



Gender Equality Plan

1 February 2024

Version 1

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1 Introduction

RUAF is an international organisation that aims to accelerate food systems transformation for greater environmental, social, and economic sustainability, resilience, and equity in cities and city regions around the world.

The RUAF organisation is made up of two distinct but interacting elements: RUAF CIC (community interest company); and the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems (RUAF GP).

- RUAF CIC is a non-profit community interest company based in the UK. It is the legal entity that both hosts the RUAF Secretariat and operates as a consultancy.

The company's activities provide benefit to food systems stakeholders and residents in cities and city regions around the world, especially low income and marginalised groups (including women, youth, migrants, and others) who experience food insecurity, discrimination, lack of economic opportunities, and who are most vulnerable to the impacts of shocks and stresses on food systems.

To reach these groups, the company engages:

- i. directly with representatives of the above communities through projects and programmes;
 - ii. with other organisations that work to advance food systems transformation for sustainability and resilience, to support and benefit the same communities (e.g. local and regional governments, NGOs, UN agencies, community groups, research institutes, and other consultants), some of whom are clients of the company.
- The RUAF GP is a consortium of strategically-selected expert institutions with a recognised track record in urban and peri-urban agriculture and urban food systems. RUAF GP brings together cities, research institutes and civil society organizations (CSOs), that combine technical and policy expertise with scientific research and practical knowledge.

Our principles

We believe that:

- all humans have the universal right to food and to food sovereignty;
- gender equity and social inclusion are essential (taking an intersectional lens);
- solutions can be found in the natural world (taking an agroecological and circular approach and respecting indigenous peoples' approaches to nurturing resources);
- open sharing of knowledge and co-creation of solutions are powerful;
- cities have the power to influence change through policies and citizen action;
- youth have a fundamental role in determining the future of food systems.

Gender equality

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. RUAF acknowledges its responsibility to provide a for a safe environment for employees, consultants, and partners, and all people with whom we work and interact, in which everyone feels comfortable and is treated equally, irrespective of their gender and other demographic characteristics. RUAF has worked on gender issues in urban food systems since 2009. With this document, we set out RUAF's wider gender equality policy and its current and future operationalisation.

2 Dedicated resources

RUAF is a strong advocate of a healthy balance in work and life. Employees of RUAF CIC can benefit from various mechanisms in order to develop or maintain a good work-life balance. For example, employees can gain temporarily more time for important private matters via:

- Pregnancy and maternity leave
- Care leave including informal care tasks
- Adoption leave
- Parental leave
- Flexible working arrangements

The process of developing and implementing the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is a responsibility of the RUAF Board of Directors, although certain tasks may be delegated to the Chief Executive to perform as part of her paid employment. By means of developing and monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with periodic audits, the RUAF Board ensures implementation of the GEP.

Any additional resources required to ensure and uphold gender equality equity throughout the RUAF organisation (such as, for example, provision of training, or additional capacity for monitoring implementation) will be provided under the overheads budget.

3 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

RUAF has established several measures to safeguard against gender-based violence and sexual harassment. These include:

- An 'open-door' policy on the part of all company directors, whereby all may be approached, individually or collectively, with any concerns related to safeguarding by all employees, associates, partners or collaborators; and a specific role for the chair in relation to performance of the chief executive, including misconduct, set out in the Articles of Association.
- Development of a Code of Ethics, which sets out the minimum international standards for ethical behaviour with which every RUAF CIC employee, associate, partner or collaborator must comply during the course of their collaboration with RUAF. The Code of Ethics is a supplement to local and international legal provisions and does not in any way replace them.
- Development of a Safeguarding Policy, the purpose of which is to protect children and vulnerable adults and provide stakeholders and the public with the principles that guide our approach in doing so:
 - Nobody who is involved in our work should ever experience abuse, harassment, harm, neglect or exploitation.
 - We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all of our beneficiaries, staff and volunteers, to keep them safe and to work in a way that protects them.
 - We all have a collective responsibility for creating a culture in which our people not only feel safe, but also able to speak up, if they have any concerns.

4 Training and capacity building

RUAF is committed to building awareness of gender equity among employees, associates, partners and collaborators. While adherence to RUAF's principles – including the belief that gender equity and social inclusion are essential – are inscribed in agreements and policies that underwrite our operations, we nonetheless acknowledge the need to keep these principles at the forefront of minds. While the main representatives of RUAF partner organisations are aware of the RUAF principles, their colleagues who interact with the RUAF Global Partnership on an irregular basis may be less aware. Furthermore, everyone has unconscious gender biases, which must be surfaced, acknowledged, and addressed.

Consequently, RUAF is committed to holding a thematic discussion or training session on gender and equality at least once a year, open to the RUAF Global Partnership (main representatives and colleagues), employees, associates, Board members, and other collaborators. The session will be led by a gender expert.

5 Data collection and monitoring

Gender balance

At present, RUAF has balanced gender representation in all parts of the organisation.

- RUAF CIC has only one employee, the chief executive, who is a woman.
- The RUAF Board is made up of three women and two men.
- The Secretariat of the RUAF Global Partnership is made up of two women and one man.
- Within the RUAF Global Partnership, four representatives of member organisations are women and five are men.

This balance will continue to be monitored and reported as the organisation grows.

Gender indicators in projects and programmes

Gender equity is integral to all our work. It underscores all activities of the RUAF Global Partnership. Establishing or upholding gender equality is a key factor that informs decision-making over which consultancy projects to take on.

As a community interest company, RUAF CIC is obliged to submit an annual community interest report to the government regulator, which details how all activities have benefited the defined community – that is, food systems stakeholders and residents in cities and city regions around the world, especially low income and marginalised groups (including women, youth, migrants, and others) who experience food insecurity, discrimination, lack of economic opportunities, and who are most vulnerable to the impacts of shocks and stresses on food systems.

A key methodology developed by RUAF relates to development of indicator frameworks for sustainable and resilient urban food systems, which can be adapted for monitoring of each RUAF project and programme. RUAF associates are currently engaged in work to strengthen the methodology, including the enhanced integration of gender and equality.

The first such community interest statement is due to be submitted in March 2024. This, and all subsequent statements, will include reporting against gender-related indicators.

6 Gender balance in leadership and career progression

RUAF is committed the UK Equality Act 2010 and all subsequent changes, which sets out protected characteristics related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. It establishes prohibited conduct, and establishes non-discrimination and non-harassment requirements for employers in relation to employees, contract workers, and office holders.

In the context of gender, no distinction will be made at RUAF on the grounds of gender during recruitment and selection for a position or consultancy, acceptance and termination of a position, terms and conditions of employment, promotion and education and training. We may, however, give preferential treatment to the under-represented gender in case of equal suitability, based on the unbalanced composition of a team.

7 Integration of the gender dimension into RUAF policies, projects and programmes

Gender equality will continue to be a core principle and objective of RUAF.

We will continue to embed and update gender equality within the policies and procedures of RUAF CIC and RUAF Global Partnership member agreement. In so doing, we will expand the current awareness on gender equality and secure a safe environment for all genders.

We are committed to integrating gender awareness and equality as a core pillar within all project and programme activities, taking an intersectional approach based on the understanding that a combination of factors, including gender as well as (for example) age, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, marital status, income level, education, migration status, can determine the experiences of an individual in any situation.

Where project and programme requirements outstrip existing expertise and/or capacity, we are committed to hiring gender experts as consultants.

Data on specified gender and equality indicators will continue to be part of project monitoring and reporting (see 5 above).

8 What will RUAF do to further improve gender equality?

RUAF CIC is a new legal entity for the RUAF organisation, established in February 2023. As such, we are still developing some of our formal policies and procedures. The RUAF Board is committed to further embedding and updating gender equality within all such documents, so that gender awareness be structurally integrated throughout the organisation.

RUAF CIC realises that having formal procedures and organisational structures in place regarding gender equality does not necessarily ensure gender equality within the organisation or between persons. Consequently, as RUAF CIC grows – hiring new employees, and working with a wider pool of associates/consultants, and expanding the RUAF Global Partnership – it will be necessary to continue providing training and awareness on gender equality to ensure that we continue to provide a safe environment for all genders.

9 Signature

This GEP has been drawn up and is certified by the chief executive of RUAF CIC, in consultation with the RUAF Board.



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