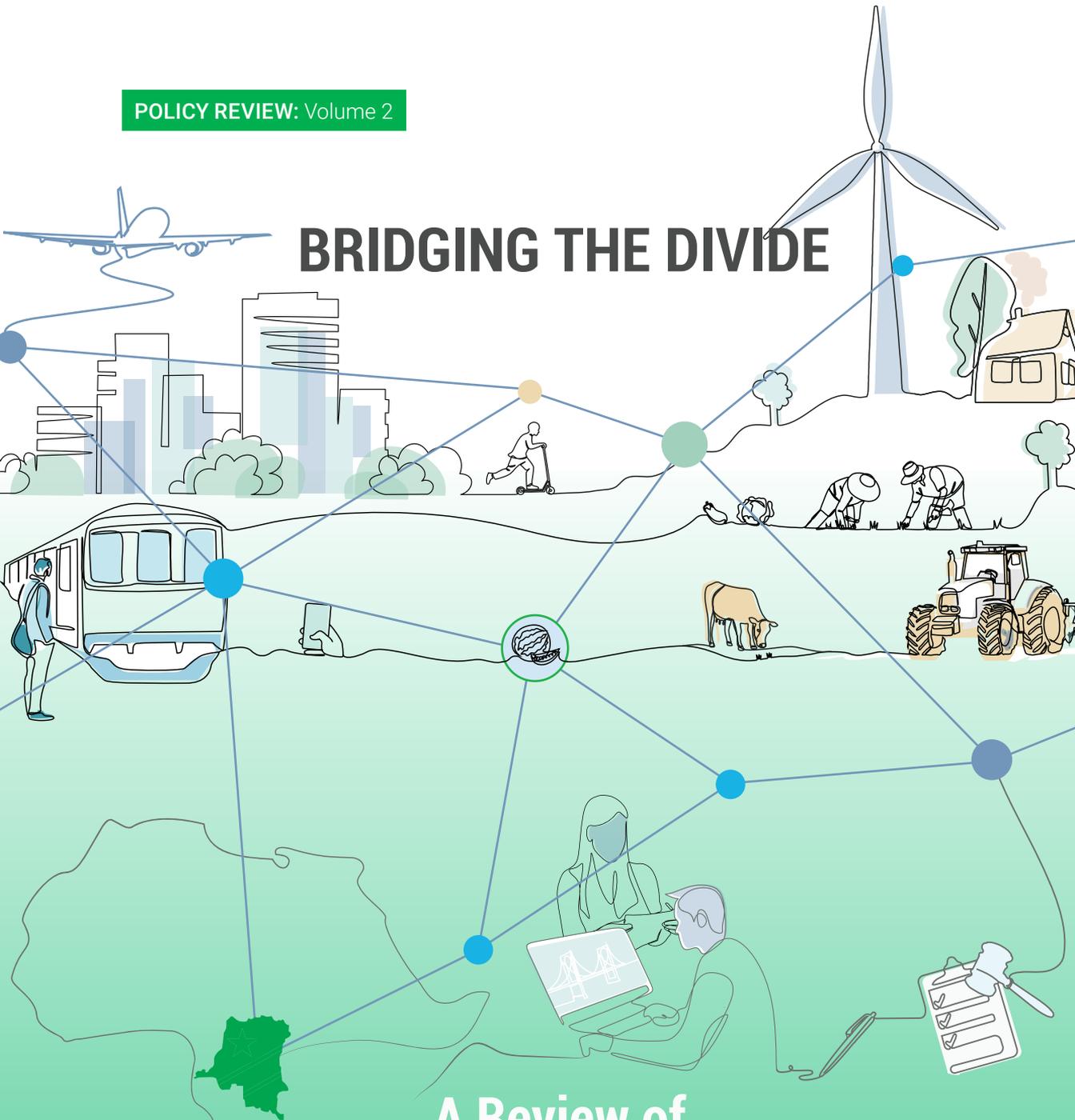


BRIDGING THE DIVIDE



A Review of Urban-Rural Linkages in Democratic Republic of Congo



BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: A REVIEW OF URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANVC	National Association of Cities and Municipalities
CARG	Agricultural Rural Management Council
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CDF	Congolese Franc
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSCR	Document of the Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction
DTEs	Decentralized Territorial Entities
ETS	Educational Training Sector Strategy
GAP	Government Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Industrial Park
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NHDR	National Human Development Report
PDL-145T	Territorial Local Development Plan
PNAT	National Spatial Planning Policy
PNIA	National Agricultural Investment Program
PNSD	National Strategy Development Plan
PPALCPI	Accelerated Presidential Program to Fight Poverty and Inequality
REGIDESO	National Water Company
RDTs	Rural Development Technicians
SPGPR	Strategic Paper for Growth and Poverty Reduction
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
URLs	Urban Rural Linkages
WHO	World Health Organization



Executive Summary

The report explores the dynamic transformation occurring in rural areas and the consequential demographic shifts stemming from the widespread phenomenon of rural exodus, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This is part of the project titled “Supporting the Effective Implementation of the New Urban Agenda through National and Subnational Urban Policies in Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali and DRC” funded by Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AACID). A comprehensive evaluation of policies within the DRC forms the core focus, meticulously examining the intricate interplay between urban and rural spheres, institutional capacity enhancement, and the pivotal role of stakeholder engagement. This in-depth analysis dissects the array of economic, social, and environmental challenges impeding rural advancement, shedding light on pressing issues such as the imperative need for economic diversification, the alarming pace of environmental degradation, and the pervasive presence of social disparities. Noteworthy attention is directed towards the glaring deficiencies in infrastructure, workforce skills, and financial allocations, identified as formidable obstacles to rural progress.

Policy recommendations are proposed, advocating for a multifaceted approach encompassing the revitalization of rural economies, the empowerment of human capital through targeted interventions, the enhancement of governance structures, and the reinforcement of financial management mechanisms. Recognizing the paramount importance of capacity development initiatives, effective communication channels, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the report underscores their pivotal role in fostering inclusive territorial development.

Additionally, a call is made for the revision of existing policies to accord precedence to urban-rural linkages, harmonizing with the UN-Habitat Guiding Principles on Urban-Rural Linkages. Ultimately, the report underscores the indispensability of concerted and holistic efforts aimed at tackling the multifaceted challenges inherent in rural development, advocating for a sustainable development paradigm that engenders resilient and sustainable urban-rural dynamics in the DRC.

Résumé exécutif

Le rapport explore l'évolution du paysage rural et les changements démographiques causés par l'exode rural dans les pays en développement, y compris la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC). Il découle du projet intitulé "Support pour une mise en œuvre effective du Nouveau Programme pour les Villes (NPV) à travers les politiques urbaines et infranationales au Burkina Faso, Sénégal, Mali et en République Démocratique du Congo". Le projet était financé par l'Agence Andalousienne de Coopération Internationale pour le Développement (AACID). Il évalue les documents politiques en RDC, en se concentrant sur les liens entre les zones urbaines et rurales, le développement des capacités institutionnelles et la participation des parties prenantes. Les défis économiques, sociaux et environnementaux entravant le développement rural sont analysés, en mettant l'accent sur la diversification économique, la dégradation environnementale

et les inégalités sociales. Le rapport met en évidence l'insuffisance des infrastructures, des compétences et des financements comme des obstacles au développement rural. Les recommandations incluent la promotion de l'économie rurale, le renforcement du capital humain, l'amélioration de la gouvernance et le renforcement de la gestion financière. Le renforcement des capacités, la communication et la collaboration entre les parties prenantes sont jugés cruciaux pour un développement territorial inclusif. Le rapport appelle à la révision des politiques pour prioriser les liens entre les zones urbaines et rurales, en alignant sur le cadre d'action d'ONU-Habitat. En fin de compte, favoriser une relation urbaine-rurale résiliente en RDC nécessite des efforts concertés pour relever des défis multidimensionnels et promouvoir un développement durable à tous les niveaux.



1. Introduction and Background

Urban, peri-urban and rural areas are interdependent and influence each other. Climate change, rapid population growth, challenges of food security, employment and the fight against poverty, are some of the emerging issues that are on the increase and shape the discussions around the functions and exchanges between cities and the countryside.

The DRC is not spared from the problem of rural exodus. Social unrest, conflict, natural disasters and/or unbearable economic pressure are the major reasons for migration within DRC. In most cases, this displacement is from rural to urban areas. This is the case for most of the young people who dream of better living conditions in the cities. However, without professional training, coupled with inadequate economic opportunities, they find themselves very quickly confronted with the difficulties linked to city life, which is a major challenge for most of the households. The consequences are

numerous and not always easy to manage. One of the main consequences of these massive movements of people to the cities is the abandonment of rural areas, leaving the rural economy to struggle with insufficient labour and other key resources (United Nations, 2017). The problem of rural development in the DRC seems to be further constrained by factors such as poverty and inequality, food insecurity, weak rural structuring, etc.

In efforts to respond to these challenges, DRC has adopted a five-year development plan for the period 2019-2023, which refers to the DRC's Prospective Study to 2040, which aims to ensure that "in 25 years, DRC's extractive and agricultural sectors will have developed to and thereby build a diversified economy with inclusive growth and a stronger middle income. In many African countries, efforts are put on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as a means to achieve the SDGs. As towns



and cities get congested over time, rural-urban exodus is often considered as the first cause of urbanization in low-income countries.

1.1. Objectives of the Report

1.1.1. General objective

This report of the UN-Habitat project titled **“Supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through National and Subnational Urban Policies”** which is funded by the Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AACID). It analyses and presents policies and strategies in the DRC that relate and contribute to strengthening Urban-rural Linkages (URLs). It also assesses the institutional capacities and participation levels in mainstreaming urban-rural linkages policies, processes, and practices. The report is limited to an inventory of national policies and strategies in DRC, making the case for mainstreaming urban rural linkages through identification of the challenges and opportunities as well as the relevant stakeholders to support these processes. The recommendations drawn provide a framework for making policy options in national urban policies/strategies for urban-rural linkages.

During the analysis, the key challenges encountered in the process of identifying national policies, strategies and frameworks was their unavailability. However, it was possible to identify some of the current policies/strategies and frameworks using the information in the various Congolese government department websites.

1.1.2. Specific objectives

- » Understanding the status of Urban-rural linkages in DRC (challenges and the opportunities)
- » Identifying the policies and strategies and clarify aspects that are captured or not in the URLs.
- » Identifying the existing gaps after the review and state how those gaps could be tackled.
- » Assessing the institutional capacities and participation in urban-rural linkages issues and recommend based on the findings.

1.2. Methodology

To remain coherent and consistent with this task, the methodology did not only focus on the document analysis which allowed the use of orientation documents elaborated by the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, but also to those related to the national development policies and strategies, including decentralization policy, followed by drafting of this report.

The work also involved assessment of the institutional capacity and level of participation in facilitating the integration of URLs in policies and strategies. An assessment tool provided information on institutional capacity and participation levels. Data gathered from this questionnaire helped to better understand the extent of engagement amongst various stakeholders in the mainstreaming process of URL in policies/strategies.





2. The Challenges of Urban-Rural Linkages in DRC

Covering a total area of 234 million hectares, the Democratic Republic of Congo has the largest land area in Sub-Saharan Africa, and like other countries in Africa, the country is experiencing rapid urbanization. The proportion of the urban population in the Democratic Republic of Congo was estimated to be 47% in 2022. Additionally, the World Bank estimates the annual growth rate of the urban population averaged 4.5% over the past decade, If this trend continues, holding other factors constant, the urban population is expected to double by 2030. With an estimated population of nearly 12 million in 2016, Kinshasa represents the largest and fastest-growing urban system in the sub-region (World Bank, 2018). At this rate, the city will be home to more than 24 million people by

2030 and will be the most populous city in Africa, ahead of Cairo, Egypt and Lagos, Nigeria. This prospect represents an opportunity, but also a risk that the living conditions of the people in Kinshasa will become even more precarious. On the other hand, rural areas also accommodate a huge population. On the other hand, the majority of this population and the areas where they live face enormous and important challenges related to the precariousness and deterioration of basic services. Poor governance in general, particularly of the natural resources on which they depend, also adversely affects their living and working conditions.

Since 1977, the DRC has had a government ministry entirely dedicated to rural development,



with the mission of intervening to improve the living conditions in rural areas, and thus facilitate the stabilization and development of rural populations (Ministry of Agriculture & Ministry of Rural Development, 2010). Despite the increase in the number of rural development technicians (RDTs), the issue of rural development in the DRC remains quite complex and challenging. What are the challenges that hinder the real and sustainable development of the countryside in DRC? This report therefore highlights the different issues of the urban-rural interrelationship in DRC defined by the economic, environmental, and social parameters.

2.1. Economic challenges



2.1.1. Strengthening and building an economy based on agriculture

Rural development in the DRC is low and remains quite complex even though the country is rich in natural resources. Poverty is felt especially in rural areas where 8 out of 10 people live below the poverty line. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the poverty rate as at 2020 (78.9%) in the DRC is among the highest in the world. As revealed by various national surveys (Ministère du Plan & Ministère de la Santé Publique,) the challenges are still immense in the Congolese countryside. It is also worth mentioning that the Congolese rural situation is part of an international context. Although it appears to be a growth area, emphasizing its multifunctionality - its ability to alleviate hunger and poverty, as well as

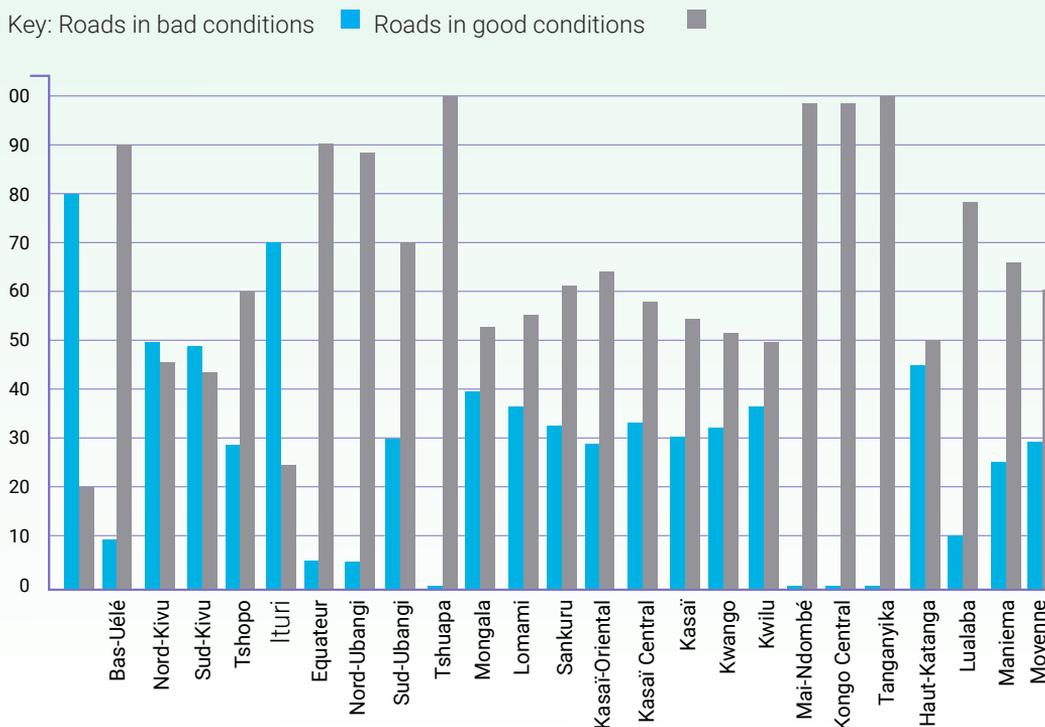
improve rural livelihoods - agriculture has long been neglected for decades. To enhance the rural economy, some of the constraints to be overcome in this sector are as follows:



2.1.2. Environmental deterioration and inadequate basic infrastructure.

The damage caused by the conflicts and prolonged political instability over the years has led to the destruction of majority of national resources including production infrastructure, agricultural access roads, and input supply circuits in rural areas. Similarly, drinking water supply, rural electrification, rural housing, storage, conservation, and processing of agricultural products as well as marketing infrastructure (markets, warehouses, storage warehouses, etc.) are in an advanced state of deterioration and often far from the production areas. This deterioration of infrastructure is a major obstacle to the revival of the agricultural and rural sectors. This general situation is linked to the: (i) poor allocation and non-execution of rehabilitation and maintenance funds in the State budget, (ii) poor capacity to mobilize resources at the level of local authorities and grassroots communities, (iii) non-involvement of beneficiaries in the design, management, and maintenance of infrastructure, and (iv) weak capacity of grassroots communities to organize themselves to take charge of the infrastructure in their areas of responsibility.

Figure 1. Agricultural roads condition per province



Source: 145 Territories Local Development Program (PDL-145) vol1, December 2021

As shown in the graph above, about 70% of the agricultural feeder roads that should be used to boost the production and distribution of agricultural products between the territories and the cities are in bad condition.



2.1.3. Inadequate access to inputs, production materials and support services

Production suffers from difficulties in obtaining quality inputs, the absence of modern techniques and tools, and the inadequate collective groups of smallholder farmers practicing traditional subsistence agriculture. Additionally, food-crop production is hampered by degeneration of plant material, soil degradation, and the lack of innovative technologies that also consider

adaptation to climate change. As for fishing, the main constraints are the shortage of fishing inputs, the lack of knowledge about seasonal fluctuations and fish stocks, and the poor conservation of fishery products.

Competing priorities at the national level may affect the agricultural development in DRC. Inadequate funding can be noted at three levels: (i) the national budget allocation for the sector is relatively low; moreover, the level of disbursement of this allocation is low and the release of funds for both investment and current expenditure is irregular. (ii) The lack of an appropriate incentive framework for private investment due to persistence macroeconomic imbalances that paralyze development in general and agriculture. (iii) The banking system



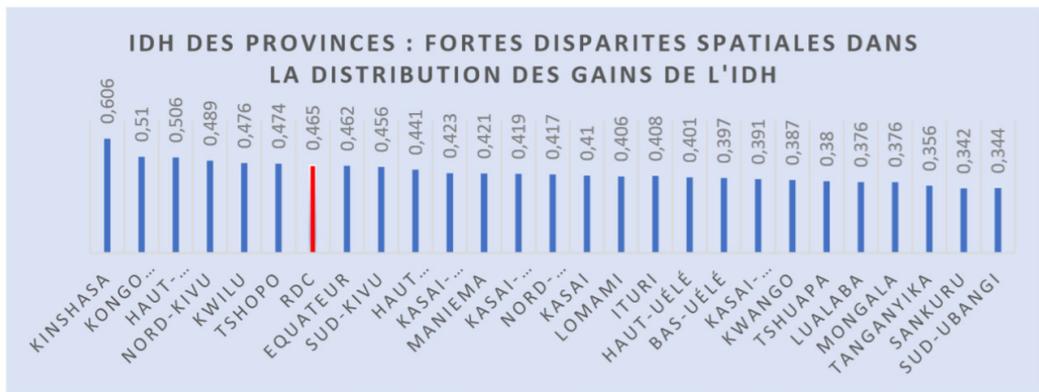
is not adapted to rural activities and these financial institutions are scarcely available in the provinces and almost non-existent in rural areas. In addition, slow establishment of microfinance that is adapted to the needs of small farmers and poor households, results from poor management of the rural areas and a regulatory and legislative framework that is not familiar to potential users.

These gaps also persist in social indicators (access to health care, education, housing, and others), reflecting a higher incidence of multidimensional poverty in rural territories than in urban settings. If these disparities are not actively addressed with well-targeted strategies and interventions, there is a risk of the country experiencing an increasing imbalanced development. The data also show strong disparities in the distribution of Human Development Index (HDI) gains across the country (NHDR 2016). Only six (6) provinces out of twenty-six (26) have an HDI above the national average (0.465). These are Kinshasa (0.606), Central Kongo (0.510), Haut-Katanga (0.506), North Kivu (0.489), Kwilu (0.476) and Tshopo (0.474). The five most remote provinces are Sankuru (0.342), South Ubangi (0.344), Tanganyika (0.356), Mongala (0.375) and Lualaba (0.376).

2.1.4. Significant income disparities between urban and rural areas

The national statistical institute in DRC estimates that the average per capita income is two to three times higher in cities among the rural poor (INS, 2019)¹.

Figure 2. Human Development Index disaggregated by province



Source: PNUD 2017

¹ DRC National statistics Intistute. <https://ins-rdc.org/accueil/organisation/>



Weak Institutional Capacity and Governance

The current institutional framework delegates the activities of the agricultural sector across several ministries. However, duplication of responsibilities across various ministries exists, leading to waste of time and resources already very scarce to the State.

It also emerges that the poor definition of roles and responsibilities, the absence of a proper legal and governance framework, the poor capacity for planning, coordination, and integration of actions, constitute a set of factors that hinder the flourishing of the agricultural sector, thus hindering the development of rural areas.

Table 1. Socio-economic and governance profile of the DRC

Population	98.37 millions (Annuaire Statistique RDC- 2020, INS)
GDP (2020, current US\$)	USD 57.5 billion
Poverty incidence (\$1.9, in 2020 Purchasing Power Parity) 98.37 million (statistical yearbook) RDC- 2020, INS)	74.7%
Human development index	0.480(2019)
Incidence of poverty (\$1.25, in 2020 Purchasing Power Parity)	56.2%
Life expectancy at birth	60.7years
Gross enrolment ratio in primary education (2019)	113%
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births	74.5%
Urban poverty	52.5%
Rural poverty	69.0%
Youth unemployment (15-24 years)	15.5% (ILO)
electrification rate	16 % (2018)
Access to drinking water	38% (2018)
Government revenue	9.6%GDP on average
Public debt	14%GDP (2019)
Budget deficit	4% in 2021 and 2.5% in 2022 (ADB)
GDP per capita (2019, constant \$)	470 US
Mo Ibrahim Governance Index	49th/54th (2019)

Source: Adopted from ILO. 2017, INS RDC. 2020, Ibrahim Index of African Governance IIAG.2019

In view of the above, the DRC is a country with an enormous potential for wealth made up of a wide array of diversified natural resources, which could constitute vectors for growth and sustainable development. Moreover, the performance in terms of economic growth is non-inclusive and unequally redistributed among the different strata of the population as well as the geographical areas.





2.1.5. Unemployment and migration in DRC

According to the annual report (2012) of the Central Bank of Congo, the average unemployment rate has evolved between 49.1% and 60.8% between 2002 and 2010, returning to 50.3% in 2012. World Bank (2023), note that 4.5% of the total labor force remain unemployed in DRC. Sumata Claude (2020) argues that economic growth and the number of entrepreneurs are the main determinants of youth employment in the DRC, for the period 2002-2018. The Congolese formal market consists mainly of small and medium-sized Congolese enterprises and provides limited employment owing to inadequate infrastructure and public services, limited access to finance, regulatory barriers, business monopolies, and uncertain land rights (Herderschee et al. 2012, cited in Sumata Claude, 2020). In addition, there is a deficit in quality of human capital or an inadequacy of required professional skills and this situation reflects the difficulty recent graduates face in finding a decent job (Kuma, 2020). The government's ambition to reduce poverty through job creation as expressed in official documents, notably the 2005 and 2011 Strategic Paper for Growth and Poverty Reduction (SPGPR), had not yet translated into a real employment policy targeting young people. Thus, international labour office in 2017 reported that unemployment was predominantly an urban issue, primarily impacting young people aged 15-24, with an estimated rate of 15.85%, compared to 9.37% for adults (ILO, 2017).



2.2. Social Challenges

There are several major socio-economic reasons to prioritize the development of rural areas. Indeed, these areas are home to more than half of the country's population. Currently, rural areas are in fact less well equipped with basic infrastructure, unlike cities and urban centers which have hospitals, health centers, water supply, schools, universities, roads and electricity supply. The mapping of the country's socio-economic infrastructure and physical and financial capital reveals a strong bias in favor of urban centers as shown in the subsequent sections.

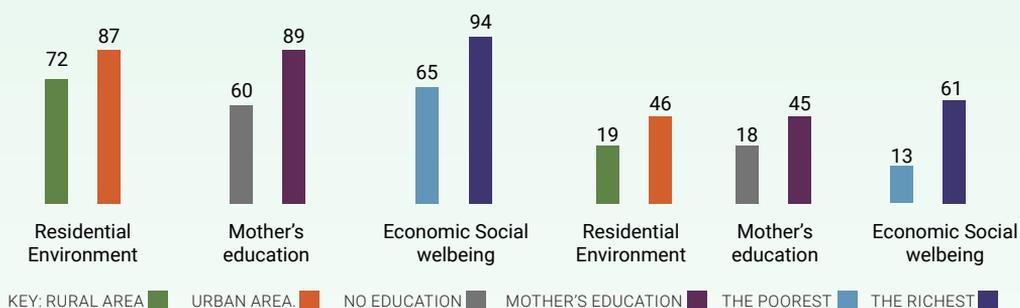
Below are some of the key social challenges:



2.2.1. Access to education

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics ([UIS data](#)), the primary school completion rate was at 79 percent in 2021 for girls and 86 percent for boys. DRC has made significant progress, particularly in primary school enrollment, for both boys and girls. The gross and net enrollment rates have been rising steadily for the period between 2000 and 2020, although there are disparities between urban and rural areas. This situation is explained by the low income of most Congolese households and the under-investment in school infrastructure and equipment and in qualified personnel in rural areas. This is shown in figure 4 below divided in two sections:

Figure 3. Primary Net Attendance Rate and Secondary Net Attendance Rate in percentage



Source: The challenges of education in DRC: A focus on girls. UNICEF 2020



2.2.2. Urbanization and housing issues

The DRC population was estimated to be 92.85 million inhabitants as of 2020, but disproportionately distributed all over the country. Kinshasa has a high population density, with 577 inhabitants per square kilometer, due to the rural exodus linked to conflict and the deterioration of living conditions in rural areas, as well as the concentration of economic, school, university, and health infrastructures, as well as administrative and political institutions in urban areas. This situation therefore favors the continuous proliferation of slums around large urban centers with a vulnerable population, resulting in poor housing conditions.



2.2.3. Health situation

The country's health situation remains precarious, as funding for the health sector remains relatively low. Indeed, the 2017 health budget amounted to 1056.32 billion CDF (8.3% of the total budget) and was only 44.9% executed. While the country faces a

concentration of health care personnel in the large cities of Kinshasa and the urban centers of the provinces, there is a severe lack of health care centers in rural areas. Expectant women for instance are compelled to travel long distances to the nearest maternity hospital. This challenge has thus led to high child mortality and maternal deaths especially in the rural areas. Many people die from common and curable diseases due to lack of public services, infrastructure, facilities, and access to care, especially in rural areas.



2.2.4. Access to safe drinking water and to sanitation

In DRC, a smaller proportion of the Congolese populations have access to drinking water, and enjoy favorable hygiene conditions in a healthy environment. In 2015, only 52% of the population had access to an improved water point. It is important to note that the strong disparities between urban and rural areas or access rates were recorded as follows: 31% in urban areas versus 81% in rural areas (Dabire J.M., ADB, 2018). Only 4% of households in rural areas use

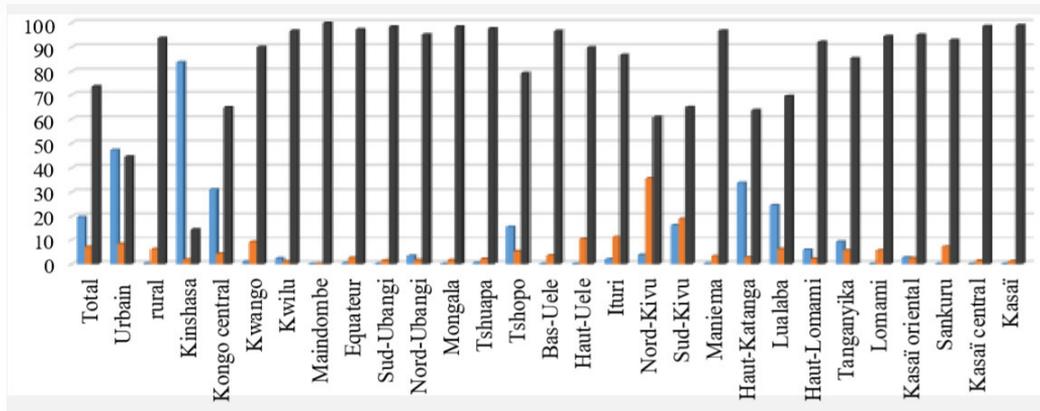


healthy sanitation facilities, while the number is 36% in urban areas. This situation is the cause of the spread of many diseases and mortality including among children. UNICEF report indicates that 17% of deaths of children under 5 years would be caused by diarrhea diseases.

 **2.2.5. Access to electricity.**

Electrification remains quite low in the 145 territories of the DRC. According to the *Territories Local Development Program (2021)*, despite a huge potential of 100,000 Megawatts, representing 37% of the African potential and 13% of the world potential, only the provinces of Kinshasa (59.5%), ex-Katanga (17.7%), and Central Kongo (16.5%) have electrification rates above the national average (16%). The rest of the provinces have rates as low as 4.3%. Significant disparities in access to electricity also persist between cities (31%) and rural areas (1%). Most small and medium-sized enterprises consider the inadequate electricity supply to be the major obstacle to the sustainability of their operations and the development of economic activities.

Figure 4. Electricity supply per province.



 **2.2.6. Inequality**

The refers to a difference in the distribution of social resources. This concept covers several aspects, including the distribution of income, conditions of access to credit, housing, health care, unequal access to jobs. In the DRC, the evolution of inequality between households is stronger in urban areas, but also evident in rural areas.





2.3. Environmental challenges

With an estimated population of just above 100 million² and a population growth rate of 3% per year, the DRC faces serious problems in managing the human environment. This is aggravated by the state of poverty of these populations, 53% of which live in rural areas³, and by the dilapidation of basic infrastructure and the impacts felt post-conflict.

The impact of climate change is also a major concern for the DRC. For example, in recent years, many farmers particularly in the Congo Basin, have expressed concern that greenhouse gas emissions are causing a decline in agricultural production⁴. This drop in production is caused by the disruption of the agricultural calendar, linked to excess rainfall that weakens plants or by prolonged droughts resulting from uncontrolled deforestation. Floods are recurrent, especially in large coastal cities such as Kinshasa. Climate change factors can also be driving the impacts on health. For instance, water-borne diseases, associated with heavy rainfall and stagnant waters may be more widespread and severe.

Environmental problems are not only caused by deforestation, but also by pollution, erosion, poorly managed transportation, and poor solid waste management.

Statistics show that Kinshasa and other major cities in DRC do not meet the threshold for minimum living and environmental standards (World Bank 2024). This problem in Kinshasa is quite complex and requires an effective policy framework. The poor management of household waste has negative impacts on the environment and health: air pollution, water pollution, production of greenhouse gases, proliferation of micro-bacteria, reproduction of infested vectors, contamination of food.

On the other hand, poor management of land is also noted, due to the occupation of the low zones, thus making the flow of water difficult; dwellings on hills in urban periphery weaken the grounds and create erosion issues.

Currently, the protection of the environment and the fight against climate change are structuring elements of sustainable economic and social development. The SPGPR-2 2011-2015 had incorporated a new pillar structured around two main components: (i) managing and protecting the environment and natural resources, which involves sustainable management of the environment and sustainable management of renewable natural resources, and (ii) combating climate change, which involves mitigation and adaptation.

2 UNFPA, "World Population Dashboard Congo, the Democratic Republic of the", 2023. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/CD>.

3 World Bank Data, "Rural Population (% of total population) - Congo, Dem. Rep.", 2023. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=CD>.

4 Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), "Understanding greenhouse gas emissions in the Congo Basin: The land-use sector", CIFOR Infobrief No. 340, 2021. Available at <https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7997/>.





3. Assessment of Capacity and Stakeholder Engagement on Urban-Rural Linkages

The analysis carried out aimed to determine the level which governmental institutions have the necessary capacity to integrate URLs in policies and strategies. Therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of the governmental institutions was diagnosed to inform key decision makers and to facilitate effective decision making. It also aimed to gather respondents' perspectives on the stakeholders engaged in addressing priority challenges, particularly in urban-rural linkages. It focused on identifying key actors and vulnerable stakeholders to ensure inclusivity in the decision-making process.

Administered online, the assessment received 53 responses, (see the questionnaire in annex 1 and raw outcomes in annex 2. Nonetheless, this sample size is deemed satisfactory for comprehensive data analysis. This chapter provides a synthesis of the responses on urban-rural linkages challenges, the level of stakeholders engagement and nature and extent or capacities available or needed for urban-rural linkages at different levels. The chapter further provided recommendations based on the issues emerging from the survey.



3.1. Urban-rural linkages Challenges

- » **Poverty and Marginalization:** Respondents unanimously identified prevalent poverty and marginalization in rural areas, contributing to demographic decline.
- » **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Inadequate road infrastructure emerged as a significant obstacle to rural development.
- » **Access to Basic Services:** Challenges were highlighted concerning access to essential services such as healthcare, vocational training, energy, water, and sanitation.
- » **Spatial Disparities:** Disparities in socio-community facilities, especially in rural provinces, were noted.

3.2. Priority Challenges Requiring Attention

- » **Uncontrolled Urban Growth:** Respondents emphasized the need to address unchecked urban expansion due to rural migration.
- » **Spatial Disparities:** Addressing disparities in basic services in rural-dominated provinces emerged as a key priority.
- » **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Improving road infrastructure was deemed crucial for rural development.

3.3. Assessment of Stakeholder Engagement



National-Level Ministries: The majority of respondents acknowledged the significant involvement of national-level ministries in decision-making.



Regional or Sub-National Authorities: Views were diverse, with significant acknowledgment of regional authorities' involvement.



Local Authorities: Respondents recognized active participation of local authorities in shaping national policies.



Universities: Data indicated a lack of university involvement in government decision-making processes.



Civil Society: The majority perceived active contributions of civil society to national political decision-making.



Community-Based Groups: Acknowledgment of active participation, although some dissenting views were noted.



Private Sector: Majority recognized the active involvement of the private sector in shaping national policies.



International Development Organizations: Widespread recognition of their significant role in national decision-making.



Marginalized Stakeholders: Vulnerable groups and women were perceived to be underrepresented in decision-making processes.



3.4. Recommendations on stakeholder engagement

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance stakeholder involvement and address capacity gaps in urban-rural linkages in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):

- » Strengthen collaboration and coordination among national-level ministries to ensure cohesive decision-making processes.
- » Develop mechanisms for regular dialogue and consultation with diverse stakeholders to incorporate a wide range of perspectives in policy formulation.

Regional or Sub-National Authorities:

- » Provide capacity-building support to regional authorities to enhance their effectiveness in addressing urban-rural challenges.
- » Foster inter-regional collaboration to promote knowledge sharing and best practices in urban-rural development initiatives.

Local Authorities:

- » Empower local authorities through capacity-building programs and sufficient resource allocation to enable them to play a more active role in decision-making processes.

- » Facilitate platforms for increased engagement between local authorities and communities to ensure inclusive and participatory governance.

Universities:

- » Establish partnerships between universities and government agencies to integrate academic research and expertise into policy development processes.
- » Encourage the participation of universities in government-led initiatives through targeted outreach and capacity-building efforts.

Civil Society:

- » Support civil society organizations through capacity-building programs to strengthen their advocacy and policy engagement capacities.
- » Promote dialogue and collaboration between civil society and government institutions to facilitate their meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Community-Based Groups:

- » Provide training and resources to community-based groups to enhance their capacity to actively engage in decision-making processes.
- » Foster partnerships between community-based groups and government agencies to co-design and implement initiatives that address local needs effectively.



Private Sector:

- » Foster an enabling environment for private sector engagement through the development of supportive policies and regulations.
- » Facilitate public-private partnerships to leverage private sector expertise and resources for sustainable urban-rural development projects.



International Development Organizations:

- » Strengthen collaboration between international development organizations and local stakeholders to ensure alignment with national priorities and strategies.
- » Support capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the technical and managerial capabilities of local institutions to effectively partner with international organizations.



Marginalized Stakeholders:

- » Prioritize the inclusion of vulnerable groups and women in decision-making processes through targeted outreach and capacity-building initiatives.
- » Implement policies and programs that address systemic barriers and promote the meaningful participation of marginalized stakeholders in urban-rural development initiatives.



3.5. Capacity assessment at different levels.

The survey conducted in May 2022 identified significant human capacity gaps affecting urban-rural linkages in the DRC. These gaps are multifaceted, encompassing deficiencies in skills, knowledge, and expertise, with a notable emphasis on shortcomings in data management and technological proficiency.

At the **local level**, respondents voiced concerns over the shortage of staff and human resources, pointing to a pressing need for capacity-building initiatives tailored to address community-specific challenges. Regionally, similar sentiments were echoed, underlining the necessity for enhancing skills and expertise to effectively navigate the complexities of urban-rural dynamics within larger geographic areas.

On a **national scale**, the survey highlighted overarching institutional and organizational capacity gaps. These include limited cross-sectoral collaboration, hindering coordinated efforts to address urban-rural disparities comprehensively. Additionally, deficiencies in collaboration between different administrative levels were observed, exacerbating challenges in policy implementation and resource allocation.

Financial capacity gaps emerged as significant barriers across all levels, with insufficient budget allocation and inadequate mechanisms for integrating external funding sources hindering sustainable development initiatives. Addressing these gaps requires strategic interventions to bolster financial management practices and



enhance resource mobilization efforts.

Technical and data capacity gaps further underscored the challenges faced in effectively harnessing information for informed decision-making. Issues such as relevant data limitations, incomplete data collection mechanisms, and inadequate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure pose significant hurdles to evidence-based policymaking and program implementation at all levels.

3.6. Recommendations for capacity enhancement

Based on the findings from the survey on capacity gaps affecting urban-rural linkages in the DRC, the following recommendations are proposed:



Local Level Capacity Building:

- » Implement tailored capacity-building initiatives at the local level to address specific skill and knowledge gaps identified by communities.
- » Provide training programs and technical assistance to enhance data management and ICT proficiency among local stakeholders.



Regional Capacity Enhancement:

- » Establish regional capacity-building programs to strengthen skills and expertise necessary for addressing urban-rural dynamics within larger geographic areas.
- » Foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among regional stakeholders to leverage best practices and resources

for sustainable development.



National-Level Institutional Strengthening:

- » Promote cross-sectoral collaboration through policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms that facilitate coordinated efforts to address urban-rural disparities.
- » Develop guidelines and protocols for effective collaboration between different administrative levels to improve policy implementation and resource allocation processes.



Financial Management Improvement:

- » Enhance budgetary processes to ensure adequate allocation of resources for urban-rural development initiatives at all levels.
- » Establish mechanisms for incorporating and incentivizing external funding sources, such as public-private partnerships, to supplement government budgets and support sustainable development projects.



Technical and Data Capacity Building:

- » Address data-related challenges by improving data collection mechanisms and investing in ICT infrastructure to enhance data management capabilities.
- » Provide training and technical support to stakeholders on data analysis and utilization for evidence-based policymaking and program implementation.



Comprehensive Capacity Development Strategy:

- » Develop a comprehensive capacity development strategy that addresses human, institutional, financial, and technical challenges holistically.
- » Engage with stakeholders at all levels to co-design and implement capacity-building initiatives that are responsive to local needs and priorities.





4. Assessment of the National Policies

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has developed several national policies, which have continued to address the complex dynamics of urban-rural relationships and fostering inclusive sustainable development. Some have been validated while others are still in draft or yet to be implemented. These policies, analysed within the context of urban-rural linkages, encompass various thematic areas.

Here is an analysis of some policies:



145 Territories Local Development Program (PDL-145T) Volume 1 (2021):

The PDL-145T targets poverty alleviation and socioeconomic development in rural areas through infrastructure enhancement, support

for production activities, capacity building, and effective monitoring mechanisms. Some relevant actions include:

- » Improve rural populations' access to basic socio-economic infrastructure and services.
- » Promote the development of local and rural economies, notably through the promotion of rural entrepreneurship, the strengthening of agricultural productivity, the enhancement of agricultural production and the improvement of rural entrepreneurs' access to financial services.
- » Strengthen local institutional capacity.



- » Develop and implement a geo-referenced monitoring and evaluation system.



National Land Use Planning Policy (2021):

This policy focuses on creating a conducive spatial configuration for population development, effective resource utilization, and environmental preservation. It emphasizes infrastructure development, social redistribution, urban framework strengthening, and environmental sustainability measures. Some relevant actions include:

- » Development and agro-rural planning and strengthening of urban-rural complementarities.
- » Collaboration in the realization of a specific study on the agricultural potential.
- » By 2050, the specific study on the agricultural potential is carried out. Collaboration in the creation of integrated development centres.
- » By 2050, twenty-six integrated development centres are created, one per province.
- » Contributions to the elaboration of sectoral policies (forestry, mining, land, agriculture, tourism, water, energy, rural development, hydrocarbons, transport and communication routes, urban planning, infrastructures, etc.) with a territorial vocation and related to

the management of natural resources with the aim of having by 2050, twelve policies with a territorial vocation developed.



National Strategic Plan for Economic and Social Development (PNSD 2019-2023):

The PNSD outlines a comprehensive vision for national development, emphasizing governance improvement, economic diversification, social well-being enhancement, infrastructure development, and climate resilience. It aims to combat poverty and achieve sustainable development goals. One relevant action is the construction of infrastructure and consideration of agricultural activities and harmonization of urban and rural activities in the future.



National Land Policy (Draft, 2018):

This draft policy seeks to enhance land governance to foster national cohesion, food security, and economic value creation in relation to land. It emphasizes efficient and effective land use and exploitation of land-dependent resources for sustainable development. Some of the relevant actions include:

- » Capacity building of ETDs.
- » Level of territorialization of public policies.
- » Taking charge of spatial management in economic policies.
- » Consideration of the local community as an autonomous development



actor and an essential partner in the implementation of public policies.



Strategic Paper for Growth and Poverty Reduction (SPGPR) Volume 1 (2011):

The SPGPR aims to revitalize growth, strengthen institutions, protect the environment, and promote decentralization to transition DRC into a middle-income country. It emphasizes poverty reduction and sustainable development. Some relevant actions are:

- » Distribute land functions and competencies among the three levels of governance (central, provincial, and local).
- » Empower, train, and equip local authorities and administrations in charge of land management.
- » Restore equity in access to and ownership of land at the different local, urban, and rural levels
- » Organize a legal review process of large-scale land titles granted on rural land
- » Through simplified planning at local levels, plan the distribution of rural areas for agricultural, pastoral, forestry, and local development purposes

- » Improve public participation in decision-making processes on land, especially those leading to the allocation of rural land and its allocation to third parties.
- » Establish capacity building programs for women and youth at the provincial and local territorial entity levels.
- » Protect rural populations from the many dangers of losing access to the land capital necessary for their livelihood,
- » Strengthen the legal security of land rights in rural areas, using participatory mapping, the issuance of collective titles to local communities and indigenous peoples, noting individual rights.



Other policies (see table 2)

As part of the project, an assessment was conducted to review DRC's policies, strategies and frameworks related to urban-rural linkages. The aim was to understand the frameworks and how these frameworks propose actions towards enhancing urban-rural relationships. Policy recommendations are then provided to enhance the effectiveness of the policies, strategies and frameworks.



Table 2: Other Policies that addressed urban -rural linkages in DRC

Policy	Objectives	Actions relevant to URL
<p>National Agricultural Investment Plan (PNIA) 2013-2020</p> 	<p>Reduce poverty, ensure food and nutritional security for the Congolese population, develop agricultural and agro-industrial sectors as one of the main pillars of economic growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Strengthen agriculture to enable citizens to access food at acceptable prices in both urban and rural areas * Respect the DRC constitution which establishes three levels of power. * Institutional strengthening of the ETDs. * Institutionalization of agricultural decentralization
<p>DSCRCP Second Generation, September 2011</p> 	<p>Growth, Job Creation and Climate Change Impact based on four pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance and peace, 2. Diversification 3. Economic diversification, accelerated growth and job creation, 4. Improving access to basic social services and human capital, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Consideration of the local community as an autonomous development actor and an essential partner in the implementation of public policies. * The place of decentralization in the DRC's development vision

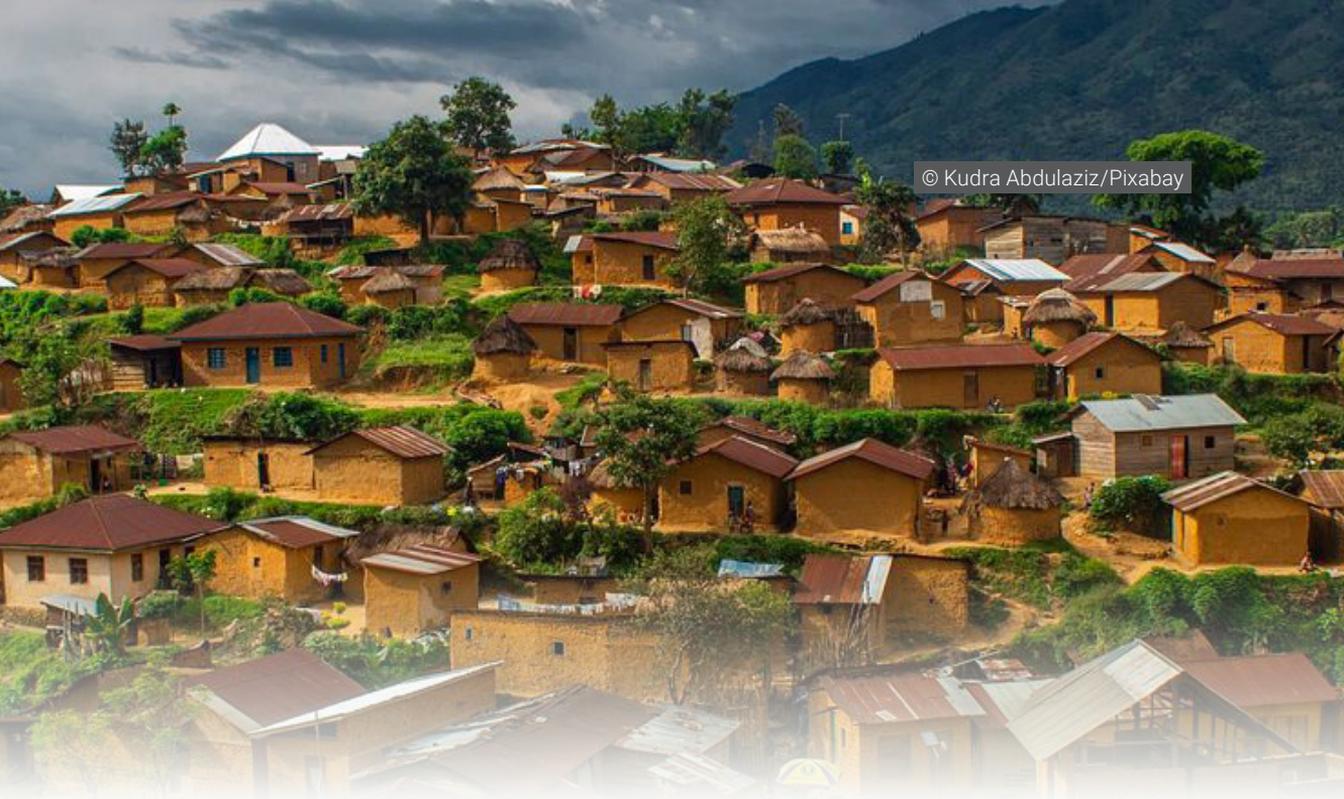
<p>Decentralization policy and its components which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Legal framework for decentralization * Constitution of the DRC of 18 February 2006 * Law n° 08/012 of July 31, 2008, on the fundamental principles relating to the free administration of the provinces * Strategic Framework for the Implementation of Decentralization, June 11, 2009 	<p>The decentralization policy covers the legal framework, the administrative division of the State, the resources allocated to local authorities, the mandate of local authorities. It defines administrative divisions, resource allocation mechanisms, and mandates for local authorities to promote autonomy, governance, and service delivery at the local level. It aims to enhance local development and participatory governance.</p>	<p>Through projects based on inter-communality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * promote solidarity and cooperation between the contracting local authorities. * ensure the coordination and harmonization of local development within the associated communities. * pool the financial resources of the local authorities concerned, with a view to building infrastructures of common interest, the cost of which could not be borne by a single commune or rural community. * carry out more effectively economic and social development actions of local interest, falling within the general or specific competencies of the local authorities.
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4.1. Policy Recommendations

Some of the policy recommendations based on the analysis include the following which if effectively implemented, would promote urban-rural linkages and foster inclusive and sustainable territorial development.

-  **Strengthen Implementation:** Ensure effective implementation of policies, strategies and frameworks through coordinated efforts across sectors and levels of governance, enhancing accountability and transparency.
-  **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Foster collaboration between government, civil society, private sector stakeholders, and local communities to ensure inclusive decision-making and implementation processes.
-  **Improve Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish robust mechanisms for monitoring progress, evaluating impact, and adjusting policies to address emerging challenges, enhancing data collection and analysis capabilities.
-  **Enhance Capacity Development:** Invest in capacity-building initiatives to enhance skills, knowledge, and expertise at all levels of governance, focusing on training programs and institutional strengthening.
-  **Address Resource Gaps:** Allocate sufficient resources and mobilize external funding to support policy implementation, infrastructure development, and service delivery, promoting efficient resource management.
-  **Prioritize Inclusive Development:** Ensure policies prioritize marginalized communities, women, and vulnerable groups to promote inclusive and equitable development outcomes, mainstreaming gender and social inclusion considerations. By implementing these recommendations, DRC can effectively leverage its policy framework to promote sustainable urban-rural linkages, foster socioeconomic development, and achieve its development goals.





5. Conclusion

This report provides an analysis of policies, strategies and frameworks related to urban-rural linkages in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The report reviews how these policies, strategies and frameworks have supported the efforts to attain inclusive territorial development. From a questionnaire sent to several respondents, the report presents analysis of the status of institutional capacity, as well as level of stakeholder engagement in decision-making related to integrating urban-rural linkages in policies, strategies, and frameworks. The report also provides policy recommendations to enhance institutional capacity as well as stakeholder engagement in

the process of integrating urban-rural linkages as part of enhancing inclusive territorial development.

The report also makes a call for the revision of existing policies to further integrate urban-rural linkages, while considering the UN-Habitat Guiding Principles on Urban-Rural Linkages. Ultimately, the report underscores the indispensability of concerted and holistic efforts aimed at tackling the multifaceted challenges inherent in rural development, advocating for a sustainable development paradigm that engenders resilient and sustainable urban-rural dynamics in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



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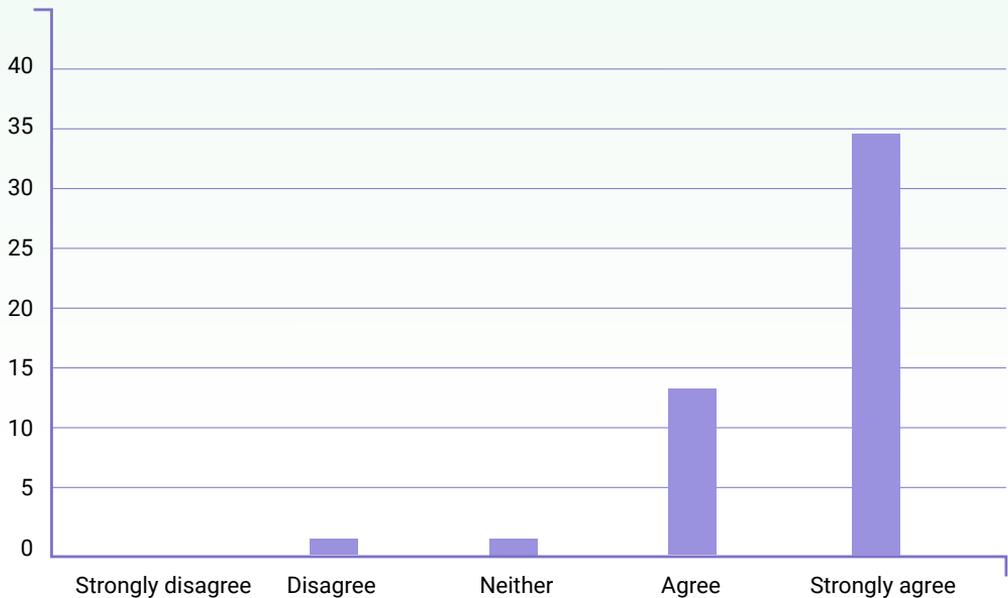


Annexes

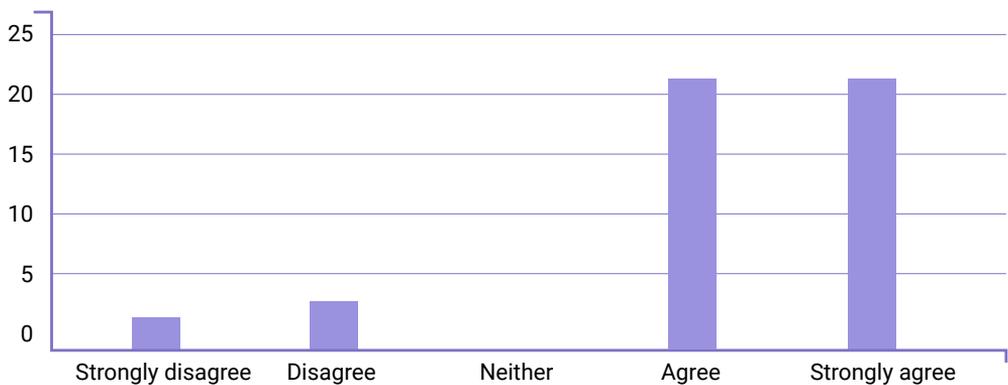
5.1. Raw survey outcomes

Categories of stakeholders significantly involved in the decision-making process

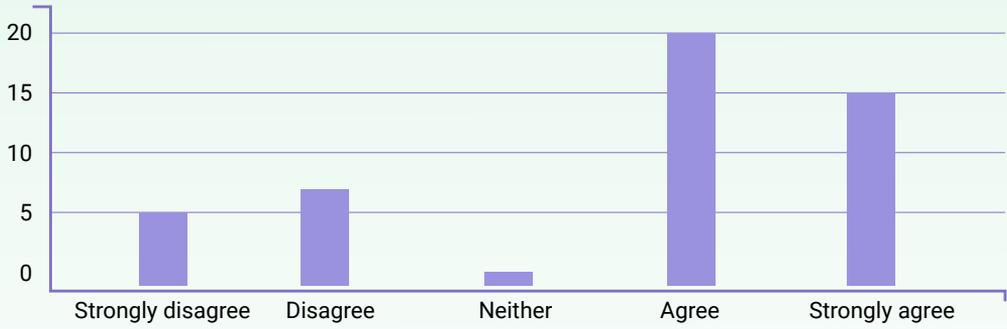
- » National level ministries and other national level organizations and agencies



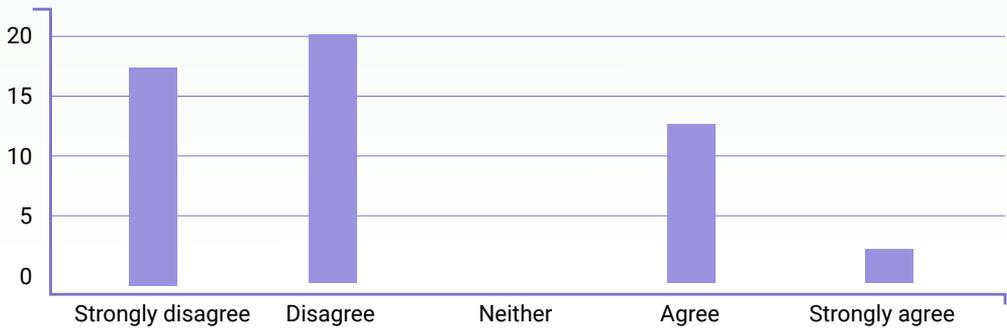
- » Regional/subnational governmental authorities



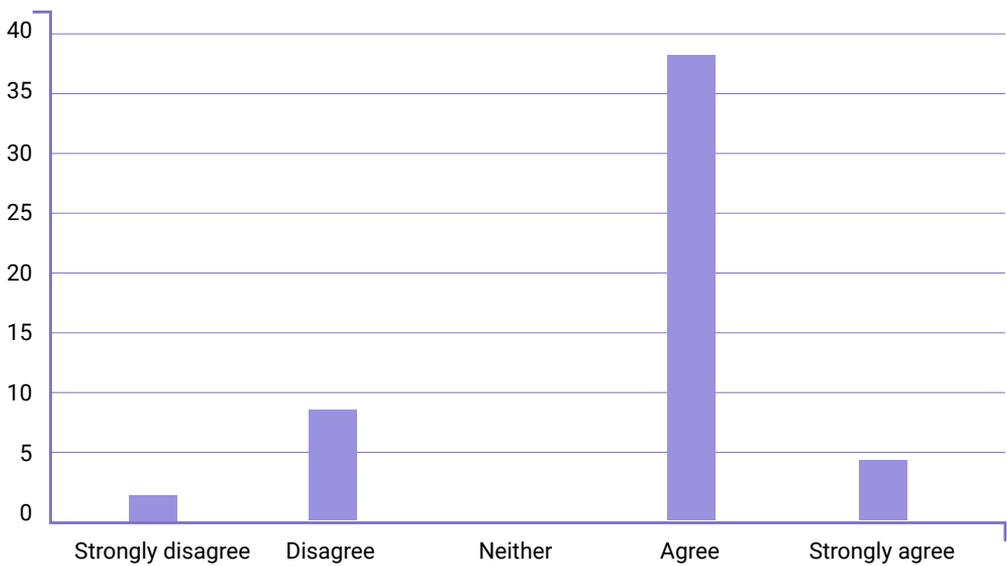
» Local authorities/municipalities



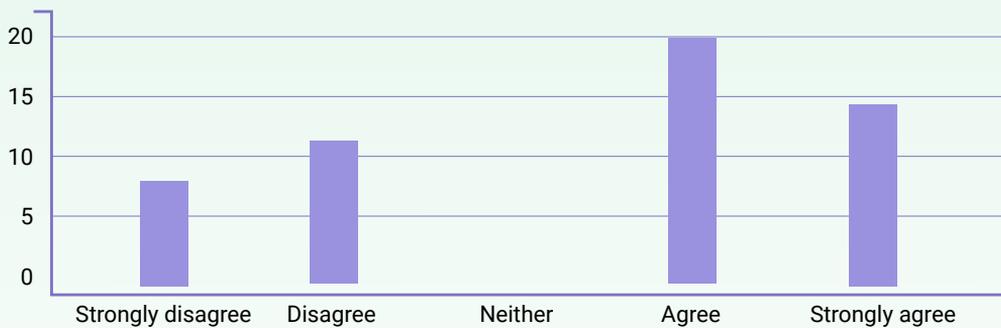
» Universities



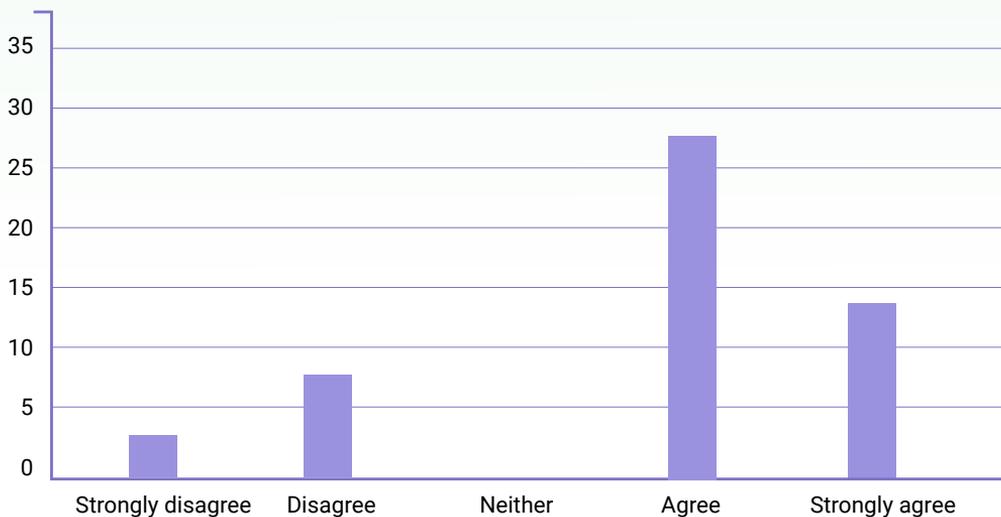
» Civil society



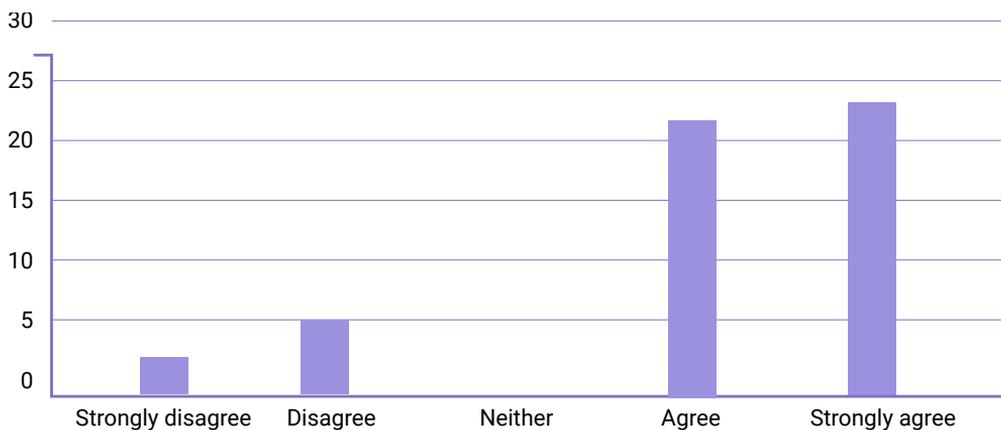
» Community-based groups



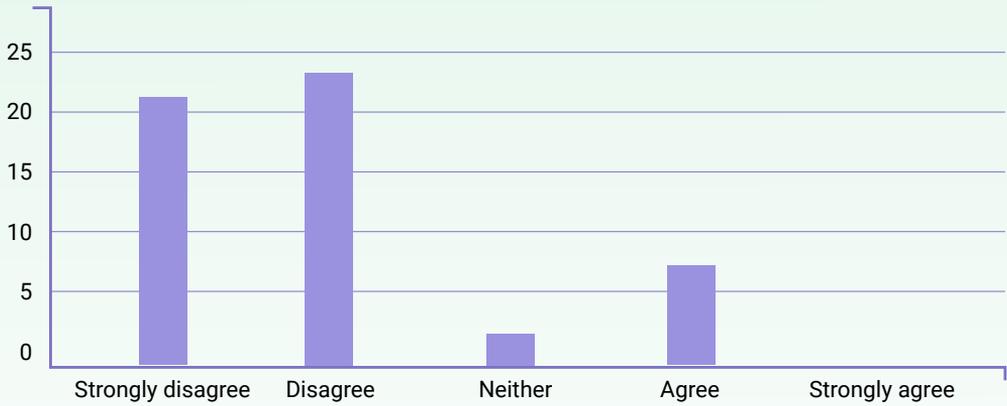
» The private sector.



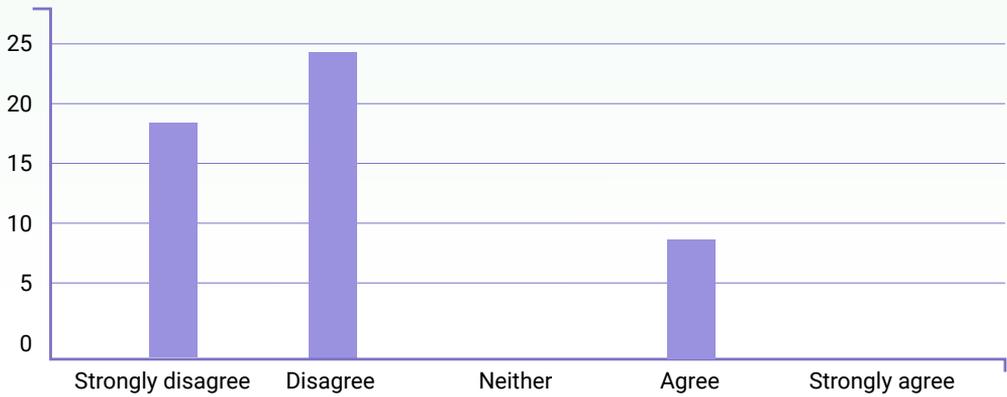
» International development organizations



» Vulnerable people (the disables, the poor, young people from disadvantaged areas, etc.)

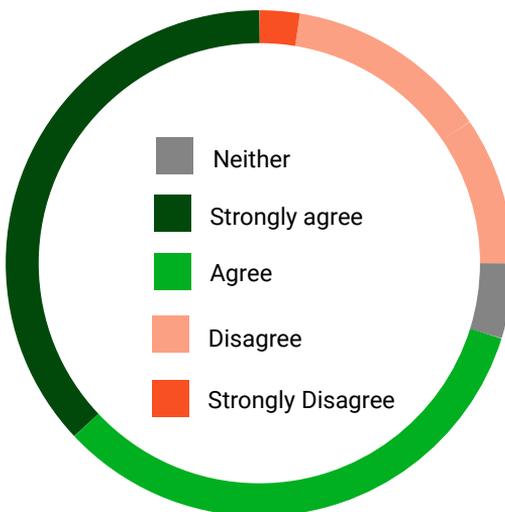


» Inclusion of women in a meaningful way in decision-making.

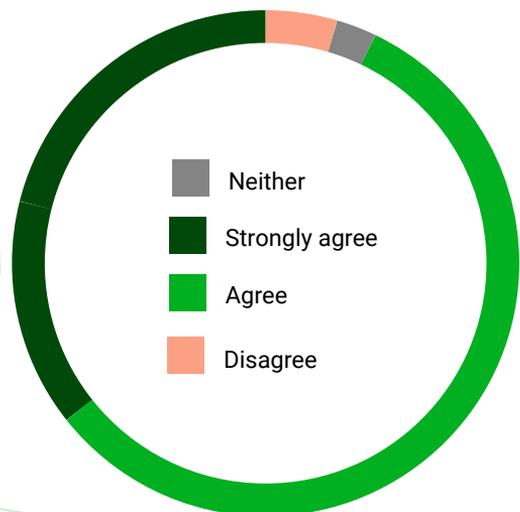


Human capacity gaps

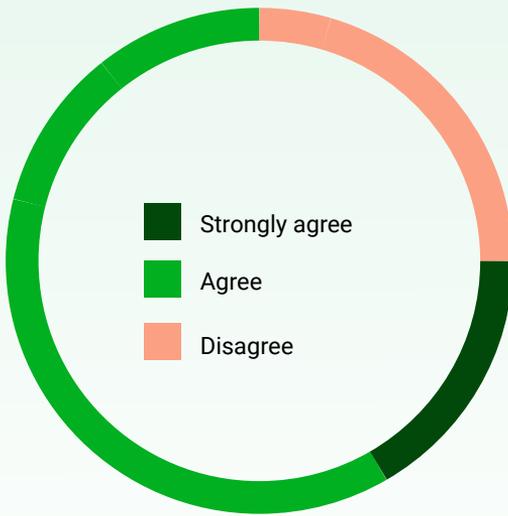
» Inadequate skills/knowledge/ awareness/approach



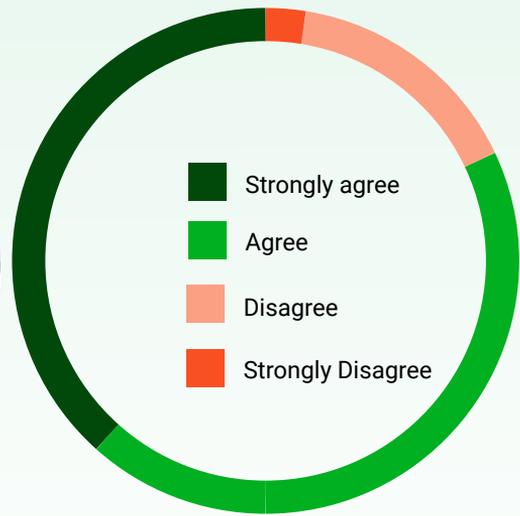
» Lack of expertise/data management capabilities



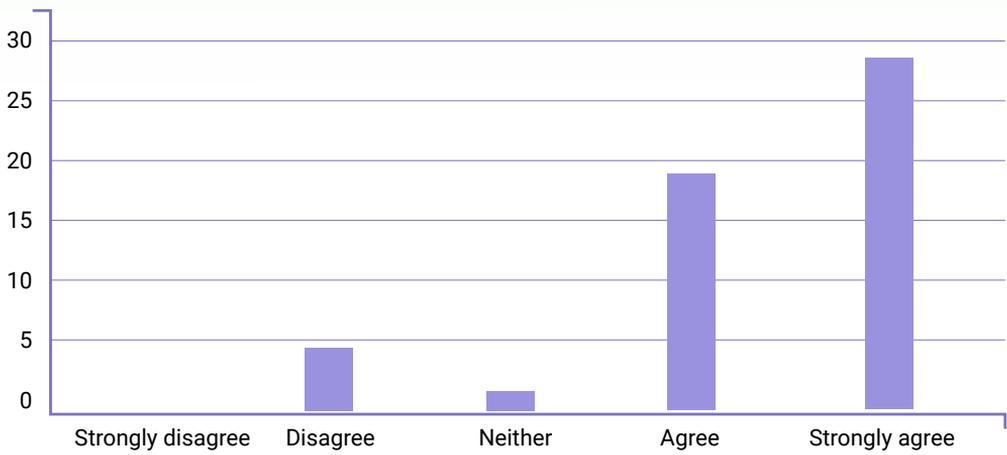
» Lack of ICT expertise



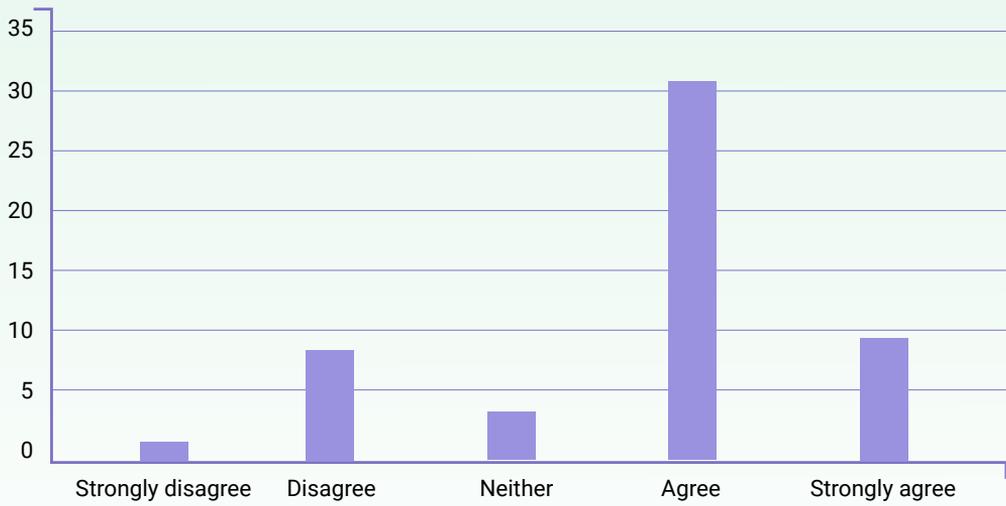
» Lack of staff/human resources



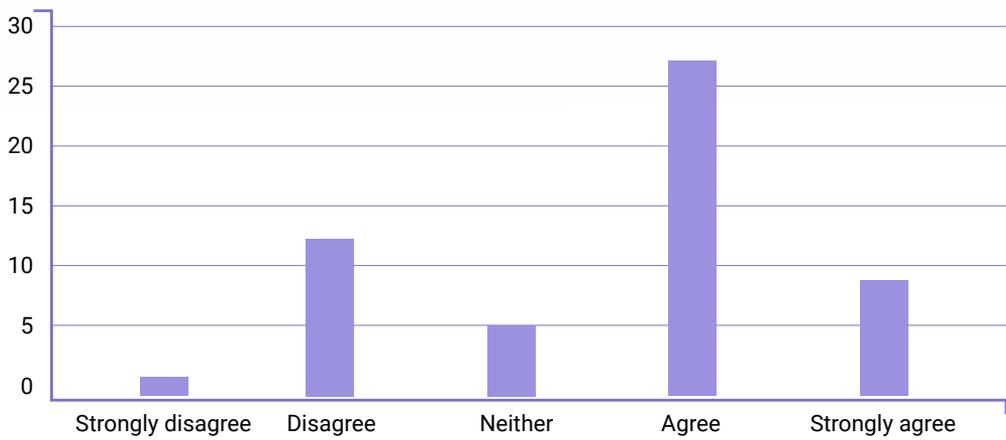
» Human capacity gaps at the local level



» Human capacity gaps at the regional level

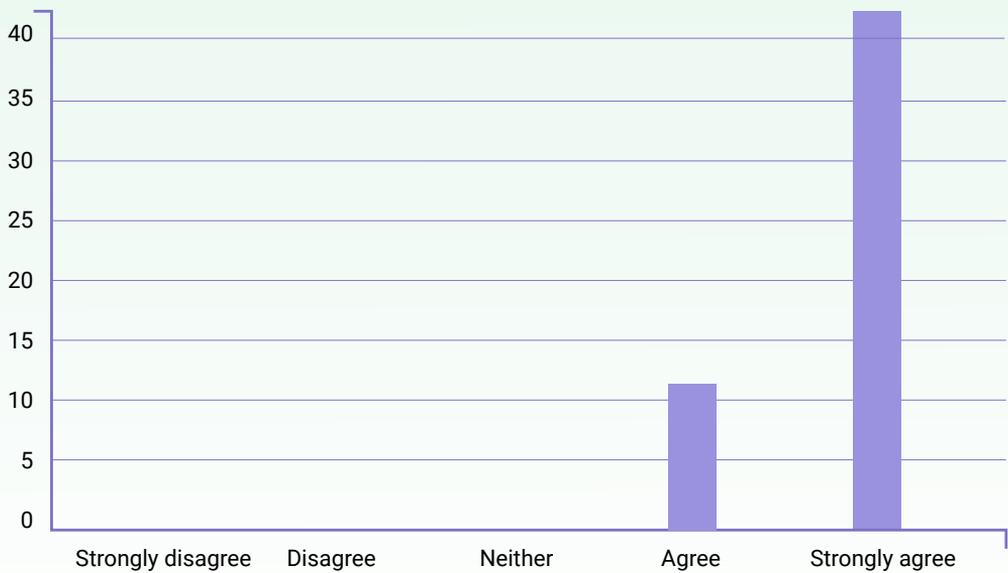


» Human capacity gaps at the national level

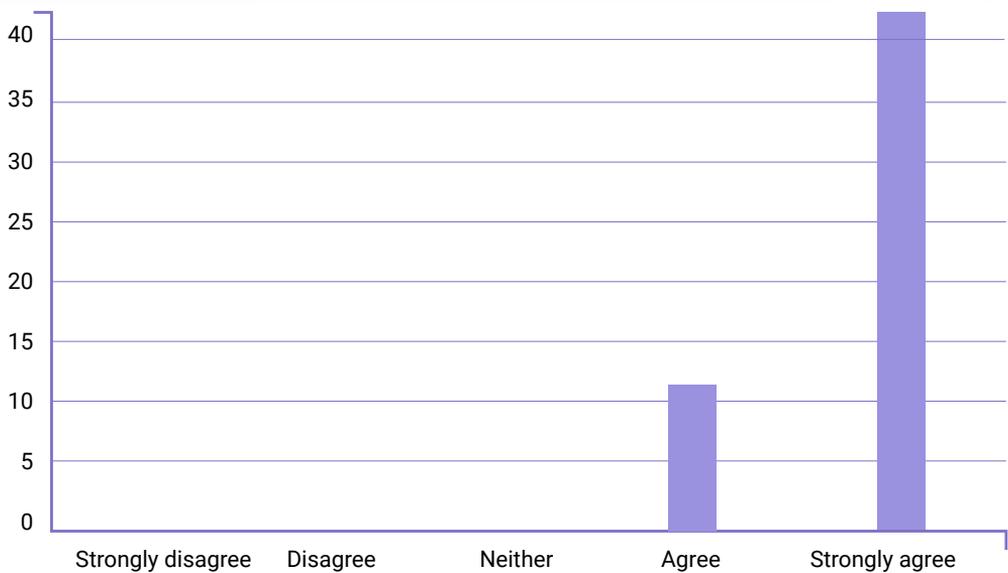


Institutional and organizational capacity gaps

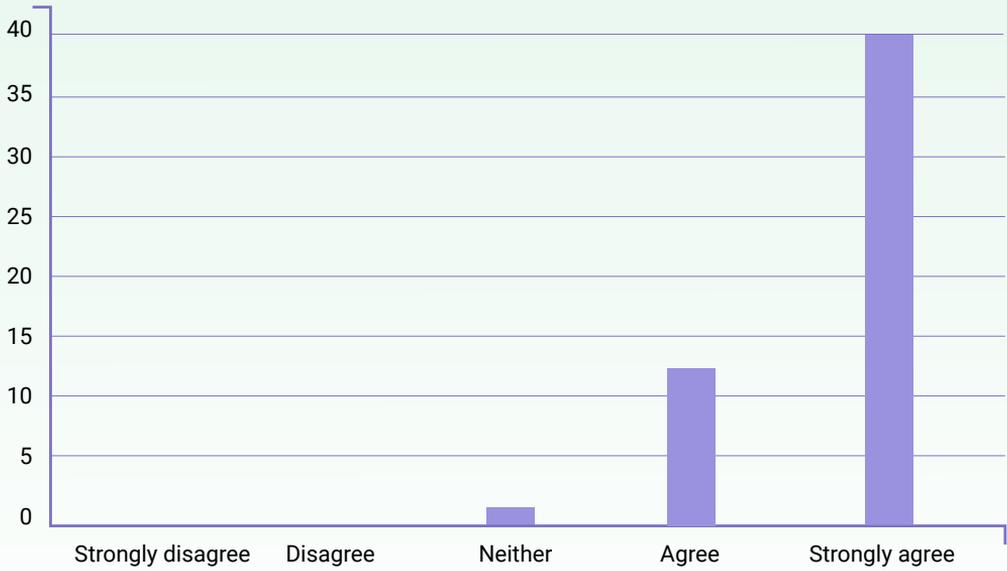
» Limited cross-sectoral collaboration/ coordination between plans/policies.



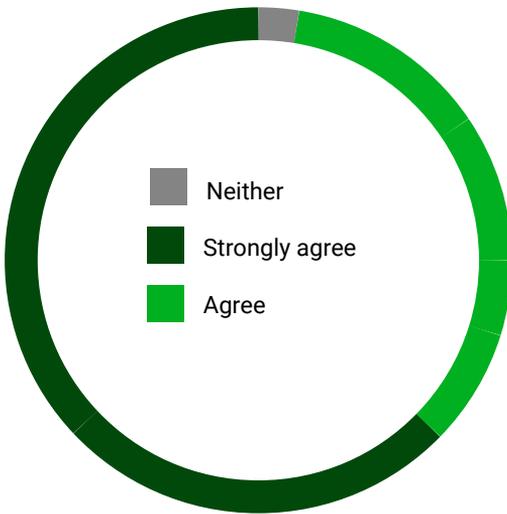
» Limited collaboration/coordination between levels (top-down decision-making approach)



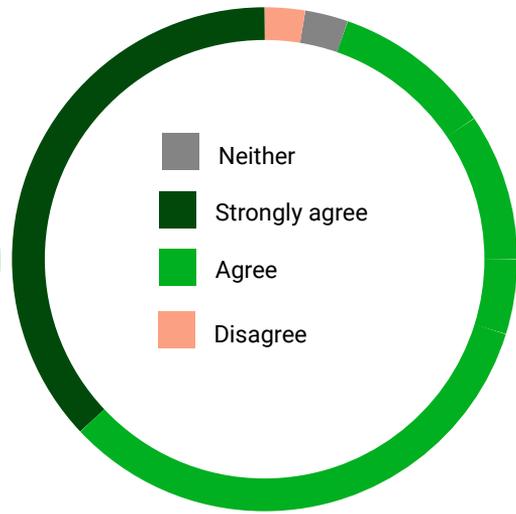
» Low implementation capacity



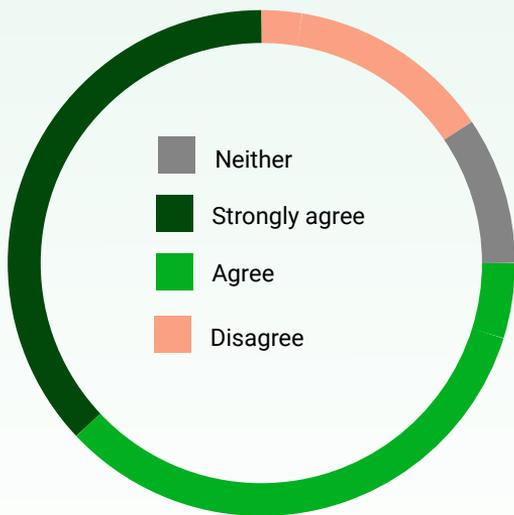
» Institutional and organizational capacity gaps at the local level



» Institutional and organizational capacity gaps at the regional level

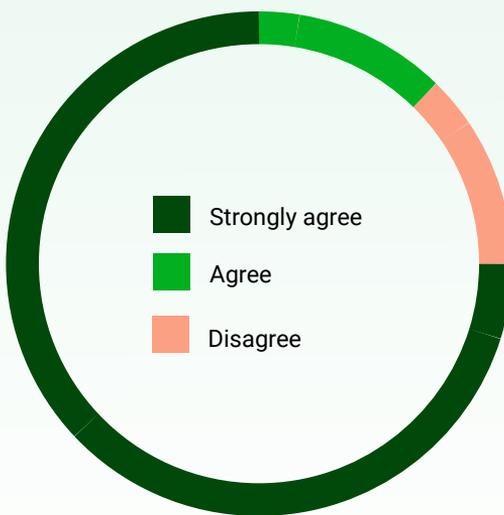


» Institutional and organizational capacity gaps at the national level

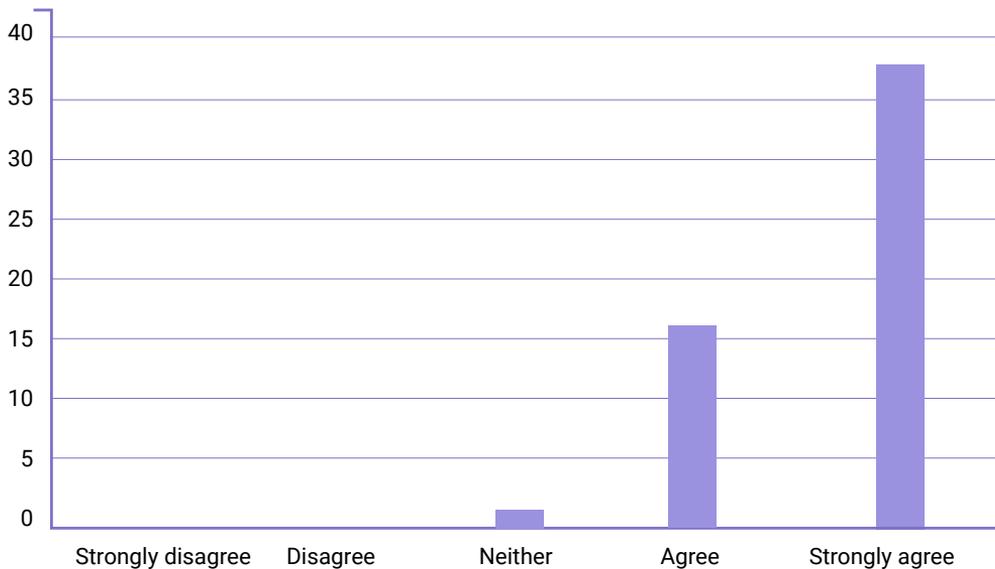


Financial capacity gaps

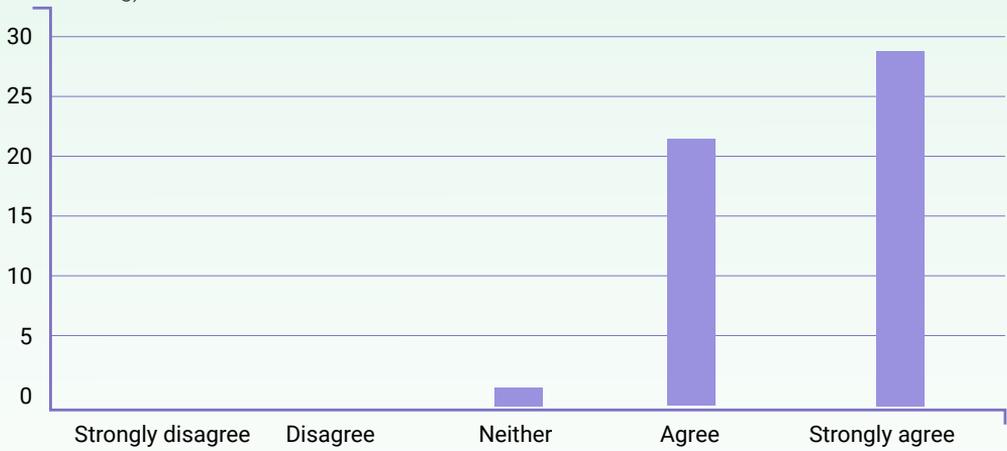
» Insufficient budget allocation



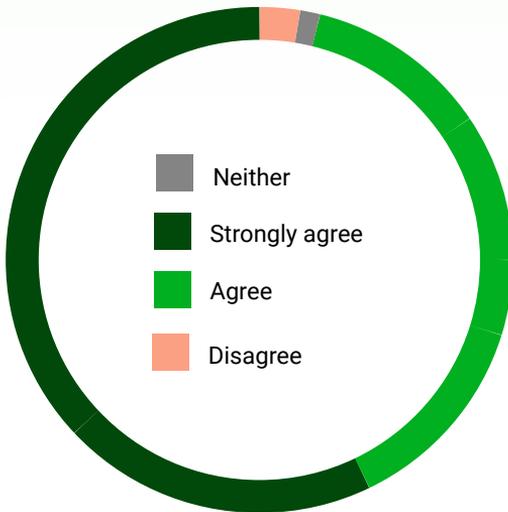
» Sudden lack of budgetary allocations



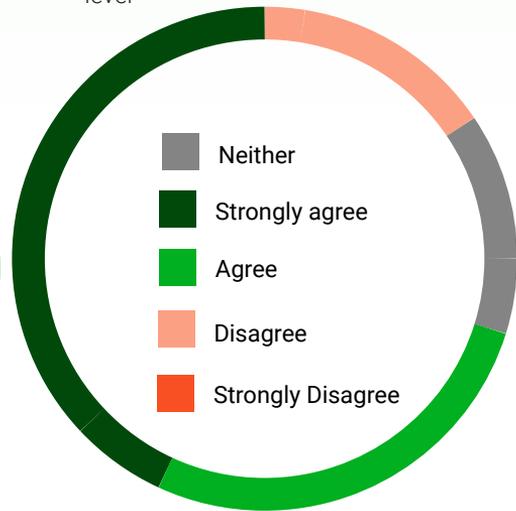
» Limited mechanisms for incorporating/incentivizing external funding (e.g., PPPs, private funding)



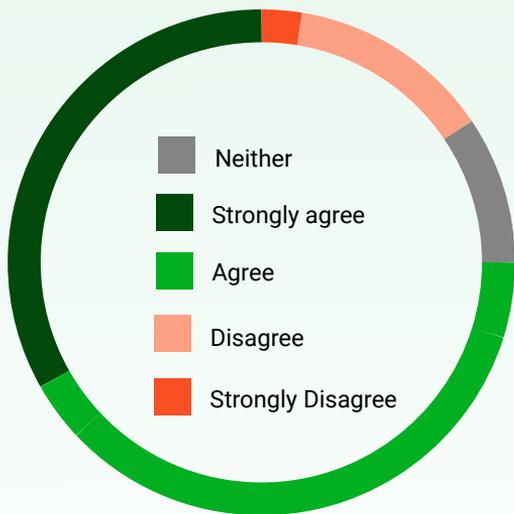
» Financial capacity gaps at the local level



» Financial capacity gaps at the regional level

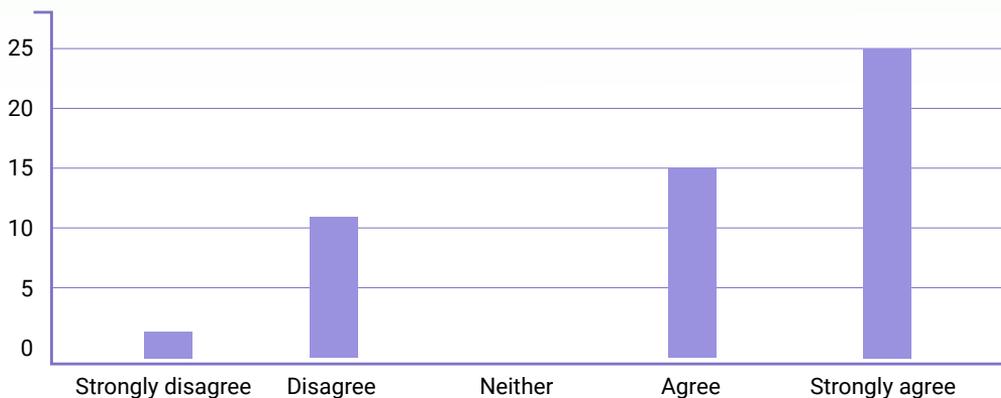


» Financial capacity gaps at the national level

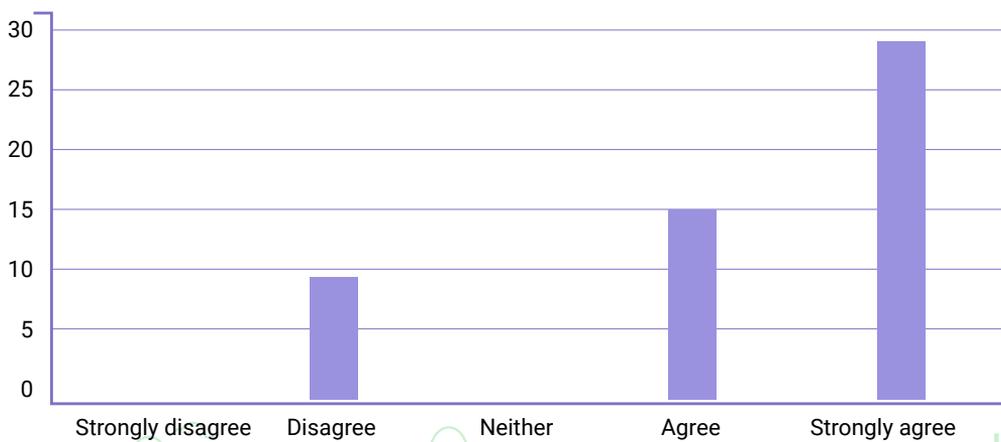


Technical/data capacity gaps

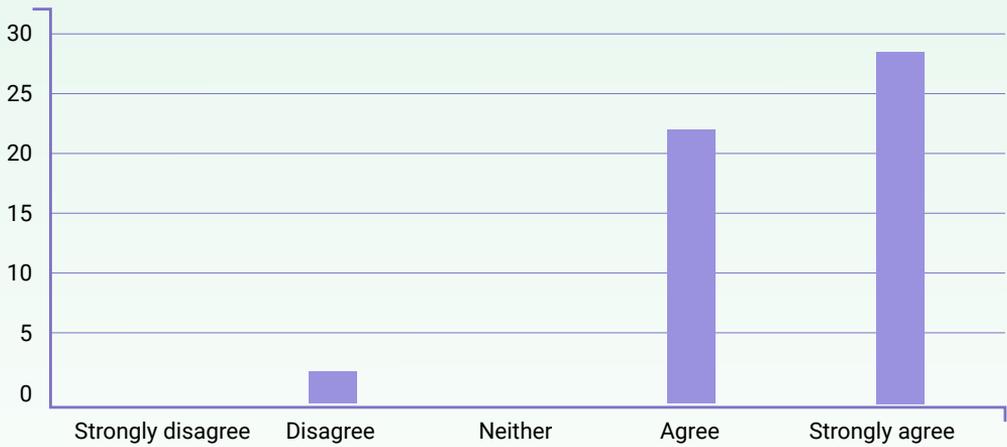
» Relevant data limitations



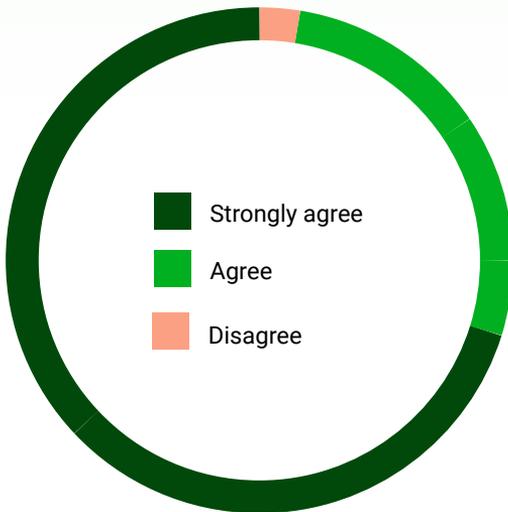
» The data collection mechanism does not aggregate rural, peri-urban, and urban areas



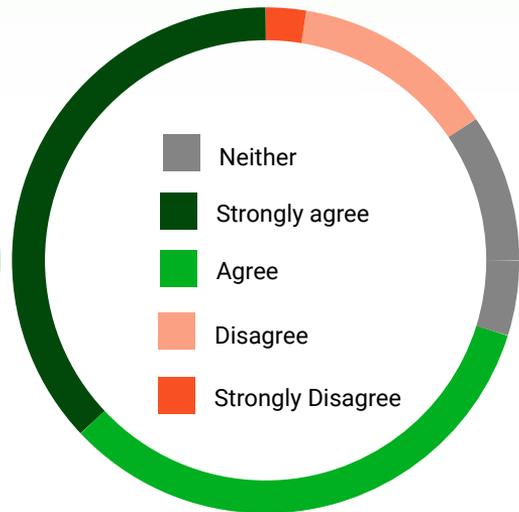
» Limited ICT infrastructure for data collection and storage



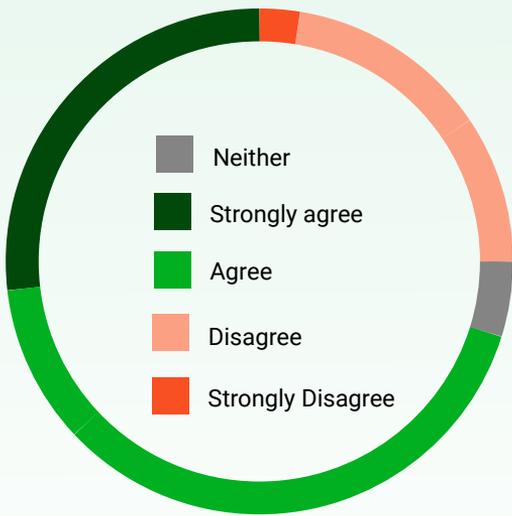
» Technical/data capacity gaps at the local level



» Technical/data capacity gaps at the regional level



» Technical/data capacity gaps at the national level





In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the interplay between urban and rural areas holds profound implications for socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. This publication offers a comprehensive examination of the challenges and opportunities within these linkages, drawing on extensive research and a survey conducted among 53 government officials. It is part of the UN-Habitat project titled **“Supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through National and Subnational Urban Policies”** funded by the Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AACID).

Key Features:

- » **Socio-Economic and Environmental Challenges:** Explore the complex landscape of urban-rural dynamics in the DRC, highlighting disparities in access to services and infrastructure, environmental degradation, and climate change vulnerabilities.
- » **Stakeholder Engagement Assessment:** Gain valuable insights into the level of stakeholder engagement in urban-rural development efforts, uncovering opportunities for collaboration and areas for improvement.
- » **Capacity Assessment:** Assess the institutional capacity within government agencies to address urban-rural challenges effectively, identifying gaps in resources, technical expertise, and coordination mechanisms.
- » **Policy Assessment:** Examine the policy landscape governing urban-rural development, evaluating the coherence, relevance, and effectiveness of existing policies in addressing the identified challenges.
- » **Recommendations for Action:** Based on the outcomes of the assessments, this publication provides actionable recommendations to enhance stakeholder engagement, strengthen institutional capacity, and reform policies for more integrated and sustainable urban-rural development in the DRC.

This publication serves as a vital resource for policymakers, development practitioners, and researchers striving to promote inclusive and resilient urban-rural linkages in the DRC. By embracing the recommendations outlined herein, stakeholders can collectively advance towards a future where urban and rural communities thrive in harmony, ensuring equitable and sustainable development for all.

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