

# Participatory Needs & Capacity Assessment

## Gaza Urban Women Agripreneurs

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July 2021  
Gaza, Palestine



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## List of Abbreviations

FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GS	Gaza Strip
GUPAP	Gaza Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Platform
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
NIS	New Israeli Shekels
PNCA	Participatory Needs & Capacity Assessment
UWAF	Urban Women Agripreneurs Forum
WB	West Bank

# 1. Context Analysis

## 4.1 Agricultural Sector in Palestine

Agriculture plays a unique role in the life of the Palestinian people, both in the West Bank (WB) and in the Gaza Strip (GS). This role may not be clearly reflected in such conventional indicators as those of the relative share of agriculture in the Palestinian economy<sup>1</sup>, but agriculture plays a pivotal role in the economy by virtue of its strong intersectoral linkages. Agriculture employs 13.4% of the population formally, though informally it employs about 90% of those who work.

Agriculture is a source of food for about 5 million people in Palestine (about 3 million in the WB and 2 million in the GS)<sup>2</sup>. Since 1967 it has also been one of the most important pillars of Palestinian community resilience against Israeli occupation policies and other implications in the WB, including East Jerusalem, and the GS.

According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), agricultural lands cover a total surface area of about 1.2 million dunums, representing 20% of the total area of the WB and GS. 90% of all agricultural lands are found in the WB and 10% in the GS<sup>3</sup>. The total number of agricultural holdings in Palestine amounts to 111,310, of which 90,908 are in the WB (81.7%), and the remaining 20,402 holdings are in the GS (18.3%)<sup>4</sup>. Agricultural holdings in Palestine are usually small household holdings and mainly taking a family farming approach (average size 18.6 dunums). The majority (88%) are owned outright by the household, but some are either fully rented, or owned land is supplemented by renting an extra area.<sup>5</sup>

Palestinian agriculture is currently estimated to be operating at one quarter of its potential<sup>6</sup>: the total area of agricultural land currently used by Palestinians does not exceed half of the Palestinian agricultural land area available for cultivation. In recent years, there has been a steady decline in the area of agricultural land in the GS for many reasons including the accelerated population growth (3.5%), the urban sprawl and the increasing conversion of agricultural land for housing.

Over 29% of women in the labour force are unpaid family members, compared with almost 7% of men. Wage employees are the largest employment category among both men and women - about 64% and 56% respectively. Men are more likely to be self-employed or employers, where 23.4%

<sup>1</sup> Agriculture represents only 3.8% of the GDP (Strategic country plan — State of Palestine (2018–2022), World Food programme); 6.8% and 6.2% of respectively the female work force and the male work force were involved in agriculture (Labour force survey PCBS – 2018). The contribution of the agriculture sector to the gross domestic product was about 36% in the mid-seventies, and then decreased to 25% in the eighties, and in 1994 it reached 13.4%. The percentage continued to decline until in 2018 it reached around 3-4%

<sup>2</sup> PCBS, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Agriculture. National Agriculture Sector Strategy (2017-2022).

<sup>4</sup> National Agricultural Sector Strategy (2017-2022) Resilience and Sustainable Development

<sup>5</sup> National Agricultural Sector Strategy (2017-2022) Resilience and Sustainable Development

<sup>6</sup> Labour force survey – PCBS - 2018

of men are self-employed compared with 12.8% of women.<sup>7</sup> The agriculture activity recorded the lowest average daily wage at 73 New Israeli Shekels (NIS) in the WB and 21 NIS in GS 20.

## 4.2 Urban Food Security in Gaza Strip

According to recent reports of the World Bank (2018/2019), “more than half of the population of GS, about 900,000, is poor; this includes more than 300,000 people in deep poverty who are unable to cover their needs for food, clothing and housing. Young people (notably women) in Gaza face particularly bleak prospects, with unemployment rates above 50%. Unemployment rates for young women are especially severe, with rates of 88% as opposed to 58% for young men”. And, although nearly 80% of GS residents receive some form of aid, poverty rates are very high. Past studies already made clear that a substantial reduction in food and cash aid would have important negative effects on the poorest segments of the GS population bringing them close to the minimum food security threshold. Consumer food insecurity is growing in parallel with declining agricultural self-sufficiency. Accelerated population growth (3.5%), urban sprawl and increasing conversion of agricultural land for housing, restricted access to (quality) land in the border area, sea and water, coupled to limited availability of good quality seeds and breeds, has resulted in a decline in the percentage of self-sufficiency for some agricultural products to about 50%. There is a need to focus on the strengthening of the local food system, where women play a key role, and rights of vulnerable groups to ensure less dependency on international markets, lower ecological foot/food print, lower vulnerability to shocks due to climate change and military and other occupational measures that affect local agriculture production and food systems. Greater networking, coordination and exchange with relevant stakeholders is needed to shift the focus away from emergency aid towards the integration of long-term resilient, sovereign and innovative development policies and community-led initiatives, despite the difficult challenging under protracted crisis context and though limited resources.

## 4.3 Impacts of the Last Aggression on the Gaza Strip

The last Israeli aggression in May 2021 on the GS has affected several sectors and one of these affected sectors is agriculture. As estimated damages in the agricultural sector reached around 200 million US dollars. Many workers in the agricultural, plant and animal production sectors and fishers were disrupted, which directly affected the deterioration of their socio-economic situation, weakened their ability to overcome the effects of war, and created a difficult humanitarian situation for them.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Gender Wage Gap and Female Labor Force Participation in the Palestinian Labor Market

<sup>8</sup> Preliminary estimating of agricultural sector losses in the war of May 2021, MoA

Most physical damage to the assets and infrastructure of farms has been reportedly done in North Gaza, Rafah and Khan Younis governorates, with lesser impacts in the other municipal areas, while most of the damaged agroindustry businesses were in and around Gaza city/governorate.<sup>9</sup>

The functionality of the agri-food and fisheries sector has been affected both through direct and indirect damage:<sup>10</sup>

- Direct damage from the bombardments include the full or partial destruction of physical assets of agricultural livelihoods, such as to agricultural land - crops (open fields), livestock sheds, greenhouses, citrus and fruit trees, storage facilities (including 5 agricultural input suppliers as well as grain storage facilities), boats and fishing gear and selected agribusinesses.
- Indirect loss of assets and incomes include the crops that have been lost and will continue to be lost due to the inability of farmers to access fields and irrigation systems during the 11-days of conflict and afterwards, as well as the yields likely to be lower this year. Losses also cover the farmers' inability to tend to animals, and the reported disposal of the produced milk due to their inability to access dairy processing plant. In the fisheries sector, due to multiple restrictions on offshore fishing, the fishing sector is facing not just depleting fish stocks, but also issues related to the sewage water from the facilities damaged during the escalation spilling into the sea.

#### 4.4 Urban Women Agripreneurs

Before the war, there were around 1000 agro women enterprises in Gaza Strip, including home garden enterprises such small and micro enterprises (as per official data of Palestinian MoA and Ministry of National Economy (MoNE). According to Gaza Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Platform (GUPAP) and Urban Women Agripreneurs Forum (UWAF) initial assessment, the recent escalation/hostilities happened in Gaza Strip in May 2021, damaged/affected partially or badly over half of small and micro enterprises led by women. Their shops, home gardens, and their products were partially or totally damaged/affected, and they are not able to continue production and support their poor families in need. This has also an impact on the poor families of GS to whom the produce cater to.

Previous and recent indicators highlight insecurity, vulnerability and marginalization of women agripreneurs and their lack of true equality in their ability to resist the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and implications of recent escalation (recent war against GS) as well as the setback of economic empowerment gains for women that have been painstakingly achieved over decades. The time it will take women agripreneurs to regain what they have lost during the pandemic and the eleven war days depends on the course of the ongoing struggle for gender equality and other relevant rights of women agripreneurs in Crisis.

<sup>9</sup> Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, June 2021, The World Bank

<sup>10</sup> Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, June 2021, The World Bank

## 2. About GUPAP

GUPAP launched in 2013 and legally registered in March 2018 as an independent Palestinian NGO under the Palestinian NGO's law. It consists of a multi-stakeholder, interactive and participatory forum that brings together key actors involved in the development of a resilient Palestinian agricultural sector in the Gaza Strip. GUPAP is currently made up of about 80 members, including national and local government Institutions; Non-Governmental Civil Institutions; women organizations/cooperatives & activists, the Private Sector; Research and Educational Institutions; Micro-Finance Institutions, Urban Women Agripreneurs & Value Chain Forums.

GUPAP has been supporting at least 50 women for the past 2 years, assisting them to initiate their own power/voice “informal” space called UWAF. GUPAP has been providing them capacity building in various fields, based on participatory learning and action approach, such as technical and managerial skills (in handling small and micro enterprises), strategic framework development, marketing, advocacy and policy influencing to defend and claim their rights, direct in-kind support for their already existing enterprises to enhance their resilience and to positively cope with crisis conditions. This year, due to these efforts, many of them have succeeded in getting official labelling for their products, enabling to marketing their local products. Their produce (date baste, fresh vegetables and fruit, honey, olive oil, mushroom, stevia, eggs, thyme, cheese, pickles, jam, maftool, salt fish, chickens and micro local seeds banks, etc.) are sold at local markets and they are becoming an important actor that contributes to resilience of local food system and ensuring healthy and nutritious food to local poor consumers (<https://gupap.org/en/>, <https://www.facebook.com/UWAF2019/> )

## 3. Assessment Study Objective

This Participatory Needs & Capacity Assessment (PNCA) aimed to identify the situation of the women agripreneurs after the last hostilities happened in the GS. Moreover, the GUPAP desires to consolidate and update its database about the urban women agripreneurs in GS and to address their needs and capacities regularly.

## 4. Methodology

This assessment study was prepared using the Participatory Needs & Capacity Assessment approach as follows:

- **Phase1:** Gather information that is required to the subject of the study, which included the related published reports.
- **Phase 2:** Designing the study tools, which included online survey (which filled by 45 women agripreneurs from different sub-sectors and areas of GS, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and several meetings with coordination committee of UWAF.
- **Phase 3:** Data analysis: Data was analyzed by using Excel.

## 5. Assessment Study Results and Findings

### 3.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

The figure below presents the respondents distribution among 5 governorates of GS.

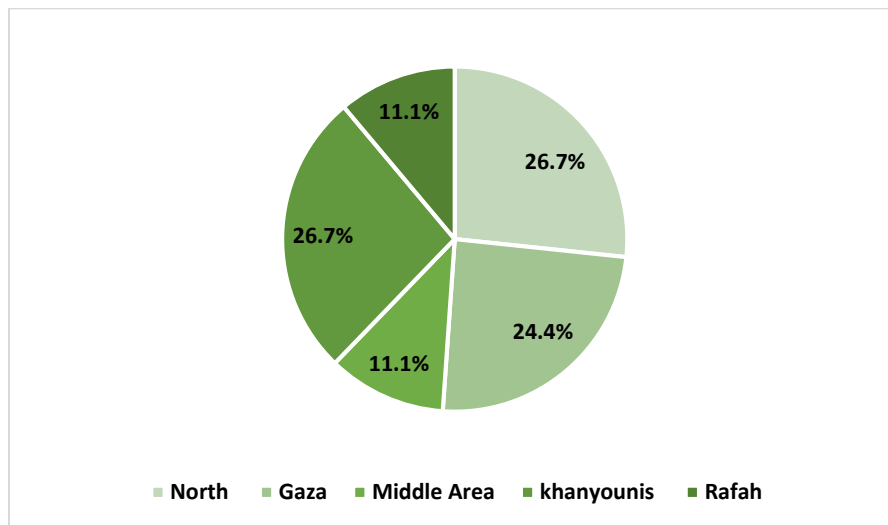


Figure 1: The Distribution of Respondents Based on the Governorate

Over more than half of the respondents have a bachelor degree (53.3%), 24.4% of them have a diploma degree, 11.1% of the respondents have a postgraduate degree (Master or doctorate), while the rest (11.1%) have secondary or preparatory education.

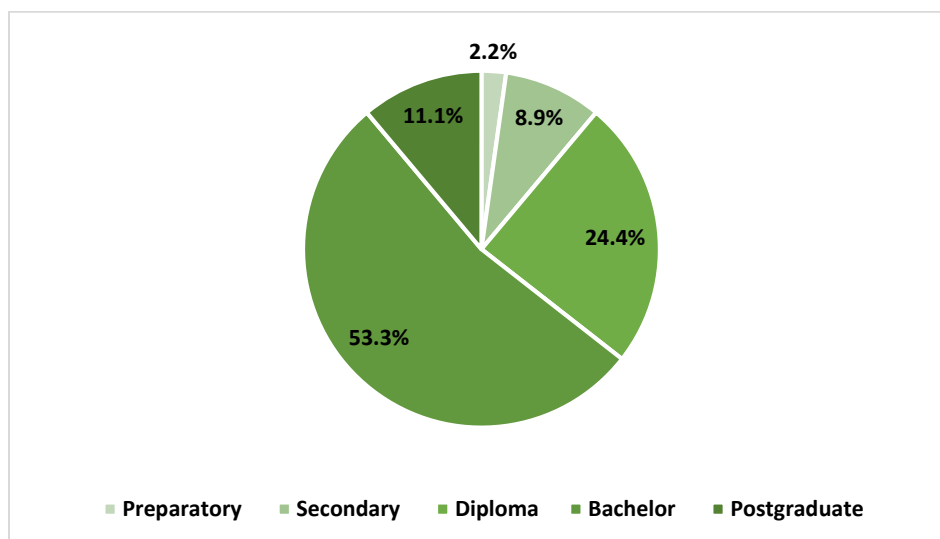


Figure 2: The Education Level of the Respondents



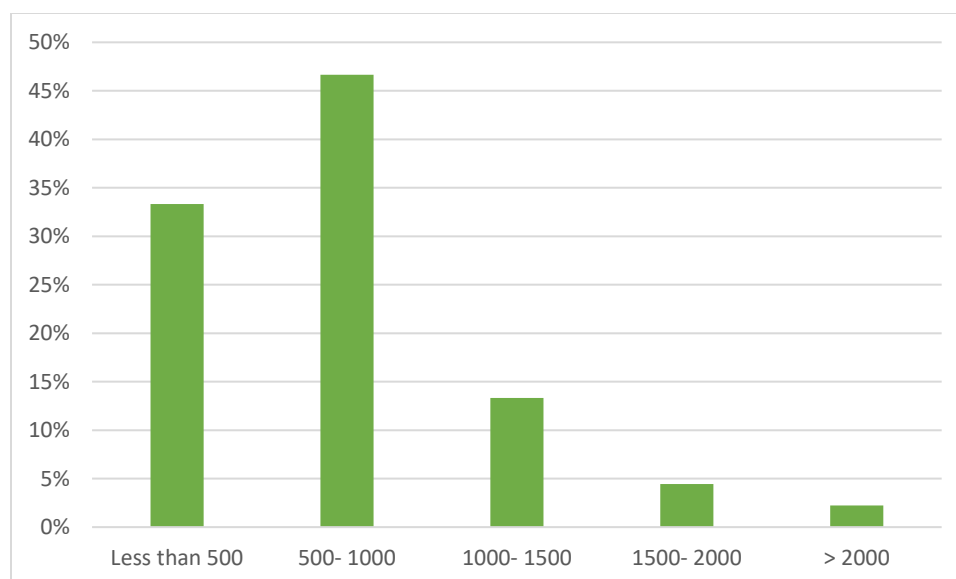


Figure 3: The Average Monthly Income of the Respondents

### 3.2 The Surveyed Enterprises Description and Status

#### – Small and micro women enterprises type and status

The assessment study included different types of agriculture enterprises namely; 9 animal production, 12 plant production enterprises, 19 food-processing enterprises, and 5 enterprises for manufacturing cosmetics from natural materials. Regarding the operational status of the surveyed enterprise, 18 out of 45 enterprises are fully operated, 17 enterprises are paused, and 10 enterprises are paused during the study period where the GS was under Israeli aggression.

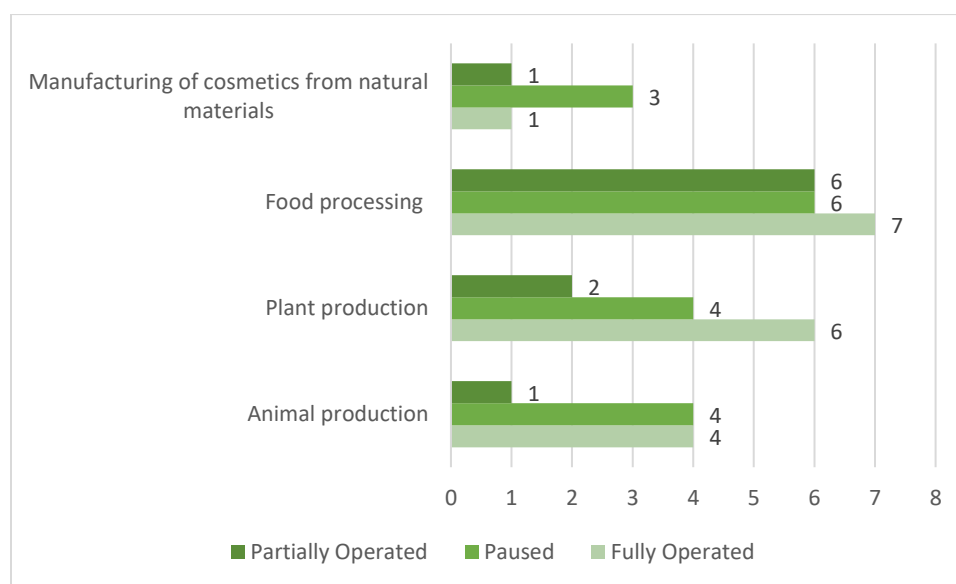


Figure 4: The Enterprises Status Based on the Enterprises type

### – The Lifetime of Enterprise

Most enterprises were established for 2-5 years (29 out of 45 enterprises), while 7 enterprises were established less than 2 years ago, and 5 enterprises were established since 6-9 years, and the rest (3 enterprises) were established over more than 9 years ago. The following figure presents the distribution of enterprise lifetime based on its type.

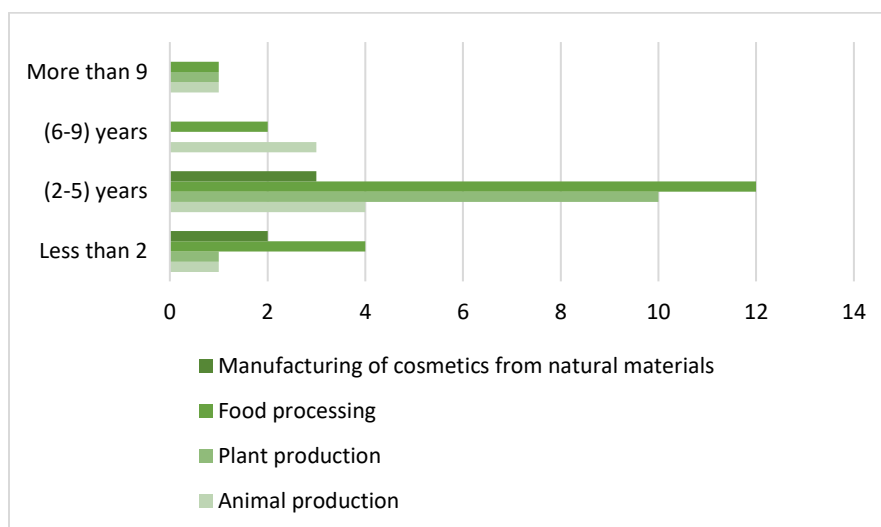


Figure 5: The Enterprise Lifetime Based on the Enterprise Type

### – Enterprises registration and ownership of enterprise place

Regarding the registration status of the surveyed enterprises, only 3 enterprises are registered in MoNE, while the rest enterprises aren't registered (42 enterprises).

### – Number of Workers

75.6 % of the enterprises have more than 1-4 workers, while 17.8% and 6.7% of enterprises have 5-9 workers and more than 14 workers respectively.

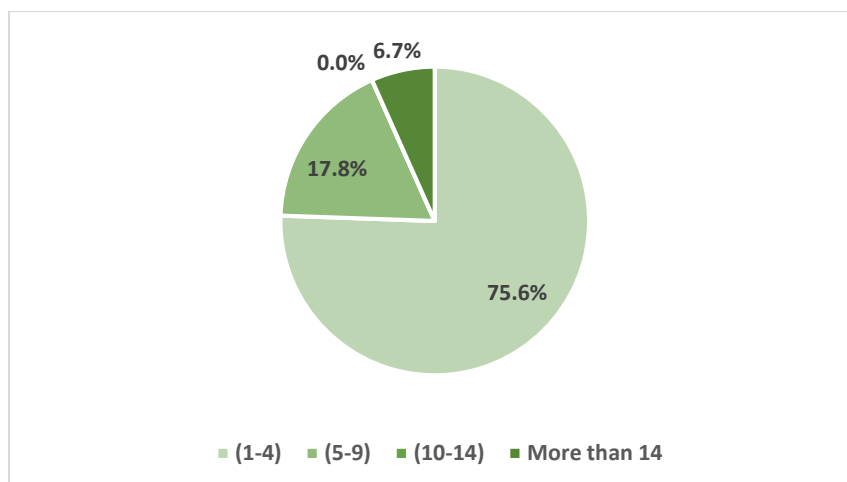


Figure 6: The Number of Workers within the Respondent Enterprises

### – The impact of the last aggression

Around 80% of surveyed enterprises were directly affected by the last Israeli aggression on the GS, while other enterprises affected indirectly as they cannot reach their enterprises' location or can't deliver the products to the customers.

## 3.3 Women Agriprenures Skills & Capacities

### – Membership and participation

46.7% of the women did not join any women's groupings, cooperatives, or any other bodies.

### – Marketing channels

The marketing channels are different based on the product type as the cosmetics are mainly marketed through pharmacies, and other types of products are marketed through malls, supermarkets, and directly to acquaintances, friends, and relatives. A small proportion of women market their products through social media.

### – Using accounting principles

Only 17 women document the purchases and sales by using one of the following: keeping the invoices, sales and purchase ledger, and only one enterprise uses accounting software.

### – Training

Only 17 women received training in basic skills in entrepreneurship and small projects management. 20 of surveyed women ask for more training topics such as marketing skills, building business plans, negotiation and skills that matched with the FGDs and meetings findings. On other hand, all surveyed women can use the distance learning tools.

## 3.4 Enterprises Needs and Challenges

### – The challenges

FGDs, meeting, and survey addressed the following challenges that faced women Agripreneurs

- The enterprise area isn't adequate and not compatible with the production capacity
- Unavailability of some production inputs due to the restriction and vulnerability
- High cost of some key raw materials that are needed to continue or develop production cycle
- Poor purchasing power due the deteriorated general bad economic condition of GS
- The Covid- 19 pandemic and restrictions regarding access and movement with suppliers, local marketing channels and customers
- Electricity power outage
- Change of currency

- High expenses of local transportation, communication/internet
- The competition of imported products
- Lack of development micro granting/funding
- Lack of some local experiences in technical issues
- The official registration/labelling requirements

### – The needs and priorities

The following are the needs and priorities that required to enhance and improve the women enterprises as reported by women agripreneurs:

#### Firstly: Needs related to the enterprise location, materials, and inputs

- Expansion and improving the enterprise location in terms of area space, utilities, and supportive tools (such as: protective clothes, plastic containers, table and chairs, kitchen tools, water tank, cooking gas cylinders, irrigation nets, scales, and new fishing nets);
- Supplying the required raw materials and production inputs based on each enterprise requirements;
- Supply the needed equipment to facilitate the enterprises management and production process such as laptop, printer, seed drying machine, seed filtering machine, Beehives, microwave sterilizer, etc. ;
- Electricity power alternatives (Generator or solar energy cells) ;
- Transportation and communication to facilitate marketing process in under crisis situations incl. the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Contribute to the rental cost of the place (for the rented enterprise).

#### Secondly: Training needs

- Urban family farming that apply agro-ecological approaches and techniques;
- Policy influencing and women agripreneurs' rights advocacy;
- Conflict transformation including negotiation skills, and mediation skills;
- Networking and participatory communication;
- Quality management and labeling;
- Marketing approaches, techniques and tools in crisis;
- Technical skills related to the enterprise type especially food processing and cosmetics' manufacturing;
- Financial management
- Training on fact sheet and policy paper development for advocacy and influencing activism;
- Management of social media spaces/pages for products promotion and rights advocacy;
- Training on rights of urban family farmers.
- Training on community kitchen approach as a positive coping strategy in crisis

**Thirdly: Other needs**

- Psychological recovery, recreational and stress release sessions/days;
- Experience exchange and learning meetings, workshops and study tours at the national, regional, and global level;
- Capacity building sessions and share of experience on new and innovative Urban Family farming approaches and techniques incl. vertical farming, aquaculture, aquaponics etc. ;
- Equipped incubational safe space for UWAF members to facilitate their activism and networking at different levels;
- Strategic management of local multi-stakeholder forums for advocacy and influencing activism.