Equator Initiative Case Studies
Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities
Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative. The Equator Initiative aims to fill that gap.

The Equator Prize 2014 was awarded to 35 outstanding local community and indigenous peoples initiatives working to meet climate and development challenges through the conservation and sustainable use of nature. Selected from 1,234 nomination from across 121 countries, the winners were recognized for their achievements at a prize ceremony held in conjunction with the UN Secretary General’s Climate Summit and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in New York City. Special emphasis was placed on forest and ecosystem restoration, food security and agriculture, and water and ocean management. The following case study is one in a growing series that describes vetted and peer-reviewed best practices intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication. Case studies are best viewed and understood with reference to The Power of Local Action: Lessons from 10 Years of the Equator Prize, a compendium of lessons learned and policy guidance that draws from the case material.

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Acknowledgements
The Equator Initiative acknowledges with gratitude the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, in particular the guidance and input of Yara F. Zayed and Fuad Abu Saif. All photos courtesy of Union of Agricultural Work Committees. Maps courtesy of Wikipedia.

Suggested Citation
PROJECT SUMMARY

One of the oldest non-profit organizations in the State of Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) supports Palestinian farmers to attain food sovereignty. UAWC works with farmers across Palestine, including vulnerable groups in remote and marginalized areas, to restore and conserve natural resources and rights to access these resources through four main program areas: land rehabilitation and restoration, water management, infrastructure development, and income diversification. A centerpiece of UAWC’s work towards food sovereignty and income generation is a Bank for Local Seeds, which stores and documents seeds from local plant varieties to protect them from extinction. The seed bank currently has in its storage unit 270 items from 36 agricultural crops, belonging to 12 plant families. A parallel keystone area of UAWC’s work is raising awareness about the issues facing Palestinians in general, and the agricultural sector in particular, lobbying for the human rights of Palestinian farmers, herders, and fishermen. UAWC addresses women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming as a cross sectional issue throughout all its programming, supporting women to engage on equal footing with men.

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Climate and landscape

Although the climate in Palestine varies due to its diverse topography, it is generally hot and dry, with long summers and semi-wet winters. Palestine has coastal, mountainous, and desert-like ecosystems, as well as the unique climate conditions of the Jordan Valley region, which lies below sea level. This diversity in landscapes and ecosystems has given the State of Palestine a unique agricultural advantage, with the ability to cultivate a range of crops throughout various seasons and weather conditions. Despite this agricultural bounty due to the diversity of ecosystems, Palestine's agricultural sector is continuously deteriorating due to the exceptionally challenging economic, political, and environmental situations in the State of Palestine.

Occupation: isolation and marginalization

Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, Israel has exerted substantial control over the daily lives of Palestinians. This has had severe implications for the ability of the Palestinian people to manage their natural resources, make long-term investments in their lands, and access water resources in an already water-strained region. The Israeli military invests substantial resources into security measures, which has led to the wholesale isolation of Palestinian villages and cities. Military checkpoints hinder the free movement of people between communities, both for commercial and social purposes. The occupation has continued throughout recent history, growing by turns as Palestinian lands and water resources are confiscated to allow for the expansion of Israeli settlements.

The OSLO accords of 1993 and 1995 divided Palestinian land in the West Bank into three areas, known as Areas A, B, and C. Area A, which represents three percent of the West Bank, is under full civil and security control by the Palestinian Authority (UN OCHA 2014). Area B, which includes 440 Palestinian villages, their surrounding lands, and no Israeli settlements, represents 24 percent of the total territory and is under Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control (PCBS 2016; UN OCHA 2014). Area C, as established in 1995, covered approximately 73 percent of the West Bank and was under full Israeli civil and military control (PCBS 2014; UN OCHA 2014). Under the Wye River Memorandum of 1998, Israel committed to cede 13 percent of Area C lands back to Palestinian civil control; however Israel only withdrew from two percent of the land and, during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 reoccupied all of the Area C territory (PCBS 2014; PCBS 2013; UN OCHA 2014; PCBS 2011).

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, Israel currently retains near exclusive control over law enforcement, planning and construction in Area C despite the fact that roughly 150,000 Palestinians in 541 communities live within this area (UN OCHA 2014). Strict laws render over two-thirds of Area C land as off-limits for Palestinian use and development (UN OCHA 2014). To make the situation more difficult for Palestinians residing in this area, Israel controls 85 percent of water resources available in the West Bank, and over 70 percent of Palestinian communities are not connected to the water network, leading their water consumption to be as low as 20 liters per day, one-fifth of the World Health Organisation’s recommended intake (UN OCHA 2014). Food insecurity is also high, with a quarter of the Palestinian population lacking the food to meet their daily needs (UN OCHA 2014).

Over the past fifty years, the Palestinian population of the West Bank has endured volatile circumstances, including land and water resource confiscation, deforestation, house demolitions, killings and assassinations of civilians, and imprisonment and detention of Palestinians (UN OCHA 2016). The expansion of occupational control over Palestinian lands has further limited access to the natural resources Palestinian communities depend upon for their survival (UN OCHA 2016). Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, Palestinians have been forced to live in small isolated cantons in the West Bank (UN OCHA 2016). Checkpoints and the erection of a separation wall in the West Bank have led to the physical separation of Palestinian people from the agricultural lands that are rightfully
theirs and upon which they depend for their survival (UN OCHA 2016). These measures have dramatically hindered the ability of Palestinian communities to pursue their livelihoods and to meet their basic needs. Israel also controls the only border between the West Bank and Jordan, limiting access to resources and aid from outside the region (UN OCHA 2016).

**Impacts on poverty and agriculture**

The complex political situation and systemic marginalization have deteriorated socioeconomic conditions amongst Palestinian communities. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the poverty rate in Palestine reached 25.8 percent in 2011, while the unemployment rate hit 23.9 percent in 2012 (PCBS 2014).

Agriculture has historically been a significant source of employment and livelihoods in Palestine. The contribution of agriculture to the net domestic product in Palestine, however, has declined dramatically due to political and economic stresses. According to PCBS, 8.7 percent of Palestinians are employed in the agriculture, fishing, and forestry sectors, but 82.2 percent of these agricultural employees are unpaid family members (PCBS 2015). During the 1970s, the agricultural sector contributed more than 30 percent of the Palestinian net domestic product. It has since diminished to 8 percent. According to the Annual Food Security Survey in 2013, which was conducted by the PCBS, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the World Food Programme (WFP), 33 percent of Palestinian households, or 1.6 million people, are food insecure.

“*The occupation confiscates lands, leading to Israeli control over more than 85 percent of the Palestinian water resources, in addition to the other natural resources which were originally owned by the Palestinians. The institutions that support farmers must help them to strengthen their resilience on their lands through continuous ownership and cultivation.*”

*Anwar Ahmed Mohammed, Local Farmer*
In 2011, olive trees made up 66.8 percent of all horticultural trees in the State of Palestine with nearly 80,000 Palestinian families depending on the annual olive harvest for their livelihood (PCBS 2011). However, this annual event has been seriously affected over the past five decades. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, Israeli settlers and soldiers have cut down, uprooted, and burned an estimated 800,000 olive trees since 1967, including nearly 10,000 in the period of 2011 to 2012 alone (UN OCHA 2012). The siege on the Gaza strip, the construction of the separation wall, and different types of military checkpoints compounds this problem, requiring Palestinian farmers to apply for a special permit in order to reach their land for the olive harvest. 42 percent of these permit requests have been denied in recent years (UN OCHA 2012). Those who are successful in getting a permit often face harassment and violence, and sometimes arrive to find their trees and crops already destroyed.

**Evolution of the organization**

The Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) was established in 1986 in response to the vulnerable sociopolitical situation of Palestinian farmers. It was founded as a non-profit organization by a group of volunteers and agronomists. In the organization’s early stages of defining its mission and identity, UAWC focused on lobbying and advocating for the rights of Palestinian farmers in light of their increasing marginalization. In 1991, UAWC was able to hire three full-time employees and two part-time employees in addition to its 15 volunteers. Project activities mainly focused on marketing olive oil, agricultural extension, and advocacy for land reclamation. In 1993, UAWC formalized its organizational structure, creating a general assembly, board of trustees, general director, and two executive directors, one in the West Bank and the other in the Gaza Strip.

From 1993 to 1997, the organization sharpened and expanded its projects and programs. The staff increased to 13 employees in the West Bank and to 20 employees in the Gaza Strip. From 1997 to 2000, UAWC continued to build partnerships that would allow it to reach a wider range of beneficiaries. It also enlarged its program activities to include animal husbandry, environmental education, and water resource management. After the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000, it became necessary for UAWC to expand its programing in order to focus on emergency projects that support farmers recovering from unexpected situations. These projects continue to provide direct aid to struggling and increasingly marginalized communities. The organization’s primary objectives are to: (i) improve the standard of living for small farmers; (ii) protect farmers’ land rights and support their political participation; (iii) strengthen the union’s capacity to respond to emergency situations and uncertainty; and (iv) manage the union’s financial and administrative effectiveness to advocate on behalf of Palestinian farmers at the national level.

**Governance and institutional structure**

UAWC is governed by a general assembly, comprised by community members from a wide range of backgrounds, including farmers and previous agricultural committee members. A board of directors, which is elected every two years by the general assembly, is responsible for decision-making at the policy level. The board of directors works through joint meetings to improve its programs and outreach in the target areas. UAWC recently developed a strategic plan in response to new political issues and to the changing needs of agricultural communities. The union closely collaborates with the government agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture, to ensure that the strategic plan is in accordance with the Palestinian National Agriculture Sector Strategy. An administrative assembly serves with support from the board of directors. It also guides decision-making on specific programs and activities. It also executes UAWC’s administrative and financial policies, manages the department of public relations, and maintains a strong relationship with the agricultural committees. The general assembly, board of directors, administrative assembly, and executive management team all work closely to pursue the mission of the organization by embracing a model of transparency and democratic decision-making. The overall UAWC team consists of 58 employees in the West Bank and 40 employees in the Gaza Strip.
The Union of Agricultural Work Committees believes that Palestinian farmers should have access to their land and the ability to effectively fight for their human rights within a free and food secure Palestinian society. The organization's mission is to empower farmers and their families to strengthen their resilience and tenure security, with a focus on the development of sustainable agriculture models that improve the income and socioeconomic conditions of all Palestinians. UAWC's activities focus on the restoration, preservation, and rehabilitation of the limited resources that are essential for the survival of rural Palestinian farmers and their families.

Agricultural committees and protecting the rights of farmers

Agricultural committees are the basic building block of UAWC. The committees, which extend throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are the organizational bodies that support farmers in rural Palestine assess their needs, identify opportunities, and address challenges. The committees are best qualified to assess the needs of the rural community and to channel these needs through the various departments of the UAWC. In turn, these departments respond to the needs of farmers according to their ability and available resources. UAWC supports 47 local agricultural committees and fishermen collectives: 21 in the Gaza Strip and 26 in the West Bank. These committees mobilize members for professional and skills training, capacity building, and public awareness campaigns. The committee also arranges field visits between farming and fishing communities to encourage income diversification, knowledge sharing, and best practice transfer.

Enhancing small farmers’ resilience and livelihoods

Systematic marginalization of farmers in many areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to the military occupation has led to challenging social, economic, and political conditions for Palestinian families. UAWC is currently focusing its activities on supporting the poorest and most marginalized Palestinian communities in light of the worsening levels of poverty in rural areas, high unemployment, food insecurity, and overall vulnerability. In 2014, over 30,000 families benefited from UAWC’s projects.

A primary focus of UAWC’s activities is improving the quality and quantity of farmer crops. This is achieved through a review of farmers’ strengths and weaknesses as well as a review of their market supply chains. The goal of this process is to provide farmers with necessary tools to optimize profits and food security by reclaiming and rehabilitating their lands. UAWC provides additional support to increase market access by constructing roads in agricultural areas. In 2014, the organization built 110 kilometers of roads, expediting the movement of farmers and agricultural products from field to market. Other activities include facilitating access to locally adapted seed varieties – including over 200,000 fruit seedlings of different varieties – building greenhouses, and rehabilitating pastureland. In 2014, UAWC reclaimed 2,837 donums of land and rehabilitated a total of 2,557 donums of pastureland.

The union places emphasis on the sustainable use of natural resources and on the protection of the surrounding environment. Farmers receive training in innovative practices in sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation, including organic fertilizing, sustainable rainwater harvesting, and restoring degraded lands and watersheds. UAWC has also established livestock demonstrations which are designed to train farmers in modern sheep farming techniques in order to increase their productivity. Investments in this sector such as feeding, vaccinating, and reducing newborn mortality and abortion rates, are low-cost and high impact. Additional activities of the livestock demonstrations include teaching farmers to use records in production management, providing farmers with high-yield and improved varieties of rams and ewes, rehabilitating livestock shelters, and improving fodder production.

The Union for Agricultural Work Committees also works on critical issues related to local water access, as well as farmer capacity to manage water resources. The maintenance of agricultural cisterns, ponds and canals, and natural springs is necessary for developing
the agricultural sector. In Palestine, water is among the most limited resources, and is considered an essential factor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Israel controls 85 percent of renewable water resources in the West Bank, drawing 750 million cubic meters in comparison to 110 million cubic meters available to Palestinians. In response to this reality, UAWC has carried out a number of projects aimed at creating water security by setting up necessary infrastructure and restoring water sources and ecosystems. In recent years, UAWC established six ‘gray water’ treatment units in the southern area of the West Bank to effectively purify water waste from households and septic systems.

**The Bank for Local Seeds**

A centerpiece of UAWC’S projects, started in 2003, is the Bank for Local Seeds located in the city of Hebron. UAWC’s seed bank is thus far the first and only of its kind in Palestine, established with the aim of preserving, documenting, and protecting local crop varieties. The seed bank currently houses 270 items from 36 agricultural crops, spanning 12 plant families. This long-term project is of special urgency and importance: before the establishment of UAWC’s seed bank, local seeds in Palestine had not been preserved, leaving them vulnerable to neglect and extinction.

This is particularly pertinent work given that surrounding countries are increasingly embracing the use of genetically modified crops. According to the Paris Protocol, Israel is able to supervise and restrict imports from and exports to other countries from Palestine, meaning that Palestine effectively does not have control over its borders (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2016). With genetically modified seeds saturating the Israeli market, and no recourse to non-Israeli controlled imports, Palestinian farmers are increasingly forced to replace local seeds with genetically-modified seeds. These genetically-modified varieties – in contrast to local varieties that have been bred over time to adapt to the surrounding environment – often produce lower quality crops in lower quantities. Another important implication of genetically-modified crops is that they produce ‘terminator seeds,’ which are not fertile and therefore cannot be saved for planting. In comparison, local seeds can be produced, stored, improved, and utilized by farmers to be used as seed stocks for the upcoming agricultural seasons. Local seeds also possess naturally evolved immunity to local viruses and diseases.

Seeds of local plant varieties are seen as a national natural treasure for every community, and a matter of national sovereignty. The Bank for Local Seeds thus plays an important role in preserving and rendering accessible local varieties of seeds. Palestinian farmers have free access to seeds, with the understanding that they will reinvest double the amount in the bank post-harvest. More than 500 farmers have received seeds from the bank and, in 2012 alone, 4.5 square kilometers were planted with these local varieties. The seed bank has the ability to identify genetically modified seeds, which is a resource for many collaborating institutions that wish to ensure the distribution of local varieties of seeds only.

**Lobbying for the human rights of the Palestinian farmer**

The union also has a strong public dimension to its work. UAWC carries out training workshops related to human rights, gender equality, land confiscation, and lobbying and advocacy. It also educates members in mechanisms for monitoring and documenting Israeli violations of international law. The union has formed many public and institutional coalitions, particularly related to the campaign against the separation wall and the expansion of Israeli settlements. UAWC encourages farmers in the Gaza Strip to reach their lands and plant in the area adjacent to the eastern and northern borders, which they have been denied access to for years for “security reasons”. UAWC has also supported fishermen to resist pressure from occupation authorities to vacate marine and coastal areas, where they make their livelihoods. Local agricultural committees and fisherfolk collectives allow farmers and fishers from specific localities to ally together for advocacy and resistance. Efforts are also made in public events, peaceful anti-occupation protests, campaigning, and media relations.

At the international level, UAWC is an active member of the International Council of the World Social Forum and has succeeded in establishing a wide network of relationships with actors that also work to defend the rights of farmers, in particular women farmers, against injustice, oppression, and discrimination. UAWC is also currently a member representative of the Arab region in the Via Campesina network. The organization provides detailed reporting at the national and international levels on its work and the plight of Palestinian farmers.

“Palestinian farmers have begun cultivating crop varieties such as fruiting palm trees that can both withstand the effects the climate change – such as soil salinity – and be economically feasible.”

*Saleh Abdullah Abu Zubeidah, Local Farmer*
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Reducing the use of pesticides

Palestine is among the world’s top users of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Hundreds of tons of chemical pesticides are consumed every year in the Gaza Strip. As noted by the WHO, the use of chemical pesticides can lead to countless environmental and human health hazards. UAWC promotes the use of natural pesticides and integrated pest management techniques. Through the agricultural committees, farmers participate in ongoing training in natural pesticide and fertilizer use and application.

Promoting genetic diversity and seed banks

The loss of local, organic seed varieties over the last decade has become a serious challenge to local farmers around the world, and Palestine is no exception. Agribusinesses are increasingly promoting genetic engineering for monocultures and terminator seeds, which are engineered to grow once and then cease to be fertile, thus leading to increasing dependence of local farmers on commercially available seeds. This creates additional costs for farming and sometimes limits the capacity of farmers to exchange and trade seeds that will strengthen local food security and resilience. Seed monopolies created by agribusiness put small farmers out of jobs and place a financial burden on remaining farmers to purchase genetically modified seeds. The result: increased vulnerability, reduced capacity to adapt to environmental change, and the loss of genetic diversity.

In response to these issues, UAWC created the Bank for Local Seeds with a focus on supporting local economies and preserving the local seed diversity. Cultivating local crop varieties has allowed farmers to select for breeds adapted to the Palestinian climate over thousands of years. However, in recent years increased market pressure to buy genetically modified seeds has led to decreased use of local varieties, effectively reducing farmers’ adaptive capacity. The Bank for Local Seeds has had a significant impact on improving the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers who are dependent on seed varieties that can grow and thrive in this water-scarce part of the world. Due to the occupation, water scarcity is both a political issue and an environmental reality for Palestinian farmers. Through the seed bank, farmers are provided with the amount of native seeds they need for free. The farmers are, however, required to pledge to return double the amount of seeds that they have initially ‘withdrawn’ from the bank in order to ensure the renewal of seed resources so that other farmers are able to benefit from access to the seed bank in the next planting season.

Adaptation to climate change

The impacts of climate change on smallholder agriculture are increasingly dire. In Palestine, the agriculture and water sectors are both expected to be drastically impacted by current climate change trends and future projections. Prolonged droughts, soil loss, decreased rainfall, and extreme weather events are already climate realities for Palestinian farmers, fishermen, and agricultural communities. In particular, the region has been experiencing longer-than-average droughts. UAWC prioritizes the integration of climate change adaptation strategies in many of its projects and activities. Examples include initiatives that focus on water resource management, the development of livestock grazing areas with alternative fodder, emergency responses to natural disasters and extreme weather events such as the 2013 Alexa storm, and, most importantly, the local seed bank initiative.

In Palestine, tackling projected climate changes cannot be viewed in isolation from the political context: generally the occupation continues its control over the natural resources in Palestine. Adapting to the negative impacts of climate change requires a comprehensive strategic vision, large amounts of resources, and technical capacities, all of which require a much larger degree of autonomy and land management authority for the Palestinian farmers. A recent study conducted by UAWC under a food sovereignty
project evaluated the political context in Palestine in relation to the limited adaptive capacities of agricultural communities. The research shows that climate change adaptation mechanisms currently used by local communities are in urgent need of further support. This includes prioritizing the irrigation of high-value crops, increasing the use of rainwater harvesting, protecting sand dunes at the Gaza shores, diversifying animal production, developing irrigation mechanisms, land-use planning, and using heat- and drought-resistant crops.

**SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Smallholder farmers in Palestine face numerous challenges. Israeli occupation policies have often confiscated land and water to isolate farmers. At the same time, severe restrictions have been placed on local and international market access, which leaves local farmers without a market for their products. This has made access to land and natural resources very difficult. Many genetically modified seed varieties also require chemical fertilizer and pesticide inputs, at an additional cost to local farmers. This limits their revenues and thus, increases the cycle of debt. Water security and access – both for drinking and irrigation – remain massive problems that all communities in Palestine face.

UAWC continues to implement programs and initiatives that contribute to community livelihoods and well-being. A number of programs have sustainably and quantifiably improved the lives of Palestinian farmers. Water resource management projects focus on rehabilitating cisterns and ponds. Agricultural engineers are trained to arrange knowledge exchange and field visits in order to create innovative solutions to local challenges. UAWC also actively markets various agricultural products harvested by local farmers and thus ensures fair pricing. This has included the marketing of fair trade olive oil to Arab, European, and Asian countries. Work also focuses on encouraging local farmers to cultivate high-value crops and providing veterinary services for herders and livestock-dependent communities.

**GENDER IMPACTS**

Women in Palestine constitute approximately half of the total population, yet the rate of women’s participation in the formal labor market in the State of Palestine comprised only 19.4 percent in 2014 compared to 25 percent in the Arab region and 51 percent in the world. In order to counteract this issue, UAWC has recently developed an independent gender mainstreaming strategy that ensures the integration of gender-related issues in all of its projects and activities. All stages of activities are designed, implemented, and evaluated in order to integrate the needs and priorities of women in target communities. UAWC recognizes that the so-called ‘neutral’ approach usually falls short in addressing the specific needs of women. Through this strategy, UAWC recognizes that equity involves facilitating equal access to opportunities and the development of basic capacities.

An example of this line of work is UAWC’s land reclamation program, which directly prioritizes and targets a total 3,500 female community members, including 50 female landowners. The female farmers’ empowerment initiative targets a total of four women-based cooperative associations through comprehensive capacity building (resources, education, access to markets, etc.). A parallel project, UAWC’s recent “Transitioning from Relief to Sustainable Livelihoods” program, targets 1,890 female members of agricultural households. UAWC has also increased the number of female members in decision-making positions in the organization: two of the six administrative assembly members are women, while three of the seven members of the board of directors are women.

**POLICY IMPACTS**

For the past several years, UAWC has worked to enhance its role in representing low-income and small-scale farmers in policymaking processes through directly collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture and through mediating between various stakeholders. UAWC has, for example, advocated for a comprehensive policy plan to offer Palestinian farmers tax exemption on livestock fodder. It has also been an active lobbyist for fair distribution of water resources in areas that are most marginalized and water-stressed. These areas also happen to be the ones containing the most valuable agricultural lands. This approach stresses the fact that problems of poor production and poverty are directly linked to the unequal distribution and mismanagement of available resources. It also prioritizes small and medium-scale agricultural production using diversified agricultural resources and methods.
SUSTAINABILITY

UAWC is a non-profit organization that largely depends on the financial support and donations of external donors and supporters as well as contributions from farmers and local councils. UAWC also maintains a good relationship with many other local and international organizations. Despite the obstacles created by prevailing political circumstances, UAWC has created strategies that have sustained and advanced the organization. UAWC has sought and received support from international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the Government of Belgium and OXFAM Belgium, who have provided support for the local seed bank.

UAWC maintains a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation scheme, which creates formal pathways for assessing successes and challenges for the organization. Work in this area focuses on taking an inventory of resources in order to aid the process of follow-up and evaluation, preparing monthly and annual plans reviewed in accordance with the strategic plan, providing the public with available agricultural information, and promoting the importance and effectiveness of UAWC in its local activities. A parallel area of monitoring and evaluation occurs at the local level, where the organization conducts field visits to activity sites, meets with various beneficiary groups, and prepares reports on achievements and obstacles at the local level.

Through its progressive implementation of its different projects and programs, UAWC ensures that the work which has been done is sustainable at the organizational level in terms of funding, member participation, and staff workload as well as at the community level for the continued improvement of the quality of life for small farmer beneficiaries.

REPLICATION

Hebron University and the Palestine Polytechnic University, as well as several other universities in the State of Palestine with farming and business faculties, are in regular contact with UAWC to learn about the organization’s National Local Seed Bank. UAWC works with these organizations to exchange information about best practice and to use the National Local Seed Bank as a model for seed bank management in other areas. The Environmental Authority of Palestine and the Palestine Standards Institute also collaborate with UAWC to ensure the quality of seeds and vouchers in the seed bank.

UAWC has developed local seed committees and agricultural committees in all of its targeted communities to create the basis of a network that can share information on best practices through peer-to-peer learning. These committees work in conjunction with the National Committee for Food Sovereignty, also created by UAWC, a network which includes more than 18 different local NGOs interested in the conservation of local seeds across the State of Palestine. Many community-based organizations that have visited the UAWC seed bank are dedicating space for the preservation of local seeds at their facilities in an attempt to develop a similar seed bank in their areas.

UAWC’s strong focus on providing technical support on the ground as well as campaigning for policy changes to support Palestinian farmers, fishermen, and herders provides a powerful model for affecting change. The union’s effort to network with other organizations in the region creates a strong basis for sharing knowledge and skills with similar projects in the Middle East.

PARTNERS

• **Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture:** For avoiding duplication and for constant coordination with the governmental sector.

• **University of Hebron:** For educational initiatives and activities as well as dissemination of National Local Seed Bank best practices.

• **Via Campesina:** UAWC is a partner and member of Via Campesina, a peasant’s movement established in 1994 with more than 200 million members around the world.

• **World Social Forum (WSF):** UAWC participates in the WSF as a part of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Palestinian Organization Network, a formal member of the forum.
FURTHER REFERENCE

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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

The Equator Initiative brings together the United Nations, governments, civil society, businesses and grassroots organizations to recognize and advance local sustainable development solutions for people, nature and resilient communities.

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