rooftop agriculture.

Photo: Roof Agricultural Expansion

A journey to Bhadam, Gazipur District

- Largely unplanned, mix of commercial and residential areas; six large readymade garment (RMG) factories

- Majority of RMG workers are female migrants

- RMG workers earn between BDT 8,000 to 13,000 (c. US$77.5 to US$125) a month

- Insufficient to buy nutritious food for whole month, as well as rent, debts, and other obligations

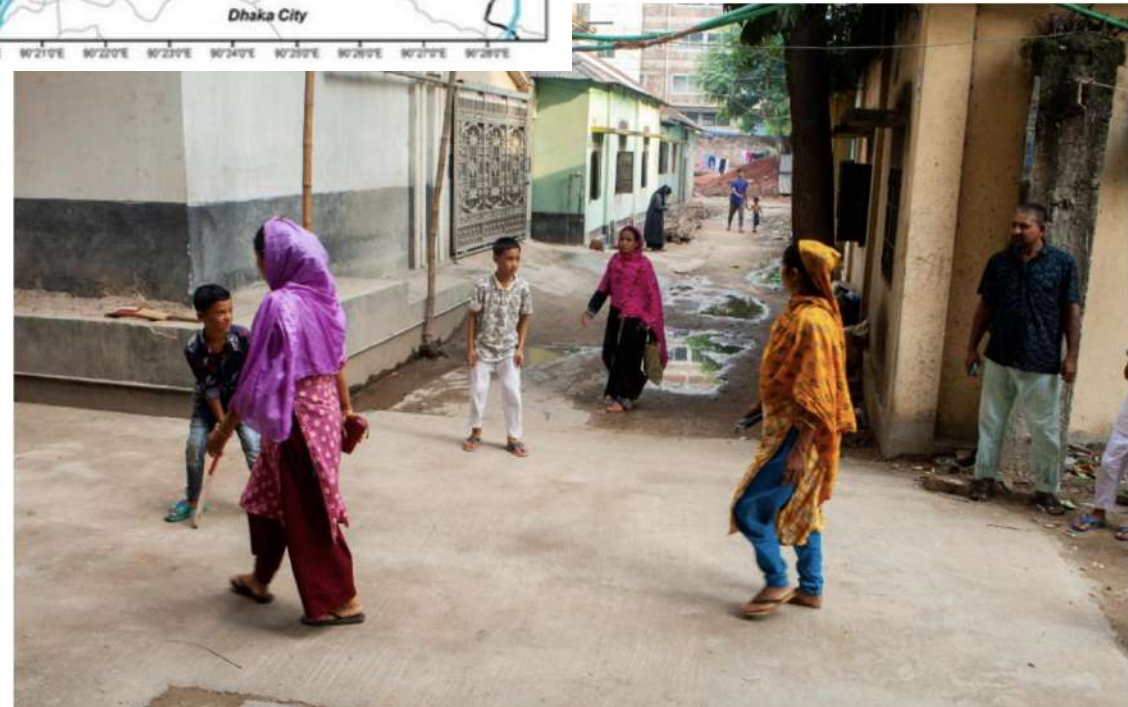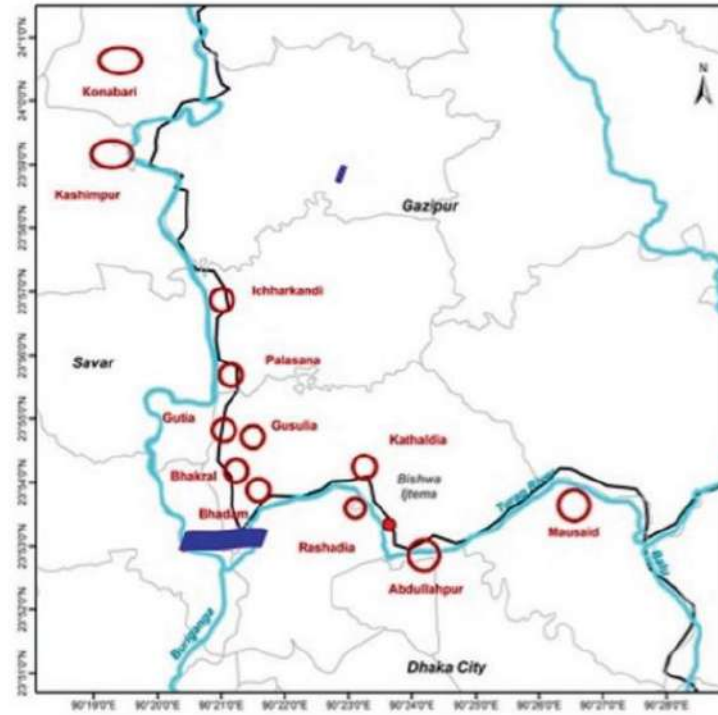- Many women have experience of growing vegetables or keeping livestock at home, but **no UA projects in Bhadam**.

Photo: Md Mahmudul Hoque

Study methodology

Led by CGIAR International Water Management Institute, under the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform

How gender norms, formal and informal governance of food, water and environment combine to impact 'liveability' for women RMG workers

Photo: Md Mahmudul Hoque

- Non-participant observation by 3 field researchers for 5 months

- Interviews with 20 RMG women workers

- Interviews with 8 husbands

- Interviews with 5 local women not working in RMG factories

- Focus group discussions and conversational interviews with 20 community actors

Why UA in Bhadam would be challenging

No public spaces for UA; what little vacant land is contaminated

RMG workers lack land tenure and physical space in residences

Even for minimal space techniques, landlord permission would be needed.

It is very unlikely that RMG women would:

a) Take initiative to advocate for right to grow food
b) Have ability to keep livestock or demand additional water for crops

Why UA in Bhadam would be challenging

Women are time-poor, working 8+ hours a day, 6 days a week; still responsible for all domestic and care work, including food preparation

Women have very little opportunity for social interaction with perrs that could develop into collective initiatives to grow food

Women workers hesitate to integrate; have little or no contact with other actors in formal and informal governance of food, water, and waste management

Photo: Md Mahmudul Hoque

So disenfranchised that engagement with any UA would be inconceivable

A fine line

Recommending UA when it would not be appropriate or helpful (especially as a foreigner)

Vs

Not writing off communities when, with some work, UA could be helpful

Interventions at other food system nodes:

- Replicating or scaling up on-site provision of healthy meals in factories
- Expanding or re-routing subsidised food distribution to RMG areas
- Awareness of food quality / checks among traders

FORBES > BUSINESS > FOOD & DRINK

Healthy Meals Are A Dream Come True For Female Garment Workers In Bangladesh

Daphne Ewing-Chow Senior Contributor ⓘ
Food, Agriculture, Sustainability... with a passion for the Caribbean

Follow

💬 2   Oct 18, 2022, 10:18pm EDT

f

y

Despite the size and global dominance of Bangladesh's ready made garment (RMG) industry, which claims a 6.8% global market share and is the second largest exporter after China, studies have found the South Asian country to have one of the lowest productivity rates per-worker

Among the primary reasons identified for worker inefficiency is nutrition, particularly among women, whose output is compromised by the impact of traditional, unpaid family ilities.

million women— comprising 60% of the RMG workforce— ificant role in the performance of a sector that drives 84% of s and as much as 20% of GDP. UNICEF estimates that "the industry's estimated 3,500 export-oriented factories are believed to either directly or indirectly support the livelihoods of more than 25 million people, particularly women and children."

A study of feasibility, interest and will

Survey actors whose participation would be needed:

- Target participants
- Neighbours
- Business owners / employers
- NGOs
- Local government

Show, not just tell

Photo: Md Mahmudul Hoque

Which actors might be engaged to support UA for the target community?

What would be the advocacy, capacity building and funding needs?

Possible preparatory interventions

- Funding for NGOs to work with target households on how to participate in UA in culturally appropriate ways

- Advocating formal planning, designating accessible areas for community food growing (methods to void contamination)

- Engaging local government departments and officials, and supporting design of integrated interventions across policy areas

- Actively exploring with landlords, other local residents and stakeholders, how they may support UA and build connections across social divides.