

Beyond the City: Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages

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BEYOND THE CITY

Global Trends and Insights on Urban Rural Linkages



UN-HABITAT

Foreword

I am pleased to present the *Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages*, a report that underscores the interconnectedness of our world and the need to continue working together to strengthen urban-rural interactions for a sustainable future.

In an era defined by unprecedented urbanization rates, with over **56% of the world's population** currently residing in urban areas, and rural areas being home to **more than 80% of the world's poorest**, the intricate relationship between urban and rural areas has never been more pronounced. The pivotal nature of urban-rural linkages is evident in many aspects of development and human coexistence. For example, on the one hand, rural areas are key contributors of food and natural resources. On the other hand, urban areas are engines of economic growth, providing employment opportunities as well as public goods and services including for rural communities. The decisions we make regarding land use, housing, basic services infrastructure development, and resource management in one space reverberate across the other, shaping the fabric of our societies and the trajectory of our planet's future. This report, the culmination of research, consultations, and invaluable contributions from partners and Member States, serves as a testament to our collective commitment to understanding and addressing the complexities of urban-rural dynamics. It underscores how **urban-rural linkages** are crucial for achieving sustainable urbanization, equitable access to services, and inclusive growth in both urban and rural regions.

Through evidence-based analysis, the report provides a roadmap for policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders to navigate the complexities of our urbanizing world. It spotlights the need for integrated approaches that transcend traditional boundaries, fostering inclusive and sustainable development that leaves no one and no place behind.

At UN-Habitat, we recognize that the challenges the world faces—from poverty and inequality to climate change and environmental degradation—are intrinsically linked along the urban-rural continuum. As we strive to advance the vision of the **New Urban Agenda** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, we must embrace an integrated understanding of development that recognizes the synergies between urban and rural spaces. The SDGs, particularly **Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)** and **Goal 2 (Zero Hunger)**, emphasize the need for such interconnectedness.

UN-Habitat's **Strategic Plan 2026–2029**, endorsed by the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2025, clearly reflects this underlying principle. The Plan positions itself with a strategic focus on **“adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, including the urgent transformation of informal settlements and slums.”** Importantly, it integrates an urban-rural linkages lens, particularly through its first impact area: **“Equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication.”**

Together, we can use the lessons and recommendations from this report to build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities—urban and rural alike—that thrive harmoniously with their natural and social environments. Let us continue to work towards a future where urban-rural linkages are seen not as divisions, but as powerful tools for global progress and sustainability.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raf Tuts', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Raf Tuts,
Director, Global Solutions
Division, UN-Habitat

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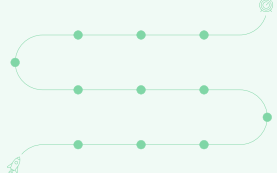
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Acronyms

<i>BSK</i>	Bratislava Self-governing Region
<i>CBD</i>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<i>CGIAR</i>	Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centres
<i>CCAFS</i>	CGIAR Research program on climate change, agriculture and food security
<i>CMM</i>	Montreal Metropolitan Community
<i>COP</i>	Conference of Parties
<i>COVID-19</i>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<i>CSA</i>	Community supported agriculture
<i>CSVs</i>	Climate-smart villages
<i>CURLA</i>	Center for Urban Rural Linkages in Africa
<i>FAO</i>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<i>FFRUs</i>	Farmer Field Research Units
<i>FtMA</i>	Farm to market alliance
<i>GAIN</i>	Global Alliance to Improve Nutrition
<i>G20</i>	Group of 20
<i>GLTN</i>	Global Land Tool Network
<i>HFSeC</i>	World Food and Health Security e-Center
<i>ICLEI</i>	Local Governments for Sustainability
<i>IFAD</i>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<i>IIED</i>	International Institute for Environment and Development
<i>IMF</i>	International Monetary Fund
<i>IEEE</i>	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
<i>KES</i>	Kenya shillings
<i>MDGs</i>	Millennium Development Goals
<i>MLG</i>	Multilevel governance
<i>MUFPP</i>	Milan Urban Food Policy Pact

<i>NUA</i>	New Urban Agenda
<i>NUPs</i>	National urban policies
<i>OCCAM</i>	Observatory on Digital Communication, in Consultative Status with United Nations Economic and Social Council
<i>OECD</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<i>PURL</i>	Peri-urban-rural linkages
<i>RAMP</i>	Niger State Rural Access and Mobility Project
<i>RUAF</i>	Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Systems
<i>SDG</i>	Sustainable Development Goals
<i>TP4D</i>	Territorial Perspectives for Development
<i>UCLG</i>	United Cities and Local Governments
<i>UNCCD</i>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<i>UN DESA</i>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<i>UNEP</i>	United Nations Environment Programme
<i>UNFCCC</i>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<i>UNFSS</i>	United Nations Food Systems Summit
<i>UN-Habitat</i>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<i>URL-GP</i>	Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles
<i>URLs</i>	Urban-Rural Linkages
<i>WorldFMC</i>	World Farmers Markets Coalition
<i>WUF</i>	World Urban Forum



Executive summary



This ***Beyond the City: Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages*** report underscores the critical interconnections between urban and rural areas, emphasizing their importance for economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability.

It explores the complexities of these linkages, analyzing their implications for achieving the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* and advancing the objectives of the *New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. The report highlights disparities in how urban and rural classifications are defined and the profound impacts of urban activities on peri-urban and rural areas. It provides an in-depth examination of urban-rural dynamics, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches to planning and development to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for all communities.

The report delves into the multifaceted nature of urban-rural linkages, drawing on insights from international organizations such as UN-Habitat, IIED, IFAD, FAO, European Union, G20 and OECD among others. While definitions of urban-rural linkages vary, the report adopts a **comprehensive approach that considers recurrent flows, economic transactions, migration patterns, and environmental impacts**.

This understanding provides a detailed perspective on the interdependence between urban and rural areas, shedding light on the institutional mechanisms and social interactions that shape these relationships.

The methodology of the report entails an analysis of urban-rural interactions trends and practices, combining a literature review, a structured survey among UN Member States, and expert contributions from diverse fields. Enriched by case studies and peer-reviewed insights, it highlights innovative practices, policy frameworks, and strategies to strengthen urban-rural linkages in different contexts.

The findings of the report reveal significant challenges that disrupt urban-rural linkages, including economic slowdowns, climate change, conflicts, historic marginalization, and rapid urbanization. These issues often result in uneven development, where urban areas concentrate resources and opportunities, leaving rural regions underserved.

Urban expansion frequently leads to increased land prices, altered land-use patterns, and migration flows which can exacerbate inequalities and strain local resources.



The report emphasizes that **addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts and integrated planning to harmonize urban and rural development.**

Despite these challenges, the report identifies opportunities to strengthen urban-rural linkages. Promoting sustainable agrifood systems, improving connectivity through infrastructure development, and leveraging technology for better service delivery are key pathways to foster balanced territorial development.

A survey conducted across 21 countries revealed common trends, such as growing urban-rural interdependence due to globalization and technological advancements. It also highlighted differentiated challenges between developed

and developing regions, underscoring the need for context-specific policies that reflect local realities.

Governance and policy frameworks play a crucial role in enhancing urban-rural linkages. The report calls for **multilevel governance, involving national, regional, and local authorities, to ensure coherent and coordinated policy implementation.** Effective governance can bridge gaps between urban and rural areas by fostering inclusive policies, strengthening institutional capacities, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

The report **emphasizes the importance of evidence-based decision-making,** supported by robust data collection and research, to inform policies and actions.



First International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages, Songyang China © UN-Habitat

Strengthening urban-rural linkages also requires addressing economic and environmental challenges through sustainable land-use practices, climate resilience strategies, and improved food security.

Enhanced access to financing mechanisms for urban and rural development is vital, enabling the mobilization of resources for projects that promote sustainable territorial development. The report also highlights the **potential of youth as drivers of innovation and connectivity.** By leveraging their skills in technology, entrepreneurship, and mobility, youth can play a transformative role in creating resilient and inclusive urban-rural systems.

There is an urgency to improving urban-rural linkages as the second quarter of the 21st century begins. Increased shocks from climate change, including severe drought and floods, fires and other natural disasters are leading to increasing conflict and migration flows within and between countries. The triple mandates of the Rio Conventions addressing biodiversity, land and climate are

essential to functional and resilient urban-rural linkages.

Solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges are most concrete and impactful when the leadership and capacity at local and subnational levels are supported as equal partners in the co-design and co-implementation of policy and programs to address challenges across the urban-rural continuum.

The report emphasizes the importance of **monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to strengthen urban-rural linkages.** Establishing mechanisms to track progress ensures that policies and interventions remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

By adopting integrated approaches and fostering collaboration across sectors and stakeholders, **urban-rural linkages can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development,** contributing to improved livelihoods, environmental stewardship, and balanced growth for urban and rural communities alike.





01

Introduction

Chapter Overview

55

per cent



*2018

68

per cent



*2050

Majority of the world's population became urban in 2008. By 2018, *55 per cent* of the global population lived in urban areas, with projections indicating a rise to *68 per cent* by 2050.



2.5B New Urban Residents globally by 2050

90 per cent from Asia and Africa



Projected urban growth

Urbanization coupled with population growth will add an estimated *2.5 billion* people to urban areas by 2050, with Asia and Africa contributing nearly *90 per cent* of this increase.

Asia

*2018

54 per cent urban population

Africa

43 per cent urban population



Regional disparities

Asia constituted the largest share of the world's urban population at *54 per cent* in 2018, while Africa, predominantly rural with a *43 per cent urban population*, is anticipated to experience a significant increase in urbanization by 2050.

Population dynamics

Some cities experience population decline, especially in regions of Asia and Europe. However, it is estimated that there will be *43 megacities* globally by 2030 – cities with populations exceeding *10 million*.

43 megacities globally

*2030

10 million population increase



Importance of management

Effective management of urban growth is crucial for sustainable development, necessitating integrated policies addressing the needs of both urban and rural dwellers and supporting integrated development



Evolution of urban-rural linkages

Urban-rural linkages go beyond administrative boundaries, involving demographic, social, economic and environmental interactions. Similar terms such as rural-urban linkages and territorial development have been used to describe this concept.



Global and regional recognition

Frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 give recognition to the importance of these linkages in achieving sustainable outcomes. Definitions vary, encompassing agricultural produce exchange, digital connectivity and sustainable development.



Emerging issues

Sustainability is increasingly emphasized, with initiatives focusing on local food systems, reducing transport emissions, supporting rural tourism and advancing renewable energy projects.

Overview of report

The chapter establishes Urban-Rural Linkages (URLs) as critical to sustainable development, emphasizing their role in fostering economic growth, social well-being, and environmental resilience. It highlights the interconnectedness of urban and rural areas through the movement of people, goods, resources, services, and information. These flows are fundamental to addressing global challenges such as climate change, inequality, food security, and urbanization pressures.



Methodology and Approach

The chapter outlines the methodology used in the report, including literature reviews, global surveys, and case studies. Contributions from experts across sectors such as migration, food systems, and land governance enrich the analysis, ensuring its global relevance. Peer reviews further validate the findings and recommendations. It also summarizes the structure of the report.



1.1. Changing landscape of urbanization

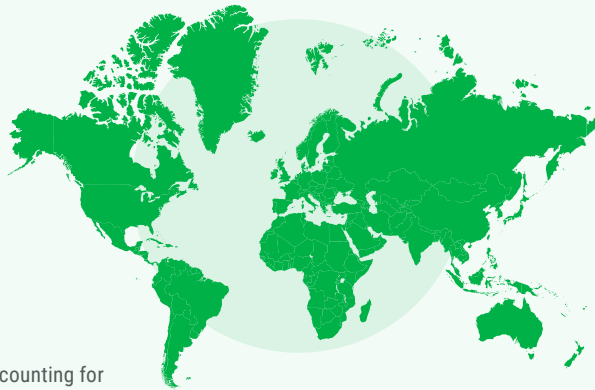


55 per cent
of the global population lived
in urban areas in 2018

Some countries in North Africa, such as *Egypt*, have relatively *high urbanization levels*, while many sub-Saharan African countries have lower rates of urbanization



Estimation
2.5 billion
people additional to
urban areas by 2050



Asia accounted
for the largest share
of the world's urban
population at **54
per cent** in 2018

Asia and *Africa* accounting for
nearly **90 per cent** increase

China, India and *Nigeria*

India alone is expected to add **416 million** urban dwellers,
followed by China with **255 million** and Nigeria with **189 million**

The world's population is becoming increasingly urbanized, and this trend is expected to continue in the coming decades. The World Urbanization Prospects 2007 Revision¹ projected that the urban population would equal the rural population of the world in 2008, and from then on, the world population would be urban in its majority.

The projections were later affirmed by the World Urbanization Prospects 2018 Revision Report produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which revealed that 55 per cent of the global population lived in urban areas in 2018.

¹ United Nations, "World Urbanization Prospects The 2007 Revision", Executive Summary, 26 February 2008. Available at https://www.electroluxgroup.com/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2010/07/2007WUP_ExecSum_web.pdf

This shift from rural to urban living has profound implications for societies, economies and the environment. By 2050, this proportion is projected to rise to 68 per cent. The growth of the global population, combined with urbanization, could add an estimated 2.5 billion people to urban areas by 2050, with Asia and Africa accounting for nearly 90 per cent of this increase.²

This chapter focuses on the key trends and dynamics of urban-rural linkages, with insights drawn from recent research studies and reports, as well as from global events and processes that have influenced urban-rural linkages.

While urbanization is a global phenomenon, the growth of the world's urban population is expected to be highly concentrated in select countries. Projections are that China, India and Nigeria will contribute significantly to the increase in the world's urban population between 2018 and 2050. India alone is expected to add 416 million urban dwellers, followed by China with 255 million and Nigeria with 189 million.³ In 2018, Asia accounted for the largest share of the world's urban population at 54 per cent.

Despite having a relatively lower level of urbanization compared to other regions, Asia is experiencing a rapid urban growth rate. In contrast to Asia, Africa is predominantly rural (see figure 2.2), with only 43 per cent of its population living in urban areas. However, it is projected that Africa's urban population is likely to nearly triple between 2018 and 2050, while that of Asia is likely to increase by over 50 per cent.

The two continents will account for nearly three-quarters of the urban population of the world.⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to note that urbanization rates vary significantly across Africa.

Some countries in North Africa, such as Egypt, have relatively high urbanization levels, while many sub-Saharan African countries have lower rates of urbanization.

Similarly, according to the Inter-American Development Bank, in Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 11 per cent of the 17,600 municipalities account for more than two-thirds of the entire urban population.⁵

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), "2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects", 16 May 2018. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/desa/2018-revision-world-urbanization-prospects>.

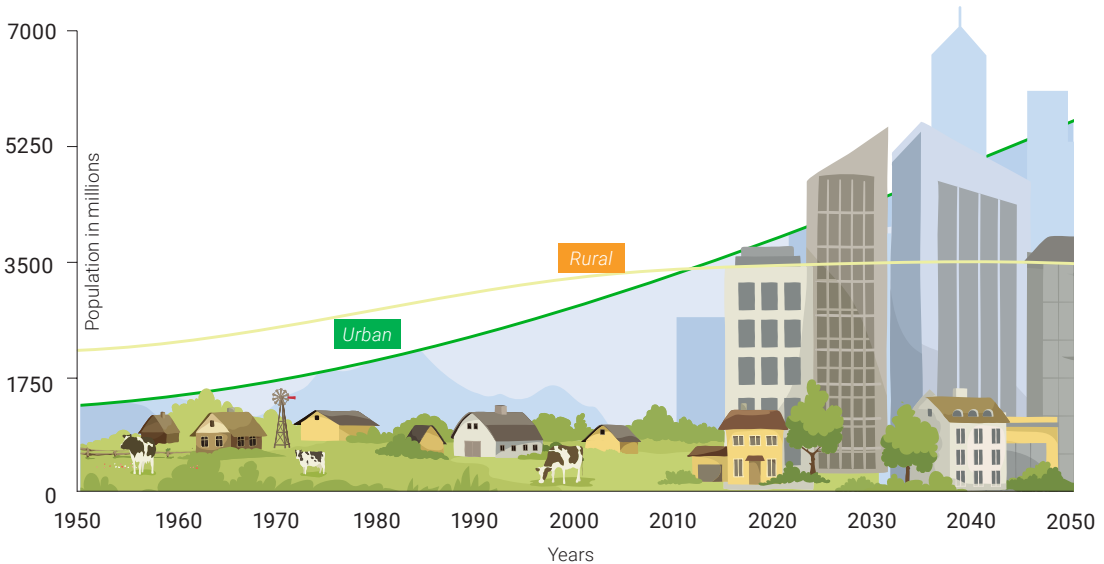
³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), "World Urbanization Prospects The 2018 Revision". 2019. Available at <https://population.un.org/wup/publications/Files/WUP2018-Report.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Nora Libertun, "How will the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean grow?" 2024. Available at <https://blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/en/how-will-the-cities-of-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-grow/#:~:text=LAC%20is%20one%20of%20the,of%20the%20entire%20urban%20population>.



Figure 1. Urban and rural populations of the world, 1950 – 2050



Source: UN World Urbanization Prospects, 2018

1.2. Population trends in selected cities and rural areas



Some Urbanization Facts

Europe and North America

52 cities that have **shrunk** since 2000 (2018 data)

62 million residents  **59 million** residents

In the US...

> 40% of cities with at least 10,000 residents lost population (1980-2010)



The **fastest-growing** urban agglomerations are smaller cities with populations **under 1 million**

They are found in Asia and Africa.



Rural population facts

Now it stands around **3.4 billion**

 **3.1 billion** by 2050

Africa and Asia are home to almost

90 per cent

of the world's rural population.



Megacities facts

By 2030

43 megacities globally, with most of them located in developing regions



world's largest city

Tokyo with **37 million** inhabitants (+ its agglomeration)

Other largest cities

Mexico City, New Delhi, São Paulo and Shanghai

While urbanization is generally associated with population growth in cities, some cities have experienced population decline in recent years. Almost half of cities in the Global North are experiencing population decline, particularly in Europe and North America⁶. In 2018, the 52 cities that have shrunk since 2000 housed 59 million residents, down from over 62 million.

This decline often results from a weakened regional economy, prompting migration elsewhere. In the U.S., over 40% of cities with at least 10,000 residents lost population between 1980 and 2010⁷, especially in the Rust Belt, where deindustrialization has led to high unemployment, urban blight, and increased crime.



Challenges

Meeting the needs of growing urban populations in areas such as:



Housing



Energy systems



Transport



Infrastructure

Unlike some European post-industrial regions, this shrinkage in the US is concentrated in urban cores, while suburban areas continue to grow.

The rise of megacities, defined as cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, is a prominent feature of urbanization. Tokyo, with its agglomeration of 37 million inhabitants, holds the title of the world's largest city. Mexico City, New Delhi, São Paulo and Shanghai also boast populations exceeding 20 million.

It is estimated that by 2030 there will be 43 megacities globally, with most of them located in developing regions.

⁶UN-Habitat, (2022a). World cities report. Envisaging the Future of Cities, Nairobi: UN-Habitat

⁷ Hunter, Lori M., Talbot, Catherine B., Connor, Dylan Shane, et al., "Change in U.S. Small Town Community Capitals, 1980–2010". 2020. Population Research and Policy Review, 39(5), 913–940. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-020-09609-4>
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-020-09609-4>.



Traffic congestion in Shanghai, China © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

However, it is important to note that some of the fastest-growing urban agglomerations are smaller cities with populations under 1 million.

Many of these smaller settlements are found in Asia and Africa. While megacities attract significant attention, almost half of the world's urban dwellers reside in these smaller secondary or intermediary cities.⁸

On the other hand, rural population growth has been slow since 1950 and is expected to reach its peak in the near future. The global rural population currently stands at around 3.4 billion and is projected to rise slightly before declining to 3.1 billion by 2050. Africa and Asia are home to almost 90 per cent of the world's rural population.

As urbanization continues to reshape the world, sustainable development becomes increasingly crucial.

The successful management of urban growth is essential, particularly in low-income and lower-middle-income countries where urbanization rates are projected to be the highest with an alarming number of informal settlements rising due to unplanned urban expansion, with all the attendant negative consequences.

Meeting the needs of growing urban populations in areas such as housing, transport, energy systems and infrastructure poses significant challenges for governments both at national and subnational level.

⁸ Ibid.

Integrated policies that improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers and rectify the imperfect urban development patterns of most of our urban areas are necessary.

Strengthening the linkages between urban and rural areas and leveraging existing economic, social and environmental ties is essential for inclusive sustainable development. Economic ties foster integrated supply chains that benefit both communities, creating jobs and increasing incomes. Social connections promote collaboration and ensure diverse voices are included in decision-making. Environmental partnerships facilitate sustainable resource management, addressing climate change, biodiversity and land. Stable rural populations supported the rise of cities in most regions before the modern era.

Since the rise of nation states over the last 500 years, the urban-rural divide has been a defining characteristic of many societies, with control over rural resources often central to political and economic power of the state.

The Industrial Revolution and subsequent shifts in employment and land use fuelled rural-to-urban migration, leading to the growth of cities and the concentration of economic activity in urban centres. However, the nature of the urban-rural divide has evolved over time. Today, factors such as the global geography of employment and rising housing costs are reshaping livelihoods and migration patterns.

⁹ Potts, Deborah, "Reshaping the Urban-Rural Divide in the 21st Century: Shifts in the Geographies of Urban-Based Livelihoods" 2022. Available at: <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/reshaping-urban-rural-divide-21st-century-shifts-geographies-urban-based-livelihoods>

These shifts in urban livelihoods necessitate a broader understanding of the urban-rural divide, planning for urban extension and their implications for the reduction of inequality.⁹ Urban livelihoods are undergoing significant transformations driven by economic, social and environmental factors.

The rise of service-based economies with shifts in employment patterns, and the increasing costs of urban living are reshaping the dynamics of urban livelihoods worldwide. These changes have far-reaching implications for migration patterns, economic opportunities, and social inequalities.

However, the urban share of national output continues to grow, highlighting the increasing importance of cities in national economies. This shift has also led to the reclassification of some rural settlements as urban, based on population thresholds and employment characteristics.

The growing urban-rural divide has become a global issue, transcending national boundaries and necessitating coordinated, international efforts to address inequalities and vulnerabilities. The evolving nature of urban livelihoods, coupled with the susceptibility of both rural and urban sectors to global economic and environmental challenges, underscores the need for integrated solutions.





Floating market in Mekong Delta, Vietnam © Adobestock

For instance, in border regions like the Mekong Delta, rural farmers grapple with environmental challenges exacerbated by upstream urbanization, illustrating the critical importance of cross-border approaches to land use, water management, and economic development. Urbanization in the twenty-first century is transforming societies, creating opportunities but also exposing complexities that must be addressed to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Strengthening urban-rural linkages (URLs) is essential to tackling global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, inequality, and pandemics.

By fostering resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities, these linkages support balanced territorial development, a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

UN-Habitat's work in this domain aligns with SDG 11.a.1, which advocates for national and regional planning that bridges urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Additionally, the AU Agenda 2063 emphasizes integrated infrastructure, inclusive growth, and equitable investments across urban and rural regions to reduce disparities and foster interdependence.



By offering an analysis of global trends and insights into urban-rural linkages, this report presents the evolving dynamics of the concept over time, alongside expert perspectives, policy frameworks, and practices in various contexts. UN-Habitat's work has underscored the importance of URLs as a critical pathway to sustainable urbanization and rural prosperity. The insights from this report will guide policymakers and stakeholders as they build stronger connections between urban and rural areas, helping to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

This report thus, builds on UN-Habitat's ongoing work to advance integrated territorial development via knowledge development, capacity development, technical assistance to countries and advocacy (see Annex IV).

1.3. *Methodology*

The "Beyond the City: Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages" report adopts a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to gather and analyse information on the dynamics of urban-rural linkages globally. It begins with an extensive review of urban-rural linkages from secondary sources, including key UN-Habitat reports and other relevant global publications. This foundational step ensures that the report builds on existing knowledge, identifies emerging trends, and addresses critical gaps in understanding urban-rural interactions.

To complement this literature review, a structured survey was conducted among UN Member States. This survey captured diverse national and regional perspectives on urban-rural linkages, providing insights into policy frameworks, challenges, and innovative practices.

These inputs were enriched by the active engagement of experts from international agencies, academia, and civil society, who offered contributions across critical areas such as smart villages, urban villages, food systems, land, governance, metropolitan management, farm to market approach, the role of intermediary cities and finally the involvement of women and youth.

The report also draws on detailed case studies that illustrate practical examples of successful and replicable strategies for enhancing urban-rural linkages. These case studies were carefully selected to represent a range of geographic, cultural, and socio-economic contexts, ensuring a well-rounded exploration of the subject.

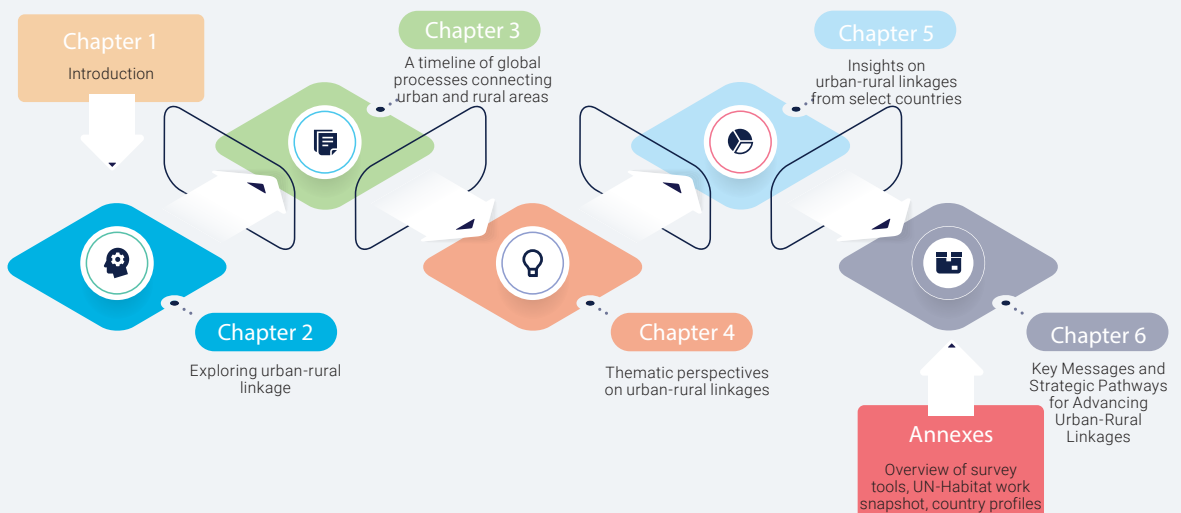
Furthermore, the findings and recommendations underwent a peer review process involving international experts from different countries. This peer and partner feedback was instrumental in refining the analysis and ensuring the report's global relevance and applicability.



1.4. Report Structure

This report is comprised of five chapters.

- 1 **Chapter 1** is an introduction of the report including the methodology and what to expect in the report.
 - 2 **Chapter 2** explores what urban-rural linkages entail, why they matter and their economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions. It also outlines what UN-Habitat work on urban-rural linkages entails.
 - 3 The **third chapter** takes a look at major events, agreements and other global processes that have shaped the discourse on urban-rural linkages Habitat I.
 - 4 The focus of the **fourth chapter** is the thematic scope of urban-rural linkages. It features experts' write-ups on thematic relevance of urban-rural linkages, which include governance, metropolitan management, smart villages, urban villages, land administration, food systems, role of intermediary cities, farm to market approach and the role of youth and women.
 - 5 The **fifth chapter** features a sample country analysis and the key findings from a survey on urban and rural dynamics across different regions.
 - 6 The **final chapter** summarizes the previous chapters. It also provides concluding insights as well as policy recommendations with case examples.
- A** The **annexes** to the report include an overview of survey tools, UN-Habitat work snapshot, and other key reference documents and reports.





02

Exploring urban-rural linkages

A Mozambican cyclist carrying coal at sunrise vividly illustrates the essential economic dimension of urban-rural linkages © Adobestock

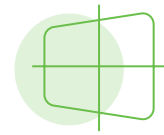
Chapter Overview

The chapter discusses challenges like rural depopulation, urban congestion, shrinking cities, and highlights successful initiatives, such as the World Bank's regional planning programs and IFAD's support for rural economies



Definitions and Perspectives

URLs are defined and approached differently by global organizations. This chapter explores these definitions, emphasizing the need for flexibility to address variations across countries and emerging issues like digital transformation and climate resilience. It introduces concepts like "functional territories" to better reflect the realities of blurred boundaries between urban and rural areas.



Socioeconomic Dimensions

URLs are crucial for economic integration, with rural areas supplying food, natural resources, and labour, while urban areas offer markets, infrastructure, and employment opportunities..

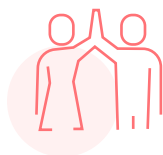
Environmental Dimensions

The chapter addresses the environmental interdependence of urban and rural areas, emphasizing shared resources like water, land, and biodiversity. It explores the impacts of urban expansion on rural environments, urban pollution affecting rural areas, and the need for sustainable land management practices. Examples include UNEP's sustainable land-use initiatives and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 's (UNCCD) efforts to combat desertification.



Social and Cultural Linkages

Social ties, migration, and cultural exchanges between rural and urban areas are explored, highlighting mutual influences. Rural populations bring traditions and crafts to urban areas, while urban trends influence rural lifestyles. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) initiatives in cultural preservation and IOM's work on migration management are cited as examples of fostering these connections.



Global Frameworks and Commitments

The chapter aligns URLs with the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 11.a.1) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). It underscores the need for integrated policies and strategies to strengthen urban-rural interactions as part of global commitments to equitable and sustainable development.



2.1. Overview

This chapter presents an overview of the categories of urban-rural linkages, offering diverse definitions from various agencies and highlighting related terms that enrich the understanding of this concept. It thoroughly examines the multifaceted dimensions of urban-rural linkages, spanning economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects.

Additionally, the chapter delves into the complexities of the urban-rural continuum, exploring key definitions and their interconnections. Finally, it addresses emerging issues in the evolving concept of urban-rural linkages, emphasizing the need for continued analysis and adaptation

2.2. Unpacking urban-rural linkages

In the pursuit of sustainable development, it is important to acknowledge and comprehend the complex and intricate connections between rural and urban areas. The interaction and interdependence between these two distinct but often overlapping settings have significant

implications for economic growth, social well-being and environmental sustainability. Before delving into the complexities of the linkages between urban and rural areas, it is essential to establish clear definitions for 'urban' and 'rural'.



The criteria used to classify urban centres vary significantly across countries and territories; these criteria are informed by factors such as population size, density and the availability of services.

This variation in definitions has several implications. However, the United Nations encourages countries to define 'urban' and 'rural' based on their local context, which can vary from country to country.¹⁰

But what really are *urban-rural linkages*?

Urban and rural settlements engage through two main modes of interaction, each reflecting distinct spatial and functional dynamics.

The first mode involves interactions across contiguous urban, peri-urban, and rural jurisdictions, commonly referred to as territorial urban-rural linkages.

These interactions are characterized by spatial proximity and often involve shared governance, resource management, and infrastructure planning within an integrated territorial framework.

The second mode encompasses interactions between geographically distant, non-contiguous territories, often described as *flow-based urban-rural linkages* or *telecoupling*.



A boulevard through Vietnam's rural landscape, seen from above, exemplifies the complex urban-rural linkages vital for sustainable development © AdobeStock

¹⁰ United Nations, (2019) United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Statistical Methodology for Delineating Cities and Rural Areas, Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2019/newyork-egmstatmeth/concept-note.pdf>

These telecoupled interactions facilitate the exchange of people, services, and commodities—such as food, water, and energy—across broader geographical scales, bypassing traditional spatial constraints. By transcending localities, telecoupled linkages establish functional relationships between regions that lack direct geographical proximity, fostering interconnectedness in globalized systems of production, consumption, and service delivery.

Several organizations have coined their definitions of urban-rural linkages, with some referring to them as “*urban-rural*” while others use the term “*rural-urban*.” While certain definitions exhibit strong similarities, others adopt distinct thematic approaches. Regardless of terminology, these definitions collectively aim to describe the dynamic connections between urban and rural areas.

However, further research and analysis are critical to deepening our understanding of how different countries define urban-rural linkages and the implications for policy and planning. Specifically, it is essential to compare definitions across countries to identify best practices and address common challenges.

Additionally, exploring how definitions vary across sectors such as transportation, agriculture, and housing will provide insights into their influence on integrated planning and the effectiveness of cross-sectoral

strategies. Engaging diverse stakeholder perspectives is equally vital. Input from communities in both urban and rural areas on how they perceive and define their linkages can enrich the process of refining definitions and improving stakeholder engagement.

Moreover, ongoing research is necessary to monitor how definitions of urban-rural linkages evolve in response to emerging trends, such as digital transformation and climate change. This continuous effort will ensure that definitions remain relevant and effective in addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Various organizations, agencies, and institutions use a range of terms to describe this concept, including rural-urban linkages, territorial development, integrated landscape management urban-rural partnerships, and regional development, among others. Many agencies prefer “rural-urban linkages” due to their focus on rural areas and their connections with urban centers. However, the term “*urban-rural linkages*” has gained prominence, reflecting global attention on urbanization and international initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, which emphasize the importance of cities.

Definitions by different organizations and agencies further illustrate the diverse interpretations of this concept.





UN-Habitat defines urban-rural linkages as the reciprocal and repetitive flow of people, goods and financial and environmental services between specific rural, peri-urban and urban locations.¹¹



The *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)* takes a rural-urban perspective.¹² The OECD views rural-urban linkages as the “deep interconnection of urban and rural areas through a variety of complex relationships. These relationships stem from the differing characteristics of the rural and urban territories, enabling each to complement the other’s assets and help address the other’s shortcomings, potentially unlocking socio-economic benefits for both. Rural-urban linkages exist across several dimensions including demographic, environmental and economic aspects.”¹³



The *International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)* describes rural-urban linkages that “consist of flows across space (such as flows of people, goods, money, information and wastes), and between sectors (for example, between agriculture and services and manufacturing) linking rural and urban areas”.¹⁴



The *Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean*, part of the *Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*, defines urban-rural linkages to include the main actors.



“Urban-rural linkages are those complementary and synergistic functions of flows of people, resources, goods, employment, information, technology and service ecosystems between rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Rural-urban cooperation includes mechanisms that see towns and cities as two ends of a continuum of human settlements. The main actors range from the public sector, civil society organizations, the private sector or others.”¹⁵

¹¹ UN-Habitat (2019). *Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development*. Available at <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/03/url-gp-1.pdf>.

¹² OECD., “Rural-urban linkages and innovation cities”, Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d3aa8741-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d3aa8741-en>.

¹³ OECD, “Rural-urban linkages and innovation cities”, available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d3aa8741-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d3aa8741-en>.

¹⁴ IIED. “Rural urban linkages”. Available at www.iied.org/rural-urban-linkages.

¹⁵ Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean. “Urban-rural linkages”. Available at <https://plataformaurbana.cepal.org/en/urban-themes/10-urban-rural-linkages>.



The *UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)* describes urban-rural linkages from a food systems perspective. FAO focuses on the flow of food, human resources, and other resources between rural agricultural production areas and urban centres, along with the policies that can better integrate these flows.¹⁶



From the *World Bank's* viewpoint, urban-rural linkages are crucial for enhancing poverty reduction and economic growth. These linkages provide avenues for mutual benefit from the exchange of goods, services, labour mobility and infrastructure development. The World Bank also emphasizes on integrated regional planning and investment as key for enhancing these linkages.¹⁷



The *European Union (EU)* defines urban-rural linkages along spatial planning and regional development, focusing on the need to improve partnerships to enhance territorial cohesion. The EU emphasizes that a truly integrated approach to development must go beyond intra-city policy coordination and traditional rural issues.¹⁸



The *International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)* perspective on rural-urban linkages is framed in terms of the interconnectedness of urban and rural economies for positive dynamics on sustainable development (Hussein, Karim and Suttie, 2016). In IFAD's Rural Development Report 2021, improvement of rural livelihood depends on transformation of food systems. Strong rural-urban linkages, territorial development and digital connectivity will play a key role to achieve transformed food systems that include value addition opportunities (IFAD, 2021).



The *Group of Twenty (G20)* has emphasized the importance of regional planning that integrates urban, peri-urban and rural development policies to effectively address challenges related to urban-rural linkages.

¹⁶ Thomas Forster, Guido Santini, David Edwards, Katie Flanagan, Makiko Taguchi, *Strengthening Urban Rural Linkages Through City Region Food Systems*, available at: https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/horticulture/crfs/Strengthening_Urban_Rural_Linkages_through_CRFS.pdf

¹⁷ World Bank, "Rural Urban Linkages and Structural Transformation". Available at <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/771321492046108896/rural-urban-linkages-and-structural-transformation>

¹⁸ European Union. "Urban-Rural Linkages". Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/what/territorial-cohesion/urban-rural-linkages_en

This approach aims to leverage the strengths of each area for balanced regional development through principles such as multilevel governance, stakeholder engagement, economic integration, quality infrastructure, resilience building, inclusion promotion with a gender perspective. Additionally, long-term financing mechanisms and robust monitoring and evaluation systems are critical (G20, 2018).



For this report, *UN-Habitat* adopts a definition of urban-rural linkages that emphasizes their *multi-sectoral and multi-level nature, encompassing the recurrent flows of people, goods, financial resources, and environmental services between rural, peri-urban, and urban areas.*

Examples of such linkages include the regular movement of people, goods, capital, services, and information. It is our aim that this definition provides the appropriate context for understanding the analysis and conclusions of this report.

Other commonly used terms that help illustrate the dynamics of urban-rural interactions include:

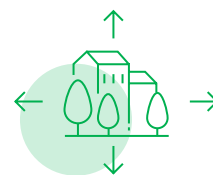
Integrated development planning

A process that seeks to coordinate development efforts between urban and rural areas to achieve sustainable outcomes.



Urban extension planning

Involves deliberate plans by governments to expand urban areas in an inclusive and coordinated way. For example, national and local authorities designate suitable locations to absorb urban growth, to maximize the opportunities and to minimize negative externalities that come with rapid urban growth.



Territorial development

Development that is endogenous and spatially integrated, leverages the contributions of actors operating at multiple scales and brings incremental value to national development efforts.



Rural-urban continuum

The gradation from highly urbanized to completely rural areas, recognizing that there's a spectrum rather than a binary distinction.



Peri-urban areas

Zones that exist at the interface of urban and rural areas, often characterized by mixed land use and transitional development.



Urban sprawl

The uncontrolled expansion of urban areas into adjacent rural lands, often leading to challenges in planning and service provision.



Smart villages

Rural communities that leverage technology to improve their residents' quality of life in ways similar to smart cities.



Integrated landscape management

Encompasses agriculture, forest and fisheries management and the provision of ecosystem functions and services (such as water flow regulation and quality, pollination, climate change mitigation and adaptation, cultural values) and protection of biodiversity, landscape beauty, identity, cultural and recreational value.



Agribusiness

Commercial agriculture activities that include the production, processing and distribution of farm products, which can link rural production to urban markets.



City region food systems

All the actors, processes and relationships that are involved in food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management in a given city region.



Food security

The availability of nutritious food and universal access to it. Urban-rural linkages impacts food security through the geography of agricultural production and distribution.



Regional development

Efforts aimed at improving the economic well-being of a region, which often entail strengthening the linkages between its urban and rural areas.



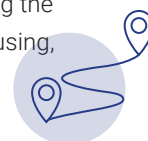
Rural gentrification

The process by which rural areas experience an influx of wealthier individuals, which can alter the socioeconomic fabric of the community and its connections to urban centres.



Migration patterns

The movement of people between rural and urban areas, which can affect labour markets, demographic trends, and cultural exchanges. Crises such as economic downturns, land degradation, drought, floods or other natural disasters, can push migrations of people across the urban-rural continuum, straining the provision of needed services (such as housing, water and food) and exacerbating social tensions



Infrastructure networks

The physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society, such as transport, water supply, energy and telecommunications, which also connect urban and rural areas.



Ecotourism

A responsible travel approach to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people, often involving urban residents traveling to rural areas.



Value chain development

The process of increasing the value added to raw materials through processing and marketing, often linking rural producers with urban consumers.



Local economic development

A process by which public, business and non-governmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.



Sustainable agriculture

Farming practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations, important for urban-rural ecological balance.



The means by which people in rural areas make a living, including farming, artisanal production and service provision, which can be supported by linkages to urban economies.



2.3. Dimensions of urban-rural linkages

In exploring the dimensions of urban-rural linkages, physical and sectoral connectivity emerge as overarching elements that support and enhance these dimensions.

Physical connectivity encompasses the infrastructure that links urban and rural areas—such as roads, transportation systems, and communication networks—facilitating the flow of people, goods, and services. Meanwhile, sectoral connectivity addresses the economic, social, and environmental interactions between

these areas, integrating agricultural supply chains, employment opportunities, and shared services. Together, these forms of connectivity play a vital role in strengthening the socio-economic fabric and environmental sustainability of both urban and rural communities.

The economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions are thus explored and their implications on physical and sectoral connectivity.



a. Economic dimension

This involves a complex economic interplay between cities and rural areas, with significant contributions and dependencies. Rural areas supply urban populations with food, natural resources and labour, eco-tourism opportunities, while cities provide markets, services and employment opportunities just to mention a few - Farmers and food producers in rural areas supply agricultural goods and food products, while urban markets and food companies provide vital sales channels for these rural producers.

Additionally, many raw materials and natural resources that power urban economies, such as water, timber, coal and metals, are extracted from rural areas.

Rural communities benefit from cities through economic activity, employment opportunities and access to essential services, cultural offers and leisure activities.

Many rural residents commute to urban areas for work, while others permanently migrate to cities for more opportunities. Cities also provide markets where farmers can sell their crops and other goods. However, challenges such as lack of infrastructure as transportation and job opportunities in rural areas often push people into cities. On the one hand, this migration contributing to overpopulation and a strain on resources in urban areas, on the other, the depopulation of smaller towns and rural areas leads to services being less provided, and those left behind are impacted due to absence or inadequacy of services.

In the United States of America for example, to curb rural-urban migration and economic disparities, the Department of Agriculture implements programmes such as the Rural Business-Cooperative Service.



A trader in a local market in Arusha, Tanzania © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

The aim of the programme is to support rural businesses and promote economic linkages between rural producers and urban markets.

Shrinking cities represent a related phenomenon that impacts urban-rural linkages, characterized by population decline and economic contraction. This is true in particular in former industrial hubs that often face significant job losses contributing to rising unemployment and economic stagnation.¹⁹

As industries shut down or relocate, younger, skilled workers migrate elsewhere, leaving behind an aging population and a diminished workforce. This outmigration results in lower tax revenues, which leads to cuts in essential public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

Additionally, the prevalence of abandoned properties exacerbates the situation by driving down property values and potentially increasing crime rates, thereby intensifying the economic and social challenges these cities confront.

Several international organizations and institutions emphasize inclusive and sustainable economic development by supporting projects that bridge the urban-rural gap. This includes investments in infrastructure linking urban to rural areas.

An example is the World Bank's Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Project in India, which focuses on improving rural livelihoods by promoting sustainable agriculture, skills development and connecting rural producers with urban markets.²⁰ The OECD, on the other hand, addresses urban-rural linkages through its Territorial Development Policy Committee, which explores policies promoting balanced regional development. This involves strategies to enhance economic cooperation between urban and rural areas. More specifically the OECD's Rural Policy Reviews provide comprehensive analyses of rural development strategies in its member and partner countries, offering insights into effective policies for fostering economic linkages.²¹

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) address economic challenges and implement initiatives to enhance the connections between urban and rural areas. UNDP focuses on inclusive and sustainable development, recognizing the socioeconomic dimensions of urban-rural linkages. UNDP's efforts include projects that aim to reduce inequality, enhance social services and promote community engagement.

¹⁹ Wu, Zezhou, Danting Zhang, Shenghan Li, Jianbo Fei, Changhong Chen, Bin Tian, and Maxwell Fordjour Antwi-Afari, "Visualizing and Understanding Shrinking Cities and Towns (SCT) Research: A Network Analysis." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 18 (2022): 11475. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811475>.

²⁰ World Bank, "World Bank Projects and Operations", 2021.

²¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "OECD Rural Policy Reviews", 2020. Available at www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/oecd-rural-policy-reviews_19909284.





Children look through a window in Aceh, Indonesia © UN-Habitat/Veronica Wijaya

For example, the UNDP's Rural Urban Partnership Programme in Indonesia seeks to improve social infrastructure, healthcare and education in rural areas while fostering collaboration with nearby urban centres.²²

ILO addresses socioeconomic challenges related to employment and labour markets in both urban and rural contexts. It emphasizes the importance of decent work and social protection for all. The ILO's Rural Economy and Employment initiatives in countries such as Kenya aim to promote inclusive economic growth, create decent employment opportunities, and address social disparities between urban and rural areas.²³

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) aims to transform agriculture, rural economies and food systems by investing in rural agriculture, empowering rural communities and promoting sustainable development including in developing countries.²⁴

²² UNDP, "UNDP Projects and Initiatives", 2021.

²³ International Labour Organization (ILO), "ILO Projects and Programmes", 2021.

²⁴ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), "Our Vision", (n.d). Available at: <https://www.ifad.org/en/our-vision>.

b. Environmental dimension

The interconnectedness of rural and urban areas extends to the environment as well. What happens in one place, directly impacts the other. Cities often rely on rural areas for natural resources such as food and fibre, water, energy and construction materials.

Conversely, urban pollution, including airborne and waterborne pollutants, can negatively affect rural areas through air and water pollution. As cities expand, they often encroach on surrounding rural land, depleting agricultural land and open spaces. This is often the case where there are no planned city extensions in place.

Natural resources, such as rivers, wildlife and green spaces, transcend rural-urban boundaries. Protecting resources in one area helps support the environment in the other.

Practices such as sustainable farming methods, reducing deforestation and transitioning to clean energy, sustainable waste management, have significant benefits for both urban and rural regions. Various global agencies are actively implementing strategies to address the environmental challenges and opportunities arising from these linkages.

The depletion of agricultural land and open spaces due to urban expansion is a concern that resonates with the emphasis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on sustainable resource management.

The work of UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices that safeguard biodiversity and ecosystems, promoting the human right to food and access to land, and recognizing the direct impact of urban demands on rural landscapes.

For example, in Brazil, where urbanization and agricultural expansion have been significant drivers of deforestation, UNEP has been involved in initiatives to promote sustainable land use and forest conservation.

These efforts contribute to the broader goal of protecting shared natural resources that extend beyond urban borders.²⁵

The environmental repercussions of urbanization, particularly pollution, have also been a focus of the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD). Airborne and waterborne pollutants originating from urban centres for instance through industrial wastes can adversely affect rural areas, impacting both ecosystems and human health. The CBD advocates for integrated approaches to urban planning that consider the conservation of biodiversity, emphasizing the importance of protecting shared resources that transcend rural-urban boundaries.²⁶



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²⁵ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "Sustainable Land Management project in Brazil", 2018.

²⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), "CBD Publications", 2020.

For example, in China, rapid urbanization and industrialization have affected air and water quality. China has implemented policies to integrate urban and rural planning, focusing on environmental protection and sustainable development.²⁷

The work of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is particularly relevant in the context of protecting rural lands from the encroachment of expanding cities. The Convention highlights the importance of sustainable land management to combat desertification, recognizing the linkages between land-use changes driven by urban expansion and the degradation of rural ecosystems.²⁸ Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity was a 2022 publication launched at the CBD COP 15 focused on the need to address integrated management of URLs for the protection of biodiversity.²⁹

c. Social-cultural dimension

Social-cultural connections with deep historical ties also exist between rural and urban areas. Family and cultural ties link people across the rural-urban spectrum, and migration in both directions leads to the sharing of ideas, values and traditions. Solutions that improve life for rural populations often have positive effects on urban populations as well. Social and cultural exchanges frequently occur between rural and urban areas, as people migrate for work or education, spreading cultural influences in both directions.

When people move from rural to urban areas, they bring aspects of rural culture and values with them, such as cuisine, faith practices, music, or traditional crafts. Major cities often have vibrant ethnic enclaves that celebrate rural cultural heritage. Family and community ties may also remain strong across distances.



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²⁷ Urban and Rural Planning law of the People's Republic of China, 2008,2019. <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC083266/>

²⁸ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), "UNCCD Library", 2019.

²⁹ UN-Habitat, (2022), Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity: An integrated territorial approach, Available at: <https://unhabitat.org/managing-urban-rural-linkages-for-nature>

Similarly, urban culture spreads to rural areas. Access to radio, television and the Internet has exposed rural populations to urban fashion, music and lifestyle trends. The youth population may adopt styles and hobbies popular in cities. Returnees may also bring back new cultural influences from the areas they lived in.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the other hand promotes cultural diversity, linguistic heritage and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Their programmes aim to strengthen cultural connections between urban and rural areas. Its Creative Cities Network fosters collaboration between cities and rural areas to promote indigenous

knowledge, cultural industries, traditional crafts and artistic expressions. Cities such as Jaipur in India, part of the network, emphasize cultural preservation. Initiatives such as the Cool Japan campaign promote cultural exports, including traditional arts and crafts.

The United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) focuses on migration management and migrant well-being, recognizing the impact on cultural ties. Programmes aim to enhance the positive aspects of migration on cultural exchange. IOM's projects in Mexico facilitate cultural exchange between urban and rural communities, promoting understanding and appreciation of diverse traditions.



Magical Guanajuato, Mexico: A vibrant blend of urban and rural influences, where culture spreads and connects communities, much like UNESCO's efforts to preserve global heritage. © Adobestock



An aerial view of a green field, with its mix of agriculture, housing, and a village, illustrates the complex and variable definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' across different regions © Adobestock

2.4. Emerging issues on the concept of urban-rural linkages

The concept of URLs has evolved in the last two decades in terms of scope and focus. However, the foundational building blocks of the concept defined by different organizations and development agencies and in different regions remains relatively similar, except for emerging issues described below:

Increased focus on sustainable urban-rural linkages: With growing concerns for the environment and climate change, there is likely to be increased emphasis on developing sustainable urban-rural linkages.

This may include initiatives such as localising food systems, reducing emissions from transportation through better connectivity between cities and rural areas, and supporting renewable energy projects in rural regions.

In Chennai, India Box 1, adaptive pathways such as enhancing urban-rural linkages to address climate change impacts due to rapid urbanization impacting rural and peri-urban areas has not only enhanced resilience but also contributed to improved livelihoods.

Box 1. Building Resilience in Chennai's, India Peri-urban Areas: Lessons from the Peri-cene Initiative³⁰

Chennai, a sprawling coastal megacity with a history as a colonial trading post, has evolved into a bustling industrial hub with a population exceeding 10 million. Its rapid economic and urban expansion has significantly increased vulnerability to climate-related hazards such as cyclones, flooding, and water stress, particularly in its peri-urban and rural hinterlands. The city's industrial and urban areas have expanded extensively into low-lying, water-based landscapes, complicating drainage and storage systems crucial for managing heavy rainfall and cyclone impacts. This urban sprawl exacerbates climate change effects, including riverine and flash flooding, sea-level rise, urban heat islands, and air pollution, while disrupting local ecosystems and exacerbating water stress. Socially, Chennai's transformation has led to rapid changes in rural economies and livelihoods, accompanied by demographic shifts and gentrification.

Traditional farming practices have been displaced, leaving many indigenous villages marginalized on the peri-urban fringes, lacking access to food and employment opportunities. Governance challenges persist with fragmented policies, elite capture of resources, and illegal encroachments, despite growing awareness of climate risks. Through the Peri-cene project, stakeholders in Chennai explored adaptive pathways to enhance resilience.



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³⁰ <https://peri-cene.net/case-studies/chennai/>

These pathways include strengthening urban-rural linkages to support sustainable ecosystems and land-based livelihoods, promoting agroecology and integrated food systems, and implementing comprehensive water management strategies for climate adaptation. A notable example is the village of Katchipattu, located near Sriperumbudur's industrial zone. Once marginalized with high unemployment and water stress, Katchipattu has become a beacon of resilience through initiatives mobilizing youth and marginalized groups in agroecological practices and ecosystem restoration.

This grassroots approach not only revitalizes local economies but also builds community resilience to climate impacts. Moving forward, Chennai exemplifies the potential for integrated regional climate sensitive planning, private sector engagement in sustainable urban development and food systems, and civil society empowerment through participatory governance. These initiatives, driven by adaptive governance models, hold promise for Chennai and similar urban regions grappling with the complex challenges of urbanization and climate change.



Increasing interest in *rural tourism* complementing the existing demand for urban tourism: As people seek more nature-based experiences and escape from crowded city life, the concept of rural tourism is becoming increasingly popular.

This trend is likely to continue, with more tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences in rural areas. An example is Songyang, a county in China that has become a tourist destination through their rural revitalization strategies (see box below).

Box 2. Rural Tourism in Songyang county, China³¹

The county of Songyang, in the southwest province of Zhejiang in China, is mostly rural with an agricultural landscape. Due to lack of employment opportunities and economic decline, young people were migrating from villages, “hollowing out” the villages and increasing the median age of the population. In 2014, the Songyang acupuncture strategy was begun to motivate local communities and stimulate further revitalisation and business ideas in the region. By applying architectural acupuncture to this area, the projects aimed to activate the circulation between the villages and among the regions. The architectural acupuncture strategy employed in Songyang created culturally and historically resonant public spaces that attract tourists and engage local residents. For example, Xing Village’s Brown Sugar Factory not only became a centre for production but also a multifunctional public space, hosting weekend movie events, performances, and cultural showcases. These community-centred spaces integrate tourism with local traditions, enhancing the visitor experience while preserving the villages’ heritage.



Zhulin Theater Songyang High Cavity Performance during the First International forum on urban rural linkages in Songyang, China 2019 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

³¹ UN-Habitat 2020. Adapted from 1st compendium of inspiring practices on urban-rural linkages available at- https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/compendium-of-urll-case-studies_web-vers_.pdf

This has impacted into:

- » *Tourism Growth:* The strategy significantly boosted tourism in the region. In Xing Village, tourist numbers rose dramatically from 200 in 2016 to 14,680 in 2018. Similarly, Shicang Village saw a surge in visitors, from fewer than 10,000 annually in 2017 to over 5,000 per month by late 2019. In Wangjing Village, the opening of Wangjing's Memorial Hall drew over 20,000 tourists in 2018, from nearly zero previously.
- » *Economic Benefits:* Tourism directly contributed to the increase in local economic activities. For instance, in Xing Village, the price of brown sugar rose from 16 RMB/kilo in 2016 to 60 RMB/kilo in 2018, driven by increased tourist demand for local products. Caizhai Village experienced a similar trend, with the price of tofu increasing from 20 RMB/kilo in 2018 to 30 RMB/kilo in 2019, alongside an influx of over 2,500 tourists per month by the end of 2019.



Watch folk culture performances at the mountainside lanterns during the First International forum on urban rural linkages in Songyang, China 2019 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

Technological advancements driving collaboration between urban and rural areas: Digital technology has made it easier than ever before for individuals in both urban and rural areas to collaborate effectively. There is likely to be an increasing trend towards greater collaboration between these two communities using tools such as video conferencing software or online platforms that facilitate communication.

Other related initiatives aim to reduce the urban-rural divide in regard to education, health and related amenities. For example, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) (box 3) have smart villages initiative in Africa that provides energy thereby contributing to access to education and improved businesses.

Box 3. IEEE Smart Village initiative³²

IEEE Smart Village initiative: African IEEE Smart Village (ISV) has been providing access to energy in rural areas (electricity or solar etc.) for some African countries. The initiative was originally established as a Community Solutions Initiative (2009) and was renamed in 2014. Its aim is to promote off-grid communities through education and the creation of sustainable businesses in the energy sector. The activities are spread worldwide, serving more than 50,000 people, living in 34 villages, mostly located in African continent (e.g., Benin, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Zambia), but also in Haiti and India.



- » *Continued migration from rural to urban areas:* Despite efforts to promote balanced development across regions, many people still find themselves moving from rural areas into cities due to perceived opportunities for education, work or lifestyle changes. A notable exception to this overall trend was the “reverse migration” during the COVID-19 pandemic in which 100s of millions of urban workers returned to rural villages in India.

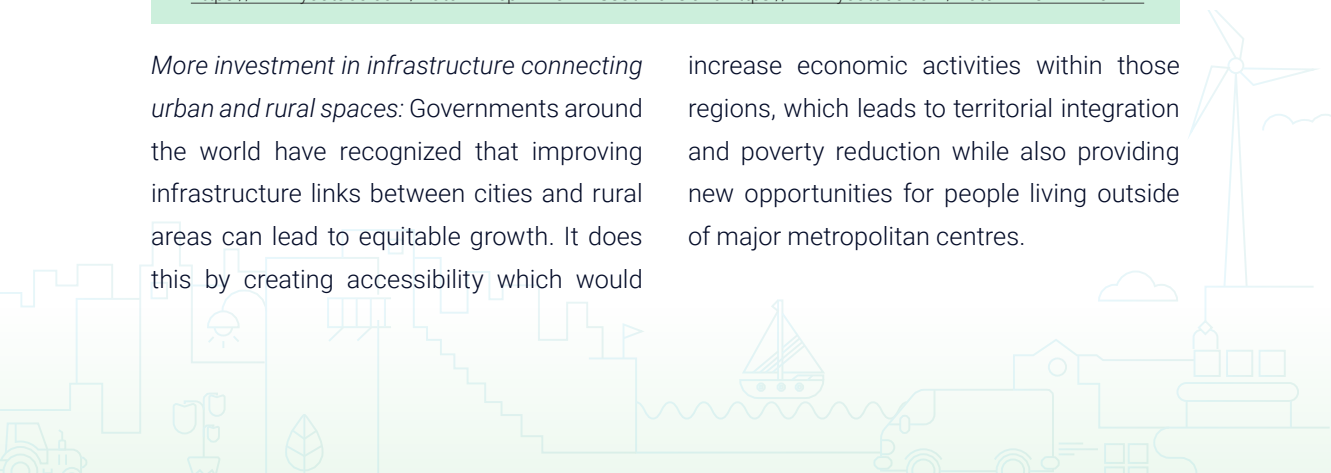


New Delhi sunset, with its bustling crowd © Adobestock

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpPvHCK9BSs&t=162s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YkKWITcB--E>

More investment in infrastructure connecting urban and rural spaces: Governments around the world have recognized that improving infrastructure links between cities and rural areas can lead to equitable growth. It does this by creating accessibility which would

increase economic activities within those regions, which leads to territorial integration and poverty reduction while also providing new opportunities for people living outside of major metropolitan centres.



Box 4. Niger State Rural Access and Mobility Project (RAMP)³³

Niger State, located in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, covers over 76,000 sq. km and is a key contributor to the country's agricultural productivity, with agriculture accounting for 47.2 per cent of its GDP in 2017. Despite its agricultural significance, rural areas in Niger State face challenges like poor infrastructure, with 21,000 km of poorly maintained rural roads, that negatively affect farm-to-market transport, rural livelihoods, and access to services. To address these issues, the *Rural Access and Mobility Project (RAMP)* was implemented between 2011 and 2020. The project, co-financed by the World Bank and French Development Agency, aimed to improve rural infrastructure and mobility, focusing on the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads and bridges.

Key Achievements:



- » **Upgrading of Infrastructure:** 500 km of rural roads and 20 river crossings were rehabilitated, improving access for farmers and transport operators.



- » **Community-based Road Maintenance:** 35 community groups, totalling 395 members, were trained and engaged to maintain the rehabilitated roads.



- » **Capacity Building:** Institutional support was provided to improve road asset management and develop rural transport policies.

Results and Impact:

728,891

beneficiaries, including farmers, market women, and transport operators.

40 per cent

increase in traffic from rural to urban areas.

15 per cent

increase in farm size and **50** per cent reduction in post-harvest losses.

45 per cent

reduction in travel costs and improved access to health and educational services.

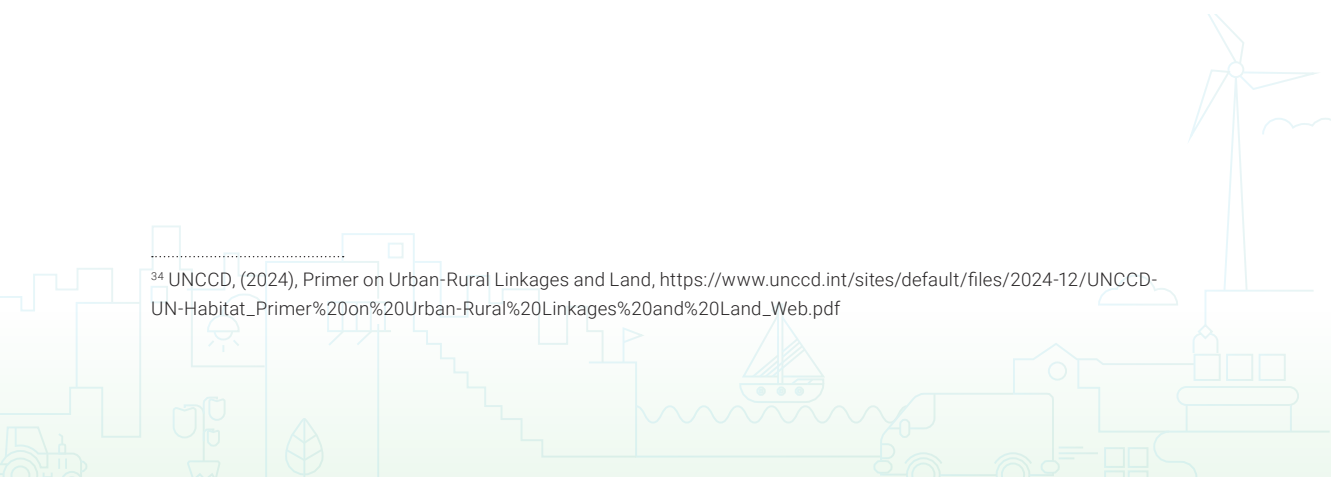


Zuma Rock, Niger State Nigeria © Adobestock

³³ UN-Habitat 2023. Adopted from the 3rd edition of the compendium of case studies on urban-rural linkages available at <https://unhabitat.org/compendium-of-inspiring-practices-on-urban-rural-linkages>

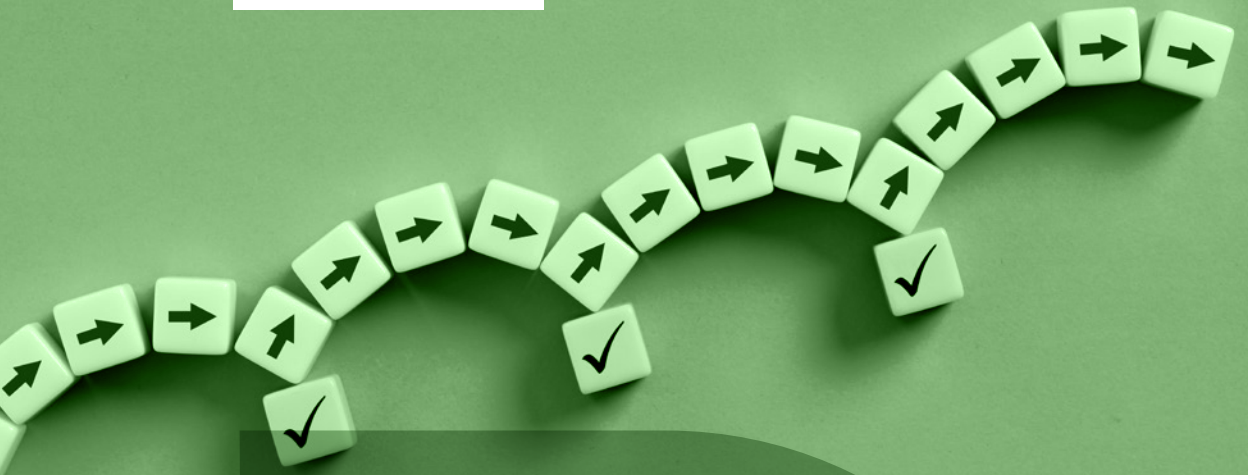
- **Urban linkages to both near and far rural areas:** Initially the focus of URLs has been on the near rural linkages to urban areas, but recently the urban linkages to distant rural areas have come forward in terms of shaping urban demand for goods and services from distant rural areas in ways that benefit rural communities and landscapes. For instance, *agricultural products, timber, and energy resources* from remote rural regions are frequently transported to urban centers, driven by advancements in transportation and logistics. This phenomenon is creating new opportunities for distant rural communities, allowing them to participate in urban economies and benefit from the high demand for rural goods. The ***Primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land*** launched at UNCCD COP 16 in December, 2024 addressed governance frameworks and tools for “flow-based URLs”.³⁴
- In recent years there has been an *increased emergence of ‘purely urban’ activities in rural areas*. For instance, the rise of e-commerce and globalization has led to the establishment of *logistics hubs* in rural areas, where vast spaces are available for warehousing, distribution centers, and transport networks.
- Additionally, there is increasing recognition of the *ecosystem services* that rural areas provide to cities, which goes beyond direct economic goods. These services include *carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection, flood regulation, and water purification*—all critical to urban sustainability.
- **Rural industrialization:** this enhances urban-rural linkages (URLs) by promoting economic diversification and job creation in rural areas. This development helps retain local talent, reduces migration to urban centres, and fosters community stability. Additionally, it strengthens economic ties through supply chain integration, as rural industries supply goods and services to urban markets.

³⁴ UNCCD, (2024), Primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land, https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/UNCCD-UN-Habitat_Primer%20on%20Urban-Rural%20Linkages%20and%20Land_Web.pdf



03

A timeline of global processes connecting urban and rural areas



Timeline of events, global frameworks and processes that have shaped and impacted urban-rural linkages:



1976

Habitat I Conference

The Vancouver Action Plan emphasized rural development alongside rapid urbanization, calling for balanced growth and rural-urban linkages.



1996

Habitat II Conference

Resolutions focused on addressing urban growth challenges by enhancing rural infrastructure, public services, and employment opportunities to curb rural-urban migration.



2000

World Bank Conference on Development Economics

Experts discussed strategies for improving access to basic services and poverty reduction in developing countries, emphasizing an integrated approach.

MDGs prioritized urban-rural linkages through poverty reduction initiatives, infrastructure development, and access to basic services.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

2000



Emphasized the importance of green economy and urban-rural partnerships for sustainable development, shaping the 2030 Agenda.

UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

2012



Launched to promote sustainable food systems and urban-rural partnerships, emphasizing governance, equitable access, and waste reduction.

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact

2015



UN Habitat III Conference

2016

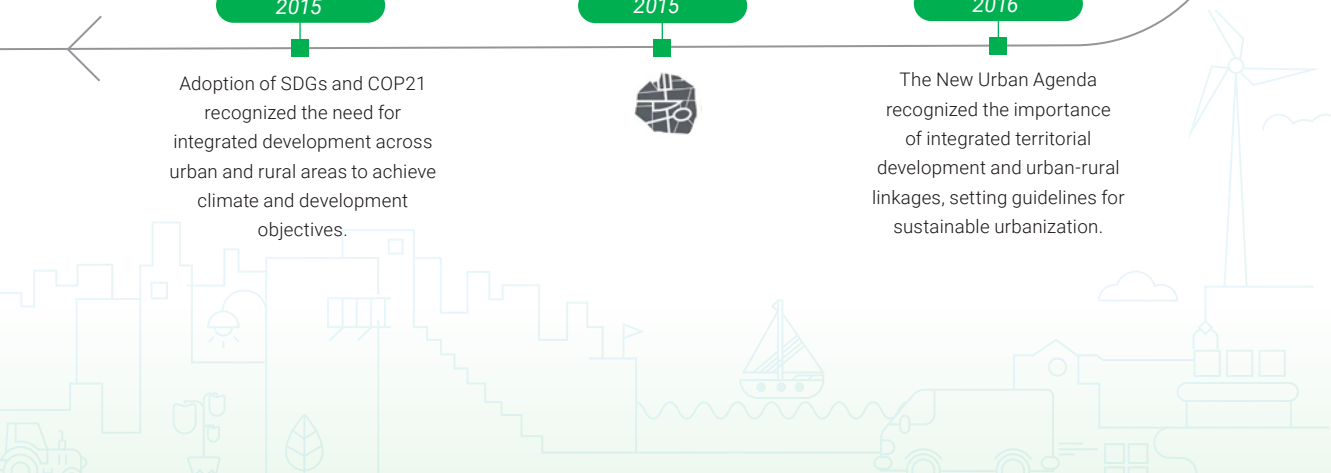
The New Urban Agenda recognized the importance of integrated territorial development and urban-rural linkages, setting guidelines for sustainable urbanization.



SDGs and COP21

2015

Adoption of SDGs and COP21 recognized the need for integrated development across urban and rural areas to achieve climate and development objectives.



Highlighted the importance of technological advances and inclusive growth for bridging urban-rural disparities.

1st United Nations Habitat Assembly

2019



Supported strengthening connections between cities and rural areas, advocating for balanced territorial development and intersectoral cooperation.

World Urban Forums

2002-Present



At the UN-Habitat Assembly, Member States adopted a resolution on urban-rural linkages in 2019, alongside the release of the Guiding Principles of urban-rural linkages. In 2023, a resolution on biodiversity and resilient cities was adopted, further reinforcing the importance of urban-rural linkages in addressing global sustainability challenges.

United Nations Habitat Assembly

2019&2023



CBD COP Agreement

2022

Called for engagement with subnational governments and cities to integrate biodiversity concerns into urban and territorial planning.

Global Climate Action Summit and UN HLPP

2018



The forums provided platforms to share best practices and promote sustainable rural transformation amidst urbanization through diverse topics, site visits and thematic sessions.

International Forums on Urban-Rural Linkages

2019/2021/2023/2025



Highlighted the need for coordinated action to transform food systems, emphasizing rural infrastructure, small towns, and cross-sectoral partnerships.

UN Food Systems Summit

2021&2025



Launch of the First Center for Urban Rural Linkages in Africa

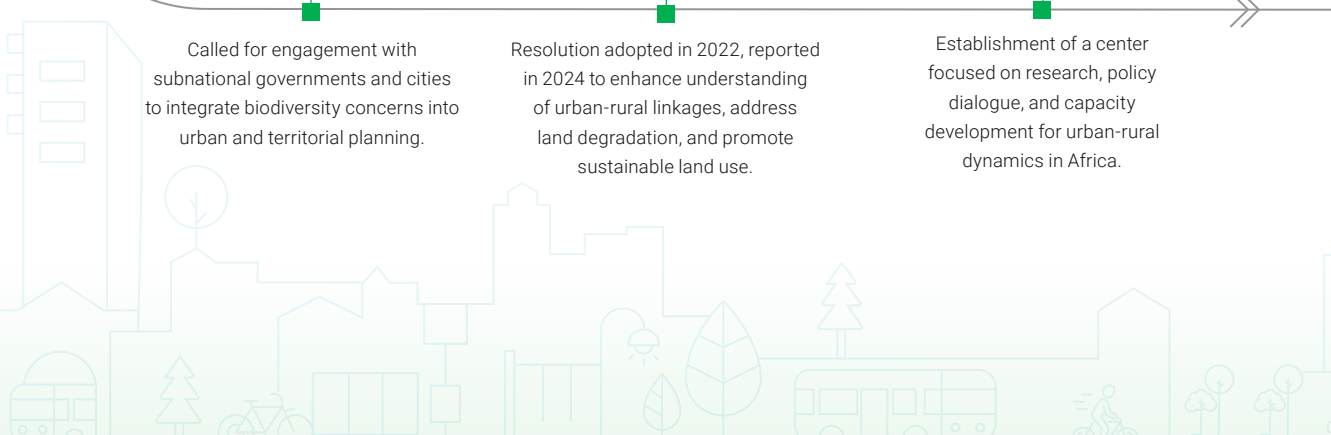
2023

Establishment of a center focused on research, policy dialogue, and capacity development for urban-rural dynamics in Africa.

UNCCD-COP Agreement

2022/2024

Resolution adopted in 2022, reported in 2024 to enhance understanding of urban-rural linkages, address land degradation, and promote sustainable land use.



3.1. Overview

Since Habitat I Conference in 1976, there have been many major international conferences, forums and other events focused on strengthening the connections between urban and rural areas. For these past 40+ years, the conversations at these events have evolved to match the changing dynamics between cities and rural areas. From food security to climate change to new technologies, the links between urban and rural spaces touch on all components of sustainable development.

This chapter is a stocktake of selected key global processes, events and initiatives on urban-rural linkages since Habitat I and how their outcomes have progressed and advanced urban-rural linkages. By understanding the past and present, we can get insights into how to shape a more connected future.

3.1.1. Habitat I conference



The Vancouver Action Plan, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976, emphasized the critical rural dimension of human settlements development. The action plan was a recognition that while rapid urbanization was occurring in many developing nations, a significant portion of the global population still lived in rural areas and small towns. As such, the plan called for governments and international organizations to ensure rural communities had access to basic services and infrastructure.

It was acknowledged that balanced development between urban and rural regions was necessary for equitable growth. Strategies were outlined to strengthen rural economies, boost agricultural productivity through improved technologies and resource management practices, protecting the environment and natural resources on which rural livelihoods depended, and enhance rural-urban linkages. Overall, the Vancouver Action Plan highlighted the need for a holistic approach to human settlements that addressed the development needs and challenges in both rural and urban settings.

3.1.2. Habitat II Conference



The second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) took place from 3 to 14 June, 1996, in Istanbul, Türkiye. Resolutions at Habitat II were based on key findings of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994.

As part of tackling urban growth challenges, delegates at Habitat II focused on addressing the increasing number of inhabitants in urban areas as a trigger to urban growth. Further, the Habitat Agenda noted the existence of interdependence between rural and urban development.

For this reason, facilitation of adequate infrastructure, public service and employment opportunities to rural areas would enhance their value, thus improving urban settlements and at the same time curbing rural-urban migration.

Key among resolutions to advance the Habitat Agenda include resolutions on the following:

- » Requesting for urban-rural interdependence³⁵(HSP/GC/17/10).
- » Dissemination of good practice and policies, especially on areas of urban-rural synergy³⁶ (HSP/GC/19/10).
- » Capacity improvement among rural service centres and intermediary towns that will improve their conditions to make them attractive for decentralized growth³⁷ (SP/ GC/25/L.9).

³⁵ Resolution HSP/GC/17/10. "The rural dimension of sustainable urban development." 1 April, 2011. Available at <https://staging.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=9688&catid=491%20&typeid=23&ContentByTheme=292>.

³⁶ Resolution HSP/GC/19/10. "Urban-rural linkages and sustainable urbanization." 5–9 May, 2003. Available at https://staging.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/9658_1_593465.pdf.

³⁷ Resolution SP/GC/25/L.9. "Contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements." 17–23 April, 2015. Available at https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2015/01/Contribution-of-the-United-Nations-Human-Settlements-Programme-to-the-post_2015-development-agenda_English.pdf.

3.1.3. The World Summit on Sustainable Development: 2002, Johannesburg South Africa



The World Summit on Sustainable Development that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 agreed on ways to achieve sustainable development across many sectors through diverse approaches. Many international organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations University, the African Association of Universities initiated far-reaching agreements

on education for Sustainable development. This led to the declaration of the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005-2014³⁸ which emphasized the need to understand and include all forms of education (formal, informal and non-formal) in efforts to realize a sustainable future.

3.1.4. Millennium Development Goals: 2000–2015



The turn of the millennium brought new attention to strengthening the connection between urban and rural areas. In 2000, United Nations Member States adopted

the Millennium Development Goals, which included aiming to improve the lives of slum dwellers and develop a global partnership for development.

³⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1682&menu=35> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Shaping the Future We Want - UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (Final report)", 2014. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1682&menu=35>.

The Goals mainly promoted URLs through Goal 1 (end poverty and hunger) and also MDG 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) and MDG 8 (Global partnership for development). In IFAD's Discussion Paper entitled Achieving the MDGs Through Rural Investment and

Enabling policy, the agency confirmed that three quarters of the people living in absolute poverty live in rural areas, and there was dire need to bridge this gap through the Goals.³⁹

Between 2000 to 2015, governments and organizations focused on increasing access to basic services, reducing poverty, and promoting environmental sustainability in both cities and the countryside.

Initiatives targeted affordable housing, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and economic opportunity in an integrated way across the urban-rural continuum. More work was still needed to truly link urban and rural areas by 2025.

However, these early efforts raised awareness about the interdependence of cities and the countryside. They showed that partnership and cooperation across sectors could improve well-being for all. The period from 2000 to 2015 set the stage for a new, holistic approach to development that views urban and rural areas as two sides of the same coin.

3.1.5. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) 2012



The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, also known as Rio+20, aimed to renew political commitment to sustainable development by focusing on inclusive economic growth, social equality and environmental protection.

The importance of a green economy and institutional reform to achieve sustainable development was emphasised at Rio+20, and it was recognized that urban-rural interlinkages are crucial for sustainable food production and poverty eradication.⁴⁰

³⁹ IFAD. "Discussion Paper on Achieving the MDGs through Rural Investment and Enabling policy", 16-17 February 2005. Available at www.un.org/esa/coordination/Alliance/achievingMDG.pdf.

⁴⁰ United Nations, "The Future We Want", 2012. Par. 110. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>.

Countries committed to strengthening urban-rural partnerships and cross-sectoral coordination. Rio+20 resulted in a non-binding document, “The Future We Want”, outlining a common vision and steps towards sustainable development.

Its contents were a call for integrated urban and rural water management, sustainable agriculture and food production, and access to sustainable energy for all.

3.1.6. Sustainable Development Goals: A turning point for integrated territorial development



The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, was a turning point for integrated development across urban and rural areas. For the first time, world leaders formally recognized the need to strengthen urban-rural connections to achieve both climate and development objectives. Urban-rural linkages have come into focus, not only for achieving Goal 11, but also Goals 2, 9 and 12 among others.

Specifically, Goal 11 is intended to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. With target 11.a, Member States acknowledge the importance of the economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas and lay the foundation for an integrated territorial approach.



3.1.7. Paris Climate Agreement



The Paris Climate Agreement was adopted during the United Nations Climate Change Conference-COP21, whereby nearly all countries committed to keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius, with the ambition to keep it below 1.5°C through reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and other climate adaptation measures.

Delegates at COP21 stressed the role of local communities, Indigenous groups, and grassroots organizations in climate solutions. Since then, global conferences have increasingly focused on practical ways to foster urban-rural partnerships, especially around agriculture, transport and natural resource management.

3.1.8. Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (2015)



As a key outcome of the Milan Food Expo 2015, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) is an international agreement of mayors. The pact was launched in 2015 with over 100 signatory cities globally. The MUFPP is the only mayoral protocol that commits cities to sustainable food systems around the world. Since 2016, Milan Pact signatory cities, now numbering over 250 cities, have participated in the Milan Pact

Awards recognizing good food policy and practice.

The Milan Pact Framework for Action defines 37 actions in 6 priority areas: ensure effective governance food systems; sustainable diets and nutrition; social and economic equity; food production; food supply and distribution; and fighting against food waste.^{41, 42}

⁴¹ Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, "Milan Urban Food Policy Pact" (n.d.). www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/the-milan-pact/.

⁴² UN-Habitat. "Milan Food Policy: An Innovative Framework for Making Urban Food Systems More Inclusive". Available at www.urbanagendaplatform.org/best-practice/milan-food-policy-innovative-framework-making-urban-food-system-more-sustainable.

3.1.9. Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)



While urban-rural linkages were already part of the Habitat II Agenda (Türkiye, 1996), the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA), adopted by Member States in Ecuador in October 2016 at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), carries forward and supports the policies and strategies for the integrated urban and rural development.

During the preparatory phase of the Habitat III conference, significant attention was directed towards the issue of urban-rural linkages. An issue paper dedicated to this topic (Habitat III Issue Paper Number 10 on Urban-Rural Linkages) served as a cornerstone for the formulation of policy provisions within the NUA. The drafting of the Issue Paper was a coordinated effort across several United Nations agencies, including FAO, IFAD, UNEP, the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This paper was a guiding document for the Special Session on Urban-Rural Linkages during the Habitat III conference.

This pivotal contribution resulted in the integration of over 17 paragraphs within the NUA framework, which comprehensively addressed territorial development. There were also three important Expert Group Meetings held in 2015 that influenced the negotiations: in Colombia, Germany, and the United States. The debate among Member States encompassed various dimensions of urban-rural interconnectivity, including the explicit attention to rural development within the urban agenda for the first time in international policy.



3.1.10. 2018 Global Climate Action Summit and the 2018 United Nations General Assembly's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)



The 2018 Global Climate Action Summit highlighted innovative models of cooperation from around the world. The UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the other hand saw discussions about how technological advances are being utilized not only to improve efficiency but also to reduce disparities between socio economic groups residing within cities or beyond their

boundaries thus promoting inclusive growth overall. This is something that has become increasingly important given recent trends such as climate change and migration.

These growing challenges adversely impacting those who live farther away from large metropolitan areas, and due to their limited resources increase their vulnerability.

3.1.11. Guiding Principles of Urban-Rural Linkages



Following the adoption of the NUA, UN-Habitat developed a paper⁴³ published in 2017 titled *“Implementing the new Urban Agenda by strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages”* which gave an overview of 10 thematic entry points to urban-rural linkages

along with recommended necessary interventions.

The paper presents numerous case studies of successful strategies and actions taken by different actors from national levels to subnational local authorities, presents

⁴³ UN-Habitat, “Implementing the new Urban Agenda by strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages.” 2017. Available at <https://unhabitat.org/implementing-the-new-urban-agenda-by-strengthening-urban-rural-linkages>.

different areas of expertise within UN-Habitat, and introduces tools such as the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IGUTP),⁴⁴ national urban policies and partnerships such as the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) among others. Nonetheless, a set of principles and actions were still needed for strengthening URLs.

Responding to this need, UN-Habitat initiated a participatory process in January 2018 at the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur to develop “Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles (URL-GP) and a Framework for Action for Advancing Integrated Territorial Development”.

This process involved consultations with over 130 stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, development partners, governments, the private sector and civil society. In June 2018, an Expert Group Meeting in La Paz, Bolivia, reviewed a second draft, and experiences from countries in Africa further refined the principles and actions.

The final URL-GP,⁴⁵ launched at the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2019, consists of 10 guiding principles and 11 entry points in the Framework for Action, providing a comprehensive tool for implementing urban-rural linkages in planning, finance, health, environment and other sectors.

3.1.12. The first and second United Nations Habitat Assembly: 2019 and 2023



The United Nations Habitat Assembly is the highest-level decision-making body concerning urbanization and human settlements matters worldwide. The Assembly convenes every four years to tackle the most pressing human settlement

challenges faced by the world and to preserve and rehabilitate the urban environment.⁴⁶ The first and second sessions of the UN-Habitat Assembly took place from 27 to 31 May, 2019 and from 5 to 9 June, 2023 at the UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi.

⁴⁴ UN-Habitat (2015a), “International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning.” Available at <https://unhabitat.org/tool/international-guidelines-on-urban-and-territorial-planning>.

⁴⁵ UN-Habitat (2019a), “Urban-rural linkages: Guiding principles.” Available at <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/03/url-gp-1.pdf>.

⁴⁶ International Institute for Sustainable Development, “About the UN-Habitat Assembly”, 27-31 May 2019. Available at <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/1st-un-habitat-assembly/>.

The adoption of the resolution on “Enhancing Urban-Rural Linkages for Sustainable Urbanization and Human Settlement”,⁴⁷ tabled at the first UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019, was a milestone and laid a strong foundation for enabling Member States to scale up their activities in this area. Building on the resolution’s momentum, the Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles (URL-GP) and Framework for Action provides Member States, subnational governments and other stakeholders with the framework to implement integrated activities across the urban-rural nexus.⁴⁸

The resolution continues to guide projects, knowledge products and advocacy efforts of the Urban Rural Linkages Programme at UN-Habitat, whose aim is to support Member States’ application of the URL-GP. Similarly, in 2023, the resolution on Biodiverse and Resilient Cities “Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban and territorial planning” HSP/HA.2/L.7. The resolution further acknowledges the urban-rural continuum along with the need for integrating biodiversity in urban and territorial planning⁴⁹.

3.1.13. International forums on urban-rural linkages (2019, 2021, 2023 & 2025)



The International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL) is one of the key activities of UN-Habitat’s urban-rural linkages work, which includes capturing, analysing and disseminating the inspiring practices globally on the subject. It serves as a platform to promote urban-rural linkages for sustainable development and well-being for all across the urban-rural continuum.⁵⁰

The three forums were hosted by Songyang County, with support from Lishui City and Zhejiang Province, China.

The First IFURL took place between 10 and 14 November, 2019. The theme was “Rural revitalization through innovations and valorisation”.

⁴⁷ UN-Habitat (2019b), “Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements.” Available at <https://unhabitat.org/hsp1a1res5-enhancing-urban-rural-linkages-for-sustainable-urbanization-and-human-settlements>.

⁴⁸ UN-Habitat (2019c), “Annual Report”. Available at <https://unhabitat.org/annual-report-2019>.

⁴⁹ UN-Habitat, “Biodiverse and resilient cities: mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban and territorial planning”, 5-9 June 2023. Available at https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/06/k2310564e_-_hsp-ha.2-l.7_-_advance.pdf.

⁵⁰ UN-Habitat. “IFURL”. Available at <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl/>.

Over 200 participants from 17 countries and 18 international organizations attended, featuring 37 presentations on different themes and producing the "Songyang Consensus."

The Second IFURL, held from 19 to 20 October, 2021 shaped its theme as "Integrating health and territorial development for sustainable livelihoods" building on the first forum's success and articulation of rural revitalization. The forum was attended by over 200 participants online and on-site, featuring over 20 presentations on health-related issues such as planning and governance, food systems, built environment, traditional medicine and COVID-19.

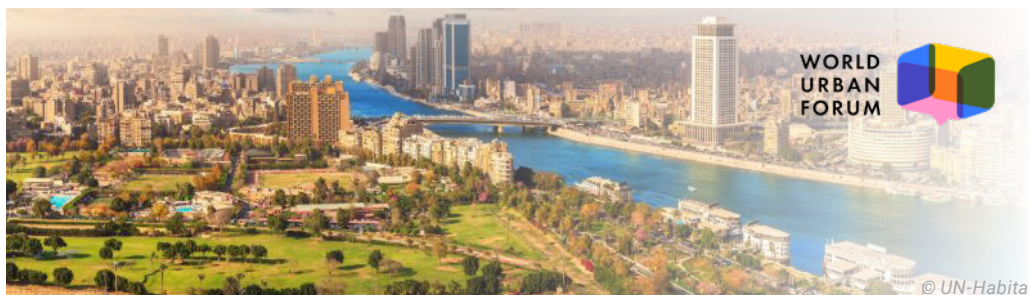
The Third IFURL held on 30 October, 2023, with the theme "Enhancing urban-rural connectivity for better livelihoods" integrated URL knowledge and actions. With over 180 participants from 17 countries and 18 international organizations, the forum served as a melting pot of ideas, experiences and solutions. The discussions highlighted significant emerging practices that are revolutionizing the way we think about

urban-rural connectivity. Among these were intelligent transport and intellectual property rights, both of which have the potential to drive remarkable changes in rural revitalization.

The fourth forum, renamed the International Dialogue on Urban-Rural Linkages (IDURL), was held in 2025 with over 120 participants from 15 countries to discuss inclusive and sustainable territorial development. Co-organized by UN-Habitat and the China International Communications Group, the Dialogue focused on strengthening urban-rural linkages through culture, housing, and basic services. Over three days, reaching more than 1 million viewers, it showcased Songyang's integrated approach to heritage preservation, adaptive reuse, and improved service delivery. Field-based workshops highlighted global best practices and emphasized the complementary nature of urban and rural areas. The Dialogue reaffirmed UN-Habitat's call for innovative, culturally grounded strategies to bridge urban-rural divides.



3.1.14. World Urban Forums (2002-present)



The World Urban Forum (WUF) has continued to highlight the need to strengthen connections between cities and surrounding rural areas since its inception. At the first WUF in 2002, discussions centred around managing the rapid urbanization occurring around the world and promoting more balanced development between urban and rural areas. Building on this, WUF sessions in subsequent years focused on practical solutions for fostering greater cooperation and partnerships between urban and rural stakeholders. For example, WUF5 in 2010 featured an examination of how investments in infrastructure such as roads, water systems and telecommunications can link cities and rural towns. WUF7 in 2014 facilitated a look into how metropolitan governance models can be expanded to include and serve peri-urban and rural populations on the outskirts of cities. The first draft of the URL-GP was debated in Kuala Lumpur parallel to WUF9.

Most recently at WUF10 and WUF11 in 2020 and 2022 respectively, the forums' discussions and events stressed the importance of integrated territorial

development to further connect urban and rural spaces through coordinated policymaking, planning and resource allocation. The COVID-19 pandemic, whose onset was between WUF10 and WUF11, also revealed how interdependent cities and surrounding areas are, increasing the urgency of improving their connections and partnerships.

The 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12), held in Cairo from 4–8 November 2024, returned to Africa after two decades, focusing on the theme "It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities." Urban-rural linkages and its thematic components was a mainstay at WUF12 featuring in the main plenaries, dialogues, side events and even the urban expo, where different partners exhibited their works, for example showing their progress on urban-rural linkages and regeneration. WUF 12 attention to URLs is reflective of the global mainstreaming of the importance of balanced urban and rural sustainable development.⁵¹

Overall, the WUF has been instrumental in raising awareness of the need to balance

⁵¹ Key messages on URL at WUF12 in the 8th edition URL newsletter available at <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/url-8th-newsletter/>

urban and rural interests. By sharing knowledge and solutions for building stronger relationships between cities and rural communities over the past 20 years, the forum has pushed countries and

local governments to make this issue a higher priority in policy and investments. Integrating urban and rural development is key to achieving more sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies.

3.1.15. United Nations Food Systems Summit



The United Nations Food Systems Summit was held in September 2021 to launch priority actions and coalitions with governments and other stakeholders to leverage their food systems to support the Sustainable Development Goals.

The summit and worldwide food system dialogues was a historic first global engagement of governments and people worldwide to transform food systems. One key emphasis was on the power of food systems to drive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and get the world back on track to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Participants recognized that better connecting urban and rural areas was key to improving nutrition and reducing poverty. Some of the relevant outcomes from the summit were:

- *Investing in rural infrastructure and*

services helps smallholder farmers access resources and markets. This includes: improving roads, transport and storage facilities that makes it easier for farmers to sell their produce in cities, developing communication technology like mobile phones which connects farmers to information on weather, market prices, and farming techniques and finally providing electricity and clean water that improves living standards and allows new income opportunities.

- **Supporting small towns** and secondary cities that act as hubs connecting rural and urban areas. Supporting their growth helps surrounding rural communities to access resources and economic opportunity. Investing in small towns may include the following: developing

affordable housing, healthcare, education and financial services that attract and retain populations, strengthening the rural-urban connection, secondly promoting local economic growth in sectors like agroprocessing, tourism and trade that creates jobs and additional markets for rural goods and services, and finally improving infrastructure and governance. Well-managed towns with adequate infrastructure and services become vibrant centres of activity for surrounding agricultural communities.

- **Recognizing the important roles of urban and territorial food systems** in the transformation of production practices and the geography of food supply to adapt to climate change. Urban-rural linkages were identified

as key for resilient and sustainable food systems in the action areas and coalitions launched during and after the UNFSS.

In the stocktaking in 2023 (UNFSS+2) and 2025 (UNFSS+4) the importance of circular economy solutions and short value chains are recognized as significant components in urban and territorial food governance.

The United Nations Food Systems Summit further highlighted the need for coordinated action across sectors and scales through national food system transformation pathways⁵² to strengthen rural-urban linkages. Investing in rural infrastructure, small towns and the connections between them can help transform food systems and improve lives worldwide.

3.1.16. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification-Conference of Parties (COP) in 2022 and 2024



The fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) took place in

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (9–20 May, 2022) under the theme "Land. Life. Legacy: From Scarcity to Prosperity". The conference called on

⁵² United Nations, "More than 100 countries sign up to develop national strategies for transforming food systems". 2021, Food Systems Summit 2021. www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/more-100-countries-sign-develop-national-strategies-transforming-food-systems.

governments to put in place measures that ensure land and the planet at large continue to benefit present and future generations. The main topics of discussion were land-related matters, since land has diverse interconnections with sustainability issues. of importance during the discussion were issues of desertification, land degradation and drought, thus informing the agenda on land restoration and other enablers such as land rights, women and young people empowerment, among others.

Future-proofing land use emerged as one of the sustainable solutions for land restoration resolutions of the COP15. This entails integrating sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and ecosystem protection, ensuring productive land while supporting biodiversity and rural livelihoods. In relation to URLs, there was a resolution to strengthen cooperation with other partners to enhance

understanding of urban-rural linkages, especially achieving land degradation neutrality, and at the same time responding to drivers of forced migration and displacement (Decision 22/COP.15).⁵³ Following the COP, UNCCD joined with UN-Habitat to develop a primer on URLs and Land to support both national and subnational governments in addressing land degradation through strengthening URLs.⁵⁴

The primer was pre-launched at the 12th session of the world urban forum in Cairo, Egypt in November 2024 and formally launched at the UNCCD COP 16 held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December 2024. During the *COP Decision 23/COP16*⁵⁵ (pages 68-69) was adopted on the implementation of the primer on urban-rural linkages and land in the context of desertification, land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration.

3.1.17. Convention on Biological Diversity-Conference of Parties Agreement 2022



The fifteenth COP for CBD consisted of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the tenth meeting of the parties to

the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity (Cartagena Protocol), and the fourth meeting of parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access

⁵³ See full report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifteenth Session (COP15), 9-20 May, 2022. Available at https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/ICCD_COP%2815%29_23_Add.1-2208672E.pdf.

⁵⁴ UNCCD and UN-Habitat, "Urban-Rural Linkages and Land", available at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/>.

⁵⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cop-16-riyadh-saudi-arabia-2024>

and Benefit-sharing. The session provided a platform to review achievement and delivery of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020.

COP15 culminated in the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework with a view to addressing biodiversity loss through the restoration of natural ecosystems and biodiversity policy development until 2030. As part of the Montreal decisions (Decision 15/12), the COPs agreed to “support subnational governments, cities and other

local authorities to manage biodiversity sustainably, provide ecosystem services to citizens and integrate biodiversity concerns into urban and territorial planning and development”.

Specifically, the decision calls for “engagement with subnational governments, cities and other local authorities to enhance implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework”.⁵⁶ UN-Habitat contributed a paper to support this target titled “Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity”.⁵⁷

3.1.18. Launch of the first Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa



Following numerous collaborative initiatives between UN-Habitat and the University of Nairobi, a pivotal milestone was reached with the implementation of a project titled “Covid-19 Impacts on Transportation of Food and Related Commodities in the Urban-Rural Nexus in Selected African Countries Project and the launch of a Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa (CURLA) in October 2023.

This centre stands as a testament to the growing recognition of the importance of urban-rural dynamics in the African context and signifies a concerted research effort to address the unique challenges and opportunities present in the region. The centre's mandate encompasses a multifaceted approach, focusing on key areas of engagement, namely the following: research, facilitating policy

⁵⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity (2022). United Nations Biodiversity Conference: COP15 / CP-MOP10 / NP-MOP4, 7-19 December. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022>.

⁵⁷ UN-Habitat & CBD, “Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity: an Integrated Territorial Approach”.2022, Position Paper for CBD COP 15 to be completed with final language for Global Framework for Biodiversity (GBF) targets. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/12/managing_urban-rural_linkages_for_biodiversity.pdf.

dialogue, mentoring students and capacity development.

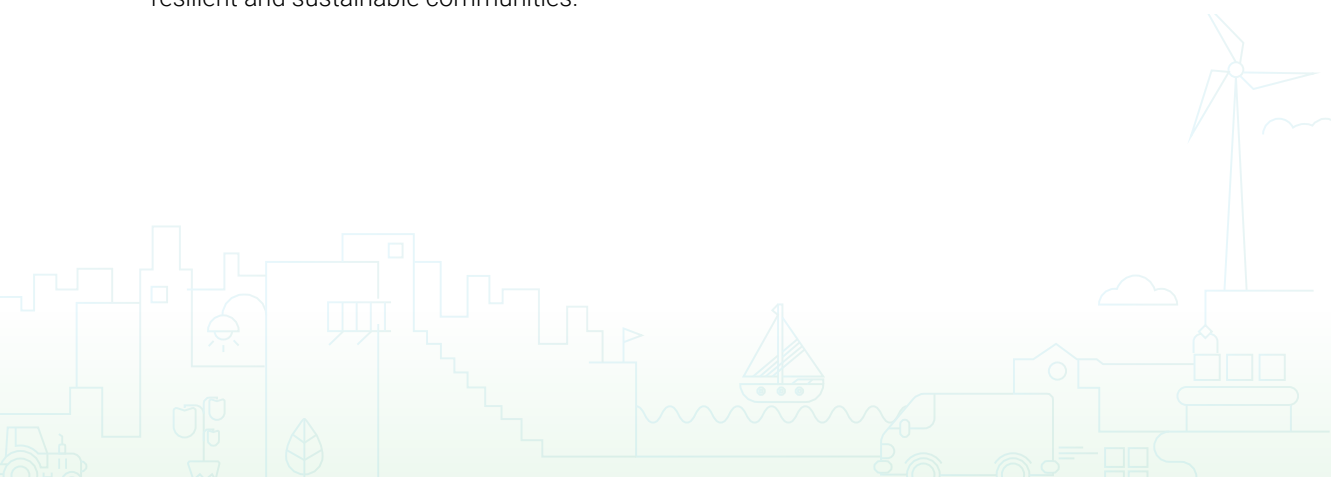
Through its holistic approach and strategic focus areas, CURLA endeavours to play a catalytic role in advancing the sustainable development agenda on the continent.

By leveraging partnerships with other research institutions, fostering innovation and promoting evidence-based practices, the centre aims to contribute to the creation of inclusive, resilient and prosperous urban and rural communities across Africa.

In summary, these key events and agreements spanning from 1976 to 2024 reflect a growing global commitment to understanding and addressing urban-rural linkages. From early conferences recognizing the importance of rural development to recent summits emphasizing integrated approaches for sustainable development, there has been a growing awareness of the interdependence between urban and rural areas. Initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals and various international conferences (such as IFURL, WUF and the COPs) have highlighted the need for coordinated action to bridge urban-rural disparities and achieve inclusive, resilient and sustainable communities.

The establishment of centres and forums dedicated to urban-rural dynamics underscores ongoing efforts to promote research, policy dialogue and capacity development in this critical area of global development. The progress over the almost five decades may feel slow. The binary approach to urban and rural is deeply entrenched, and yet the increasing recognition of urban-rural linkages as crucial for sustainable development is mainstreaming. The challenges ahead are many, but so too are the opportunities when the conditions are right.

From commitments made at these conferences and normative policy at the international level, what is most important now are real, meaningful action in communities around the world supported by national, subnational and local governments. This is because when cities and rural areas work hand in hand, tapping into urban dynamism and innovation and rural cultural richness and natural resources, positive outcomes for both urban and rural communities are possible.



04

Thematic Perspectives on Urban-Rural Linkages



An elderly woman using technology in a rural setting. This image touches on several key themes: smart villages leveraging technology, empowering communities, and bridging the urban-rural divide through digital inclusion and improved quality of life © Adobestock

Chapter Overview

This chapter brings together thematic insights and articles contributed by diverse experts from various agencies, each offering a unique perspective based on their expertise. The themes explored in this chapter include:

Governance

Effective governance of urban-rural linkages requires multilevel, collaborative frameworks. These address territorial interactions (within adjacent jurisdictions) and flow-based linkages (across distant regions), harmonizing policies and managing shared resources to promote balanced development.



Metropolitan Management

Metropolitan regions serve as hubs for urban-rural interactions, addressing socioeconomic disparities, infrastructure gaps, and environmental sustainability. Integrated management ensures equitable resource distribution, food security, and resilience to shocks.



Food Systems and Local Agency

Strengthened urban-rural linkages underpin sustainable food systems by fostering local production, circular economies, and equitable access to nutritious food. Articles such as Local Agency for Food Systems emphasize empowering communities and stakeholders to co-create sustainable food pathways.



Smart Villages

Leveraging technology and participatory governance, smart villages tackle rural challenges like depopulation, economic decline, and digital divides. They exemplify sustainable rural development by fostering economic inclusion and improved quality of life.



Empowering Communities Through Urban-Rural Linkages

The Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) strengthens food systems by connecting farmers to markets, improving incomes, and promoting sustainable agriculture. In Kenya, it has facilitated the shift from tobacco farming to high-iron beans, empowering youth and women while driving inclusive rural-urban development.



Land Administration

Secure land tenure and integrated management are essential to sustain urban-rural linkages. Effective land policies address peri-urban challenges, prevent conflicts, and promote climate resilience while ensuring economic stability.



Urban Villages

The phenomenon of urban villages showcases the spatial and functional blending of urban and rural characteristics. These areas, often dense and diverse, offer affordable housing and serve as economic and cultural hubs, but they require innovative governance to address planning and equity challenges.



Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide through Food Systems

Articles such as *Bridging Urban-Rural Divide* explore the critical role of city-region food systems in fostering resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity across the urban-rural continuum.



4.1. Overview

Urban-rural linkages represent a dynamic interplay between urban and rural areas, characterized by flows of people, goods, services, capital, information and ecosystem services. These linkages are vital for sustainable development, influencing economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

As urbanization accelerates globally, understanding the nuanced connections between urban and rural areas becomes increasingly important. This chapter delves into the thematic perspectives of urban-rural linkages, exploring the multifaceted relationships that shape our built and natural environments.

In the Urban-Rural Linkages Framework for Action accompanying the 2019 Guiding Principles are 11 “entry points” (see annex 1).

The first five are actions to create an enabling environment for strengthened URLs including governance, planning, investment, empowerment, knowledge and data.

The next six actions are sectoral and thematic entry points to promote integrated territorial development including:



In the first two years following the launch of the URL-GP there were several thematic papers produced with partners exploring these entry points, including: Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages to Reduce Spatial Inequality and Poverty by Leveraging Sustainable Food Systems Actions⁵⁸, Urban-Rural Linkages for Nutrition⁵⁹ (with UN Nutrition) and Territorial Approaches for Sustainable Development⁶⁰ (with GIZ).

⁵⁸ <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/strengthening-urban-rural-linkages-to-reduce-spatial-inequality-and-poverty-by-leveraging-sustainable-food-systems-actions/>

⁵⁹ <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Urban-rural-linkages-for-nutrition-EN-WEB-OK-Feb.pdf>

⁶⁰ <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/territorial-approaches-for-sustainable-development/>

In this chapter colleagues from UN-Habitat and partners explore the intricate linkages between urban and rural areas through selected thematic lenses: governance and metropolitan management, smart and urban villages, peri-urban dynamics, food and nutrition systems, climate change, and land administration. By examining these issues, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of their significance and the implications for policy and planning.

The chapter begins with an in-depth analysis of governance and metropolitan management, highlighting their crucial roles in facilitating effective urban-rural integration.

Regardless of the scale from local smart or urban villages and rural hamlets to intermediary, larger cities and metropolitan areas, strong governance structures are essential for coordinating efforts across sectors and scales.

This will help ensure that the needs of both urban and rural communities are addressed.

The other thematic areas are then presented in a concise manner, each accompanied by case studies that illustrate their relevance and application.

Ten contributions from authors explore diverse thematic approaches to strengthening urban-rural linkages:

- ***Governance of urban rural linkages***
By Anne Amin, Samuel Njuguna and Zoe Gabrielli, UN-Habitat

- ***Urban-rural linkages and Metropolitan Management***

By Rafael H. Forero, UN-Habitat

- ***Urban-rural Linkages in the context of land administration***

By Eugene, Chigbu, Namibia University of Science and Technology

- ***Urban villages: a feature of urban - rural linkages***

By Matthijs van Oostrum, UN-Habitat.

- ***SMART initiatives in rural areas: a review of current practices***

By Paolo Gerli (Napier University) and Martina Baldessin (OCCAM)

- ***Local Agency in Food Systems: Transforming Food Systems and Nutrition through Socio-ecological Webs***

By Ann Trevenen-Jones, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

- ***Intermediary Cities as Hubs of Urban-Rural Synergy and Sustainable Urbanization***

By Firdaous Oussidhoum, Former Assistant Secretary General for Monitoring and Evaluation, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

- ***Empowering Communities Through Urban-Rural Linkages***

By Angeline Wafula- World Food Programme of the United Nations





4.2. Governance of urban-rural linkages

By Anne Amin, Samuel Njuguna and Zoe Gabrielli, UN-Habitat

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents the main global framework addressing the critical challenges our world faces today in relation to People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace. The agenda is augmented by a set of principles of effective governance for sustainable development⁶¹

These principles are complemented and articulated into governance-related targets in all SDGs. For example, SDG 16 includes a specific focus on effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions as an intrinsic component of sustainable development processes.

These elements provide a general guidance for governments at all levels to devote specific attention to designing and implementing governance mechanisms that effectively support universally set objectives.

This section explores at an introductory level how urban-rural linkages should be governed, being a complex concept that varies in different contexts. Urban-rural linkages most often refer to adjacent administrative jurisdictions.

⁶¹ UN ECOSOC, "Principles of effective governance for sustainable development", 2018, Economic and Social Council E/2018/44-E/C.16/2018/8, para. 31.



However, URLs can also skip geographical and administrative boundaries further complicating its governance, for example with rural forests, agriculture and extractive industries occurring at a distance from urban centers of demand for those resources. Urban-rural linkages necessitate interactions between major towns and surrounding rural or peri urban areas and those between small towns and remote villages.

Options available for managing urban-rural linkages include different governance approaches and some of them are discussed with examples. A focus on food systems is presented, as food flows are a core dimension of urban rural interactions.

Food governance at a city region level is discussed with examples from different contexts. The literature on governance of urban-rural linkages addresses metropolitan and territorial governance and while similar, there are distinctions depending on existing governance mechanisms that address both rural and urban communities (see the next section for a focus on metropolitan management of urban-rural linkages).

4.2.1. Implications of urban-rural linkages for different levels of Governance

As urban-rural linkages have been defined in terms of “flows” across the urban-rural continuum, two major categories of flows exists. The first is territorial or contiguous urban-rural linkages and second the flow-

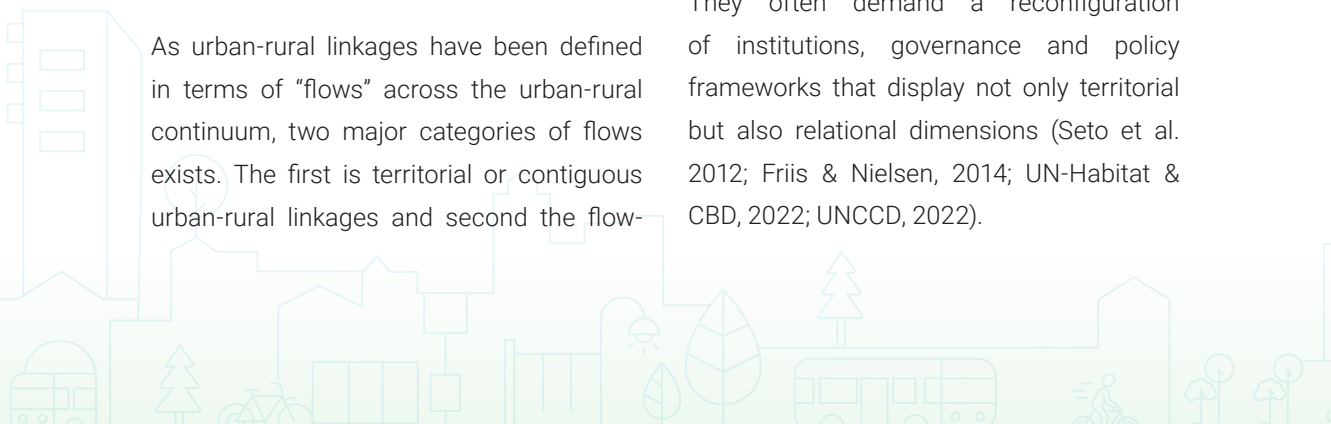
based linkages or telecoupling determine appropriate governance frameworks or mechanisms. For the territorial urban-rural linkages, interactions can sometimes be within or between a municipality, a state, a county, or province each governed by different jurisdictions. It therefore means that these interactions could be governed by existing governance frameworks, such as in metropolitan areas or councils of local governments.

In other contexts, however, new territorial configurations such as city regions or networks of cities as trade partners may emerge beyond the existing jurisdictions.

For example, managing flows between more than one municipality despite their adjacent geography may require specific forms of cooperation. In such contexts, partnerships between the neighbouring municipalities involved can result in functional territories with expanded or new supra-local forms of governance such as regional planning authorities, metropolitan governance, etc. (Woods and Heley, 2017).

For territorial urban-rural linkages, the flows are often not under any single territorial institution but are under multiple, flow-anchored governance arrangements.

They often demand a reconfiguration of institutions, governance and policy frameworks that display not only territorial but also relational dimensions (Seto et al. 2012; Friis & Nielsen, 2014; UN-Habitat & CBD, 2022; UNCCD, 2022).



These interactions are often governed through partnerships among actors in specific networks. Partnerships may develop in different forms, for example partnerships involving local governments, civil society, the private sector, and existing institutions and are in this context using collaboration with other actors to manage relations that transcend their boundaries.

In many cases interactions transcending national boundaries require engagement of national governments. In this context multi-level governance (MLG) arrangements are often become necessary and relate to bilateral or multilateral trade policy.

The concept of MLG is used to describe the mechanisms for the proper coordination of resources, actions and capacities between the different governance levels, policy domains, and societal actors.⁶² Multilevel governance can be supranational, transnational, national, cross-border, Interregional, regional, sub-regional, local and sub-local.

Three approaches to MLG can be identified considering the way institutions work together across levels. These are:

- hierarchical (top-down), based on rule of law;
- subsidiary & empowered (bottom- up), based on participation and incentives;

- reciprocal or collaborative, based on balanced inclusion and co-production.⁶³

Given the complexity of flow-based urban rural linkages within or beyond national boundaries, their management may require a combination of the three approaches, each complementing the other.

In the context of multilevel governance there are existing partnership models for governance of flow-based urban-rural linkages including public and private sector collaboration. This can entail engaging private corporations and third-party certification bodies, apart from or in collaboration with local, subnational or national government.

For instance, environmental and social standards can be set by businesses at different scales as a result of consumer demand or civil society activism, for example cause marketing or certification schemes (e.g. organic, fair trade, GMO free, etc.).

While there has been in some countries a reduction of national regulation and a stronger role played by corporations and civil society groups in the governance of long-distance flows, public instruments still play a significant role in the environmental governance of long-distance interlinked urban and rural places.⁶⁴

⁶² Noferini, A, "Development, decentralised cooperation and multilevel governance: Considerations for the current climate", 2010, Observatorio de Cooperacion Descentralizada UE – AL, Governance and Institutional Strengthening.

⁶³ Meuleman Louis, "Public Administration and Governance for the SDGs: Navigating between Change and Stability", 2021, Sustainability, 13: 5914.

⁶⁴ Cotta, Benedetta, et al., "Environmental governance in globally telecoupled systems: Mapping the terrain towards an integrated research agenda", 2022, Earth System Governance, 13, 100142, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2022.100142>.

Private sector-driven regulatory schemes often require both monitoring by civil society and government oversight to protect against fraud and corruption in reporting and certification systems.

This calls for greater collaboration between academia and policy advocates to support governance systems to manage URLs, for example building a more comprehensive Land System Science.⁶⁵

Box 5. Case Studies of Successful Urban Rural Linkages Governance



» **Case study 1:** In the United States, the Appalachian Regional Commission has implemented a range of programs and initiatives to support economic development and environmental conservation in rural areas. The Commission has partnered with urban areas to support sustainable tourism, promote renewable energy, and improve access to healthcare and education⁶⁶.



» **Case study 2:** In China, the government has implemented a range of policies, strategies to support rural development and reduce poverty, and recently through the Rural Revitalization Strategy⁶⁷. These policies have included investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, as well as support for agricultural production and environmental conservation in different provinces.

» For example, in Zhejiang⁶⁸ and Hunnan⁶⁹ provinces, projects have expanded access to remote mountainous areas, driving economic growth through tourism and agriculture.

⁶⁵ Turner, B.L., Lambin, Eric F., and Peter H. Verburg, "From land-use/land-cover to land system science", 2021, *Ambio* 50, 1291–1294, available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-021-01510-4>.

⁶⁶ <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Appalachia-Envisioned-ARC-Strategic-Plan-FY-2022-2026.pdf>

⁶⁷ Liu, Y., Zang, Y., & Yang, Y. (2020). China's rural revitalization and development: Theory, technology and management. *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, 30, 1923-1942.

⁶⁸ https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202402/24/content_WS65d9ae75c6d0868f4e8e4521.html#:~:text=As%20a%20village%20rich%20in,moderate%20prosperity%20in%20all%20respects.

⁶⁹ <https://www.ifad.org/en/w/news/ifad-and-china-launch-project-to-revitalize-the-rural-economy-in-hunan#:~:text=Rome%2C%2020%20July%202021%20%2D%20The,urban%20areas%20in%20the%20province.>



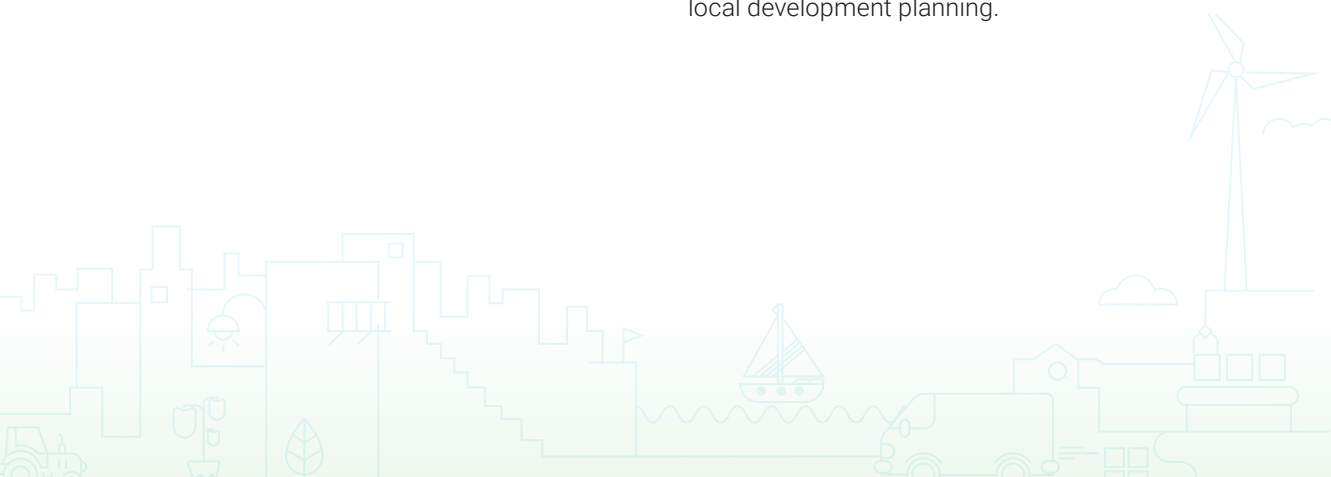
Case study 3: Antananarivo, Madagascar. The city government has taken a holistic city region approach to fight poverty and food insecurity while preserving the natural environment. This includes protection of coastal mangrove swamps that buffer storm surges from frequent cyclones. The municipal government, together with local and international NGOs, research organizations and national ministries have integrated urban and rural programmes in market gardening, fruit tree farming, livestock, fisheries, reforestation, agroecology and support for secure tenure (FAO, 2021).

These case studies demonstrate the importance of collaborative governance, shared decision-making, and integrated planning for effective management of urban-rural linkages. They also highlight the need for government policies and programs that support sustainable development and equitable outcomes for both urban and rural communities.

To harness the potential of urban-rural linkages, effective governance is essential. Local governments play a crucial role in facilitating positive interactions and mitigating negative exchanges between rural and urban areas.

They are best positioned to make decisions regarding physical transport and communication infrastructure, among other issues. However, the financial resources required for infrastructure development often exceed the capacity of local governments, necessitating wider alliances. Local government intervention is also necessary for managing natural resources and managing waste.

However, administrative authority for these issues (both public and private) often extends beyond the jurisdiction of local authorities, requiring collaboration with other levels of government. National policies related to land access and ownership are also crucial for local development planning.





4.3. Urban-rural linkages and Metropolitan Management

By Rafael H. Forero, UN-Habitat

Urban-Rural Linkages (URLs) as the interconnectedness and interdependencies between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, also occur within metropolitan and regional spaces. Encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, URLs imply the flow of people, goods, services, and resources across the urban-rural metropolitan and regional continuum.

As the urban world becomes metropolitan,¹ implementing integrative metropolitan management is essential to achieve balanced and sustainable URLs.

In the context of URLs, metropolitan management plays a crucial role in addressing institutional coordination challenges in areas such as socioeconomic disparities, environmental degradation, and infrastructure gaps. By mainstreaming URLs into metropolitan management, policymakers and practitioners can develop strategies that promote balanced territorial development, equitable resource distribution, and resilience against climate and environmental shocks.

Furthermore, the integration of rural resources and agricultural systems into urban markets enhances food security and fosters local economies, making URLs a significant aspect of metropolitan development. More specifically, the article explores metro regional nature of urban-rural linkages, metropolitan management approach to urban-rural linkages and future directions.

4.3.1. Metro-regional Nature of Urban-Rural Linkages

Urban extension has been driven by various situational and sometimes spontaneous factors,² resulting in a diverse range of metropolitan realities. These realities often do not align with predefined categories and labels, nor are they consistent globally. Indeed, the adoption of different metropolitan names and definitions frequently depends on localised cultural, institutional, legal, political, and statistical trajectories and criteria.

Examples of these realities include the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, Metropolitan Community of Montreal, Metropolitan Municipality of Johannesburg, Metropolitan Region of Bogota-Cundinamarca, Metro Manila, Zagreb Urban Agglomeration, among many others.

Significant consensus is being achieved in efforts to compare and suggest integrative metropolitan management approaches internationally.³

According to UN-Habitat's 1st Global State of Metropolis "*Metropolitan Management from Policy, Legislation, Governance, Planning, Finance and Economics*",⁴ metropolises are defined by their functional geography rather than population size, territorial extent, number of local jurisdictions, or even given names and labels.

This notion aligns with the linkages that cities and their surroundings commonly exhibit, crossing jurisdictional boundaries and the urban-rural continuum.

Therefore, the characteristics and dynamics of urban-rural linkages in metropolitan and regional settings are multifaceted, encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects that influence urban, peri-urban and rural communities. These linkages can manifest through various channels, including migration patterns, trade relationships, and shared resources, shaping the overall landscape of metropolitan and regional spaces. Economically, URLs play a critical role in integrating rural economies with urban markets. For instance, in Colombia, the Metropolitan Region of Bogota-Cundinamarca relies heavily on agricultural products from surrounding rural areas.



Basket with red ripe coffee beans at a coffee plantation in Colombia © Adobestock

This relationship not only provides urban populations with fresh produce but also sustains rural livelihoods by ensuring that farmers have access to larger markets.⁵ At the same time, urban economies depend on rural areas for raw materials. Conversely, urban centres regularly provide rural areas with access to services, technologies, and employment opportunities that can stimulate rural development. The interplay of these economic factors is essential for fostering balanced growth and reducing disparities between urban and rural regions.

Socially, URLs contribute to the cultural exchange and community development across metropolitan and regional spaces, as residents from different areas interact and collaborate on various initiatives. In Finland, for example, initiatives that encourage rural residents to engage in urban cultural events foster a sense of belonging and shared identity.⁶ This interaction enhances social cohesion and promotes mutual understanding between diverse populations.

Additionally, social services such as education and healthcare often rely on collaborative networks that span urban and rural areas, underscoring the importance of integrated planning in addressing community needs.

Environmentally, URLs present significant implications for sustainability. The ways in which URLs are managed can either exacerbate or alleviate environmental pressures. Metropolitan expansion can lead to the over-exploitation of rural resources,

contributing to deforestation and habitat loss. Yet, the application of sustainable methods like agroecology in the Philippines illustrates the potential for rural regions to decrease the carbon footprint linked with agricultural production, thereby aiding sustainability to the whole metropolitan and regional spaces.⁷

Similarly, effective land-use metropolitan planning and resource management can lead to better environmental outcomes, such as reduced urban sprawl, biodiversity conservation, and improved air and water quality. Understanding urban-rural linkages is essential for resource distribution. Metropolitan areas and regions often face challenges related to equitable distribution of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and public services within their jurisdictions. By recognising the interdependencies between urban and rural regions, policymakers can develop more integrated strategies that ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. This comprehensive approach to metropolitan management fosters resilience and adaptability in the face of changing socioeconomic and environmental conditions.

By investigating URLs from the whole varied case studies included throughout this Report, we can better understand the complexities and opportunities they present, ultimately informing more effective metropolitan management practices that recognise the value of both urban and rural contributions to sustainable development.



Box 6. Globalisation and Technology Redefining Urban-Rural Linkages⁷⁰

In recent years, globalisation and technological advancements have facilitated increased exchanges, movements, and transactions across vast distances, enabling urban centres to establish connections with rural ecosystems, landscapes, and territories far beyond their immediate surroundings. This shift has diminished metropolises dependence on localised bioregions and alleviated constraints imposed by geographic proximity. The resulting flows and interactions create extensive relational networks that transcend local and territorial boundaries, linking geographically distant regions across nations and continents. These networks effectively bring disparate and non-contiguous territories into closer relational proximity. As a result, managing these complex interactions requires a shift from a purely territorial perspective to a more relational approach, emphasizing the integration and coordination among various nodes within the global system of cities. This approach necessitates innovative international governance frameworks and collaborative efforts that can address the multifaceted nature of these global URLs, ensuring sustainable and equitable territorial development across diverse world-regions.



Flying drone above a wheat field. Agricultural and technology innovations concept © Adobestock

⁷⁰ UN-Habitat (To be published soon). Adapted from UN-Habitat's 1st Global State of Metropolis Report. Chapter 2.2

4.3.2. Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages through Metropolitan Management

Managing urban-rural linkages through metropolitan management involves addressing key challenges such as lack of coordination, socioeconomic disparities, environmental degradation, and infrastructure gaps. Local governments often operate independently, leading to fragmented policies that hinder effective collaboration between urban and rural areas. Rural regions face chronic underinvestment, limiting access to essential services and markets, while rapid urbanization causes over-exploitation of rural resources, resulting in environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. Additionally, inadequate transportation, communication, and digital infrastructure restrict the flow of goods, services, and information between urban and rural areas. As presented below, metropolitan management offers an opportunity to address these URLs challenges and promote more balanced and sustainable territorial development.

4.3.2.1. Enhancing multi-level coordination

Effective management of urban-rural linkages is fraught with coordination and institutional challenges due to the distinct administrative frameworks and priorities governing urban and rural areas. Relevant governing bodies in urban spaces focus on industrial growth, infrastructure development, and service delivery, while in rural areas, key priorities include agricultural productivity, land conservation, and local resource management. This divergence creates a significant coordination gap. The lack of integrated planning and policy frameworks exacerbates these challenges, leading to fragmented development efforts and inefficiencies in resource allocation. Harmonising policies and fostering collaborative spatial planning between urban and rural stakeholders are essential to bridge this gap and ensure integrated regional development.⁸

Institutional challenges are further compounded by the varying governance arrangements and jurisdictional boundaries that exist between urban and rural areas.





In several countries, urban and rural institutional solutions operate independently, with little overlap in their administrative responsibilities (see more details in Chapter 5). This separation often results in conflicting policies and priorities, making it difficult to implement cohesive development strategies. The absence of unified governance models can lead to the marginalisation of rural communities and inadequate representation in decision-making processes. Establishing multi-level and metropolitan governance frameworks that incorporate both urban and rural perspectives is crucial for addressing these institutional barriers.⁹

This is illustrated in the case of the Montreal Metropolitan Community (CMM) where two different governance arrangements have served improved coordination between the urban and rural areas of the metropolis.

First, the Haut-Saint-Laurent - Greater Montreal Regional Concertation Table plays an important role in terms of the environmental management within the metropolitan area. Second, the Agricultural Advisory Committee, composed of (5) five members from the Metropolitan Council and (5) five agricultural producers from the territory, which advises on the opinions sought from the CMM by the Quebec Agricultural Land Protection Commission.¹⁰ They have achieved success through ongoing engagement, consensus-building, and data-driven policies. From 1981, their collaboration has evolved into sustainable regional development patterns that balances urban growth with agricultural preservation, aligning local strategies with broader provincial and metropolitan governance frameworks to address CMM's urban and rural needs effectively.¹¹

4.3.2.2. Reversing Socioeconomic disparities

Socioeconomic inequalities between urban and rural areas significantly impact the effectiveness of their linkages and the overall dynamics of territorial development. Urban centres generally have more robust economic bases, access to better financial resources, and greater investment opportunities compared to their rural counterparts.

This financial imbalance often results in rural areas lagging in social infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and other critical services, which are essential for sustaining a balanced regional development. The World Bank highlights that rural areas face significant constraints in accessing funds for development projects, which limits their ability to contribute effectively to regional socioeconomic growth.¹²

The lack of financial resources also restricts the implementation of comprehensive urban-rural development policies, further entrenching economic disparities.

Therefore, introducing metropolitan economic strategies has the potential to address these financial and socioeconomic challenges. Metropolitan management can facilitate the pooling of resources, enabling more efficient and equitable distribution of investments across the urban-rural continuum.¹³ By leveraging the economic strengths of urban areas, metropolitan economies can support rural development projects and infrastructure improvements, thereby fostering integrated growth. This approach aligns with the principles set out by UN-Habitat, which advocate for the development of cohesive urban-rural linkages through coordinated investment and planning.¹⁴



The vibrant, colorful buildings of rural India often mask deeper financial and socioeconomic disparities
© Adobestock

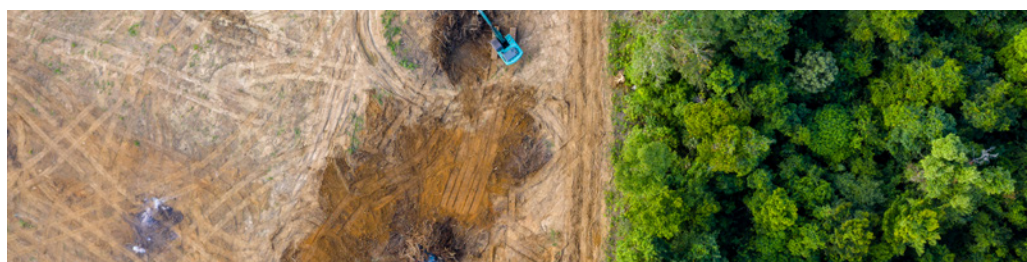
The strengthening of metropolitan economics can also enhance the mobility of goods, services, and labour, ensuring that both urban and rural areas benefit from regional economic activities and opportunities. The case of the 2016–2020 Rural Development Strategy for the Bratislava Self-governing Region (BSK) focused on enhancing financial efficiency to boost local jobs, businesses, and infrastructure along BSK's rural areas. It addressed the actual needs of the rural residents in Bratislava region and allowed stakeholders to effectively utilise European Union funds or other public and private resources for local development.¹⁵

4.3.2.3. Environmental recovery degradation

Environment is a significant challenge in managing urban-rural linkages, largely due to the competing land use demands and unsustainable practices that often occur along urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Urban expansion frequently leads to the encroachment on agricultural and natural lands, resulting in habitat loss, reduced biodiversity, and increased pollution.

Rural areas, on the other hand, face challenges such as deforestation, soil erosion, and water contamination due to agricultural activities and resource extraction.¹⁶ These environmental issues are compounded by the lack of environmental management strategies that integrate the needs and impacts of the whole metropolitan territory.

Metropolitan environmental management offers a potential solution to these challenges by promoting integrated and sustainable practices across urban-rural boundaries. Inter-jurisdictional coordination of environmental policies and initiatives addresses the interconnected nature of urban and rural ecosystems, as showed by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Water Strategy 2014-44, which provides a long-term guidance to manage the Canberra's water and other natural resources.¹⁷ By fostering collaboration between urban and rural stakeholders, metropolitan environmental management can ensure that land use planning, resource management, and environmental conservation efforts are aligned and mutually supportive.



Aerial view: deforestation for palm oil and rubber, underscoring critical environmental issues within urban-rural dynamics © Adobestock

This integrated approach not only helps mitigate the environmental impacts of urbanization and rural activities but also enhances the resilience of both metropolises and regions to climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental stresses. According to the FAO, promoting urban and peri-urban agriculture, protecting agricultural land, and managing food waste through city region food systems are effective strategies for sustainable urban-rural development.¹⁸ While these strategies are indeed *environmental* in nature, they also offer substantial *economic benefits* by fostering local economies, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable development through an integrated urban-rural framework.

4.3.2.4. Reducing infrastructure gaps

The infrastructure disparities and inadequate connections between urban and rural areas pose significant challenges in managing urban-rural linkages effectively. Urban areas typically have better infrastructure such as transportation networks, healthcare facilities, education systems, and utilities, contributing to higher standards of living and economic opportunities. In contrast, rural areas often lack adequate infrastructure, leading to limited access to essential services, economic stagnation, and outmigration to urban centres.¹⁹ This disparity not only hampers rural development but also puts additional pressure on urban infrastructure, exacerbating metropolitan congestion and resource strain.



Bringing care to rural communities © Adobestock

Addressing these gaps requires significant investment in rural infrastructure to improve connectivity, access to services, and economic integration with urban areas.²⁰

Moreover, it is not only about creating new traditional infrastructure but supporting the conversion from grey infrastructure to green, ecological, natural infrastructures, supporting ecological networks and the increase of ecosystem services provision, in urban and rural areas, to support people's processes, increase resilience and adapt to climate change.

Likewise, digital infrastructure represents another critical gap that exacerbates the urban-rural divide. Urban areas typically benefit from high-speed internet and advanced telecommunications, essential for modern economic activities, education, healthcare services, and culture. In contrast, rural areas often suffer from limited or no access to reliable internet, hindering their ability to participate in the digital economy and access essential services.²¹

Bridging the digital divide, such as through investments in broadband expansion and digital literacy programs in peri-urban and rural areas, is compulsory to ensure equitable development and integration of rural areas into the broader twenty-first century economic frameworks.

Implementing integrative metropolitan management and, especially, metropolitan infrastructure policies and plans can help to address these physical and digital infrastructure gaps while promoting more balanced territorial development. This is the purpose of the City of Johannesburg Broadband Policy, aiming elucidating a clear strategy for expanding broadband networks across the entire metropolitan municipality, emphasising network extension as essential for communication and business, with affordable access being crucial for economic growth and development.²² Such coordinated efforts ensure that both urban and rural populations benefit from the current urban and metropolitan transformation, fostering inclusive growth and sustainable URLs.



Empowering rural education: schoolgirls using laptops despite digital disparities © Adobestock

4.3.3. Advancing metropolitan management of urban-rural linkages

URLs play a pivotal role in the development of metropolitan areas and regions, acting as conduits for economic, social, and environmental interactions between urban centres and their surrounding peri-urban and rural territories. Effective metropolitan management of these linkages is crucial to foster balanced growth, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and promoting sustainability. As metropolitan areas and regions continue to expand, managing their urban-rural continuum through integrative frameworks becomes increasingly important to create synergies that benefit the entire metropolitan community.

Metropolitan management frameworks for URLs must holistically include policies and legislation, governance arrangements, planning instruments and financial mechanisms, all designed to promote collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.

By engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and private sector actors, metropolitan management can ensure that the voices of both urban and rural communities are considered. The alignment of programmes, projects and interventions across different jurisdictions helps to bridge the existing urban-rural divide, promoting more equitable and balanced territorial development.



Dialogue in the village: Highlighting the vital role of community input in metropolitan management to bridge urban-rural gaps © Pexels



Digital farming in rural India: Farmers embrace technology, highlighting the future of digital infrastructure for economic participation and URLs management © Adobestock

Looking ahead, the future of URLs will increasingly rely on technological integration, innovation and physical infrastructure.

Expanding digital infrastructure in rural areas, for instance, is crucial to bridge the digital divide and ensuring that all communities can participate in modern economy and governance. Moreover, the use of data analytics and smart technologies and their governance, can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of URLs management, enabling better decision-making and resource allocation from the metropolitan level.

The effective management of urban-rural linkages, by recognising and fostering their interdependencies, is a cornerstone of sustainable metropolitan development. The insights and recommendations provided in this chapter underscore the importance of mainstreaming URLs into metropolitan management.²³ As metropolitan areas and regions continue to evolve, it is essential to implement strategies that enhance the synergies between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, ensuring that all communities within metropolitan and regional spaces can thrive and contribute to a sustainable and inclusive futures.





4.4. *Urban-rural linkages in the context of land administration*⁷¹

By Eugene, Chigbu. Namibia University of Science and Technology

Achieving balanced spatial development (that is, a development outcome that benefits rural and urban areas interdependently) is impossible unless there is a collaborative effort between planners and land administrators to reduce the development disparities between them. Poor visioning (or a lack of it) is a critical factor that causes imbalances in spatial development. Consequently, this leaves rural and urban areas to be developed unequally.

It has also led to a world spatially divided into socioeconomically thriving urban areas, semi-thriving peripheral areas, and declining rural areas.

Urban and urban-rural areas exist as a continuum and, in most cases, side-by-side. So, why do they in many cases continue to develop in isolation from each other? Impeding their development in a sustainable manner are multitudes of land problems.



Montenegro rural landscape © Adobestock

⁷¹ Chigbu, Uchendu Eugene and others, "Tenure responsive land use planning: a guide for country level implementation", 2016, UN-Habitat: Nairobi, Kenya.



Daily water burden. Symbolizing the environmental hurdles and planning gaps in rural areas © Adobestock

These include deforestation, water shortage, illegal conversion of land uses, overlapping legal frameworks or unclear laws on land use and natural resource management, legal pluralism, loss of biodiversity and poor land administration services, and many others.

Another hindrance to development within and outside these urban and rural settlements is insufficient knowledge and capacity to design and implement appropriate land use plans to tackle the peri-urban problems. Land tenure challenges also often hinder development by creating uncertainty for both investors and local communities, limiting their willingness to invest in land-based projects.

From a land administration lens, most developing countries' urban and rural areas exist within a continuum of land spaces. It is a land space that spans from urban to rural or rural to urban via a peri-urban space.

The peripheral areas (peri-urban or peri-rural), apart from being a settlement of their own, serve as shared land and spatial resources for urban and rural settlements. These peripheral areas emerge partly because of inexistent or poor spatial planning to tackle the high rate of unemployment in urban areas and low rate of non-farm opportunities in rural areas, dependence on informality in urban activities, demand for increasing settlements, unemployment, and a lack of access to urban infrastructure services.

This has fortified the peripheral areas as “*linkage development settlements*” because urban dwellers need them for agriculture, leisure and labour for booming commerce and industries. Rural dwellers also need them as a transitional settlement (entry point) to urban life. In addition, most rural-urban migrants now embrace them as a destination in their quest for socioeconomic development.

Urban-rural linkages (URLs) allow for understanding the existence of rural and urban areas in a continuum and their spatial proximity scenario as opportunities to match their needs in mutually beneficial ways through planning and land administration. This is mandatory for achieving sustainable development goals related to sustainable cities and communities (SDGs 11).

It requires creating a balance in urban-rural development by leveraging their potential interlinkages. This would not be possible without tapping into the role of land in the development process.

To improve this situation, the subject of URLs has to be tackled from a land administration perspective because the main connecting factor between urban and rural areas is land, expressible in the physical borders they share, the spaces they use for human settlement, and the communication and other various exchanges they experience.

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) partners have embraced the urban-rural land linkages (URLs), a derivative of URLs focusing on land administration, to secure tenure security for all.

The URLs framework developed by the GLTN has the potential to become a handy land management tool that can enable urban (including peri-urban) and rural areas to leverage each other's strengths in land and natural resources.

The framework encourages secure land ownership, land rights, and the mobility of land-related services across urban-rural lines. It integrates the principles and practices of land administration and management strategies as critical requirements for improving urban-rural interdependent development.



Aerial view of land earmarked for residential development © Adobestock



4.5. Urban villages: a feature of urban-rural linkages

By Matthijs van Oostrum, UN-Habitat.

Urban villages are a type of informal urban development at the interface between urban and rural characteristics.⁷² Urban villages are prevalent in Southern China,⁷³ but they are also widespread in other Asian countries like India,⁷⁴ Vietnam⁷⁵ and Indonesia,⁷⁶ and they also emerge in other countries where cities expand into a countryside with dense rural settlement, like Egypt.⁷⁷

An urban village is a former rural village that is spatially enveloped by an adjacent city yet remains only partially integrated into the city's formal planning framework. In this process of informal urbanization, the village becomes denser and gets access to urban services, yet simultaneously retains distinct

rural characteristics in urban form, governance structure and aspects of social life. As many as 800 million people globally may live in urban villages.

In the typical development trajectory of an urban village, the spatial envelopment of villages leads to increasing loss of agricultural land and marginalization of rural livelihoods, which initiates a process in which villagers build housing for rural-to-urban migrants and start other businesses that provide employment. These urban villages are an important source of affordable housing for rural-urban migrants and other disadvantaged groups.

⁷² Van Oostrum, Matthijs, and Kim Dovey, "Urban villages in China and India: Parallels and differences in the village extension process." *Urban Research & Practice* 17.2 (2024): 218-239.

⁷³ Van Oostrum, Matthijs, "Urbanizing villages: Informal morphologies in Shenzhen's urban periphery." 2018, *Journal of Urban Design* 23.5: 732-748.

⁷⁴ Kumar, Bipasha, and Sanjukta Bhaduri, "Disaster risk in the urban villages of Delhi." *International journal of disaster risk reduction* 31 (2018): 1309-1325.

⁷⁵ Tinh, Ngo Kien, and Yun Gao, "Understanding the informal morphology of villages-in-the-city: A case study in Hanoi city, Vietnam." *Sustainability* 13.23 (2021): 13136.

⁷⁶ Hawken, Scott, Riza Yosia Sunindijo, and David Sanderson, "The critical role of community networks in building everyday resilience—Insights from the urban villages of Surabaya." 2023, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 98: 104090.

⁷⁷ Bayat, Asef, and Eric Denis, "Who is afraid of ashwaityat? Urban change and politics in Egypt." *Environment and Urbanization* 12.2 (2000): 185-199.

Urban villages are more often than not, highly liveable urban environments, with compact mixed land-use, walkable urban form, distinct cultural identity and strong community life.

4.5.1. Key challenges

Urban villages in some countries can be hundreds of years old, with rich traditions. They originate themselves as rural bodies of local government, but as they are enveloped, they are simultaneously regulated by the local urban municipal governments, which can create conflicts and challenges.

First, urban villages differ from most informal settlement in that they do not form through land invasion or squatting but originate as rural villages that subdivide their own agricultural land. These land subdivisions are designed informally, and built incrementally, often without a pre-conceived masterplan.

Village-owned land may be subject to forms of collective or common ownership. Hence, as villages develop, they may face a tragedy of the commons, as the collective management of land becomes more difficult to maintain.

Second, urban villages have embedded governance structures that simultaneously

represent the villagers towards the local government, but also are expected to implement government regulations.

In urban villages, self-organized means of urban development are supplemented by collective decision-making, often in the form of village committees, that may be responsible for maintaining local amenities like village roads and potable water supply, as well as for carrying out any social programs that are financed by state governments.

The lack of clear governance structure and responsibilities can lead to gaps in funding and service provision. The local governance structure may represent the native villagers, but often excludes rural-urban migrants from the planning process.

Third, while urban villages are often perceived as developing uncontrolled and outside the realm of municipal by-laws, village residents and village committees often follow a simplified set of municipal building and land-use regulation, or they may develop their own urban design regulation based on norms and forms of conduct that were present in the original rural village. Challenges arise as municipal building regulations are often not appropriate for the smaller plots and narrower lanes that are characteristic for urban villages.



Urban village in Beijing. Photograph by Matthijs van Oostrum



Urban village in Delhi. Photograph by Matthijs van Oostrum



4.5.2. Spatial transformation of urban villages

As villages are enveloped, they undergo a spatial transformation in which rural building typologies and agricultural fields are incrementally adapted to urban conditions. The former agricultural land directly adjacent to the old core of the village is incrementally subdivided from rural parcels to urban lots.

This transformation can happen in one of two ways, parcel by parcel subdivision by individual villagers, or land pooling through the rural collectives. The design of these new extensions is often inspired from the urban fabric of their respective old village cores, which provides a continuity of residential practices, but also lends legitimacy to extensions that may be perceived by local authorities as illegal encroachment.

Much of the variation between contemporary urban villages can be traced back to the historic land distribution arrangement that existed prior to its envelopment. More egalitarian rural land distribution is linked to a contemporary urban form of identical plots in orthogonal layouts, while economically stratified villages feature a larger mix of buildings, plots and lanes of different sizes, and a greater multiplicity of agents, which can contribute to a more 'informal' appearance and fragmentary urban fabric.

When the villages were still rural, the boundary between the built-up village land and the agricultural fields was blurry and shifted depending on the village' needs. As the villages became enveloped, this boundary is increasingly fixed through municipal regulation and imbued with new legal meaning, including building and land use regulation. The local terms *lal dora*, *gramathana* and *zhajidi* in India for example all refer to the built-up area of the old core and they are usually under a different set of rules and customs, then parts of the urban villages on former agricultural land. Adjacent properties divided by such boundaries can face entirely different development prospects.

Perhaps the most significant transformation is the densification of these villages, from low-rise structures to high-dense urban environments that rank among the densest urban environments anywhere on earth. Shipai urban village, Guangzhou, China for example has an estimated density upwards of 200,000 people per km^{2.78} In most cities, building codes exist that limit the building height of villages. While urban villages may appear to grow 'uncontrolled', detailed research on the relationship between buildings and building codes has shown that villagers are aware of the government regulations, and are simply exploiting loopholes and grey areas in the regulation, rather than to defy building regulations.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Zacharias, John, Yue Hu, and Quan Le Huang, "Morphology and spatial dynamics of urban villages in Guangzhou's CBD." *Urban Studies Research* 2013.1 (2013): 958738.

⁷⁹ Van Oostrum, Matthijs, "Access, density and mix of informal settlement: Comparing urban villages in China and India." 2021, *Cities* 117 (2021): 103334.

It is important for local governments to prepare building codes that are appropriate for the spatial conditions that already exist in urban villages, that respect their cultural heritage and urban form, and help to retain their social and functional mix.⁸⁰

The densification of urban villages typically starts in the new village extensions before the older buildings in the village core are densified. There is an 'investment cycle' at play here, where newer buildings in the village extensions provide rental income to villagers that still live in the old core of the village. Oftentimes, villagers gradually move out of the old core to newer extensions, which then frees up the old buildings in the village core to be replaced with newer and taller structures.

In the process of urbanization, villages do not only expand into their former agricultural land and get denser, but they also diversify their land-use mix.

The villages shift from predominantly agricultural land-use to one that is increasingly dominated by residential uses, as well as shops and services that cater to the new, largely migrant population.

Peri-urban villages on the outskirts of the city also attract small-scale industries and home-based enterprises, which form an important source of employment for migrant workers, but as the village becomes more enveloped and land prices rise, residential rental uses become more dominant, as well as shops and services that cater to the surrounding city.

In this way, the mixed land-use of urban villages and their provision of affordable housing, allows urban village to perform a complementary role to the formally planned city, ensuring that the city retains a strong social and economic mix of people see example in box 7.



Jiangxia urban village. Photograph by Matthijs van Oostrum

⁸⁰ Van Oostrum, Matthijs, and Tanzil Shafique, "Regulating informal settlement 'from within': the case for plurality in applying building regulation to slum upgrading." 2023, *International Development Planning Review* 45.3: 235-248.

Box 7. The villages extension process in Jiangxia⁸¹

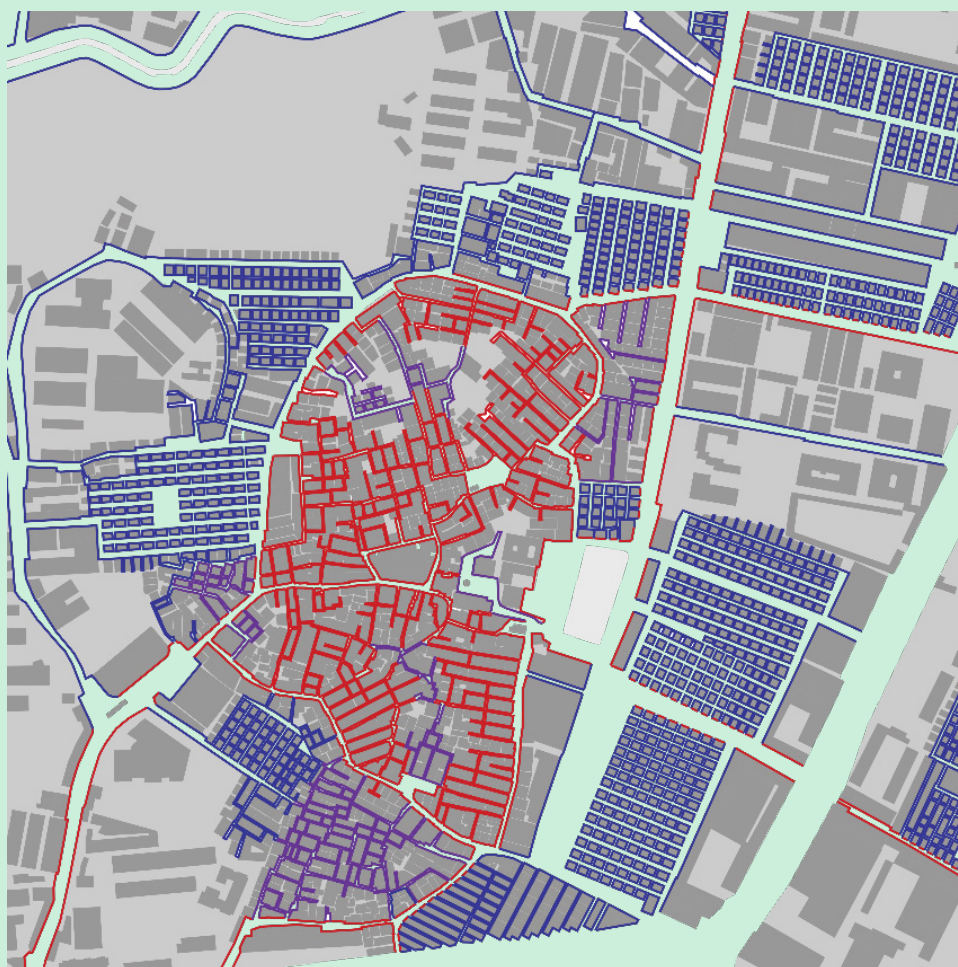
Located in Guangzhou's northern peri-urban outskirts, Jiangxia is a village that is more than 800 years old and has a strong lineage structure, which is embodied through the ancestral hall, and fosters a strong sense of community and collective identity. The local villagers have legal rights to build their own housing and community facilities within the original built-up area of the village (*zhajidi*), but municipal regulation also applies a 'reserved land policy' which reserves 8–12 per cent of the village's agricultural land for new extensions.

Jiangxia's earliest extensions are small and emulate the traditional 'comb' layout (*shushi buju*) of the old core with a series of narrow parallel lanes running off a main street. Residents in Jiangxia explain that the early extensions were 'messy for historical reasons', but that these were intended as experiments that provided a testing ground for the full utilization of its 15 per cent allotment, which was initiated by the collective village committee in 1995.

While the decision to extend was made collectively, each extension was laid out by one of the ten local *production* teams – a relic from the communist management of these villages. Traditionally in charge of agricultural and industrial production, the production teams were granted responsibility to subdivide their respective section of former agricultural land for new residential use. Inspired by the early experiments and abiding by municipal rules that limits plot size at 80 m², a variety of urban designs emerged. The parallel laneways that characterize the traditional comb layout were emulated yet widened and altered in its street hierarchy. As all villagers have equal right to housing within their production team, the new plots were allocated through a lottery system, which, depending on the family's size, could result in either one or two awarded plots. The small plot size spurs on villagers to build multistorey buildings, within which they occupy 1 or 2 floors, while the remainder serve as rental units for migrants.

Jiangxia's extension process thus demonstrates village-initiated extensions, executed by production teams and regulated by municipal regulation, all of which results in a village that is spatially segregated from the more formal city, but provides it with key amenities and affordable housing.

⁸¹ Matthijs van Oostrum & Kim Dovey, 2024. "Urban villages in China and India: parallels and differences in the village extension process," *Urban Research & Practice*, Taylor & Francis Journals, vol. 17(2), pages 218-239, March.



Jiangxia's old village core in red, and new village extensions in blue

Source: Van Oostrum, M., & Dovey, K. (2024). Urban villages in China and India: Parallels and differences in the village extension process. *Urban Research & Practice*, 17(2), 218-239.

4.5.3. Implications for urban-rural linkages

The evolution of urban villages offers valuable insights for strengthening urban-rural linkages. To manage these transitions more effectively, proactive land use planning is essential to prevent inefficient sprawl and protect agricultural zones.

Supporting economic diversification in these areas fosters stronger rural-urban business connections and job creation. Additionally, integrating infrastructure and services across urban and rural spaces ensures balanced access to transportation,

healthcare, and education. Lastly, securing land tenure rights promotes investment and reduces conflicts, facilitating more sustainable urban-rural development.

These lessons from the organic evolution of urban villages provide a roadmap for better managing future urban-rural dynamics.



4.6. *SMART initiatives in rural areas: a review of current practices*⁸²

By Paolo Gerli (Napier University) and Martina Baldessin (OCCAM⁸³)

The debate on smart rural places can be traced back to the early 2000s, yet it is only in the mid-2010s that the implementation of smart place initiatives has gained momentum in rural areas across the world.

Since then, smart villages, smart territories, and similar initiatives have become a cornerstone of global programmes for rural development⁸⁴ (see Box 8 for some examples). Despite the variety of definitions and approaches followed worldwide, all these initiatives share some key characteristics.⁸⁵

First, their main purpose is to tackle social, economic, and environmental challenges in rural regions, focusing on either a single community, a group of villages, or an entire territory. To achieve this goal, these initiatives leverage the potential of technological innovations, mostly but not limited to information and communication technologies (ICTs). Finally, they tend to follow a participatory bottom-up approach rather than a top-down, centralised one: this is to ensure that innovative solutions are tailored to the actual needs of local communities and built upon their capabilities.

⁸² Julio Navío-Marco and others, "The rising importance of the "Smart territory" concept: definition and implications", 2020, *Land Use Policy*, 99, 105003; Paolo Gerli and others, "What makes a smart village smart? A review of the literature", 2022, *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 16(3), 292-304, available at <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-07-2021-0126>.

⁸³ OCCAM is the Observatory on Digital Communication is Affiliated to United Nations Economic and Social Council

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The combination of technological innovations and co-creation processes is undoubtedly the trump card of smart initiatives in rural regions. Their people-centric approach to digital transformation enables rural communities to effectively tackle the challenges that they are currently facing, from depopulation to economic decline, from food insecurity and climate change to the digital divide. For example, it has been estimated that in the climate-smart village of Olopa (Guatemala) the local agriculture production has increased by up to 86% while its vulnerability to climate change reduced by almost 100%⁸⁶.

After the closure of local shops, the citizens of Remmesweiler⁸⁷ (Germany) have created an online platform and a communal distribution centre that boosted the economic resilience of the village and safeguarded the social inclusion of elderly and less mobile residents. This smart village project has also generated economic and ecological benefits by minimising transportation costs and CO₂ emissions.

The *EWA-BELT Project*⁸⁸ operates in six sub-Saharan African countries⁸⁹ to promote sustainable farming through ICT and other technologies⁹⁰. A key initiative is the Plant Head Diagnostic Platform, developed by the Observatory on Digital Communication (OCCAM), inspired on the World Food and Health Security e-Center (HFSeC) Platform and endorsed by the UN. This digital tool aids in diagnosing and predicting plant diseases, improving pre- and post-harvest crop management and crop protection. It supports timely detection and treatment of crop diseases for farmers within the 39 Farmer Fields Research Units (FFRUs) or study cases of the Project. The platform benefits farmers, researchers, and field agents and aims to be widely used to combat food insecurity globally.

These are just three cases testifying the potential of smart place initiatives for the sustainable development of rural communities. However, ongoing projects are also highlighting some shortcomings in the current approaches to rural smartness:

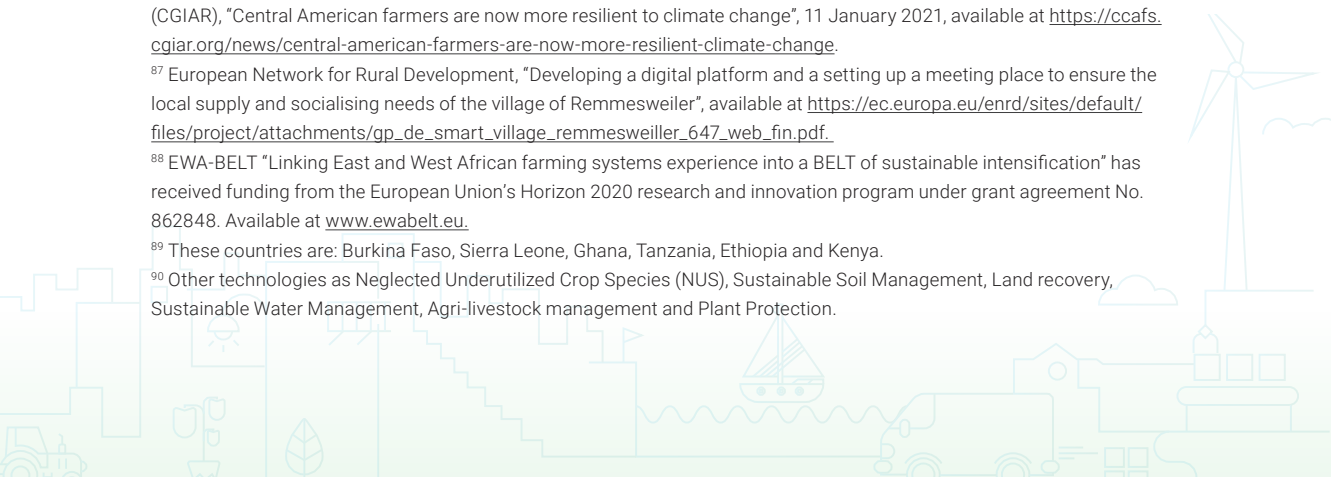
⁸⁶ Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) and Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR), "Central American farmers are now more resilient to climate change", 11 January 2021, available at <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/news/central-american-farmers-are-now-more-resilient-climate-change>.

⁸⁷ European Network for Rural Development, "Developing a digital platform and a setting up a meeting place to ensure the local supply and socialising needs of the village of Remmesweiler", available at https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/sites/default/files/project/attachments/gp_de_smart_village_remmesweiler_647_web_fin.pdf.

⁸⁸ EWA-BELT "Linking East and West African farming systems experience into a BELT of sustainable intensification" has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 862848. Available at www.ewabelt.eu.

⁸⁹ These countries are: Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya.

⁹⁰ Other technologies as Neglected Underutilized Crop Species (NUS), Sustainable Soil Management, Land recovery, Sustainable Water Management, Agri-livestock management and Plant Protection.



- Some initiatives still place too much emphasis on the deployment of digital solutions without a careful consideration of the effective needs of local communities⁹¹. Without embracing a truly people-centric approach, the transformative potential of smart places is unlikely to be realised. As a result, there is a risk that ‘smartness’ becomes just a label for territorial marketing rather than a lever for the socio-economic development of rural communities.
- Concerns have also been raised with regard to the broader impact of smart places on territorial inequalities and regional cohesion⁹². Due to the lack of coordination and cooperation among local projects, there is a risk that these initiatives may generate new divides between smart and non-smart communities.
- Another major challenge is their economic sustainability. Smart places generally rely on the contributions of national governments, international donors, and other institutions⁹³.

91 Ruiz, David Flores, Javier Perogil Burgos, and Blanca Miedes Ugarte, “¿Destinos turísticos inteligentes o territorios inteligentes? Estudios de casos en España”, 2018, *Revista de Estudios Regionales*, 3, 193-219.

92 Navio-Marco, Julio, Beatriz Rodrigo-Moya, and Paolo Gerli, “The rising importance of the “Smart territory” concept: definition and implications”, 2020, *Land Use Policy*, 99, 105003.

93 Ibid.

94 UN-Habitat, “Global Review of Smart City Governance Practices”, (2022b), available at <https://unhabitat.org/global-review-of-smart-city-governance-practices>

95 Mora Lucas and others, “Smart city governance from an innovation management perspective: Theoretical framing, review of current practices, and future research agenda”, 2023, *Technovation*, 123, 102717.

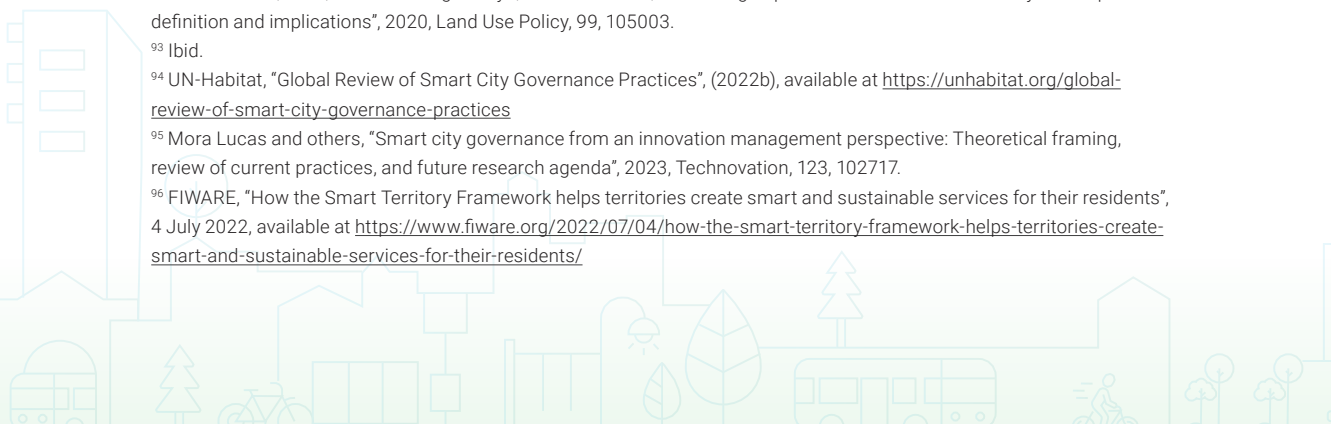
96 FIWARE, “How the Smart Territory Framework helps territories create smart and sustainable services for their residents”, 4 July 2022, available at <https://www.fiware.org/2022/07/04/how-the-smart-territory-framework-helps-territories-create-smart-and-sustainable-services-for-their-residents/>

Identifying alternative funding sources and business models is key to ensure that these initiatives can survive and generate benefits beyond their pilot phases.

These issues are not new to researchers and practitioners with expertise in the digital transformation of places and communities: smart cities have often encountered similar challenges⁹⁴.

Research on smart city governance⁹⁵ can offer useful lessons to also improve the sustainability and maximise the impact of smart initiatives in rural areas.

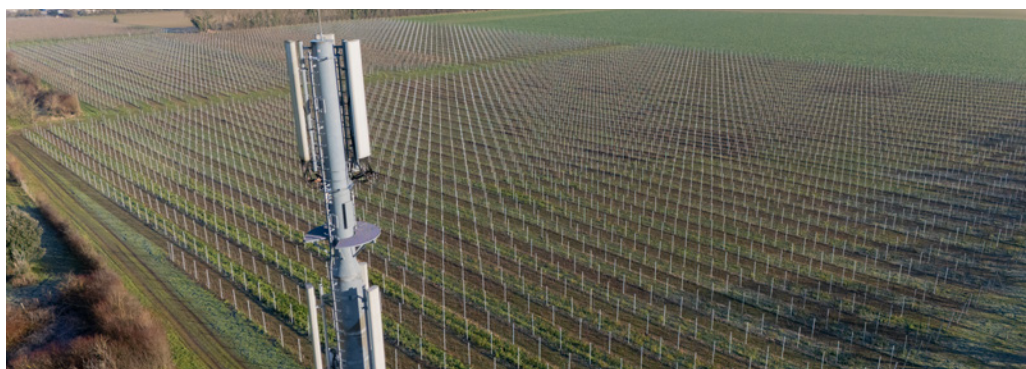
- To help smart solutions achieve scale and become sustainable, it is crucial to support the exchange of best practices across rural regions to ensure that the expertise and innovations developed by local projects can be shared and applied across multiple communities. The replication and adaptation of smart solutions can be further facilitated by endorsing the use of open-source technologies⁹⁶.



- Policymakers at different administrative levels can play a pivotal role by integrating smart place initiatives in their programmes to support rural development⁹⁷. Accordingly, smart villages and smart territories should no longer be treated as experimental projects but recognised as pillars of regional cohesion policies and fundamental to pursue sustainable development goals in rural regions.
- Policymakers should also promote the coordination and collaboration of smart places across urban and rural areas to leverage the synergies existing between cities and their rural counterparts⁹⁸, for example, in the context of sustainable mobility and efficient e-government services.

In fact, it is only through the continuous collaboration between rural and urban stakeholders that the potential of technological innovations can be fully leveraged for the development, resilience and wellbeing of local communities. Neither cities nor villages can be truly smart unless they work together to co-create shared solutions to their common problems. All these efforts shall be grouped in a *Global Smart Center* to guarantee supply of e-services, exchange of knowledge and best practices and investments towards the assurance of basic **e-welfare for all**.

The Infopoverty World Conference⁹⁹ organized by OCCAM constitutes an historical forum that gathers all these instances, to be renewed annually at the United Nations and validated by a desirable convergence at all operative levels.



5G in the vineyard shows how smart place initiatives, driven by urban-rural collaboration, can leverage technology for sustainable development and e-services © Adobestock

⁹⁷ Almeida Cerredá and Santiago Iglesias, "Las smart communities: un instrumento para alcanzar, de forma planificada y concertada, el equilibrio en la distribución espacial de la población", 2021.

⁹⁸ Paolo Gerli and others, "What makes a smart village smart? A review of the literature", 2022, *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 16(3), 292-304, available at <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-07-2021-0126>.

⁹⁹ OCCAM, "Infopoverty World Conference". The 24th edition of the Infopoverty World Conference is scheduled for Spring 2025 at the UNHQ in New York. <https://www.occam.org/infopoverty-programme>.

Box 8. Examples of Smart Place Initiatives

The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) was the first organisation to launch a programme for the development of smart villages. Since 2009, IEEE Smart Village¹⁰⁰ has been empowering off-grid communities in the Global South by giving them access to solar power and supporting the development of local entrepreneurs.

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) has, instead, focused on the implementation of Climate-Smart Villages¹⁰¹ (CSVs). Working with farmers, researchers, development agencies and private companies, this programme has been testing climate-smart innovative solutions for agriculture in 18 countries across Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

The ITU¹⁰² has also partnered with the Niger Agence Nationale pour la Société de l'Information (ANSI) to support their Projet Villages Intelligents¹⁰³, launched in 2018 to drive sustainable rural development in agriculture, commerce, education, finance, and health. Similarly, FAO has launched a Digital Village Initiative¹⁰⁴ to promote digital innovation in rural areas. Despite its focus on smart agriculture, this initiative also supports the development of a wide range of digital services to improve rural livelihoods and boost the sustainability of rural communities.

In the European Union, the European Network for Rural Development¹⁰⁵ has promoted the creation of Smart Villages leveraging ICT innovations and participatory methods to develop place-based solutions to rural problems. More recently, the EU has been endorsing the creation of StartUp Villages¹⁰⁶, described as a place (or a network of small places) embracing innovation and entrepreneurship to unlock development potential and enhance the wellbeing of rural communities.

OCCAM, a UN-affiliated Observatory on Digital Communication, developed the ICT Village Model to support disadvantaged communities in Latin America and Africa. This model provides flexible, replicable e-services like food security, telemedicine, e-learning, and e-governance, fostering sustainable development in rural areas.

100 IEEE Smart Village, "About IEEE Smart Village". <https://smartvillage.ieee.org/faq/>.

101 Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) and Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR), "About us". <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/about-us>.

102 ITU (n.d.), "Smart Village". <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/ICT-Applications/Pages/smart-village.aspx>.

103 Projet Villages Intelligent pour la Croissance Rurale et l'Inclusion Numérique (PVI). <https://www.pvi.ne/about/>.

104 FAO, <https://www.fao.org/platforms/digital-village-initiative/>.

105 European Network for Rural Development, "Smart Villages Portal". https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal_en.html.

106 European Union, "European Startup Village". <https://startup-forum.rural-vision.europa.eu/?lng=en>.

The first ICT Village was established in Honduras in 1999, in collaboration with the Honduran government. It provided solar-powered electricity and high-speed internet (108 mb/sec) to over 30,000 people, enabling e-learning, telemedicine, e-commerce, and e-government services.

Following this success, OCCAM implemented ICT Villages in various rural areas worldwide¹⁰⁷, including Honduras, Lebanon, the Navajo Nation, Tunisia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Lebanon, Cameroon, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Senegal, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Serbia, and the Philippines.

The UN Millennium Village of Sambaina, in Madagascar, received a total of 55 computers at the beginning of the project and, with the support of external stakeholders, renewed the maternal unit with the use of new e-ultrasound tools by local midwives, thus decreasing the mortality range by 82 per cent. The local school also professionalized 320 pupils toward new jobs exploiting local rural and craft resources.

¹⁰⁷ OCCAM, "ICT Villages". <https://www.occam.org/ict-villages>.

The ICT Village Model involves several intervention phases, starting with the creation of a community ICT Access Center and developing specific information circuits such as food security, e-learning, and telemedicine, improving the community's quality of life.

The concept of smart territory has also been applied, predominantly in Europe.

The smart territory initiatives launched in Spain¹⁰⁸, Portugal¹⁰⁹ and Argentina¹¹⁰ have mainly focused on the implementation of digital technologies in touristic destinations. In France¹¹¹ and Italy¹¹², instead, the term 'smart territory' has been associated to projects that aims to enhance the digital infrastructures and public services available in rural provinces and regions.

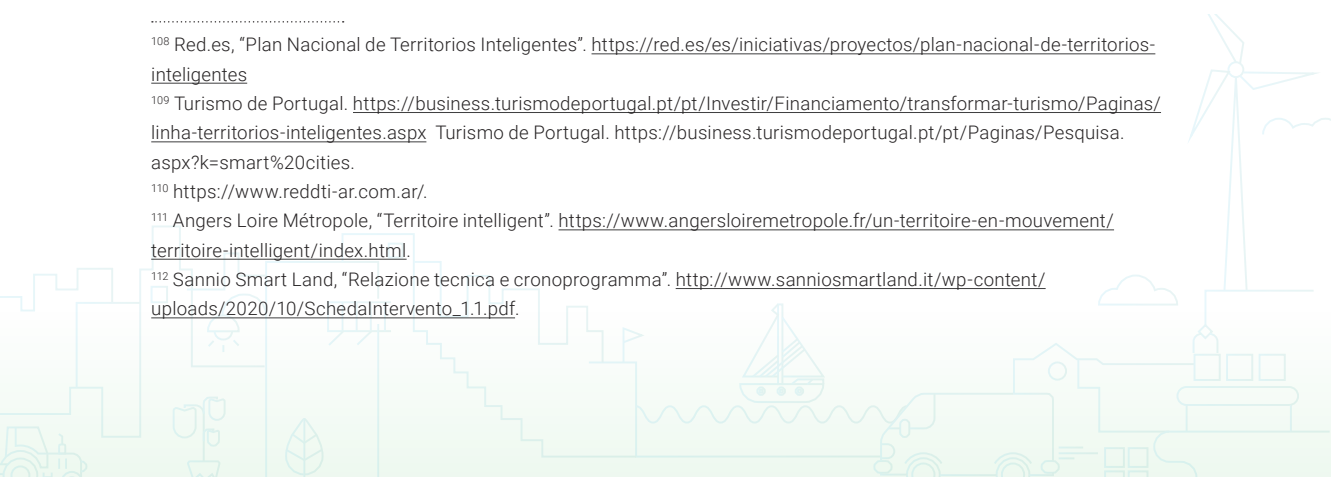
¹⁰⁸ Red.es, "Plan Nacional de Territorios Inteligentes". <https://red.es/es/iniciativas/proyectos/plan-nacional-de-territorios-inteligentes>

¹⁰⁹ Turismo de Portugal. <https://business.turismodeportugal.pt/pt/Investir/Financiamento/transformar-turismo/Paginas/linha-territorios-inteligentes.aspx> Turismo de Portugal. <https://business.turismodeportugal.pt/pt/Paginas/Pesquisa.aspx?k=smart%20cities>.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.reddti-ar.com.ar/>

¹¹¹ Angers Loire Métropole, "Territoire intelligent". <https://www.angersloiremetropole.fr/un-territoire-en-mouvement/territoire-intelligent/index.html>.

¹¹² Sannio Smart Land, "Relazione tecnica e cronoprogramma". http://www.sanniosmartland.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SchedaIntervento_1.1.pdf.





4.7. Local agency in food systems: transforming food systems and nutrition through socio-ecological webs

By Ann Trevenen-Jones, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

The goal of thriving, sustainable and nutritious food systems involves all for the benefit of everyone's health, prosperity and peace and for ensuring the Earth continues to be a 'safe place' for humanity.¹¹³ Presently, three quarters of urban and peri-urban communities, worldwide, experience, moderate to severe food insecurity.¹¹⁴ This is as a consequence of multiple drivers and choices, including increased urban population sizes, widening inequalities, as well as the high dependence on food purchasing among urban communities.¹¹⁵ Urbanisation further impacts nutritional wellbeing, driving consumption, of unhealthy diets high in sugar, salt and/or fat, which are often more accessible in terms of convenience and affordability.¹¹⁶

In low - and middle-income countries, the relatively high cost of a healthy diet means such diets are unaffordable for many.¹¹⁷ Globally, individuals, households and communities are experiencing a double burden of malnutrition i.e. the "coexistence of overnutrition (overweight and obesity) alongside undernutrition (stunting and wasting)"¹¹⁸.

These challenges are further exacerbated by intersecting polycrisis associated with public health, climate change, loss of biodiversity and political and/or economic instability.

¹¹³ Springmann, M., Clark, M., Mason-D'Croz, D., Wiebe, K., Bodirsky, B. L., Lassaletta, L., ... & Willett, W. (2018). Options for keeping the food system within environmental limits. *Nature*, 562(7728), 519-525.

¹¹⁴ FAO. Suite of Food Security Indicators. FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>.

¹¹⁵ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. (2023). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural-urban continuum. Rome, FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/445c9d27-b396-4126-96c9-50b335364d01>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Lancet, T. (2020). A future direction for tackling malnutrition. *Lancet* (London, England), 395(10217), 2. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33099-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33099-5/fulltext).

¹¹⁸ Supra note 3.

Many challenges can be viewed as opportunities for locally led, inclusive and equitable solutions.

As most food produced is consumed and wasted in cities, and given that city administrations oversee significant segments of the population, there has been an emphasis, especially since 2015, on cities as a vital entry point to catalyse local sustainable development, including food systems transformation.^{119,[8]} Inherent within this view has been the need to develop enabling conditions in which climate smart, bio-diverse, safe and healthy (nutritious) foods are available and accessible, at all times, for all - as per local and cultural preferences.^[9] Even so, as the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted, cities are not islands but rather settlement nodes within systems of food and non-food, connecting households, small towns, intermediary and mega cities, rural communities, wild and production landscapes and, at a wider scale, territories.

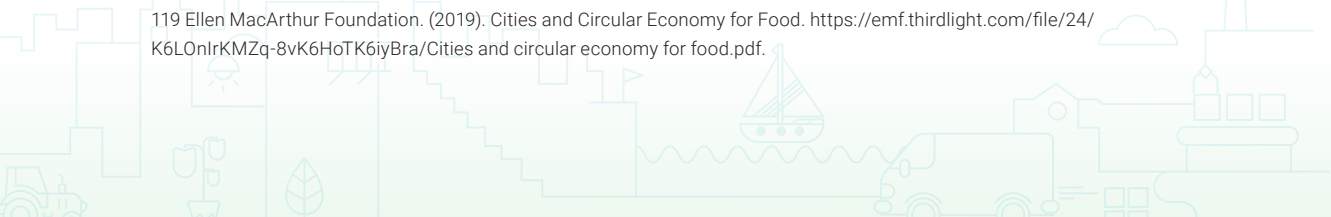
Effecting local agency in this context requires a “whole-of-society approach”. Here, all stakeholders, formal and informal food sectors, and governance actors at various levels are engaged, responsible and working together towards an overarching shared vision. For example, the *City of Bristol adopt a One City approach*, involving multiple stakeholders committed to shared “good food” values.^[10] The *City Region Food System (CRFS) approach* advocates for

“collective voice...across scales...provide[ing] coherence across jurisdictions, policies, and scales”.^[11] Multistakeholder participation through mechanisms, like food policy councils and food security committees are widely viewed as best practice. During the pandemic, several countries including the USA, Kenya, Mozambique and Pakistan established *food security “war-room” type* response and coordination “committees” which brought together multi-stakeholders. However, several such committees are no longer operational and/or only activated during emergencies.

There is a critical need for all stakeholders to understand and contextually operationalise sustainable, just and circular flows of diverse, safe and healthy foods from rural sources to urban plates, with reduced food loss and waste. However, a fundamental barrier exists around the practice of sustainable food systems as well as effective inclusion and equitability in routine food relationships including governance. Thinking of urban-peri-urban-rural and wider territorial food systems requires thinking of webs and directional flows of social and ecological relationships, involving healthy food and non-food elements, such as road infrastructure, renewable energy alternatives and cold storage.

It’s also about a variety of data from indigenous knowledge to scientifically gathered evidence, skills, sharing of best (and local) practices and coordination

119 Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (2019). Cities and Circular Economy for Food. <https://emf.thirdlight.com/file/24/K6L0nIrKMZq-8vK6HoTK6iyBra/Cities and circular economy for food.pdf>.



between different levels of government, local administrations and sectors.

Engaging diverse stakeholders takes time, finance, skills, on-going commitment, experience and local champions – without whom, such engagements can lose traction and political investment. For many local governments a balance of effort, expertise, time and budget is often illusive, a) across multiple food system related delivery mandates, such as WASH and waste services, public food market management and integrated development planning, b) in the juggle of multi-sectors, and c) in locally interpreting national policy into delivery. This is further to demands of responding to crises. Effectively engaging vulnerable communities, like the urban poor, women, food market committees, as well as last mile vendors and urban farmers in the informal sector, requires trust, attention to social nuances, consistency and equitable participation techniques.

Engagement needs to be about more than invitations and attendance at meetings and measured by more than disaggregated socio-economic demographic data. Tracking change over the short term, using tools like process indicators, resonant case studies and bell weathers, across the course of interventions, typically 1 – 5 years in duration, is key. Stakeholders need to be engaged equitably, and almost all need investment in understanding and thinking in food systems and how they are also embedded therein as part of challenge (s) and solution (s).

Local agency i.e. the capacity of communities to effectively engage in decision making from food choices to governance and to own “solutions”, is essential to sustainable and resilient food systems transformation in an era of poly-crises and multi-layered new uncertainties.^{[12],[13],[14]} UN-Habitat’s 10 guiding principles on urban-rural linkages provide a useful framework to guide “whole society” engagement towards food systems and nutrition transformation: from locally grounded interventions to participatory engagement and evidence.

These principles are viewed against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which explicitly target nutrition, under SDG 2; albeit nutrition and enabling conditions thereof are part of all 17 SDGs.

2025 will be an important year to review the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), build further common commitment and financial investment during the forthcoming Nutrition for Growth summit and the UN Food Systems Summit stocktake (UNFSS +4). 2025 will also offer opportunities to continue to advocate for the important role cities play in urban and rural food systems through the celebration of 15 years since the declaration of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Lessons learnt, progress and 2030 roadmaps for UNFSS coalitions, that bring together multiple stakeholders, across multiple levels of governance and multi-laterally, like those focused on urban and territorial food systems, social protection, and healthy diets will also be key in 2025 and beyond.





4.8. *Intermediary cities as hubs of urban-rural synergy and sustainable urbanization*

By Firdaous Oussidhoum, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Intermediary cities, defined as urban centers that mediate between larger metropolitan areas and rural regions, have become key players in global urbanization. Initially conceptualized by the UNESCO Chair in Intermediary Cities and World Urbanization in Lleida University in 2008, as a tool for mastering urban spatial development and studying basic municipal services provision to project the city into the present and future.

This concept was born from its starting point in the present and future treatment of urban-rural linkages and remains at the heart of the question of intermediary cities. Once the subject was integrated later into UCLG's structure as a Working Group leading to the Forum of Intermediary Cities, the governance perspective emerged as the key issue for intermediary cities and their role in the urbanization process.

Today, and following a long journey since 2015, the intermediary city is more than ever at the heart of the planet's urban development and a significant approach to the future of urbanization. One major reason

is the progressive loss of the rural dimension as pivotal for the articulation of territorial governance. The global movement of local and regional governments is convinced that in the urban era, intermediary cities hold the key to future sustainability, durable peace and wellbeing through strengthening urban-rural linkages.

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) projects that the demographics projects intermediary cities will be the primary internal destination for migration of rural communities. This will require elevating the need for an ordered urbanization process that does not convert all rural spaces to urban spaces. Experts project increased migration caused by the impacts of Climate Change such as water scarcity, severe flooding, desertification, food insecurity, and conflicts.

Related to the impacts of climate change and conflict that feed rapid urbanization is the degradation of rural lands, ecosystems and biodiversity as a consequence of the need for more human settlements. Intermediary

Cities may hold one of the keys that may prevent from encroaching on the thresholds of ecosystems' survival in the territories, as they play a centric role in the management of urban-rural linkages.

Intermediary Cities have been defined as engines for human development partly through their function of "intermediation" at the territorial level, including the flows of goods, people, service provision across the urban-rural continuum.

It is important to note that the development of intermediary cities is understood in diverse ways by Intermediary Cities of the World. The Intermediary Cities Forum was initiated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) to bring attention to the unique role of intermediary cities (i-cities) in achieving sustainable development see Box n 9.

Box 9. UCLG Intermediary Cities Forum¹²⁰

It serves as a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and advocacy for i-cities, which are critical in connecting rural and urban areas, contributing to balanced territorial development, and addressing global challenges like climate change and migration. Launched in 2018 in Chefchaouen, Morocco, the biannual forum aims to empower these cities to lead in localizing global agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It focuses on fostering equitable resource distribution, improving infrastructure, and facilitating access to financial mechanisms, such as climate finance, to enhance the capacity of i-cities to contribute to sustainable development and global territorial justice. Through this platform, UCLG seeks to support intermediary cities in becoming key players in national and global economic systems while enhancing their resilience and inclusivity. The forum also emphasizes the importance of intermediary cities in managing migration and supporting rural populations through job creation and better access to services.

If there is a pathway for our urban planet to be sustainable, there is no doubt that the Intermediary Cities will have an important role to play. While the Global North is may be approaching de-growth to ensure the sustainability of their resources, the Global South are living through a progressive human mobility and development. These dynamics raise important questions about the kind of treatment that will be given to the urban-rural linkages, and the future of human settlements on earth. Keeping these human settlements as sustainable environments for life of people and the planet is where the challenge resides.

¹²⁰ UCLG world forum on intermediary cities accessed on 22nd January 2025 at <https://intermediarycities.uclg.org/en/home>



4.9. Bridging the urban-rural divide by strengthening food systems and sustainable governance

By Jess Haliday (Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Systems - RUAF)

Urban-rural linkages are fundamental to sustainable, resilient food systems in and around cities. Stakeholders from across rural, peri-urban and urban areas must be included in governance of city region food systems to ensure the issues and perspectives from across all areas are taken into account. The resulting policies and programmes are more likely to yield mutually beneficial policies and programmes, with multiple environmental, economic, and social benefits.

The long-standing conceptual and disciplinary divide between rural and urban affairs has been discredited. We now understand that urban, peri-urban and rural areas exist along a continuum, across which people, goods, food, money, waste, natural resources, and ecosystem services flow – in both directions (FAO and RUAF, 2023).

Cities are not isolated places of consumption whose food needs can be served solely through long, often industrialized supply chains.

Where once food insecurity was seen as a rural phenomenon faced by farmers whose crops have failed, hunger and malnutrition are recognized as rife among urban populations, exacerbated by rapid urbanization, economic shocks and the impacts of climate change.

Agricultural production, meanwhile, is not restricted to the countryside. Urban and peri-urban agriculture, in their various forms (FAO et al, 2022), enhance access to fresh, healthy food for city residents, provide environmental benefits in built-up areas, and can offer health and social benefits for practitioners. Urban agroecology initiatives aim to create circular nutrient and water flows to improve the ecological ‘metabolism’ of the city.

Over the last decade, the number of cities asserting responsibility for their food system has grown exponentially due to urbanization trends, concern over food security and public health, climate change, and the need to boost resilience to economic and environmental shocks¹²¹.

¹²¹ For example, since its launch in October 2015, 290 cities around the globe – of all sizes and in all geographies – have signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, pledging ‘to work to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimise waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change’.

These cities are identifying the powers and competencies they can leverage to shape their food systems across multiple policy areas, including planning, public health, public procurement, environmental management, education, and social welfare.

One aspect of this work concerns shaping the food environment within cities – that is, the physical setting in which people make their food choices, and factors related to access, availability, convenience, and desirability that influence them (Turner et al, 2018).

However, the food environment is the interface between people and the wider food system. As such, it is crucial that city actors (local government officials and non-governmental stakeholders involved in food systems governance) take an embedded, place-based approach that acknowledges the intrinsic connections with the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas.

Food-related policies, programmes and initiatives must be designed with the potential impacts on flows across the urban-rural continuum in mind, and to have positive, sustainable outcomes for food system stakeholders, assets and infrastructure – natural and human-made – across all areas, synergistically.

Food systems governance across the continuum

One common feature in cities that seek to build sustainable and resilient food systems is a multistakeholder platform made up of local government actors from relevant departments, NGOs / CSOs, community groups, private sector representatives from across food value chains, trade unions, consultants, and academics. The precise composition, institutional structure, and mandate of these platforms varies from place to place.



Transcarpathian greenhouse work © Adobestock

To enable connections across the urban-rural continuum and for potential impacts to be taken into account, membership should include some stakeholders whose work, interests and perspectives are informed by food system elements outside of urban areas – such as, for instance, farmers, rural development agencies, regional government officers, or environmental groups.

In addition, polycentric governance is particularly helpful for strengthening urban-rural linkages within the food system – that is, multiple governments working together to address shared issues (Halliday, 2022).

This can involve several neighbouring municipalities cooperating over – for example, water sheds and other natural resources flows, or transportation within commuter belts. Alternatively, there can be ‘nested’ governments at multiple levels, where the local, regional/provincial and/or national levels each have some jurisdiction over the issue in question.

For example, in Greater Manchester, United Kingdom, the food partnership exists to support and enhance the sustainable food activities of the 10 boroughs that fall within the city region (Clair and Morley, 2019).

Box 10. City region food systems¹²²

The city region food systems approach, developed by FAO and RUAFA, defines city regions as cities and their immediate rural and agricultural areas or small and medium towns that link small-scale producers to value chains and urban markets. In functional terms, a city region is ‘an area in which flows of people, goods, and ecosystem services operate across the urban-rural continuum’ (FAO and RUAFA, 2023, p. 5).

Under the City Region Food Systems programme, which ran in two phases from 2015-2018 and 2019-2023, FAO and RUAFA developed a methodology for assessing the sustainability and resilience of city region food systems, followed by participatory planning to address problems, bottlenecks, and vulnerabilities. Central to the process is multistakeholder engagement and participatory governance, including representatives from various local government areas across the defined city region areas (FAO and RUAFA, 2023).

¹²² FAO and RUAFA. (2023). Building sustainable and resilient city region food systems – Assessment and planning handbook. Rome: FAO)



Actions with multiple benefits

The value of the governance arrangements is seen in on-the-ground, practical actions they develop, including policy implementation, programmes, and community initiatives. Such actions yield both wider mutual

understanding and support between food system stakeholders – including both producers and citizens – and multiple benefits across all areas. Box 11 offers a specific instance of how local policies can benefit urban and peri-urban farmers and urban consumers.

Box 11. Local sourcing for Milanese school meals¹²³

In 2016 Milano Ristorazione, the city-owned food service company, teams up with farm consortium Distretto Agricolo Milanese (DAM) comprised of 31 farms in the Lombardy Region, to supply rice for school meals in the city. From an initial 180 tons of rice per year with a value of €300,000, the partners subsequently extended the collaboration to other legume, vegetable and cereal value chains, with the support of the Milan Food Policy Office. The arrangement both increases the presence of local produce within Milan's food service sector and supports peri-urban farmers in moving from cereal monoculture to diversified production by creating stable sales channels (Quaglia and Geissler, 2018).



Lombardy's green fields. Showcasing local agriculture's vital role in food systems © Adobestock

¹²³ Quaglia, S., & Geissler, J. (2018). Greater Milan's foodscape: A neo-rural metropolis. In *Integrating Food into Urban Planning*

For example, supporting cultivation of indigenous crops that are part of the local culture and suited to the local climate can improve economic, environmental, and public health outcomes.

In many countries national agricultural policy has favoured commodity monocrops for global markets that depend on expensive imported inputs (such as seeds and fertilizer), and that deplete soils and are disease prone. Providing extension services to support indigenous crop cultivation, and setting up local seed banks, can benefit both farmer livelihoods and protect natural resources (Kimani et al, 2020).

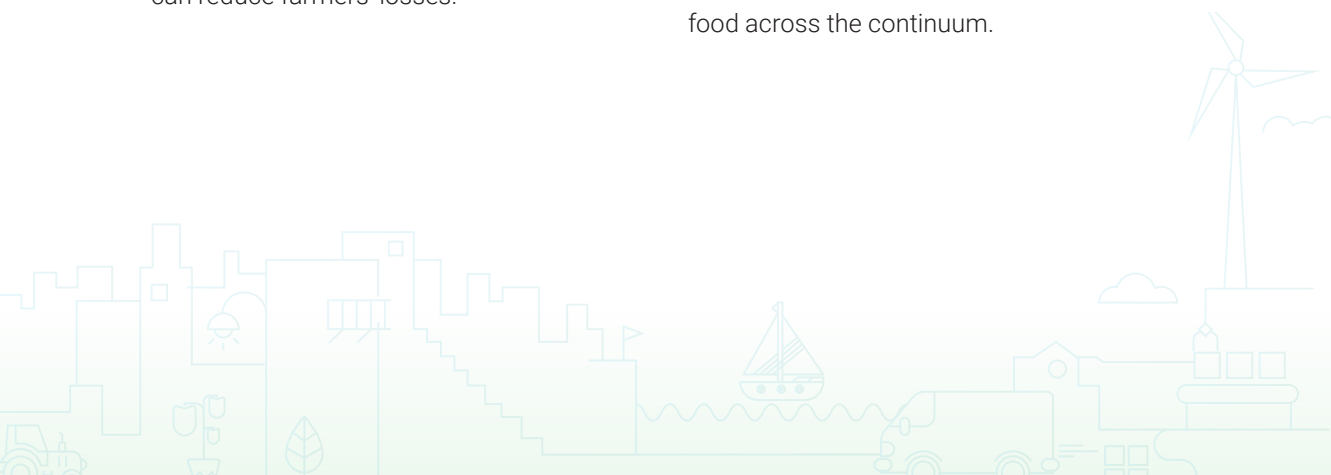
In parallel, promoting consumption of indigenous foods within cities stimulates demand to meet the increase supply, and can improve diets among urban populations that have become dependent on commodities and ultra-processed foods.

Another example is shoring up food systems infrastructure to support economic viability of food supply chain activities across rural, peri-urban and urban areas, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create nutrient feedback loops. For instance, adequate post-harvest storage facilities close to agricultural areas can reduce farmers' losses.

Suitable processing facilities for the crops grown in the area removes the need for crops to transported elsewhere for transformation – usually by vehicles running on fossil-fuel – then re-imported in their processed form at a higher price, meaning that the economic gains from value addition are exported out of the area (Boerwinkel et al, 2018). Provision of organic waste collection within markets can both reduce the amount of food waste rotting in landfill, where it emits Co2 and seeps toxic leachates into groundwater, and enable creation of nutrient-rich compost for urban and peri-urban farms (ICLEI, 2021).

Finally, enabling short supply chains between rural and peri-urban farmers and urban consumers both creates access to markets and builds citizen engagement in sustainable food systems. Collective transportation into markets, farmers' food hubs, and public procurement of locally produced food all enable small-scale farmers to serve lucrative urban markets that they could not supply alone (See Boxes 11 and 12).

Moreover, direct exchanges between producers and consumers create greater public awareness of where food comes from and the realities of rural existence, and create a sense of community around sustainable food across the continuum.



Box 12. Curitiba's Nossa Feira short supply chains¹²⁴

Curitiba, Brazil, introduced its Nossa Feira (Our Fair) programme in 2013, as a variation on an existing model to sell fixed price vegetables to consumers. Nossa Feira are temporary produce markets that take place at 10 locations in the city each week, in the late afternoons and evenings. Fruit and vegetables are supplied by family farm cooperatives, which bid to manage a batch of markets. With the support of the Rural Technical Assistance and Extension Agency for Paraná state, a consortium of nine cooperatives from across the state (with a collective membership of 9,000 producers) organise to ensure a variety of produce at each market, as well as a centre for receiving produce within the wholesale market.

Produce is sold for around 40 percent less than regular retail outlets, meaning citizens can afford healthier food on a low income. Sales by the farmers' cooperatives have increased considerably – by around 450 per cent – meaning higher earnings for cooperative members. (Halliday et al, 2019).



This Sao Paulo street market, brimming with fresh oranges, mirrors programs like Curitiba's Nossa Feira, directly linking family farms to urban consumers for mutual benefit © Adobestock

¹²⁴ Halliday, J., Platenkamp, L., Nicolarea, Y. (2019) A menu of actions to shape urban food systems for improved nutrition, GAIN, MUFPP and RUAF

4.10. Empowering communities through urban-rural linkages

By Angeline Wafula- World Food Programme of the United Nations



Marygoretty proudly displays a tree seedling from her nursery. Under Tobacco Free Farms initiative, Farmers are encouraged to adopt climate smart agriculture as they shift to growing food.

Image by FtMA

The Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) is a collaboration of six organizations—AGRA, Bayer, Rabobank, Syngenta, World Food Programme (WFP), and Yara—dedicated to building sustainable food systems by strengthening markets, empowering farmers, and enhancing African food security. Active in Kenya since 2017, FtMA operates in 13 counties: Homabay, Kisumu, Migori, Siaya, Kakamega, Busia, Bungoma, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Nyandarua, Nakuru, Narok, and Elgeyo Marakwet.

The key Value Chains promoted were:

- *Pulses:* Green Grams, High Iron Beans (HIB), Cow Peas
- *Indigenous Crops:* African Leafy Vegetables (ALV), Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP), Finger Millet, Groundnuts

FtMA introduced the Farmer Service Centre (FSC) model in Kenya in 2019 to address gaps in input and service delivery (“last mile”) and commodity marketing (“first mile”) for smallholder farmers in rural areas. Through continuous improvement and scaling, FtMA has established over 1,300 FSCs, benefiting 296,443 smallholder farmers and significantly impacting their incomes and productivity.

- *Potatoes and Cereals:* Maize, Rice, Sorghum, Finger Millet

Testimonial: Marygoretty Chitira's Impact in Sirisia Sub-County

In Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya, a quiet revolution is underway as farmers, guided by figures like Marygoretty Chitira, a 58-year-old FSC operator from Kaprot village, transition from tobacco cultivation to sustainable alternatives. Marygoretty is passionate about leading this transformation. "My purpose," she says, "is to guide smallholder farmers towards a path that not only sustains them but nurtures the land we call home."

Marygoretty's FSC provides farmers with market access, post-harvest handling solutions, agricultural inputs, conservation agriculture training, mechanization, and financial services. Each FSC serves about 200 farmers and can operate from physical premises, informal spaces, or through mobile agents. FSC Marygoretty Chitira's brevity and commitment to be at the centre of the shift from tobacco to alternative sources of livelihood such as high iron bean farming is relentless.

"My purpose," Mary's voice rings with unwavering determination, "is to guide smallholder farmers towards a path that not only sustains them but nurtures the land we call home."

Through embarking on an aggressive farmer registration exercise, FSC Marygoretty manages to establish and forge meaningful connections with the local farmers. With each registration, a ripple of change set forth.

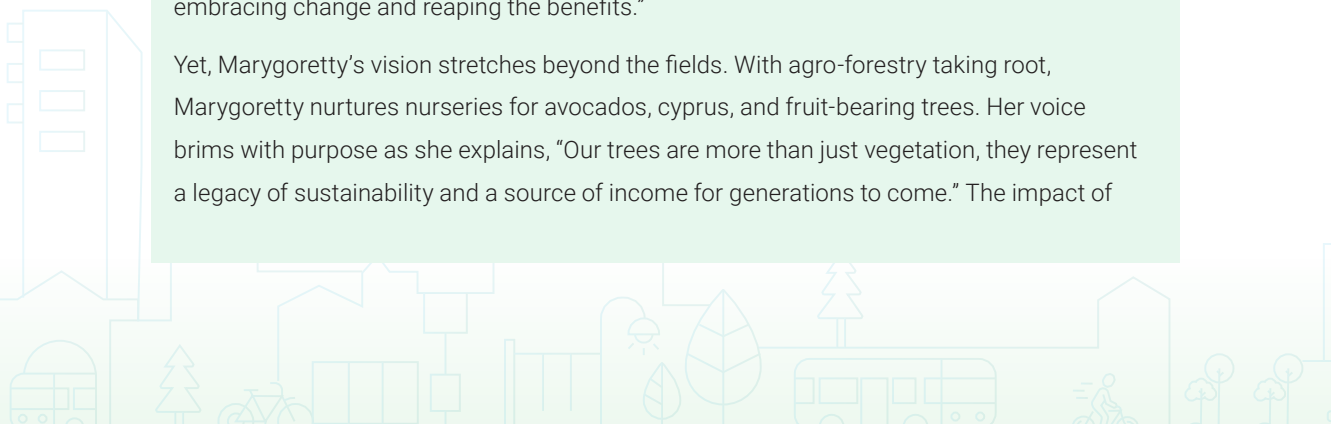
The allure of tobacco's quick gains once held sway, but Marygoretty understood the greater cost, the toll on the land, the fleeting nature of income, and the hidden health implications. She knew it was time for a paradigm shift, a transition to climate-smart agriculture.

"Our mission is clear," Marygoretty underscores. "To empower smallholder farmers with knowledge, to help them comprehend the bigger picture, and to steer them towards sustainable prosperity."

High-iron beans emerged as the alluring alternative, offering not just economic stability but improved nutrition and food security for families.

"Our second season of growing high iron beans covered 135 acres," Marygoretty shares, "Compare that to our initial season's 35 acres, it points to the great strides we have made in embracing change and reaping the benefits."

Yet, Marygoretty's vision stretches beyond the fields. With agro-forestry taking root, Marygoretty nurtures nurseries for avocados, cyprus, and fruit-bearing trees. Her voice brims with purpose as she explains, "Our trees are more than just vegetation, they represent a legacy of sustainability and a source of income for generations to come." The impact of



Marygoretty's endeavors is tangible. Working closely with approximately 600 farmers, she sits at the centre of farmer transformation in Bungoma county. From the initial 52 pioneers who embraced change, the next season holds the promise of 150 more joining the fold.

And then there are the stories that affirm the journey's success. Marygoretty's delightedly recounts a recent encounter. "One of our farmers came up to me with joy in his eyes. He had earned an astounding USD 1600 from 10 bags of 90 kilograms of his high-iron bean harvest. It was a moment that encapsulated the essence of our efforts – transforming lives and livelihoods." It's not just financial gains that underline the transformation. Marygoretty's compassionately recalls, "Kids at the age of 5 used to look like they were 2-year-old, a result of stunted growth caused by tobacco not being a food crop and therefore contributing to food insecurity and nutrition challenges in households. Now, with healthier diets from our high-iron beans and vegetables, they thrive."

A critical part of this transformation lies in education. "We educate and demonstrate to farmers how to do minimum tilling, soil covering, and even crop rotation," Marygoretty explains. "These practices not only nurture the land but also increase their harvest, ensuring a sustainable source of income for their families."

"The land is our ally," Marygoretty's voice soars with conviction. "Through climate-smart agriculture, we restore its vitality and reap the benefits of a more bountiful harvest."



A line graph with two lines, one teal and one dark green, plotted on a grid. The teal line starts high, dips, and then rises. The dark green line starts lower, dips, and then rises. A magnifying glass is positioned over the dark green line, focusing on its upward trend. The number '05' is prominently displayed in white, underlined, with a small white arrow pointing down from the underline.

05

Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages from Select Countries

Chapter Overview

The chapter presents a review of urban-rural linkages (URL) across 21 countries from Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Arab States, Europe and North America, and Latin America. The analysis is based on survey responses and desk research, offering a broad understanding of how countries address URL in the context of sustainable development

Many countries recognize URL as essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Countries like Algeria and the United States of America incorporate URL into their national strategies to address all 17 SDGs. Others, such as Finland, Nigeria, and Moldova, focus on specific SDGs, particularly those related to sustainable cities (SDG 11), infrastructure (SDG 9), and climate action (SDG 13). A key finding is the gap in awareness of the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on URL, adopted in 2019. Only nine out of 21 countries acknowledged awareness of the resolution, although several have implemented related policies independently. This suggests a need for stronger advocacy and outreach to increase awareness and integration of URL strategies in national policies.

The report identifies key themes such as food security, infrastructure, communication, and environmental management and the country prioritizations since the year 2000. Post-2020, more countries began prioritizing these themes, especially in response to the pandemic, indicating the critical role of urban-rural connections in addressing global challenges like food systems and digital connectivity.

While many countries have robust national and subnational policies, more can be done to increase the local-level frameworks. Many local governments often lack the formal policies needed to implement and adapt national strategies, limiting the effectiveness of urban-rural linkages at the grassroots level.

Ten out of 21 countries have specific policies to enhance the role of intermediary cities in strengthening URL. These intermediary cities serve as crucial connectors between urban and rural areas, helping to balance development and reduce pressure on larger cities.

Countries have adopted a variety of policies and strategies to strengthen URL,



including integrating linkages into national urban policies, enhancing capacity, and implementing territorial planning initiatives. Post-2020, more emphasis has been placed on infrastructure development and financial mechanisms, though capacity building remains a challenge.

The chapter highlights areas where UN-Habitat and other international organizations can provide support, particularly in capacity building, policy development, and enhancing the role of intermediary cities. This will help countries leverage URL for more balanced and sustainable development.

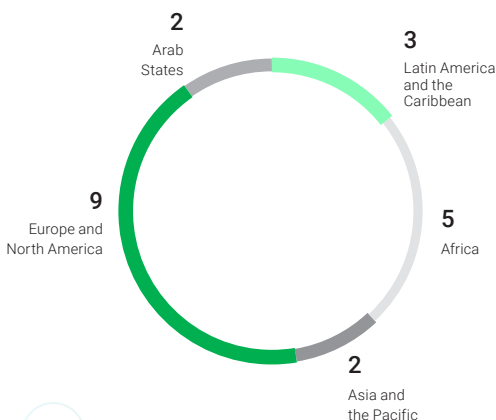
5.1. Overview

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of urban-rural linkages (URL) across select countries, drawing on data from a survey and supplementary desk research (see annex 1 for individual country profiles). The analysis encompasses a total of 21 countries (fig 5.1). This geographic scope allows for a detailed understanding of how different regions perceive and address the complexities of urban-rural dynamics in the context of sustainable development.

The survey was designed to assess the recognition of urban-rural linkages as essential components in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also sought to evaluate countries' awareness and implementation of the UN-Habitat resolution on URL, which was adopted in 2019.

By analyzing the responses, this chapter sheds light on the progress made by various governments in recognizing and operationalizing this resolution within their national policies and programs.

Figure 2. Regional representation of the countries



The chapter also examines the existence and effectiveness of integrated policies, strategies, and frameworks designed to strengthen urban-rural linkages across multiple dimensions.

This includes evaluating how these frameworks address key areas such as food security, environmental sustainability, transportation infrastructure, and social equity.

By identifying these thematic aspects, the analysis reveals both challenges and opportunities present within the various national contexts.

Additionally, the chapter outlines core areas where UN-Habitat and related entities can provide essential support to enhance urban-rural linkages in each country. The findings underscore a critical need for capacity building, technical assistance, and cross-sectoral collaboration to effectively implement integrated urban-rural strategies. Such support is vital for fostering an enabling environment where urban and rural areas can thrive in synergy, ultimately contributing to more balanced and sustainable development outcomes.

By synthesizing these insights, this chapter aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders about effective practices and innovative opportunities for leveraging urban-rural linkages in pursuit of sustainable development.

The findings are intended to serve as a resource for countries looking to enhance their urban-rural strategies and to foster greater collaboration between urban and rural sectors, ensuring that the benefits of sustainable development are accessible to all. Through this analysis, the chapter aspires to catalyse further dialogue and initiatives that prioritize the interconnectedness of urban and rural areas in achieving holistic and inclusive development goals.

5.2. *Urban-rural linkages and the sustainable development goals*

An analysis of urban-rural linkages (URL) reveals a broad consensus among countries regarding their crucial role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, both *Algeria* and the *United States* consider these linkages essential for achieving all 17 SDGs, reflecting a comprehensive approach to integrating urban-rural dynamics into their national development strategies. Meanwhile, countries such as *Finland*, *Nigeria*, and *Moldova* identify URL as contributing significantly to 11 specific SDGs, suggesting a focused yet impactful integration of urban and rural priorities.

In contrast, *Eswatini*, *Serbia*, and *Zimbabwe* perceive the impact of urban-rural linkages primarily in relation to SDG 11, which emphasizes sustainable cities and communities. This narrower focus may limit the potential for leveraging URL to facilitate broader developmental outcomes.

This suggests a need for tailored approaches that recognize varying contexts and priorities.

Most countries emphasize the significance of strengthening urban-rural linkages for achieving SDG 11.





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This goal is particularly relevant as it explicitly addresses urban-rural interactions essential for fostering sustainable development. Following SDG 11, SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) are also identified as key areas where urban-rural linkages play a vital role.

However, the acknowledgment of urban-rural linkages in contributing to other critical goals, such as SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequality), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 1 (No Poverty), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), remains limited. This indicates an opportunity for countries to further explore and utilize URL strategies in addressing these important areas, potentially enhancing their overall developmental effectiveness.

Moreover, contributions to SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and 14 (Life Below Water) were recognized by only a small fraction of the responding countries, highlighting a significant gap in the perceived relevance of urban-rural linkages to these specific goals.

While there is widespread recognition of the importance of urban-rural linkages in achieving various SDGs, the extent of this recognition varies considerably among countries. This variability underscores the need for deeper exploration into how different contexts leverage URL to enhance developmental outcomes and emphasizes the importance of developing tailored strategies that effectively integrate urban and rural priorities within the SDG framework. Addressing these differences can lead to more comprehensive and effective approaches to sustainable development.

Figure 3. Countries acknowledging importance of strengthening URL in advancing Sustainable Development Goals



5.3. The UN Habitat assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages

In 2019, UN Member States adopted a resolution aimed at enhancing urban-rural linkages (URL) to promote the integration of these linkages into development planning policies and processes. This resolution is designed to strengthen the economic, social, and environmental connections among urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, recognizing the critical role these linkages play in sustainable urbanization.

As part of this initiative, the resolution mandates UN-Habitat to provide support to Member States through various means, including technical assistance, capacity development, the creation of tools, and advocacy efforts.

Since the adoption of the resolution, UN-Habitat has actively engaged in multiple efforts to promote urban-rural linkages on a global scale. However, an analysis of awareness regarding the resolution reveals that 12 out of the 21 surveyed countries reported a lack of knowledge about the URL resolution, while nine (9) countries acknowledged their awareness of it.

For example, Algeria recognized the resolution and highlighted several policy reforms to integrate urban-rural linkages into national urban policies, focusing on areas such as energy, food, biodiversity, and climate.



Gobi scenery in Jiuqua, Algeria © Adobestock

Countries also adopted laws and decrees to support these linkages. Other countries that expressed awareness of the resolution and its importance include the *Czech Republic, Finland, Honduras, Mauritius, Nigeria, Serbia, the United States, and Zimbabwe*. On the other hand, Colombia did not explicitly express awareness of the UN-Habitat resolution, but it has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen urban-rural linkages, including the Housing and Habitat Law 2079 of 2020 and the Cities System Policy (Conpes 3819 of 2014), which promotes intermediary cities as hubs for regional development and urban-rural linkages. Other countries, such as the *Lithuania, Moldova, the Philippines, Zambia, and Israel*, have also taken actions related to urban-rural linkages (Fig 5) despite limited awareness of the resolution.

This disparity highlights a significant opportunity for UN-Habitat and other stakeholders to intensify advocacy and outreach initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the URL resolution. By doing so, there is potential to enhance contributions toward its effective implementation and to promote the integration of urban-rural linkages in national and local development agendas.

The findings underscore the importance of bolstering outreach efforts to bridge the knowledge gap surrounding the URL resolution. Increasing awareness among Member States can lead to more robust policy frameworks and implementation strategies, ultimately fostering stronger urban-rural connections that are essential for achieving sustainable development goals.

Enhancing awareness is not merely a matter of knowledge transfer; it also paves the way for increased collaboration and synergy between urban and rural sectors, creating a more integrated and cohesive approach to development planning.

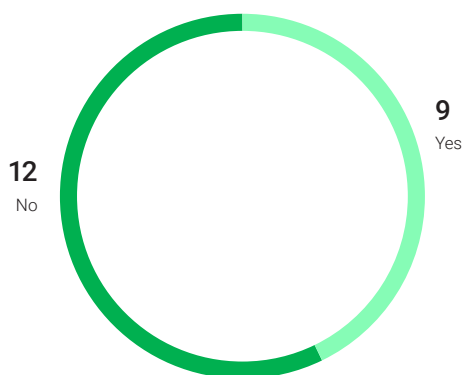


Figure 4. Awareness of URL Resolution among Countries

■ 5.4. *Thematic focus of urban rural linkages*

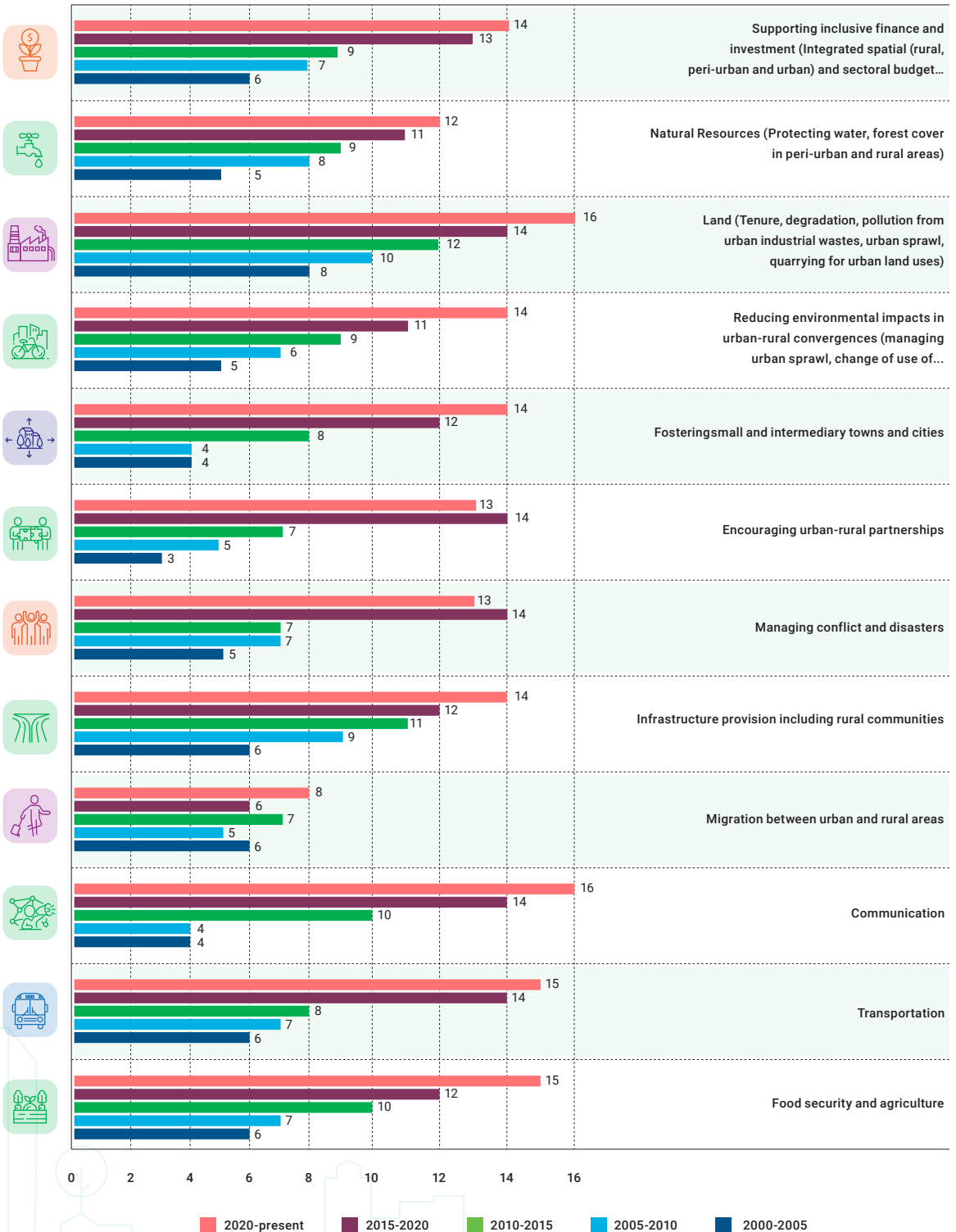
The thematic dimensions assessed in the preparation of this report included food security and agriculture, transportation, communication, migration, infrastructure, conflicts and disasters, intermediary cities, environmental issues, land, natural resources, and inclusive finance. The evolution of countries' focus on these thematic dimensions of urban-rural linkages was tracked over time, from 2000 through the post-2020 period. Overall, there has been a positive trajectory in the level of attention

countries have given to these themes, as illustrated in Figure 5.

For instance, food security and agriculture were the focus of only six out of the 21 countries between 2000 and 2005, but this increased significantly to 15 countries post-2020. A more pronounced shift is observed in the communication sector, where only four countries reported prioritizing it between 2000 and 2005, compared to 16 countries post-2020.



Figure 5. Urban Rural Aspects considered by Countries, 2000 to 2022



During the critical period following the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and before the COVID-19 pandemic (2015-2020), all thematic sectors were the focus of over 10 out of the 21 countries, except for managing conflicts and disasters. Urban-rural partnerships received significant attention from most countries during the period (2015-2020), but interest declined somewhat post-2020.

The thematic areas that received the most attention from countries post-2020 include food security and agriculture, transportation, infrastructure, intermediary cities, environmental issues, and inclusive finance. Land and communication were the most prominent themes, receiving substantial focus from most of the countries post-2020 period.

The observed shifts in thematic focus across countries underscore the growing recognition of urban-rural linkages as critical components of sustainable development. The increased attention to food security, agriculture, communication, and infrastructure post-2020, especially in the context of a post-pandemic recovery, highlights the interconnectedness of urban and rural areas in addressing global challenges such as climate change, economic instability, and social inequity. The rise in focus on communication, for instance, signals an understanding of the importance of digital connectivity in fostering urban-rural integration.

This is essential not only for improving service delivery and economic opportunities but also for enhancing resilience in the face of future crises. Similarly, the prioritization of food security and agriculture reflects a growing emphasis on sustainable food systems that bridge the urban-rural divide, ensuring that both urban centres and rural communities can thrive together. The increasing attention to intermediary cities and inclusive finance further demonstrates a shift toward promoting balanced regional development, recognizing that smaller urban hubs play a key role in linking rural and urban economies. By focusing on these themes, countries are making strides in addressing the root causes of migration, poverty, and regional disparities, fostering more inclusive and resilient growth.

However, the relatively lower focus on managing conflicts and disasters, particularly post-2020, raises concerns. As climate change worsens natural disasters and geopolitical tension heightens conflicts, strengthening urban-rural linkages in disaster management will become increasingly critical. The disparity in thematic focus suggests that while progress is being made in several areas, there are still gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that urban-rural linkages are fully integrated into national and regional development strategies.



Overall, the evolving focus on thematic dimensions of urban-rural linkages indicates positive strides, but it also highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach. Countries need to continue aligning their strategies with global frameworks like the SDGs, while also addressing emerging challenges such as conflict, disaster, and climate-related disruptions to ensure sustainable and resilient urban-rural systems in the future.

5.5. Approaches taken to strengthen urban-rural linkages

Several countries have taken significant steps to enhance the relationship between urban and rural areas, following the implementation of the urban-rural linkages resolution. These measures have been implemented through various approaches (figure 9), including political reforms aimed at strengthening the connection between urban and rural areas. Part of the reforms include an integration of urban-rural linkages into policies that promote sustainable development, such as national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, and climate and resilient infrastructure. Another approach has been the enhancing

capacity of national, sub-national, and other stakeholders to improve their understanding of urban-rural linkages. Furthermore, some countries have implemented laws and decrees while for some countries, there has been the development of specific visions and strategies that focus on urban-rural linkages or include provisions that address these linkages in a significant way. Up to 12 out of the 21 countries have been promoting political reforms and six have adopted laws to support implementation of URLs demonstrating the relevance of creating an enabling environment via policy and legal framework.

Figure 6. Approaches taken to strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages

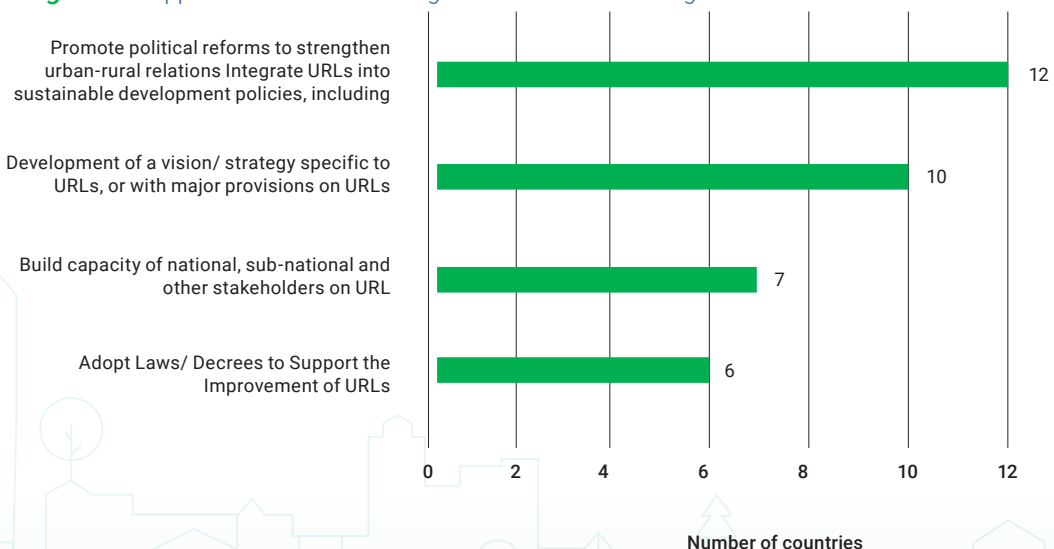
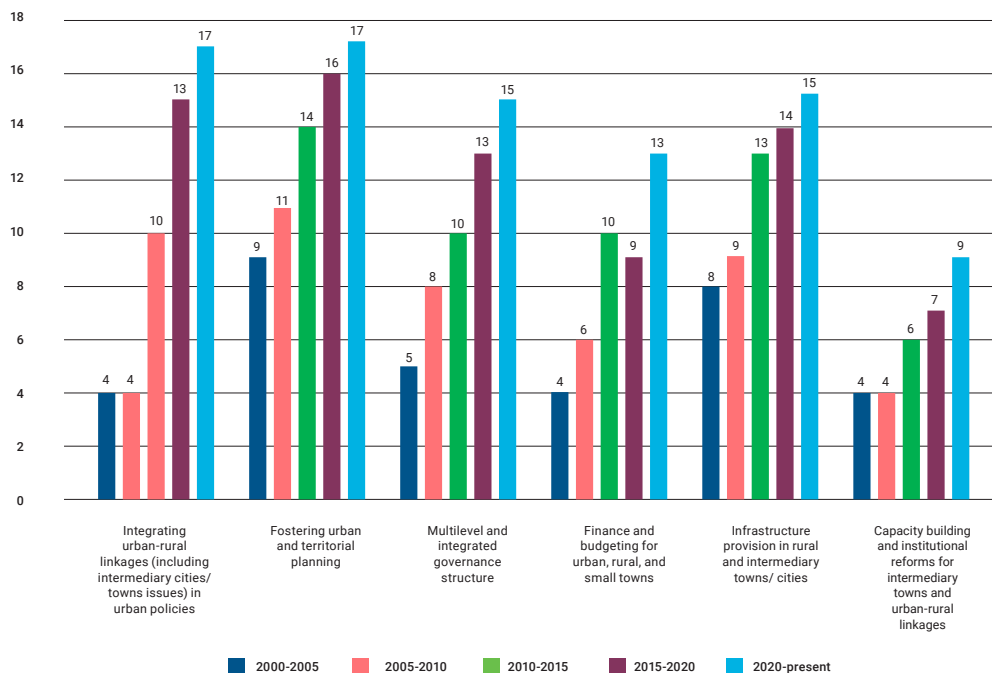


Figure 7. Timeline of actions taken to strengthen Urban Rural Linkages since the beginning of the millennium



The actions taken by countries to strengthen urban-rural linkages include integrating these linkages into national urban policies, fostering urban and territorial planning, implementing multi-level and integrated governance, securing financing and budgeting, providing infrastructure, and carrying out capacity building and institutional reforms. Most of these actions have shown an upward trend over time (figure n). Notably, the integration of urban-rural linkages into urban policies and the fostering of urban and territorial planning have been undertaken by most countries, particularly in the post-2020 period. Multi-level governance and infrastructure provision have also been prominent, with 15 countries adopting these actions during the same period.

One striking example is the increase in the number of countries incorporating urban-rural linkages into their urban policies, rising from just four countries between 2000 and 2005 to 16 out of 21 countries post-2020. During the period following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) but before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a general rise in all actions except for financing and budgeting, where there was a drop from 10 countries to eight (8). However, this trend reversed post-2020, with 13 countries taking up financing and budgeting initiatives.

Despite these positive developments, capacity building and institutional reforms have consistently seen the least engagement across all periods, signalling a gap that could

be effectively addressed by UN-Habitat and its partners. While infrastructure provision, urban and territorial planning, and capacity building have steadily risen since 2010, this increase has been relatively modest compared to the period before 2010.

The trends highlighted in these actions reveal an encouraging global effort to prioritize urban-rural linkages in recent years, particularly in national policies, planning, and infrastructure development. This focus aligns with the growing recognition that stronger urban-rural connections are essential for balanced and sustainable development, especially in addressing issues such as food security, migration, and environmental challenges. The marked increase in post-2020 actions also indicates that countries are aligning their strategies with global frameworks like the SDGs and NUA.

However, the relatively low engagement in capacity building and institutional reforms poses a challenge. Without investing more in human and institutional capacities, the sustainability and effectiveness of these actions could be undermined. This gap provides an opportunity for organizations like UN-Habitat to step in, providing the necessary resources and support to enhance countries' capabilities in managing and optimizing urban-rural linkages.

Moreover, the temporary decline in financing and budgeting actions before the pandemic highlights the critical need for sustained financial mechanisms to support urban-rural initiatives. The post-2020 resurgence in this area is promising, but it underscores the importance of ensuring stable, long-term funding to maintain progress and address future challenges.

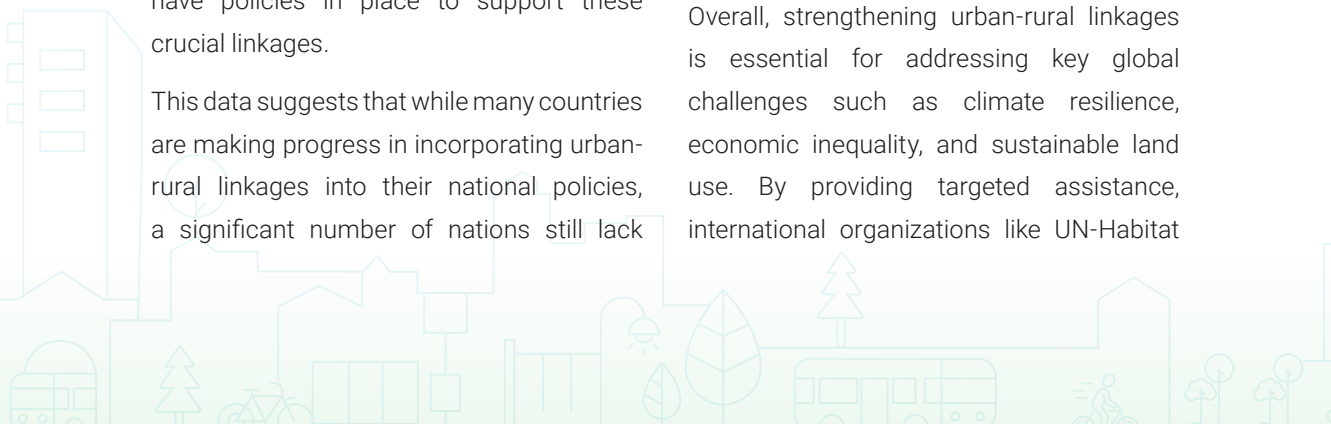
5.6. *Policies and strategies addressing urban-rural linkages*

16 out of 21 countries have policies that actively support urban-rural linkages, demonstrating recognition given to the importance of fostering connections between urban and rural areas for balanced development. However, four countries, nearly a fifth of those surveyed, do not yet have policies in place to support these crucial linkages.

This data suggests that while many countries are making progress in incorporating urban-rural linkages into their national policies, a significant number of nations still lack

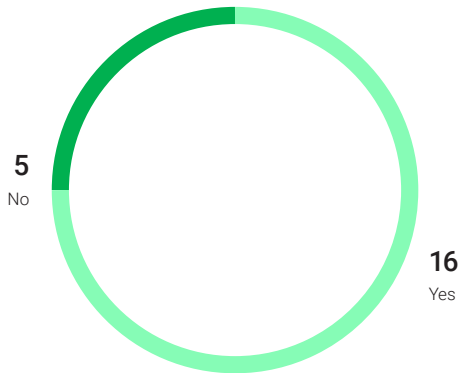
formal frameworks to guide and enhance these connections. Without policies that explicitly address urban-rural linkages, these countries may miss out on key opportunities for integrated development that could address challenges like food security, rural poverty, infrastructure.

Overall, strengthening urban-rural linkages is essential for addressing key global challenges such as climate resilience, economic inequality, and sustainable land use. By providing targeted assistance, international organizations like UN-Habitat



can play a pivotal role in closing these gaps and ensuring that all countries can leverage the full potential of urban-rural linkages for sustainable development.

Figure 8. Countries with policies addressing urban rural linkages



The examples from Israel, Honduras, Zimbabwe, and the Philippines showcase the diverse ways countries are tackling urban-rural challenges through innovative policies and initiatives. These countries demonstrate that effective urban-rural linkages can lead to tangible benefits, such as shared employment zones, improved infrastructure, and more sustainable land use.

In Israel, the Western Galilee regional plan—conducted between 2020-2022, serves as a pioneering effort in strengthening urban-rural ties. The plan connected four cities—Acre, Nahariya, Ma'alot Tarshikha, and Shlomi—as well as two regional authorities that encompass 14 rural, Arab, and Druze local authorities. This initiative was groundbreaking in its integration of land and sea spaces, a first for Israel.

The plan resulted in the creation of around 60 joint ventures centered on research and development, renewable energy, and transportation infrastructure.

Importantly, it introduced joint employment zones and provided spatial solutions in critical areas such as waste management and energy. Honduras is similarly advancing its urban-rural linkage efforts through the implementation of Land Use Plans in the municipalities of the Sula Valley, including the cities of San Pedro Sula and the Central District. These plans aim to balance land use between urban centers and rural areas, fostering more integrated development.



San Pedro Sula, Honduras © Adobestock

Zimbabwe has also demonstrated its commitment to urban-rural linkages through the implementation of two major policies: the *Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy* and the *Presidential Rural Development Programme*. Both policies focus on creating synergies between urban growth and rural development to promote inclusive national progress.

In *Philippines*, the *National Urban Development and Housing Framework (NU DHF 2017–2022)* emphasized spatially and sectorally integrated settlements within coherent urban systems. Building on that foundation, the *Philippine Development*

Plan 2023–2028 mainstreams livable communities, compact growth and resilient infrastructure, while the *Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD)* recognizes local government units (LGUs) as primary implementers of housing, land-use and climate-resilient urban-rural linkages—aligning national policy, finance and technical support to enable LGUs to coordinate housing, transport, markets and peri-urban safeguards across city-regions.

The framework acknowledges that LGUs play a pivotal role in bridging urban and rural areas, fostering more sustainable and equitable development.



This traditional Filipino village and its road showcase the Philippines' emphasis on local governments driving integrated urban-rural linkages © Adobestock

5.7. *Policies fostering intermediary cities*

Intermediary cities, which are typically surrounded by vast rural areas, play a transformative role in enhancing urban-rural linkages.

As rapid urbanization continues, the significance of these cities in bridging the urban-rural continuum is increasing exponentially. Strengthening the capacity of intermediary cities is crucial to mitigating the negative social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with large, rapidly expanding urban agglomerations. These cities serve as vital hubs, improving access to infrastructure, services, food systems, health, and fostering institutional innovations that benefit both urban and rural populations.

Ten (10) out of the 21 countries have specific policies and strategies aimed at enhancing the role of intermediary cities in strengthening urban-rural linkages. This demonstrates a growing recognition of their importance in achieving balanced regional development and addressing urbanization pressures. However, the fact that only half of the countries have adopted such policies highlights a significant gap that needs to be addressed.

Intermediary cities, which act as crucial nodes in connecting rural and urban areas, remain underutilized in many regions, limiting their potential to distribute economic growth more equitably and reduce the strain on major metropolitan centres.

To close this gap, there is a pressing need for more countries to develop targeted strategies that empower intermediary cities. These strategies should focus on improving infrastructure, enhancing public services, and fostering economic opportunities that are integrated across urban-rural continuums.

Additionally, intermediary cities must be supported in enhancing local governance capacities to manage rapid urbanization while simultaneously promoting rural development.

This dual focus ensures that these cities can act as bridges, not only facilitating the movement of people, goods, and services but also ensuring that rural areas are not left behind in the process of national development.

International development organizations and national governments should also prioritize investment in intermediary cities, offering technical assistance and financial resources to help them fulfil their roles. By scaling up investments in intermediary cities, countries can promote more sustainable urbanization patterns, reduce migration pressures on larger urban centres, create opportunities for more equitable distribution of resources, services and create more resilient regional economies. Further, fostering urban-rural linkages through these cities can enhance food security, improve access to health and education services in rural areas, and



facilitate climate adaptation strategies that benefit both urban and rural populations.

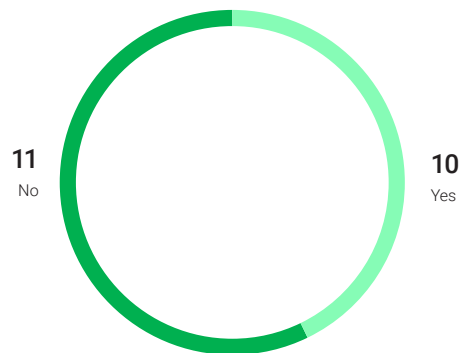
Overall, enhancing the role of intermediary cities is not just about improving local infrastructure and services; it is a strategic move towards more sustainable, inclusive, and balanced development on a national scale. It ensures that rural areas are not left behind in the race towards sustainable urbanization and helps countries contribute to the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

For instance, *Finland's "Seutukaupunkiohjelman"* program supports intermediary towns and cities through voluntary development, contractual partnerships, and network development among regional cities. Similarly, Romania's Urban Policy emphasizes tailored strategies for smaller, less competitive towns, acknowledging their unique challenges in becoming sustainable and competitive cities. *Israel's Ashkelon Regional Plan (2018-2020)* successfully connected five cities and 11 rural towns through a comprehensive regional master plan, promoting economic hubs and planning agricultural and development areas up to 2050.

The *Philippines' National Housing and Urban Development Sector Plan 2040* includes key programs such as the Metropolitan Development Program and Transit-Oriented Development, both aimed at fostering the development of intermediary cities with a focus on compact urban forms, mixed land use, and social equity.

Algeria has also taken steps to enhance the urban-rural continuum by revising its National Territorial Development Plan and urban planning laws. It is also creating new urban towns and intermediary satellite cities to promote stronger ties between urban and rural areas, while providing social housing, particularly in rural regions.

Figure 9. Countries with policies to enhance intermediary cities



5.8. Governance of urban-rural linkages

At different government levels, several countries continue developing and implementing policies, strategies and frameworks to enhance urban-rural linkages. This could be attributed to the ongoing advocacy, technical support and other global processes fostering urban-rural linkages for sustainable development. The survey analyzed the existence of diverse thematic policies relevant for urban-rural linkages across various government levels. These themes include food security, urban and territorial planning, transportation infrastructure, internal migration, disaster management, conflict management, environmental management, communication and ICT, protection of catchment areas and urban sprawl, land

tenure, and inclusive finance and investment.

For all the thematic areas covered, between 13 and 19 countries indicated presence of national-level policies supporting urban-rural linkages reflecting a strong focus at the national government level. However, at the subnational level, between 5 and 13 countries reported having policies or frameworks in place, indicating a moderate degree of decentralization in URL policy development.

At the local level, fewer than 5 countries have policies in place for any given thematic area, pointing to a significant gap in local-level governance and capacity for fostering urban-rural linkages. Below is a detailed description of each thematic area covered:



Food Security: Food security is one of the most prevalent themes, with 15 national governments and 18 subnational/regional governments having policies in place. However, local governments have fewer policies (9), and two (2) countries reported that no policies exist in this area. This suggests that while higher-level governments are taking significant action on food security, there is a need for greater local-level involvement and action to ensure that these policies translate into tangible impacts on the ground.



Urban and Territorial Planning: Urban and territorial planning sees significant attention from both national (16) and subnational/regional governments (18), indicating a strong focus on spatial organization at these levels. Only 9 local governments have policies in place, reflecting a challenge in decentralizing urban and territorial planning responsibilities. The absence of policies at the local level can limit the effective implementation of these plans.





Transportation Infrastructure (urban-rural): This theme shows a well-distributed engagement, with 14 national governments and 16 subnational/regional governments having policies, while nine (9) local governments also participate in this domain. However, the gap at the local level may limit the seamless integration of urban-rural transportation networks, emphasizing the need for more localized planning and implementation.



Internal Migration (urban-rural): Policies addressing internal migration from rural to urban areas are somewhat limited, with only 10 national governments and 9 subnational/regional governments having policies in place. The local level shows even less attention (5), with eight (8) governments reporting no policy. Given the growing pressures of rural-to-urban migration, this gap highlights a critical area for policy development to manage migration flows and support balanced regional development.



Disaster Management: There is uneven policy development for disaster management in urban-rural contexts. National governments (11) and subnational/regional governments (13) are somewhat active in this area, but local governments (5) lag significantly. This could be problematic as local governments are typically on the front line of disaster response and mitigation, highlighting the need for greater local capacity-building in disaster management.



Conflict Management: Conflict management policies show a marked gap across all government levels. Only five (5) national governments, five (5) subnational/regional governments, and four (4) local governments have policies in place. This suggests that conflict management, especially as it pertains to urban-rural tensions or disputes, remains an underdeveloped area. Given the importance of stable urban-rural relations for social cohesion, this is a key area that requires further policy attention.



Environmental Management in Urban-Rural Areas: Many national governments (13) and subnational/regional governments (12) have developed policies on environmental management, but only seven (7) local governments have corresponding policies. This gap at the local level could hinder the effective implementation of environmental protection and sustainability initiatives, as many environmental challenges require localized responses.





Communication and ICT: Policies related to communication and information and communication technology (ICT) are present in 19 national governments, 17 subnational/regional governments, and 11 local governments. This suggests a strong recognition of the importance of ICT for fostering urban-rural linkages, but local governments still require more support to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas.



Protection of Catchment Areas & Urban Sprawl: Policies on protecting catchment areas and managing urban sprawl show moderate attention at the national (17) and subnational/regional (13) levels but are less common at the local level (9). Urban sprawl is often most acutely felt at the local level, so increasing local government participation in this policy domain could enhance urban planning outcomes and environmental sustainability.



Land Tenure, Degradation, Pollution, and Urban Sprawl: This theme exhibits solid policy engagement from national governments (17) and subnational/regional governments (13), but only nine (9) local governments have policies in this area. Local-level engagement in land tenure and pollution control is crucial, as these issues often require place-based interventions.



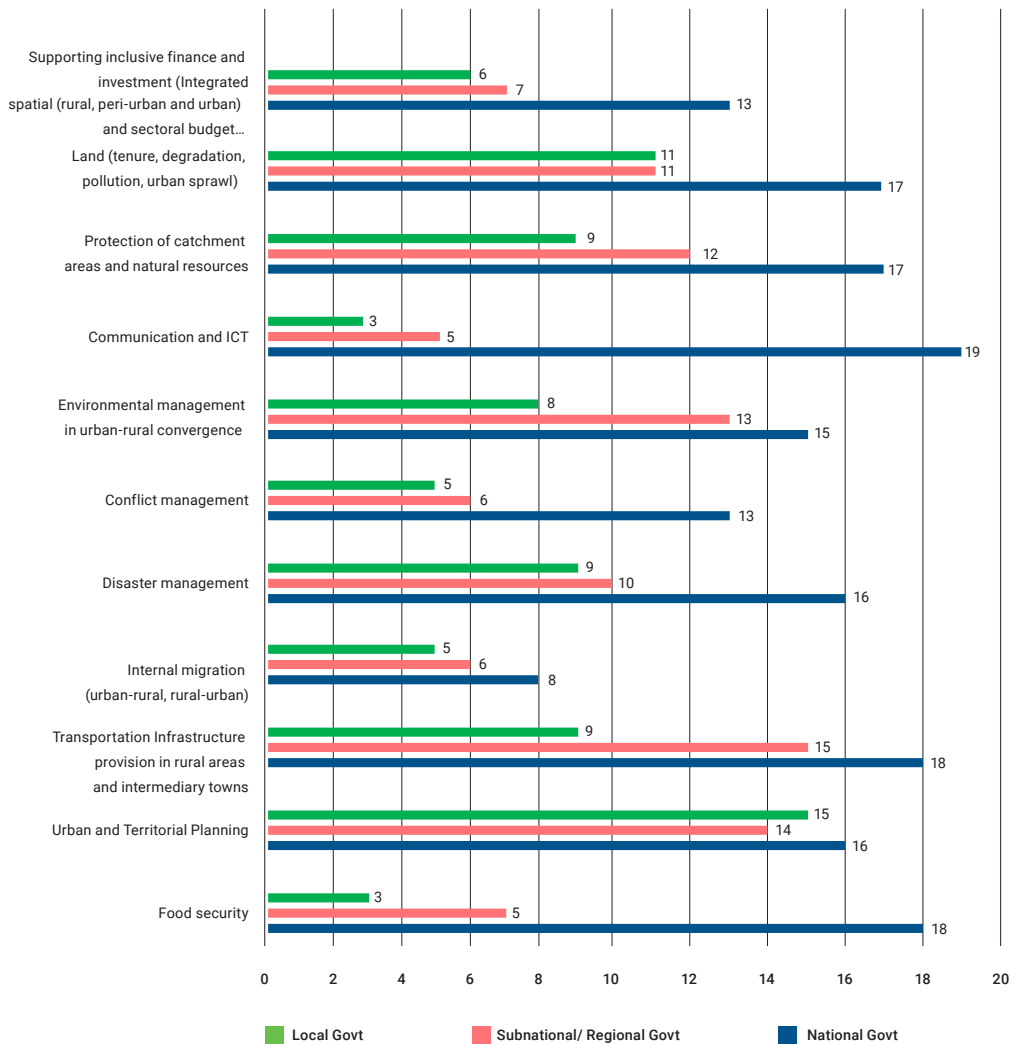
Supporting Inclusive Finance and Investment: While national governments (17) and subnational/regional governments (13) are active in promoting inclusive finance and investment, local governments (7) show significantly less involvement. Inclusive finance, particularly in rural areas, is critical for fostering economic growth and development, and more localized financial policies could enhance economic inclusion.

Most policy themes, including food security, urban planning, and communication/ICT, have strong engagement from national and subnational/regional governments. However, local governments consistently lag, suggesting a need for decentralized policymaking and capacity building at the local level. Across almost all themes, local governments have fewer policies in place, which may limit the effectiveness of national and regional strategies, particularly in areas such as disaster management, conflict resolution, and land tenure.

Strengthening local policy frameworks is crucial for addressing issues that require localized responses. Internal migration, conflict management, and inclusive finance are areas that show relatively limited policy attention across all government levels. These are critical domains where enhanced policy focus could lead to more equitable and balanced urban-rural development.



Figure 10. Relevant thematic policies at different governance levels



Lithuania has relevant policies exclusively at the national level, indicating a centralized approach to urban-rural linkages. In contrast, countries like *Algeria, Azerbaijan, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Eswatini, Honduras, Israel, Mauritius, Moldova, Romania, the United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe* have established relevant policies at both national and subnational levels, reflecting a relatively more decentralized

effort in addressing these linkages. However, local-level policies are limited in these countries, which could indicate one of two possibilities: either there is strong local-level implementation of national or subnational policies, or there is a significant gap in policymaking at the local level.

Finland has policies at all governance levels, particularly in urban and territorial planning, environmental management, and land and

natural resources protection, ensuring a comprehensive approach across national, subnational, and local levels. Similarly, *Nigeria and the Philippines* also have policies at all levels of governance, however environmental issues is the only thematic area consistently covered across all three tiers of government.

Serbia has prioritized planning and infrastructural issues, establishing policies at every level of governance for these areas, showcasing a robust commitment to fostering urban-rural connectivity. Meanwhile, some of *Sudan's* policies are on internal migration and conflict management at the national level, necessitating strong multi-level governance for effective local implementation.

Sweden takes a multi-level approach, with policies at all governance levels for urban and territorial planning, transportation infrastructure in rural areas, disaster management, and environmental management. However, at the national level, policies are more focused on food security and conflict management. *Chile* has a dedicated Department for Rural Development, with a National Rural Development Policy ¹²⁵.

This policy not only defines the roles of each governance level but also includes 54 guidelines aimed at improving the quality of life and increasing opportunities for rural inhabitants, demonstrating a comprehensive framework for rural development across all levels of government.

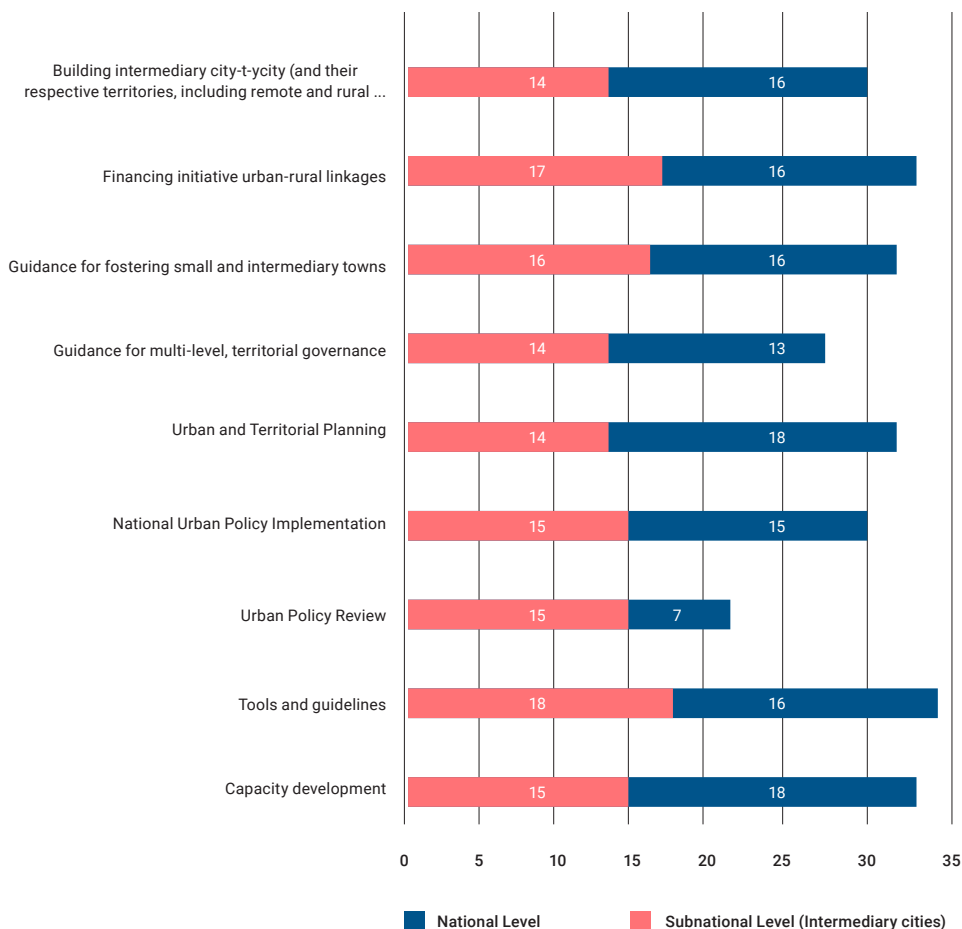


A tramway reflects Sweden's multi-level approach to urban and territorial planning, extending even to transportation infrastructure that connects urban centers with broader regions © Adobestock

¹²⁵ Chile. (2020). National Rural Development Policy. Supreme Decree No. 19 of 5 May 2020. Ministry of the Interior and Public Security. <https://www.odepa.gob.cl/dpto-desarrollo-rural/politica-nacional-de-desarrollo-rural>.

5.9. Requests for assistance on urban-rural linkages

Figure 11. Needs of Countries to strengthen urban-rural linkages at national and subnational levels



This section provides critical insights into the thematic areas where countries require support to enhance urban-rural linkages, distinguishing between national and subnational governance levels. A significant emphasis is placed on building *intermediary city-to-city linkages*, with 14 countries identifying this need at the national level and 16 at the subnational level.

This highlights the essential role of intermediary cities in connecting rural areas to urban centres, particularly in the context of enhancing accessibility and resource sharing.

Financing initiatives for urban-rural linkages emerge as a crucial area, with 17 countries indicating a need for support at the national level and 16 at the subnational level.

The balanced demand across both governance tiers underscores that adequate financial mechanisms are vital for the successful implementation of urban-rural integration strategies.

There is also a strong emphasis on *guidance for fostering small and intermediary towns*, as 16 countries recognize its importance at both levels.

This suggests that enhancing the capacity and development of these towns is viewed as pivotal in achieving sustainable urban-rural integration, as they serve as vital hubs for local economies and services.

The theme of *multi-level territorial governance* is highlighted, with 14 countries expressing this need at the national level compared to 13 at the subnational level.

This indicates a recognition of the necessity for coordinated governance frameworks that align policies and efforts across different levels to facilitate effective urban-rural development.

The data reveals a greater demand for *urban and territorial planning* support at the subnational level (18 countries) compared to the national level (14 countries).

This suggests that *local authorities are seeking tailored planning frameworks to better address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by their contexts*. Equal attention is given to *national urban policy implementation*, with 15 countries needing assistance at both governance levels. This shared emphasis suggests that successful urban-rural linkages depend on collaborative efforts to translate national policies into effective local actions.



Nepali local residents engaging in planning discussions © UN-Habitat

The need for *urban policy review* is more pronounced at the national level, where 15 countries indicated a requirement for support, contrasted with just seven (7) at the subnational level. This disparity suggests that while national governments are focusing on revising and updating policies to reflect current urban-rural dynamics, subnational entities may be more focused on implementing existing frameworks.

Both governance levels show a high demand for *tools and guidelines*, with 18 countries requiring assistance at the national level and 16 at the subnational level. This reflects a consensus on the necessity for practical methodologies to effectively implement urban-rural strategies.

Lastly, *capacity development* emerges as a significant focus area, with 15 countries highlighting this need at the national level and 18 at the subnational level.

The greater emphasis on capacity development at the subnational level indicates the need for strengthening local governance structures and resources, crucial for the effective execution of urban-rural linkage strategies.

The insights from the survey illustrate a comprehensive need for support across various thematic areas to strengthen urban-rural linkages, particularly emphasizing the role of intermediary cities. Both national and subnational levels require collaborative efforts, especially in financing, urban planning, and capacity building, to achieve sustainable urban-rural development. The findings underscore the importance of integrated approaches that facilitate resilient urban-rural connections, ensuring that both levels of governance play their respective roles in fostering development that benefits diverse communities.





06

Key Messages and Strategic Pathways for Advancing Urban-Rural Linkages

The fundamental interdependence between urban and rural areas is as old as human settlements, yet the relations between urban and rural communities and their management in today's governance systems are complex and mostly separated. It is important to note that the essential interdependence of urban and rural areas has been upheld in resolutions and global agendas (Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda) for sustainable urbanization by UN-Habitat and more recently by all Member States of the United Nations.¹²⁶

On the one hand, the report shows the persistent challenges of the urban-rural divide, while there are bright spots and windows of opportunity to further advance urban-rural linkages. For example, the country responses and examples have shown several efforts at national and subnational levels to this end.

This report has analysed and presented key aspects of urban-rural linkages since the beginning of the millennium. Using country information from a survey of Member States, coupled with desk research as well as thematic articles from experts, the challenges, opportunities, trends and progress in strengthening urban-rural linkages have been presented to advance territorial development.

While the report highlights progress made and the positive examples from various countries, it also exposes a global gap in

attention to urban-rural linkages, evidenced by the limited survey responses from just 21 countries.

This limited geographic coverage of the responses underscores a low level of attention to urban-rural linkages. The experiences from countries' responses may not be fully representative, as urban-rural linkages are highly context-specific, varying significantly based on local socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors. Therefore, broader and deeper analysis will be necessary to capture the diverse ways in which urban and rural areas interact across different regions.

The introductory chapter provides the context for the rising importance of urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization. The fundamental question is asked: why do urban-rural linkages matter? The chapter unpacks the definition of urban-rural linkages with a comparison of perspectives from different organizations. Urban-rural linkages as an important issue has been recognized in global agendas such as the SDGs and NUA. Understanding the concept and the fundamental role of urban-rural linkages helps frame the discussion on how these influence various aspects of sustainable development. Despite inclusion in global agendas the data shows the need for integrated approaches to implementation of policy and planning to address the interactions between urban and rural communities and landscapes.

¹²⁶ UN-Habitat. (2022c). "Urban-Rural Linkages Handbook", 1 June, pp.3-7. Available at <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/URL-Handbook.pdf>.

The second chapter features a look at the changing landscape of urbanization, exploring global trends in the evolution of urban-rural linkages over nearly a half century.

A timeline of international URL milestones over this period shows the key global mandates, frameworks, events, agreements and resolutions that have shaped the understanding of the role of urban-rural linkages in efforts towards sustainable development. This historical perspective underscores both the ongoing articulation of urban-rural linkages as well the influence of the global mandates on how URLs are addressed at national and subnational levels. This understanding is crucial for policy makers and practitioners in order to align current strategies with past achievements at different levels and anticipate future trends.

The third chapter provides a examples of the broad thematic scope of urban-rural linkages from a holistic point of view and begins with an exploration of the socioeconomic and environmental aspects of urban-rural linkages. With inputs from colleagues expert in each thematic arena , the chapter provides perspectives from a selection of thematic entry-points, including governance, planning, food systems, climate change, SMART approaches, land administration, and governance, among others.

The chapter also has a summary of a case study exploring “beyond and between urban-rural linkages: key challenges and opportunities ahead”. This chapter reveals the multifaceted nature of urban-rural linkages and their impact on different sectors. Addressing these diverse aspects through targeted place-based strategies can enhance the effectiveness of the interventions and promote more sustainable and integrated development outcomes”.

Chapter four of the report presents data-driven insights into urban-rural dynamics at the country level. Using direct responses from countries to a questionnaire, the chapter features an analysis of the various thematic elements and priorities and a comparison of the development levels between urban and rural areas within the surveyed countries. Results from 21 surveyed countries indicate that these linkages are critical for economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability.

They play a crucial role in reducing geographical and gender inequalities, improving livelihoods, eradicating poverty, enhancing food security, promoting resilient territories and achieving sustainable development. The various country examples demonstrate the ongoing country efforts to enhance urban-rural linkages to reduce the urban-rural divide and, in turn, foster the territorial approach to development.



These examples show how urban-rural linkages are context-specific, from country to country, and this observation matches one of the conclusions of the recent research carried out by UN-Habitat and the University of Nairobi, titled “Urban-Rural Linkages and COVID-19 Lockdown Measures”.

This report features an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the flow of food systems along the transport corridor in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe. In addition, the country examples also show that the degree and effectiveness of these linkages vary significantly across regions and countries, emphasizing the need for context-specific policies, strategies and frameworks. This emphasizes the importance of context-specific policies to address the unique challenges and opportunities in different regions.

The variability in linkages across countries suggests that tailored approaches are needed to effectively bridge the urban-rural divide and support sustainable development.

This report has revealed that **a lot has been achieved for urban-rural linkages. However much more can be achieved with concerted efforts by all players in this Decade of Action and beyond.**

This report comes as an increasing number of United Nations and global actors are pushing for localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and territorial approaches to sustainable development. It is hoped that the report will be of value to policymakers and other stakeholders to further enhance their knowledge and capacity on how strengthening URLs will help achieve a more resilient future and quality of life for both urban and rural dwellers.

In the end, **the path to sustainable development lies in our ability to effectively leverage the synergies between urban and rural areas.**

The time is ripe for a **renewed focus on strengthening urban-rural linkages**, and this global report serves as a call to action for all stakeholders involved.



Below are policy recommendations for governments at all levels and all other urban-rural stakeholders:



Strengthen institutional frameworks



Promote integrated planning



Enhance infrastructure connectivity



Foster knowledge-sharing and capacity-building



Encourage community participation



Promote URL Climate Change & Resilient Strategic Actions



Increase investment



Monitor progress



Integrate youth in urban-rural development





Strengthen institutional frameworks: Governments should establish robust institutional frameworks to manage and enhance urban-rural linkages. This could include creating or redirecting dedicated departments or agencies, formulating comprehensive policies and legislation, and promoting cross-sectoral coordination. An example is the Niger state urban policy (box 13) adopted in 2022 explicitly outlines urban-rural linkages as a core policy component outlining specific policy actions.

Box 13. Niger State Urban Policy: Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages¹²⁷

The Niger State Urban Policy places a strong emphasis on enhancing urban-rural linkages to promote balanced and inclusive development across the state. It recognizes the importance of fostering connections between urban and rural areas for the equitable distribution of resources, services, and economic opportunities. The key focus areas are:



- » **Infrastructure Development:** The policy prioritizes improving transportation networks, including rural roads, to facilitate the smooth movement of goods and people between urban centers and rural communities. This reduces travel times, improves access to markets, and enhances service delivery.



- » **Agricultural Productivity:** By promoting agricultural modernization, the policy seeks to transform rural agriculture into a high-value sector, creating stronger market linkages between rural producers and urban consumers. This includes the development of agro-processing zones and increased access to urban markets for farmers.



- » **Economic Integration:** The policy supports the integration of rural economies with urban centers by encouraging investment in tourism, large-scale farming, and natural resource extraction. This helps create jobs and boosts rural incomes while reducing urban migration pressures.



- » **Service Delivery:** Emphasis is placed on improving access to essential services like healthcare, education, and clean water in rural areas by leveraging the improved infrastructure. This promotes a more balanced urban-rural development and reduces the disparities in service delivery.

¹²⁷ Adopted from - UN-Habitat 2021. Niger state urban policy: A road to transformation available at- <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/niger-state-urban-policy-a-roadmap-to-transformation/#:~:text=The%20overall%20goal%20of%20the,of%20economic%20prosperity%20and%20development.>



Promote integrated planning: Urban and rural development should not be planned in isolation. Integrated planning can lead to coordinated development and efficient use of resources. It can also help in mitigating the adverse effects of urbanization, such as urban sprawl and loss of agricultural land.

Box 14. Gauteng City-Region Integration for Prosperity¹²⁸

Gauteng, accounting for only 1.5 per cent of South Africa's territory, is the country's most densely populated region, with 12.3 million inhabitants representing a quarter of the national population. This diverse economy contributes over 35 per cent of the country's GDP and is characterized by four main polycentric conurbations. However, the legacy of apartheid has resulted in high levels of social exclusion, poverty, inequality, and spatial dislocation, compounded by declining industrial areas. In 2004, the Gauteng Provincial Government initiated the establishment of the *Gauteng City-Region (GCR)*, shifting from a sectorial to a territorial development approach. This involved the creation of an *Integrated Urban Planning Framework* aimed at fostering inclusive and resilient urban settlements through spatial integration. Some of the key achievement include:



- » **Collaborative Governance:** Consensus among public and private stakeholders has led to a unified agenda for promoting the GCR concept, attracting investments, and implementing transformative projects.



- » **Transport Infrastructure:** The Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan has enhanced transport planning, leading to the implementation of the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link and various Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems.



- » **Basic Service Access:** Access to basic services has improved, even amidst rapid population growth, highlighting progress towards sustainable development.



- » **Support for the Informal Economy:** Increased investment in the informal sector, with a procurement budget allocation rising from 5 per cent to 30 per cent, and initiatives to empower township enterprises.

¹²⁸ Gauteng city-region page accessed on 22 December 2024 at <https://gcro.ac.za/about/the-gauteng-city-region/>



Enhance infrastructure connectivity: Improved infrastructure connectivity, especially transport and digital infrastructure, can significantly enhance urban-rural linkages. It can facilitate the flow of goods, services and information, leading to economic and social benefits. Furthermore, implement green instead of grey infrastructures and design hybrid and green/ecological/natural infrastructures that support people's processes along the urban-rural continuum creating robust networks.

Box 15. Enhancing Rural-Urban Connectivity in Asia: The Vientiane Declaration and Its Impact¹²⁹

In Asia, where over 47 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, poor infrastructure and food insecurity are major barriers to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognizing the importance of rural-urban connectivity for economic development and climate resilience, the *Vientiane Declaration on Sustainable Rural Transport* was adopted in 2017 by the *Asian Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST)* countries. This declaration commits to environmentally and socially sustainable rural transport improvements to support better access to markets, services, and resources. The key initiatives include:



» **Infrastructure Projects:** Countries like Afghanistan, Nepal, and the Russian Federation have implemented projects that enhance rural road networks, while India's Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has constructed 787,810 km of rural roads by 2022, improving livelihoods and promoting rural development.



» **Policy Actions:** Nations such as Bhutan, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam have developed policies and long-term plans to ensure sustained rural connectivity.

The results can be outlined as:

- » Increased access to markets and social services.
- » Significant improvements in agricultural productivity, education, and healthcare.
- » Enhanced resilience to climate change impacts and natural disasters.

129 UN-Habitat 2023. Third edition of the compendium of case studies on urban-rural linkages (page 94-100) available at- <https://unhabitat.org/compendium-of-inspiring-practices-on-urban-rural-linkages-implementation-of-guiding-principles-0#:~:text=The%20third%20edition%20of%20the,America%2C%20and%20the%20Middle%20East.>



Foster knowledge-sharing and capacity-building: Encourage the exchange of knowledge, best practices and innovative solutions through global platforms such as the International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages. Invest in capacity-building to equip local communities, policymakers and practitioners with the necessary skills and knowledge. An example is capacity building workshops by UN-Habitat and partners using available resources, see box 16 for training of Nakuru County government officials.

Box 16. Enhancing Capacity of Nakuru County, Kenya Officials on Urban-Rural Linkages¹³⁰

In September 2024, subnational government officials from Nakuru County, Kenya, completed a two-day training on integrating urban-rural linkages for planning and development. Co-organized by UN-Habitat, the Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa (CURLA), and the Nakuru County Government, the training focused on strengthening the county's approach to sustainable development amid rapid urbanization and environmental challenges. Some outcomes include:



- » **Breaking Departmental Silos:** The training promoted closer collaboration across county departments, such as planning and environment, particularly in areas like solid waste management. Officials committed to integrating efforts across departments for more cohesive development strategies.



- » **Enhanced Policy and Planning Capacity:** Participants emphasized the need to incorporate urban-rural linkages into county plans, aligning with global frameworks such as the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. This will ensure more holistic planning that considers both urban and rural needs.



- » **Commitment to Climate Resilience and Biodiversity:** Officials recognized the importance of preserving Nakuru's rich natural resources and integrating climate resilience into development plans. This commitment is crucial given recent climate events, including flash floods impacting both urban and rural communities.



- » **Re-entry Plans for Practical Application:** Participants developed actionable re-entry plans to apply the knowledge gained from the training, committing to advancing the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) through enhanced urban-rural linkages.

¹³⁰ Capacity development workshop in Nakuru, Kenya press release available at- (Source)



Encourage community participation: Engage local communities in decision-making processes related to urban-rural linkages. Their insights and participation can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Some of the approaches include raising awareness through local and social media, building trust and relationships, creating inclusive participation mechanisms, using participatory tools, empowerment and cocreation, capacity building, leveraging technology and building long term partnerships. Technology could include digital tools and virtual engagement platforms to collect inputs from different groups (girls, women, boys, men, elderly, people with special abilities -so-called disable-, etc.).

Box 17. Participatory Planning in Cuenca, Ecuador¹³¹

Cuenca, the capital of the Province of Azuay, is the third largest city in Ecuador and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. It is a predominantly rural territory, with 21 Rural Parishes and 15 Urban Parishes, covering 376 neighbourhoods and a population of 596,101 inhabitants. Participation in Cuenca is meant to reduce the rural-urban gap, contribute to social inclusion and ensure environmental protection. For instance, the municipality takes care of including specific populations, such as the youth, and also transfers the budget considering the basic needs index. Cuenca implements a participatory planning approach that actively engaged both rural and urban communities in decision-making processes. Through local assemblies, public consultations, and participatory budgeting, the municipality empowers local stakeholders to shape policies on infrastructure, land use, and resource management. Key outcomes include improved rural-urban infrastructure, sustainable land use, and enhanced social cohesion. The creation of urban-rural planning committees ensures continuous dialogue, promoting balanced territorial development. This model has become a replicable example of inclusive urban-rural governance, contributing to more equitable and sustainable development.

¹³¹ International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), 2024. Participatory democracy processes (page 16-17) available at- https://learning.uclg.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/PLN37_Participatory-democracy-processes.pdf



Increase investment: Allocating sufficient financial resources is essential to strengthen these connections and support initiatives that promote collaboration between urban and rural areas. This can be achieved by exploring diverse funding sources, including national and subnational co-financing mechanisms that leverage government budgets to support local projects (see box 18). Furthermore, engaging the private sector can lead to significant investment opportunities, as businesses often have a vested interest in the sustainability of their surrounding communities. Public-private partnerships can facilitate innovative solutions by combining public funding and expertise with private sector efficiency and investment, ensuring that resources are effectively utilized. By strategically investing in these linkages, we can create a robust framework for implementing initiatives that not only benefit urban and rural areas but also address pressing challenges such as climate change, food security, and social inequality.

Box 18. China's Rural Revitalization Strategy¹³²

China's *Rural Revitalization Strategy* is a cornerstone of its national development plan, aimed at bridging the urban-rural divide, alleviating poverty, and improving rural livelihoods. Launched as part of the government's long-term agenda, the strategy has committed *trillions of yuan* over several years to transform rural areas through targeted infrastructure investment, public service enhancements, and integration with urban economies. Key initiatives include the construction of *road networks, water supply systems, and sanitation projects* in provinces like *Zhejiang* and *Guangdong*, where the government has invested heavily to improve connectivity and living standards in rural areas. Additionally, the development of *digital platforms* allows rural farmers to access urban markets more efficiently, enabling them to sell agricultural products directly to consumers in cities. This has boosted rural incomes and strengthened the economic links between urban and rural regions. The strategy also promotes *agricultural modernization* and *managed rural-urban migration*, ensuring that rural areas can thrive while reducing the pressures of over-urbanization. China's financial and policy commitment through this strategy underscores its focus on reducing urban-rural disparities and fostering balanced, sustainable development nationwide

¹³² Kalpit A Mankikar, "Decoding Rural Revitalisation, Xi Jinping's New Priority," Issue brief no. 574, September 2022, observer researcher foundation



Promote URL Climate Change & Resilient Strategic Actions: Along the urban rural continuum to support the increase of ecosystem services providing multiple functions. This approach recognizes that both urban and rural areas are interconnected and can work together to enhance environmental sustainability. By fostering collaboration between these regions, we can effectively support the delivery of multiple ecosystem functions, such as biodiversity conservation, water management, and carbon sequestration. Initiatives might include developing green infrastructure in urban areas that utilizes resources from surrounding rural landscapes, implementing agroecological practices that enhance food security while preserving natural habitats, and encouraging community-based projects that leverage local knowledge and resources. Beyond climate action, collaborations that also address biodiversity and land through integrated URLs, are in fact delivering on the mandates of the three Rio Conventions: UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD.

Box 19. Medellín's Metropolitan Green Belt Strategy¹³³

Medellín, Colombia, situated in the Aburrá Valley, faces significant challenges due to rapid urbanization and socioeconomic disparities among communities, especially in vulnerable areas prone to landslides and flooding. To address these issues, the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) planning strategy was launched in 2013. This holistic approach aims to preserve natural ecosystems while enhancing the quality of life for residents, particularly low-income communities. It is crucial for integrating urban and rural areas in Medellín, enhancing resilience against climate impacts while improving living conditions for vulnerable populations. The key components of this strategy are:

1. **Environmental Restoration:** The MGB focuses on restoring ecosystems, protecting archaeological heritage, and managing solid waste, aiming for a sustainable environment.
2. **Comprehensive Habitat Improvement:** This includes the relocation or construction of housing, as well as developing infrastructure such as schools and transport systems to connect rural communities with urban areas.

¹³³ UN-Habitat 2021. Second Compendium of inspiring practices on urban-rural linkages (page 119-124) available at: <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/compendium-of-inspiring-practices-2nd-edition/>

3. *Civic and Pedagogical Urbanism*: The strategy emphasizes social cohesion and cultural promotion through educational initiatives, workshops, and community engagement activities.

Impact and Progress:

- » Environmental Recovery: Initiatives aimed at ecological restoration and solid waste management are underway.
- » Housing and Infrastructure: Progress has been made in housing development and construction of public facilities, improving access for rural communities.
- » Community Engagement: The strategy promotes participation through educational programs and cultural events, fostering a sense of ownership among residents.



Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia © Adobestock



Integrate youth in urban-rural development: Youth are pivotal in strengthening urban-rural linkages due to their adaptability, innovative spirit, and potential to drive change across sectors. They play a central role in leveraging technology to bridge urban and rural divides, such as creating digital platforms that connect rural farmers with urban markets or improving access to education and healthcare through e-learning and telemedicine. As entrepreneurs, youth contribute to economic flows by establishing businesses like agri-tech startups, value-added food production, or eco-tourism ventures that utilize resources from both urban and rural areas. Their advocacy for sustainable practices and climate action fosters alignment between urban and rural stakeholders, addressing shared challenges like food security and environmental conservation.

Moreover, youth mobility, often between urban and rural regions for education or employment, facilitates the exchange of ideas, skills, and resources, enriching both ends of the spectrum. For example, youth-led initiatives in Kenya in section 4.12 of this report, such as growing high-iron beans to replace tobacco farming, demonstrate how young people can create sustainable livelihoods while strengthening food systems and improving health outcomes.



Monitor progress: Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented to strengthen urban-rural linkages. This will help in identifying areas of improvement and adjusting strategies as needed. To monitor and evaluate strategies for strengthening urban-rural linkages, it is essential to establish clear indicators, such as improved market access, job creation, and resource efficiency, and collect data through surveys, GIS mapping, and administrative records. For example, a strategy promoting local food systems can be monitored by tracking the increase in farmers' incomes and reduced urban food insecurity using baseline and end-line evaluations. Participatory approaches, such as community workshops, ensure stakeholders contribute to the process. Technology like dashboards and remote sensing can track land use changes or service accessibility, while frameworks like the SDGs and UN-Habitat's Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles guide progress alignment. Findings should be regularly reported to stakeholders, fostering adaptive management and continuous improvement.

ANNEXES

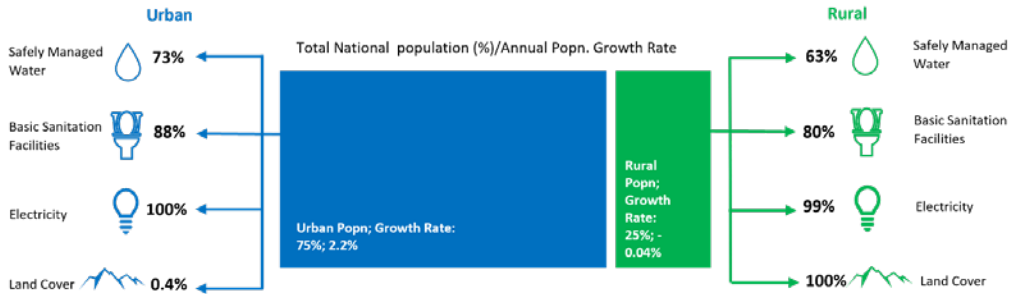


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Annex I: Country Profiles

Algeria

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Algeria acknowledges urban-rural linkages as vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Algeria expressed the awareness and recognition of the Resolution on urban-rural linkages adopted during the first UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019.
- Key Actions:**
 - Policy reforms to integrate urban-rural linkages in national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, and climate.
 - Adoption of laws and decrees to support urban-rural linkages.

Thematic Areas and Actions (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Key Actions
2000-2005	Food security, transportation, migration, disaster management, land use, and finance investment.	Urban and territorial planning prioritized.
2005-2010	Continued focus on rural infrastructure and natural resource protection.	Multilevel governance and infrastructure provision in rural/intermediary towns.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Key Actions
2010-2015	Small/intermediary towns and reducing environmental impacts.	Creation of road and rail links between urban-rural areas to improve connectivity.
2015-2020	Emphasizing urban-rural partnerships.	Capacity building for urban-rural governance and reforms for intermediary towns.
2020-Present	Rural housing, subdivision, and migration control measures, along with renewable energy integration (e.g., solar energy).	Continuation of previous actions with additional focus on intermediary towns, housing, and agricultural work promotion.

Relevant Sectoral Policies (2010-Present)

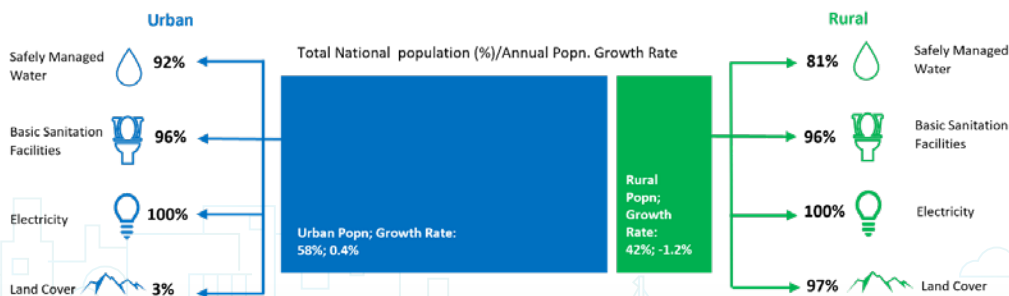
- Existing sectoral policies at national and subnational levels on urban and territorial planning, transport, environment, disaster management, and land management.
- Food security and ICT policies remain centralized at the national level, needing decentralization for specific local contexts.

Needs for Technical Support (Next 5 Years)

- Capacity Building: Training on managing urban-rural linkages at national and subnational levels.
- Tools and Guidelines: For urban-rural linkages, territorial planning, and intermediary towns.
- Urban Policy Implementation: Support for national urban policy and multi-level governance guidance.

Azerbaijan:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Azerbaijan acknowledges the importance of urban-rural linkages in achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), though specific goals were not listed.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Azerbaijan is unaware of the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages (2019).
- Despite this, Azerbaijan has implemented key policies supporting URL, such as:
 - State Programme of Socioeconomic Development of the Regions (2019-2023).
 - Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socioeconomic Development (2021).
 - Strategy of Socioeconomic Development (2022-2026).
 - First State Programme on Great Return to Liberated Territories (2022).

Thematic Aspects on URL (2000-Present)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-Present	Food security, agriculture, transport, communication, migration, infrastructure, environmental management	Azerbaijan focuses on multiple thematic areas, including managing conflict, promoting urban-rural partnerships, and fostering small and intermediary towns.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Financial support and infrastructure provision.	Azerbaijan allocated budgets for urban-rural linkages, supporting small towns, rural infrastructure, and capacity building.
2005-2010	Reduced focus on three key actions.	Continued emphasis on finance, infrastructure, and thematic interventions targeting urban-rural areas.
2010-2015	Integration into urban policies and planning.	Urban-rural linkages were integrated into broader urban and territorial planning.
2020-Present	Focus on capacity building and institutional reforms.	Additional efforts include improving housing and employment for refugees, land reform, and promoting ecological agriculture.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National and Subnational Policies: Focus on transport, disaster management, land, natural resources, and inclusive finance.
- National Policies: Address food security, urban planning, conflict management, environmental protection, and communication/ICT.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines development for URL.
- Urban policy review and implementation.
- Guidance on fostering small/intermediary towns, multilevel governance, and financing intermediary towns.
- Partnerships between intermediary cities and their rural territories.

Chile:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Food security and agriculture	Focus on ensuring food security and agriculture to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2005-2010	N/A	No specific thematic aspect addressed for URL during this period.

2010-2015	Land management	Land tenure, pollution, urban sprawl, and degradation, particularly linked to urban industrial waste and quarrying for land uses, became prominent.
2015-2020	Transportation, communication, infrastructure, urban-rural partnerships, small towns, and natural resource protection	Expanded focus on transportation, infrastructural provision, urban-rural partnerships, and protection of natural resources, along with land management.
2020-Present	N/A	Continued focus on previous thematic areas without new additions.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

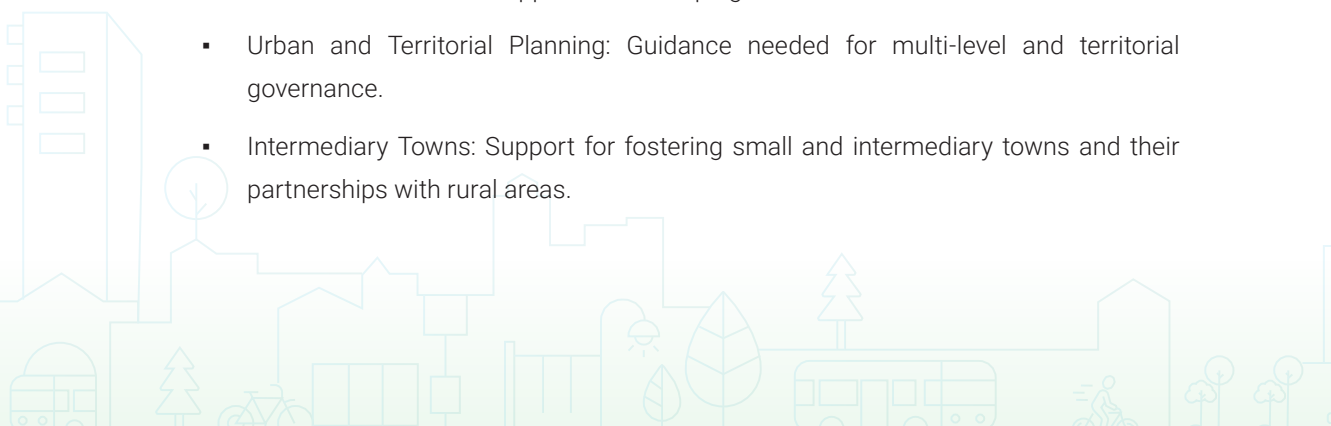
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2015	N/A	No actions specifically aimed at strengthening urban-rural linkages were undertaken.
2015-Present	Urban and territorial planning	Since 2015, fostering urban and territorial planning has been a priority for strengthening URL.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- Rural Development National Policy: Encompasses 54 guidelines focused on improving quality of life and opportunities for rural populations.
- Established at both national and sub-national levels, with each level of government having specific roles in enhancing rural development.

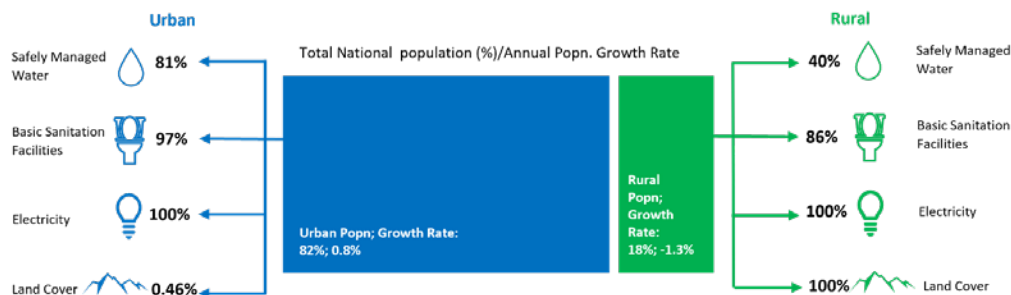
Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity Building and Training: For managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and Guidelines: Support for developing relevant tools for URL.
- Urban and Territorial Planning: Guidance needed for multi-level and territorial governance.
- Intermediary Towns: Support for fostering small and intermediary towns and their partnerships with rural areas.



Colombia:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Colombia acknowledges the significance of urban-rural linkages in achieving three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the specific goals were not detailed.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Colombia did not explicitly express awareness of the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions taken to enhance urban-rural linkages include:
 - Housing and Habitat Law 2079 of 2020: Aims to address urban-rural disparities.
 - Cities System Policy (Conpes 3819 of 2014): Focuses on promoting intermediary cities as hubs for regional development and stronger urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2010	N/A	No specific thematic aspect addressed for urban-rural linkages.
2010-2015	Transport, intermediary cities	Focus on transport and promoting small/intermediary cities to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2015-2020	Urban-rural partnerships	Continued attention to urban-rural partnerships alongside ongoing thematic areas from previous periods.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2020-Present	Food security, conflict and disaster management	New focus on food security, agriculture, and conflict/disaster management, while maintaining previous attention on transport and partnerships.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

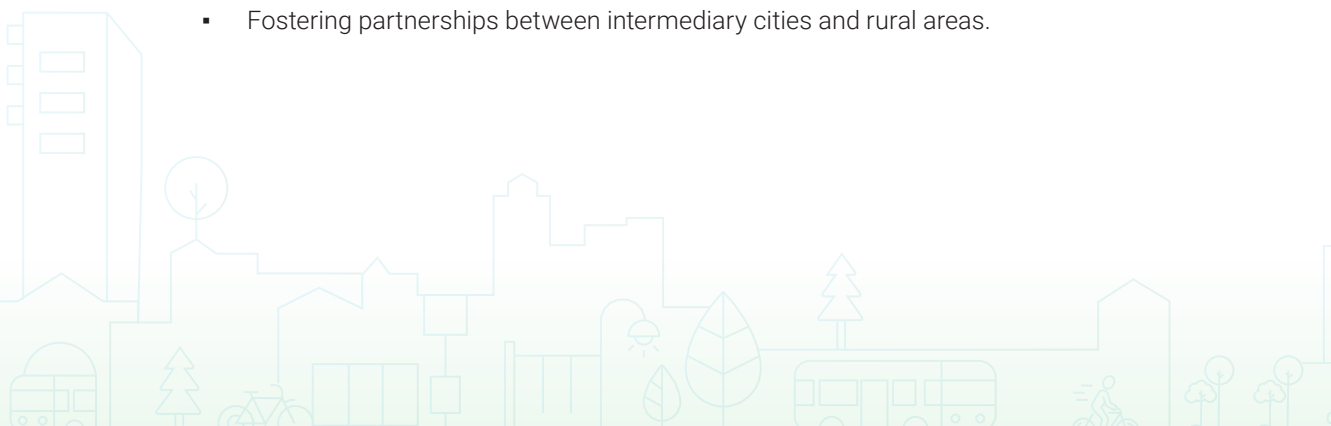
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2010	Urban and territorial planning	Emphasis on fostering urban and territorial planning as a key action to enhance URL.
2010-2015	Integration into urban policies	Urban-rural linkages integrated into urban policies and territorial planning processes.
2015-2020	Multilevel governance, infrastructure, finance	Establishment of multilevel governance, financing for urban-rural linkages, and infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns.
2020-Present	N/A	No specific new action identified for this period, but attention to previous actions continues.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National and Subnational Policies: Focus on transport, inclusive finance, environmental management, and land management.
- National Policies: Address urban planning, conflict management, and provision of infrastructure in rural areas.

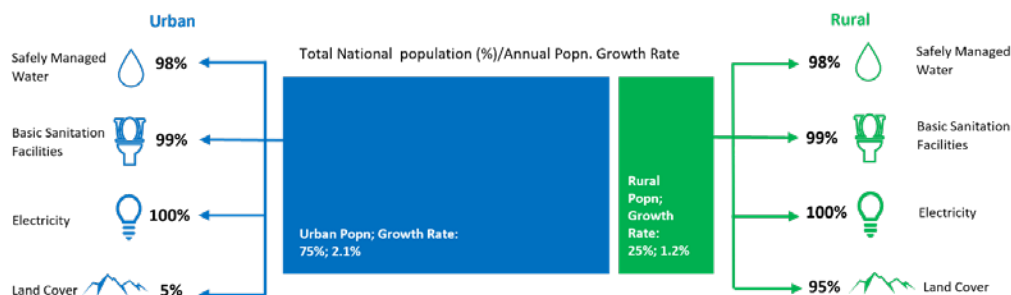
Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training for managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Urban policy review and implementation.
- Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance.
- Fostering partnerships between intermediary cities and rural areas.



Czech Republic:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- The Czech Republic recognizes the importance of urban-rural linkages in achieving five (3,4,9,1,13) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), though the specific goals were not listed.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- The Czech Republic acknowledges awareness of UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- Notable actions to enhance urban-rural linkages include:
 - Regional Development Strategy 2021+: A comprehensive strategy promoting intermediary towns as key urban-rural connectors.
 - Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) Strategies: Implemented to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
 - Development of a methodology for metropolitan cooperation, improving coordination between urban and rural areas.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Migration, infrastructure, conflict/disaster management, land issues	Focus on migration, land degradation, pollution, urban sprawl, and natural resource protection as core to strengthening urban-rural linkages.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2005-2010	Transport, urban-rural partnerships	Introduction of transport infrastructure development and fostering urban-rural partnerships to enhance connectivity.
2010-Present	Communication, inclusive finance and investment	Expanded focus to include enhancing communication and supporting inclusive finance and investment, alongside continued emphasis on previous areas.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

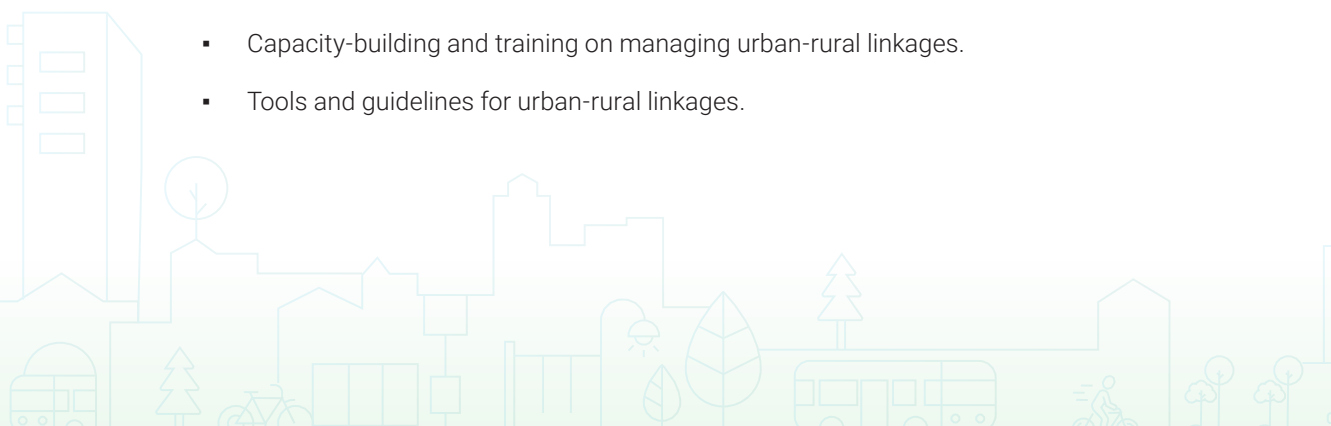
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Integration into urban policies and planning	Emphasis on urban-rural linkages in urban policies, infrastructure provision in rural/intermediary towns, and thematic interventions.
2005-2010	Continued infrastructure development	Focused on maintaining previous actions without new key actions.
2010-2015	Finance, budgeting, and urban-rural integration	Continued attention to integrating urban-rural linkages into urban policies, alongside finance and budgeting for rural/intermediary towns.
2015-Present	Multilevel governance, social care, education, healthcare	Focus on multilevel governance and continued emphasis on social care, education, research, and healthcare services in urban-rural zones.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Include food security, conflict management, and urban-rural cooperation.
- National and Subnational Policies: Cover inclusive finance, land management, disaster management, and protection of catchment areas.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

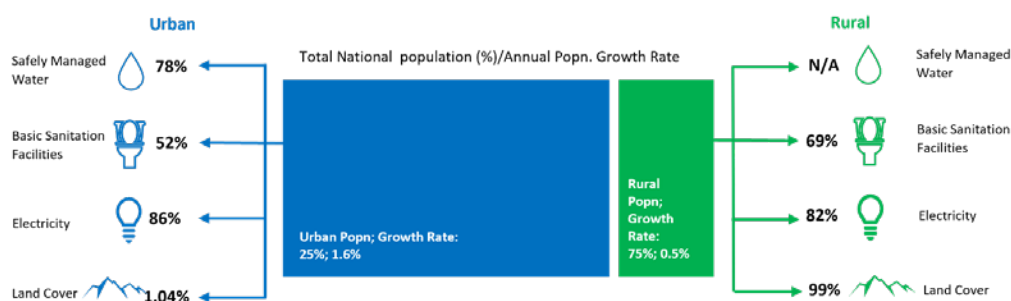
- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.



- Urban policy review and implementation.
- Urban and territorial planning.
- Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance.
- Fostering partnerships between small/intermediary towns and their rural territories.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.

Eswatini:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



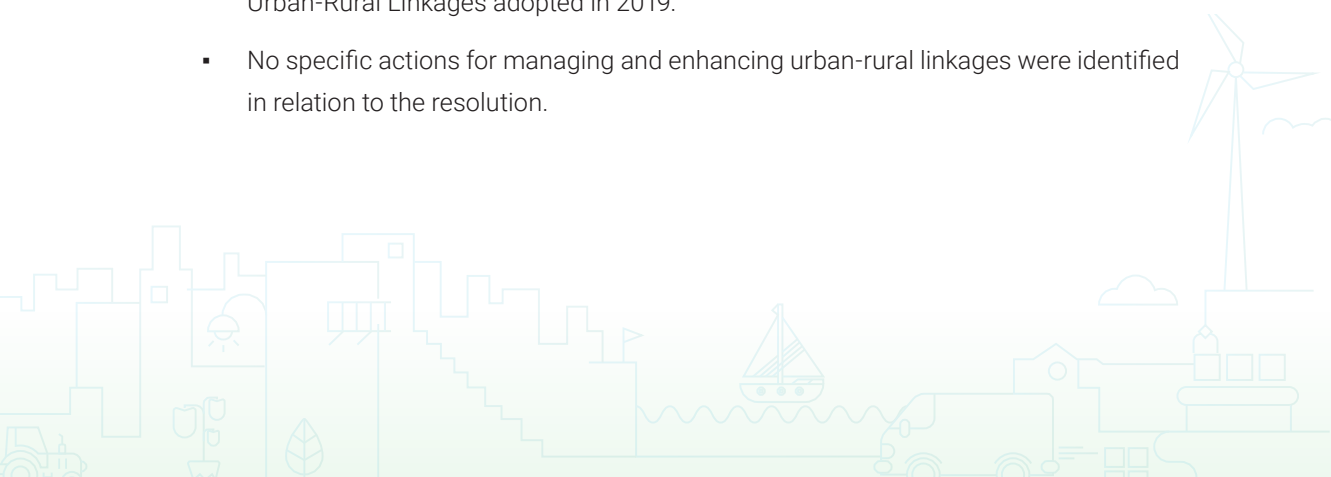
Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Eswatini recognizes the relevance of urban-rural linkages in achieving SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which specifically addresses urban-rural linkages.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- During the survey, Eswatini did not affirm recognition of the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- No specific actions for managing and enhancing urban-rural linkages were identified in relation to the resolution.

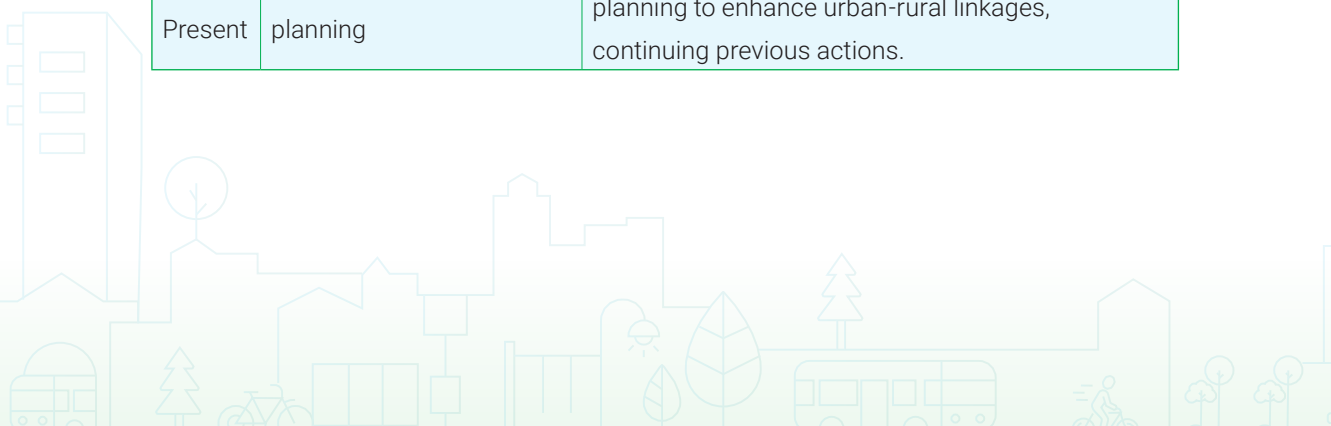


Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Conflict and disaster management	Focus on managing conflict and disasters as part of efforts to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2005-2010	Urban-rural partnerships, small towns, and natural resource protection	Emphasis on encouraging urban-rural partnerships, fostering small towns, and protecting natural resources.
2010-2015	Migration, land tenure, urban sprawl, and pollution	Focus on migration between urban and rural areas, addressing land tenure, urban sprawl, pollution from industrial waste, and urban land uses.
2015-2020	Food security, agriculture, and environmental impacts	Continued emphasis on urban-rural partnerships, food security, agriculture, reducing environmental impacts, and supporting inclusive finance.
2020-Present	Transport, communication, and infrastructure provision	Focus on transport, communication, and infrastructure provision in rural communities, with sustained attention to inclusive finance initiatives.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Infrastructure provision	Significant efforts focused on infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns and cities.
2005-2010	Continued infrastructure provision	Continued focus on infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns, building on previous actions.
2010-2015	Finance, budgeting, capacity-building, and institutional reforms	Emphasis on finance and budgeting for urban-rural linkages, along with capacity-building and institutional reforms for intermediary towns.
2015-2020	Urban policy integration and multilevel governance	Urban-rural linkages were integrated into urban policies, with a focus on establishing multilevel and integrated governance structures.
2020-Present	Urban and territorial planning	Ongoing efforts to foster urban and territorial planning to enhance urban-rural linkages, continuing previous actions.



Relevant Sectoral Policies

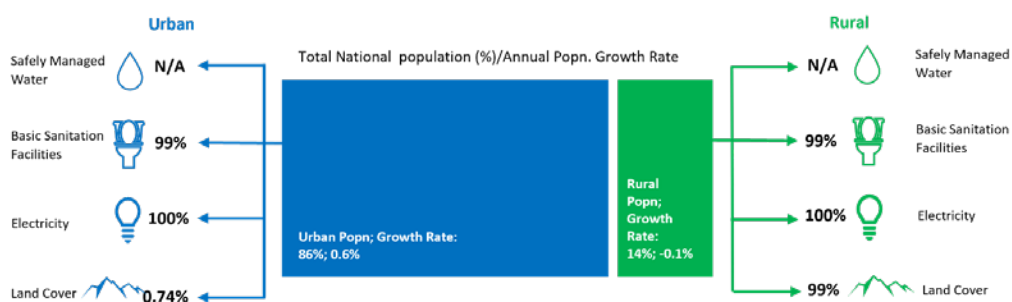
- National and Subnational Policies: Address food security, urban and territorial planning, disaster management, and land tenure.
- National Policies: Focus on transport infrastructure, internal migration, and communication (ICT).

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines relevant to urban-rural linkages.
- Urban policy review and implementation.
- Urban and territorial planning.
- Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance.
- Fostering small/intermediary towns.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.
- Building partnerships between intermediary cities and their rural areas.

Finland:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Finland recognizes the significance of urban-rural linkages in achieving six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Finland acknowledges awareness of the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- Actions include the Intermediary Towns Programme (Seutukaupunkiohjelman) to enhance urban-rural linkages and promote the development of intermediary towns.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Transport, infrastructure, environment, finance, natural resources	Focus on improving transport, infrastructure in rural areas, and reducing environmental impacts, alongside inclusive finance and natural resources protection.
2005-2010	Communication and information flow	Continued focus on previous areas, with added emphasis on enhancing communication for better urban-rural service delivery.
2010-2015	Development of intermediary towns	Strengthening small and intermediary towns, continuing efforts from earlier periods.
2015-Present	Conflict and disaster management, urban-rural partnerships	Emphasis on managing conflicts and disasters while strengthening urban-rural partnerships.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2010	Urban and territorial planning, capacity building	Focus on urban planning and capacity building, with institutional reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2010-2015	Integration into urban policies, financing for small towns	Integrated urban-rural linkages into urban policies, financing infrastructure in rural and intermediary towns.



Period	Actions	Description
2015-Present	Multilevel governance, sustained focus on previous actions	Established multilevel governance structures, with continued attention to actions from earlier phases.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

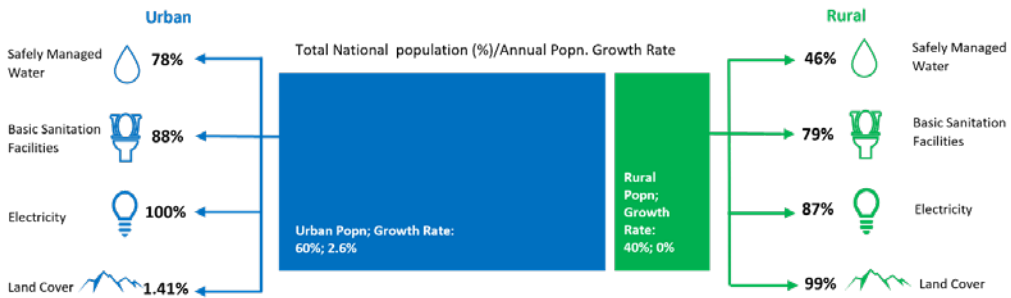
- National and Subnational Policies: Food security, communication/ICT, transport, infrastructure, local food production.
- Subnational and Local Policies: Urban and territorial planning, environmental management, land and natural resources protection.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training for managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Multilevel and territorial governance guidance.
- Fostering intermediary towns and city-to-city partnerships.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.

Honduras:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Honduras recognizes urban-rural linkages as crucial for achieving 11 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Honduras recognizes the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages from 2019.
- Actions include the development of Land-Use Plans in the Sula Valley, San Pedro Sula, and the Central District to strengthen urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Conflict management, small towns, land issues	Focus on conflict management, small town development, and addressing land-related issues.
2005-2010	Food security, agriculture, infrastructure, natural resource protection	Prioritized food security and agriculture, along with infrastructure development in rural communities and natural resource protection.
2010-2015	Transport, migration, urban-rural partnerships, environment	Focus on transport, migration, urban-rural partnerships, and reducing environmental impacts.
2015-Present	Communication, conflict management, inclusive finance	Focus shifted towards communication, conflict management, fostering small towns, and supporting inclusive finance and investment.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Urban-rural integration, urban policies, infrastructure	Integrated urban-rural linkages into urban policies, infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns.
2005-2010	Continued infrastructure development	Continued implementation of previous infrastructure and urban-rural linkages actions.
2010-2020	Financing and budgeting for small towns	Focused on financing and budgeting for urban, rural, and small towns, along with continued infrastructure development.
2020-Present	Continuation of previous actions	Continued focus on actions from the previous phase, excluding financing and budgeting.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National and Subnational Policies: Food security, urban planning, disaster management, environmental management, transport infrastructure.

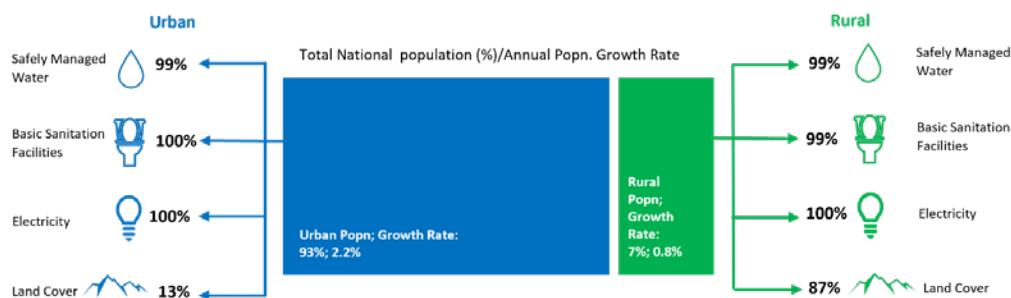
- National Policies: Land management, inclusive finance, investments.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Multilevel and territorial governance guidance.
- Fostering intermediary towns.
- City-to-city partnerships and financing initiatives for intermediary towns.

Israel:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Israel recognizes the importance of urban-rural linkages in achieving eight Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Israel did not express explicit recognition of the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages.
- Key steps include the Western Galilee Regional Plan (2020-2022) and the Ashkelon Regional Plan (2018-2020), which connect multiple cities and rural areas through collaborative ventures in transport, renewable energy, and waste management.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2015	N/A	No specific thematic focus on urban-rural linkages during this period.
2015-2020	Transport, small towns, land management	Focus on transport, intermediary town development, and land-related issues such as pollution and urban sprawl.
2020-Present	Communication, urban-rural partnerships, natural resources	Expanded focus on communication, urban-rural partnerships, and natural resource protection.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

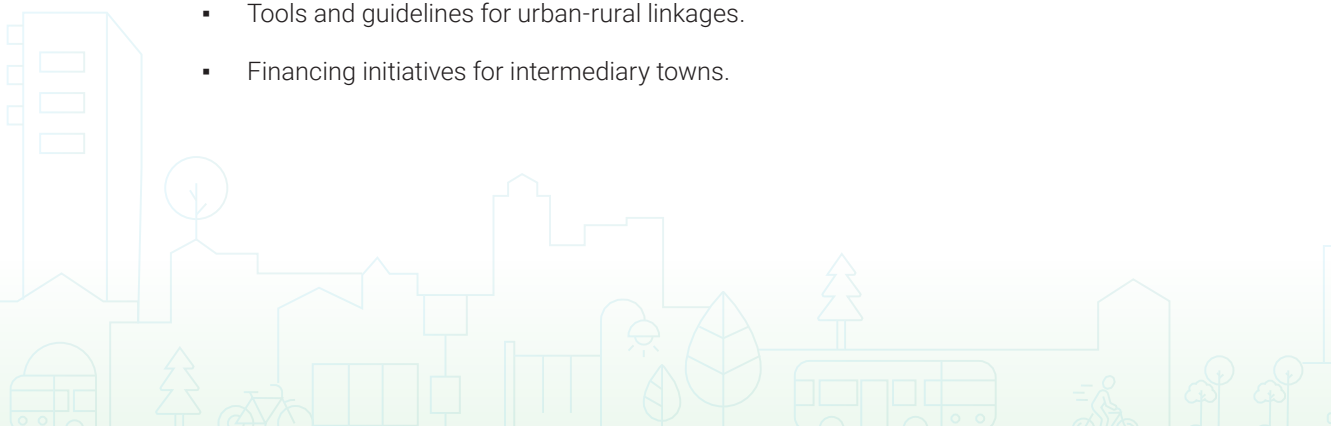
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2015	N/A	No specific actions taken during this period.
2015-2020	Regional planning, spatial organization	Developed regional plans such as Ashkelon Regional Plan focusing on regional spatial organization, public transport, and economic hubs.
2020-Present	Regional cooperation and environmental ventures	Implementation of the Western Galilee Regional Plan to foster cooperation in renewable energy, transport, and R&D.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, disaster management, ICT, and natural resources.
- National and Subnational Policies: Transport infrastructure, environmental management, land management.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.



Lithuania:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Lithuania recognizes the importance of urban-rural linkages in advancing the achievement of 12 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Lithuania didn't expressly recognize the UN-Habitat Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to integrate urban-rural linkages into sustainable development policies (national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, and climate).
 - Adoption of laws and decrees to improve urban-rural linkages.
 - Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania, as part of a national urban policy.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2010	Environmental impacts, land-related issues	Focus on reducing environmental impacts and addressing land-related issues in urban-rural convergence zones.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2010-2015	Inclusive finance and investments	Emphasis on supporting inclusive finance and investments while continuing previous efforts.
2015-2020	Natural resource protection	Focus expanded to include natural resource protection alongside existing thematic areas.
2020-Present	Food security, agriculture, transport, urban-rural partnerships	Continued emphasis on food security, agriculture, migration, and fostering small/intermediary towns and cities.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

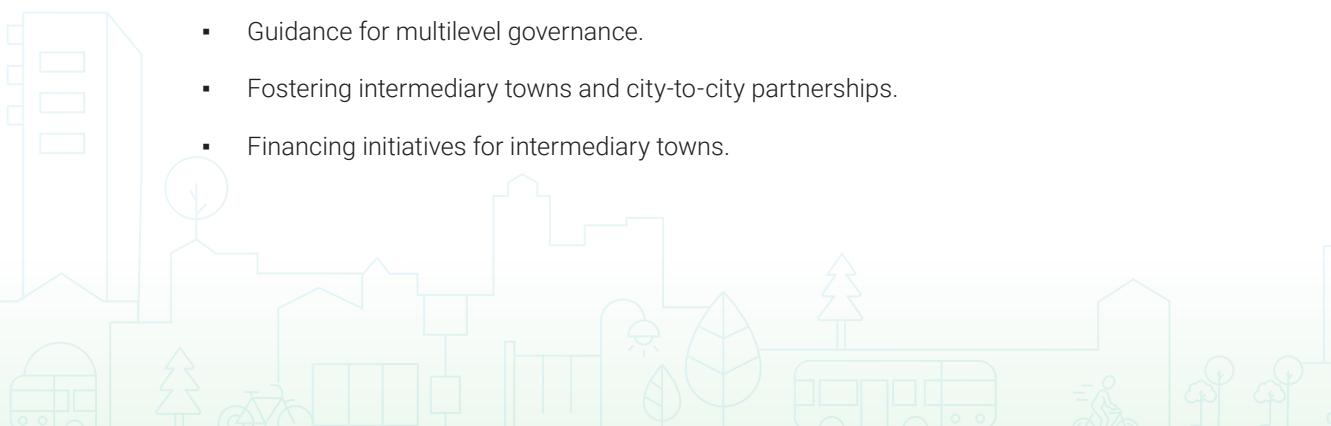
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Urban and territorial planning, multilevel governance, financing	Promoted urban and territorial planning, multilevel governance, and financing for urban, rural, and small towns.
2005-2015	Infrastructure provision, rural areas, intermediary towns	Focus on providing infrastructure in rural areas and intermediary towns, continuing earlier efforts.
2015-Present	Integration into urban policies, intermediary towns	Focus on integrating urban-rural linkages into urban policies, particularly for intermediary towns and cities.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, urban and territorial planning, transport infrastructure, disaster management, environmental management, land tenure.

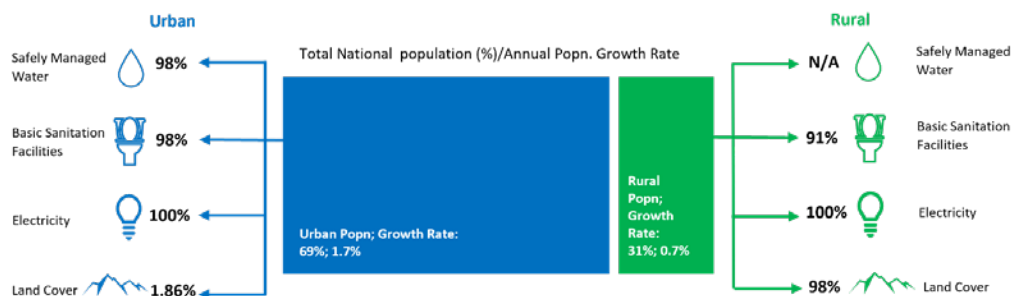
Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Urban policy review and implementation.
- Guidance for multilevel governance.
- Fostering intermediary towns and city-to-city partnerships.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.



Mauritius:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

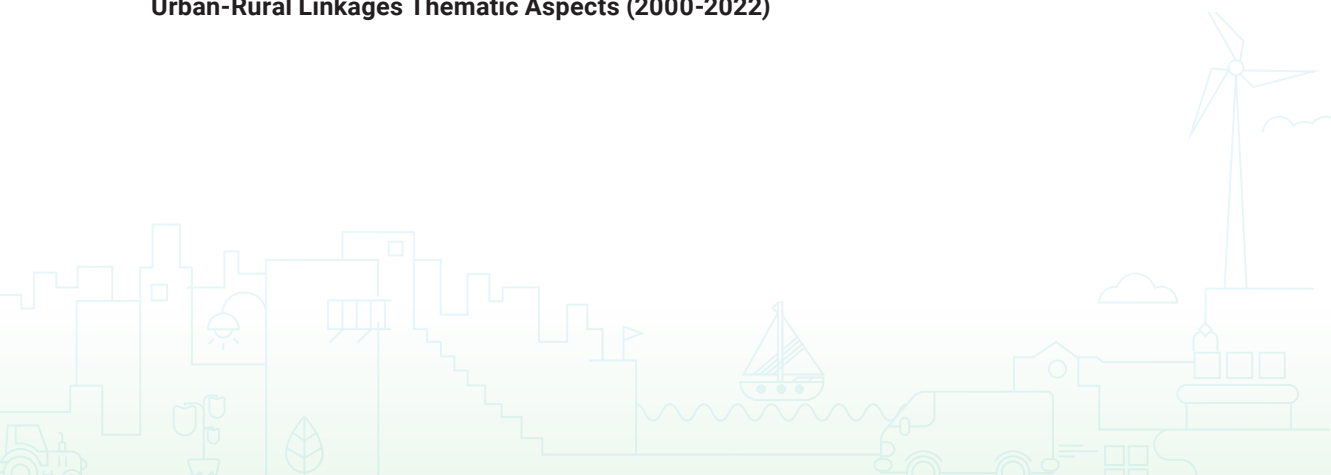
Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Mauritius recognizes urban-rural linkages as essential for achieving several SDGs. The country benefits from a well-connected road network, recent introduction of a light rail system, and minimal disparities between urban and rural services.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Mauritius acknowledges awareness of the UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted in 2019.
- Actions include:
 - National Development Strategy (2003, under revision) focuses on land-use planning and development of a new town, Cote D'Or.
 - Road and Traffic Master Plans to improve urban-rural mobility.
 - Planning schemes for balanced spatial regeneration and urban development.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)



Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2010	Food security, infrastructure, environmental impacts, land protection	Focus on food security, infrastructure provision, environmental impacts, land protection, and inclusive finance.
2010-2015	Conflict and disaster management	Emphasis on managing conflicts and disasters, while continuing earlier thematic aspects.
2015-Present	Transport, environmental impacts	Key focus on transport, with continued attention to earlier thematic areas such as land protection and infrastructure.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

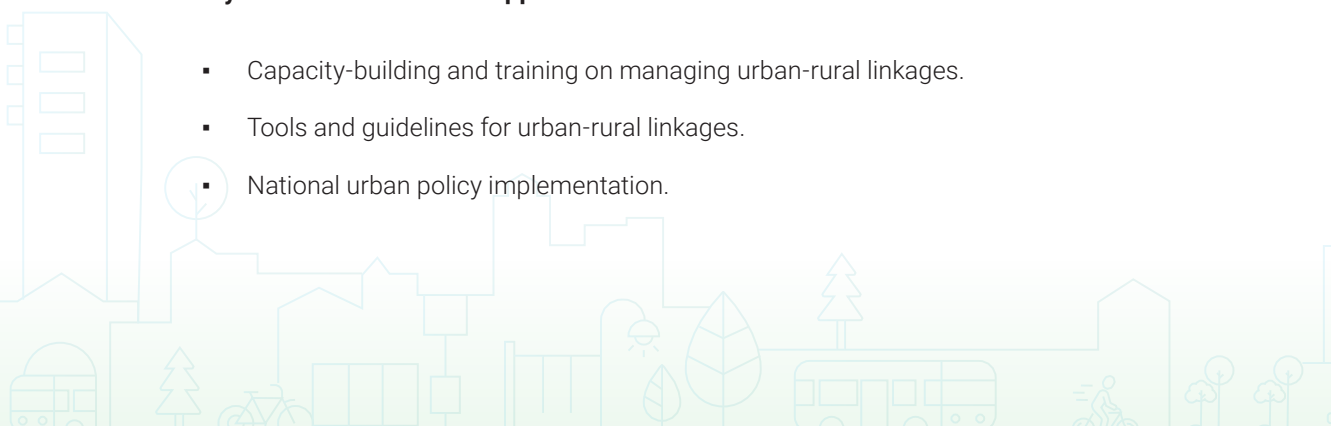
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Integration of urban-rural linkages into urban policies, infrastructure provision	Focused on urban policies, infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns, and governance structures.
2005-2015	Capacity-building for intermediary towns	Emphasis on capacity-building and institutional reforms for intermediary towns.
2015-Present	Focus on transport, continuation of earlier actions	Shift towards transport as a thematic focus while maintaining attention on earlier actions, including food security and infrastructure.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National and Subnational Policies: Food security, transport infrastructure, communication, disaster management, urban planning, and environmental management.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

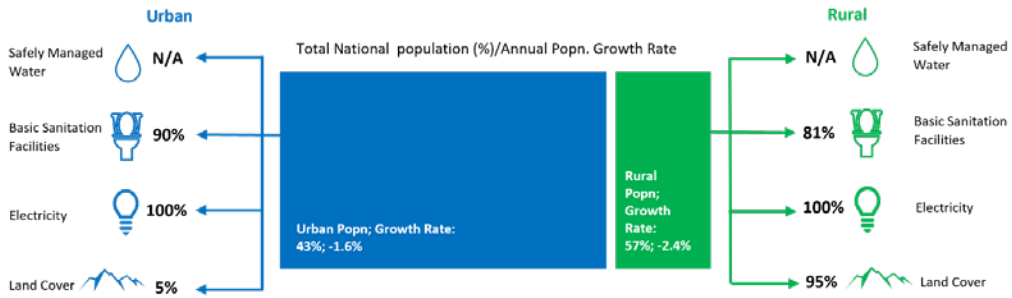
- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- National urban policy implementation.



- Guidance for multilevel governance.
- Fostering intermediary towns and city-to-city partnerships.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.

Moldova:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

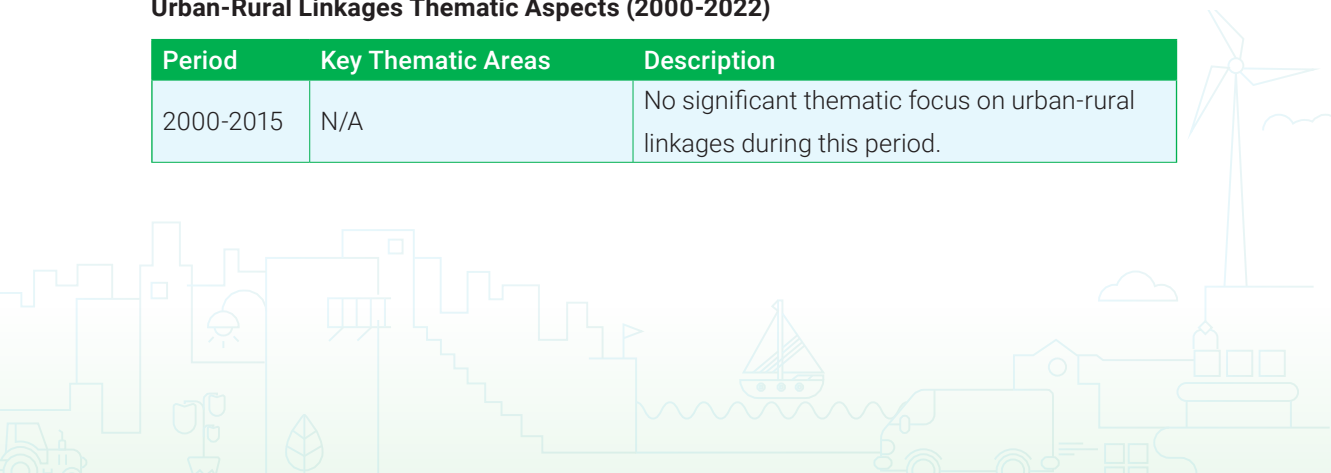
- Moldova recognizes the importance of urban-rural linkages in contributing to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (1,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,2,13)

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Moldova did not explicitly express awareness of the UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages (2019).
- However, the country has implemented Government Decision No. 916/2020, which addresses urban-rural linkages and enhances national development strategies.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2015	N/A	No significant thematic focus on urban-rural linkages during this period.



Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2015-Present	Food security, transport, communication, migration, infrastructure, urban-rural partnerships	Focus on food security, transport, communication, infrastructure provision, migration, and fostering small/intermediary towns and urban-rural partnerships.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

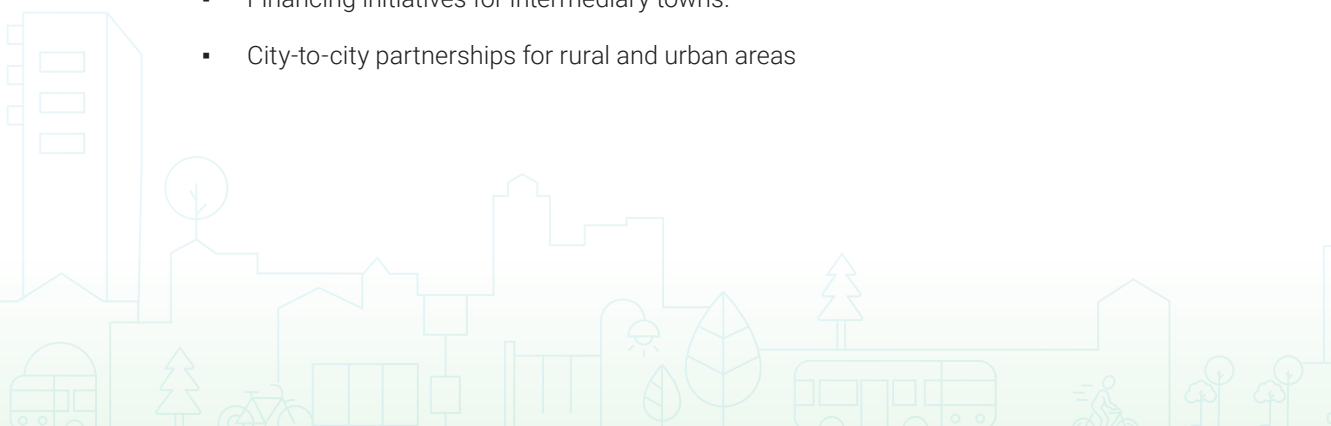
Period	Actions	Description
2000-2020	N/A	No specific actions were undertaken to enhance urban-rural linkages.
2020-Present	Integration into urban policies, multilevel governance, infrastructure	Key actions include integrating urban-rural linkages into urban policies, establishing multilevel governance structures, and providing infrastructure.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, transport infrastructure, disaster management, communication/ICT, protection of natural resources.
- National and Subnational Policies: Environmental management in urban-rural convergences, land management, internal migration.

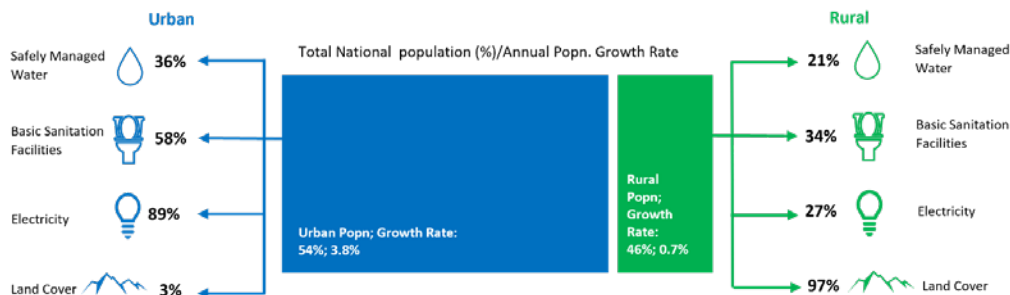
Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- National urban policy implementation.
- Urban and territorial planning.
- Guidance for multilevel governance and fostering intermediary towns.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns.
- City-to-city partnerships for rural and urban areas



Nigeria:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the Sustainable Development Goals

- Nigeria acknowledges the relevance of urban-rural linkages in achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Nigeria acknowledged awareness of the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages by integrating them into sustainable development policies such as national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, and climate.
 - Strengthening the capacity of national, subnational, and other stakeholders on urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects and Actions (2000–2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	No key thematic aspects	Lack of attention on urban-rural linkages during this period.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2005-2010	Communication, land-related issues	Emergence of communication, land tenure, degradation, pollution, urban sprawl, and quarrying.
2010-2015	Food security, agriculture, infrastructure	Broadened focus to food security, agriculture, and infrastructure provision in rural areas.
2015-2020	Transportation, small/intermediary towns	Emphasis on transportation, fostering small towns, inclusive finance; infrastructure provision less critical.
2020-Present	Environmental impact reduction	Growing focus on reducing environmental impacts while sustaining previous thematic aspects.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000–2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2010	Governance structure, financing	Establishing multilevel governance, financing for urban/rural needs, infrastructure provision.
2010-2015	Continued governance and budgeting	Continued emphasis on previous actions with added focus on financing urban and rural developments.
2015-Present	Policy integration, capacity-building	Significant focus on integrating urban-rural linkages in policies and building institutional capacity.

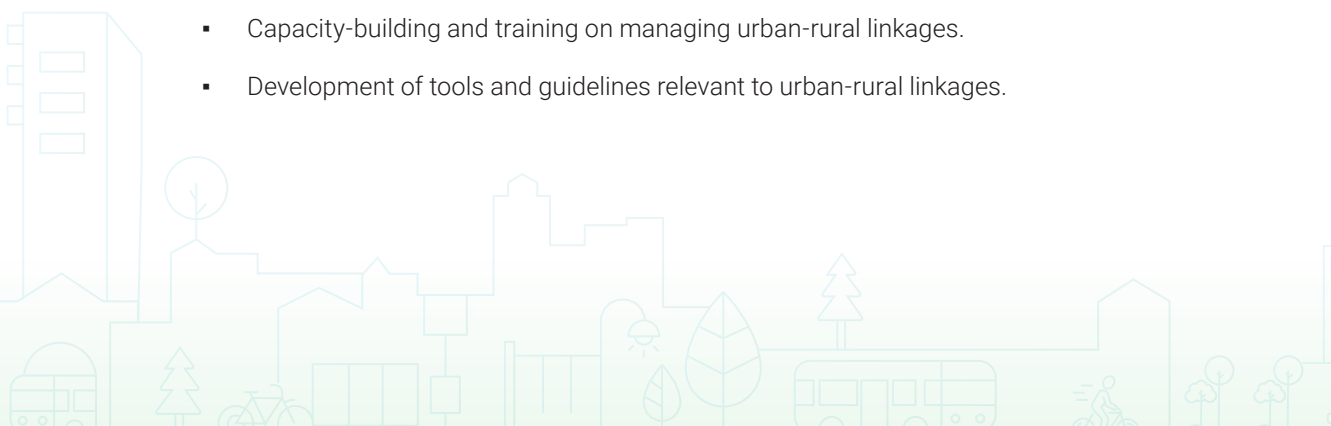
Existence of Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Address food security, communication, ICT, inclusive finance.
- National and Subnational Policies: Cover urban and territorial planning, disaster management, environmental management.
- Local Policies: Include transport infrastructure provision, internal migration, and protection of watersheds.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

Support for:

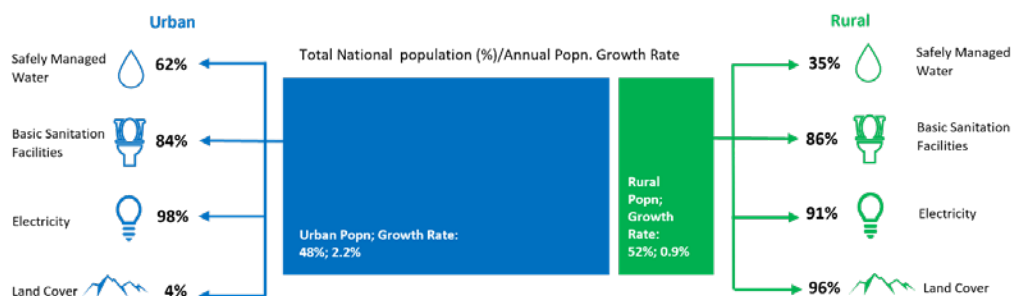
- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Development of tools and guidelines relevant to urban-rural linkages.



- Implementation of national urban policies and urban planning.
- Guidance for multilevel governance and fostering small and intermediary towns.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns and managing urban-rural linkages.

Philippines:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

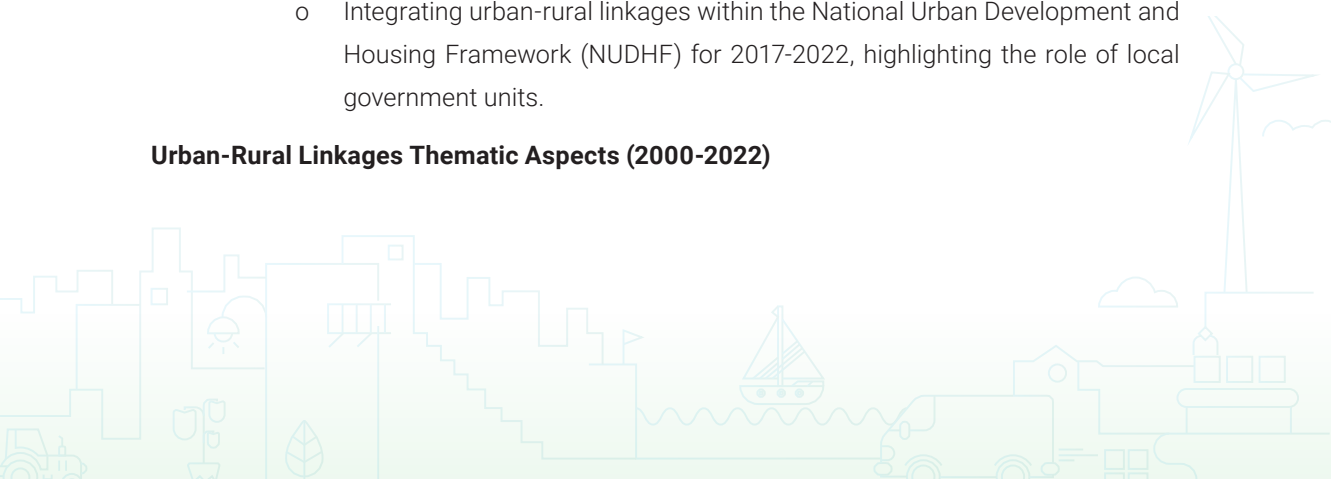
Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- The Philippines recognizes the significance of urban-rural linkages in achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Philippines did not explicitly express awareness of the UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages (2019).
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages in national urban policies.
 - Integrating urban-rural linkages within the National Urban Development and Housing Framework (NUDHF) for 2017-2022, highlighting the role of local government units.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)



Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Food security, migration, infrastructure	Emphasis on food security, migration, and land-related issues like tenure and pollution.
2005-2010	Disaster management, inclusive finance	Expanded focus to include disaster management and finance while maintaining prior themes.
2010-2015	Communication, intermediary towns	New areas introduced, including communication and the promotion of small/intermediary towns.
2015-2020	Transportation, thematic continuity	Continued attention to transport alongside other established themes.
2020-Present	Infrastructure, ongoing thematic areas	Infrastructure provision has reduced focus, but other thematic areas remain relevant.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Infrastructure, capacity-building	Focus on infrastructure provision and capacity-building for urban-rural linkages.
2005-2010	Integrated governance	Establishment of multilevel governance structures and continued infrastructure support.
2010-2015	Policy integration	Centralization of urban-rural linkages in urban policies and continued previous actions.
2015-Present	Urban planning, capacity-building	Emphasis on urban and territorial planning while maintaining focus on previous actions.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, transport infrastructure, ICT.
- National and Subnational Policies: Urban planning, disaster management, environmental management.
- Local Policies: Communication on migration, protection of catchment areas, and land tenure.

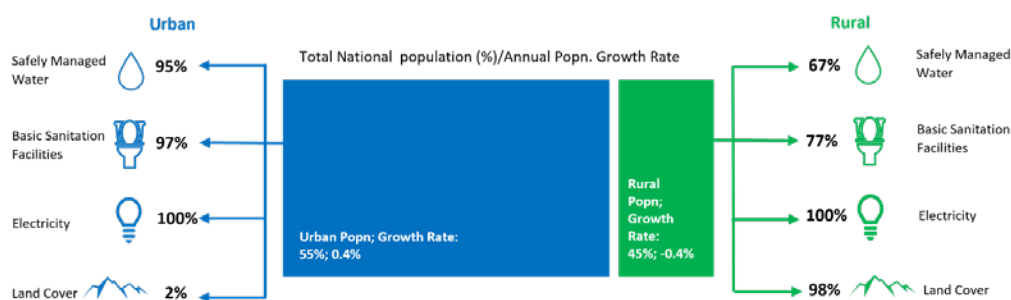


Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages.
- Development of tools and guidelines relevant to urban-rural linkages.
- Support for national urban policy implementation and urban planning.
- Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance, fostering intermediary towns.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns and rural areas.

Romania:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Romania acknowledges the significance of urban-rural linkages in achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Romania is aware of the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions include:
 - Implementing policies, laws, and strategies to enhance urban-rural linkages and promote intermediary towns and cities.
 - The recently approved national urban policy includes objectives that align with the Declaration on Policies for Building Better Futures, emphasizing just and inclusive cities.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Migration, infrastructure	Focus on migration between urban and rural areas and essential infrastructure for rural communities.
2005-2010	Urban-rural partnerships	Continued emphasis on migration and promotion of urban-rural partnerships.
2010-2015	Food security, agriculture, land-related issues	Addressing food security, agriculture, land tenure, and pollution from urban industrial activities.
2015-2020	Transportation	Increased focus on transport alongside ongoing themes from previous periods.
2020-Present	Small towns, ongoing thematic areas	Sustained attention to small and intermediary towns while maintaining previous thematic relevance.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2010	Urban and territorial planning	Key action focused on fostering urban and territorial planning to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2010-2015	Infrastructure provision	Continued focus on urban planning alongside infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary areas.
2015-2020	Policy integration	Integrating urban-rural linkages into urban policies while maintaining previous efforts.
2020-Present	Multilevel governance	Expanded focus on establishing integrated governance structures and budgeting for urban and rural needs.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, transport infrastructure, communication.
- National and Subnational Policies: Urban and territorial planning, disaster management, environmental management.

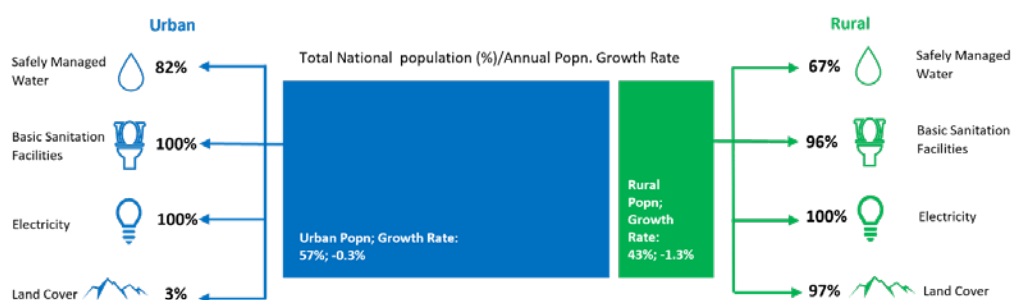


Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Technical assistance for inclusive finance and investment initiatives.
- Support for implementing national urban policies and fostering partnerships between intermediary cities and surrounding areas.
- Guidance for building capacities in managing urban-rural linkages at both national and subnational levels.

Serbia:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

a) Urban-Rural Linkages and the Sustainable Development Goals

- Serbia recognizes the significance of urban-rural linkages in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

b) Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages

- Serbia affirms recognition of the UN-Habitat resolution on urban-rural linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
 - Integrating urban-rural linkages into sustainable development policies, including national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, and climate.

c) Urban-Rural Linkages Actions: 2000–2022

Relevant Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages

Period	Actions	Description
2000 - 2020	Urban and territorial planning	Significant efforts directed toward fostering urban and territorial planning as a key action to strengthen linkages.
2020- Present	Integration of urban-rural linkages	Current focus on integrating urban-rural linkages, including addressing intermediary cities and towns, within urban policies.

d) Existence of Relevant Sectoral Policies at Each Government Level

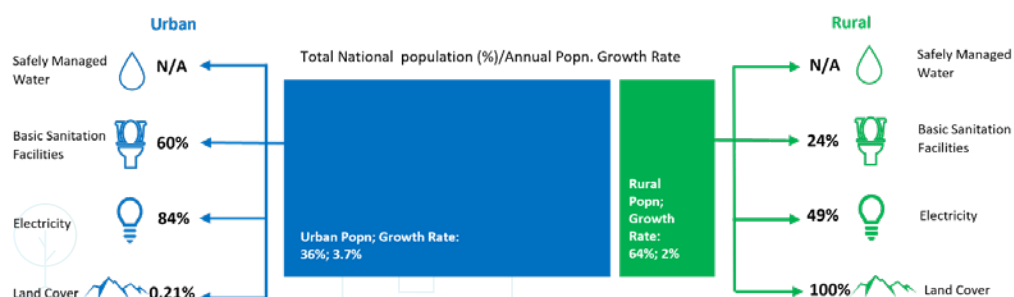
- Policies related to urban and territorial planning and transport infrastructure provision in rural areas and intermediary towns exist at all government levels.
- Disaster management, information and communication technology (ICT), and protection of catchment areas and natural resources primarily have policies at the national government level.

e) Need for Technical Support on Urban-Rural Linkages

- Support for urban and territorial planning is required exclusively at the subnational government level.
- Necessary support areas include:
 - Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages
 - Implementation of national urban policy

Sudan

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

a) Urban-Rural Linkages and the Sustainable Development Goals

- Sudan acknowledges the relevance of urban-rural linkages in achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

b) Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages

- Sudan did not express explicit awareness of the UN-Habitat resolution on urban-rural linkages adopted in 2019.
- Key actions taken include:
 - Adoption of laws/decrees to support the improvement of urban-rural linkages.

c) Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects and Actions: 2000–2022

Relevant Thematic Aspects

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000 - 2005	Food security, agriculture, transport, land	Focus on food security, agriculture, and transport-related matters.
2005 - 2015	Infrastructure, conflict, disaster management	Broader focus on infrastructure provision for rural communities, and conflict and disaster management.
2015 - 2020	Sustained attention to previous areas	Managing conflicts and disasters was less emphasized, but focus remained on food security and agriculture.
2020 - Present	Narrowed focus	Focus areas reduced to three, with infrastructural provision less crucial in ongoing urban-rural linkages efforts.



Relevant Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages

Period	Actions	Description
2000 - 2005	No actions reported	No specific actions indicated to strengthen urban-rural linkages during this period.
2005 - Present	Integration of urban-rural linkages	Key actions include integrating urban-rural linkages in urban policies, fostering urban and territorial planning, and establishing multilevel governance structures.

d) Existence of Relevant Sectoral Policies at Each Government Level

- National Level: Policies for food security, urban and territorial planning, transport infrastructure, internal migration, environmental management, and conflict management.
- Subnational Level: Policies for disaster management and inclusive finance.
- Local Level: Focus on disaster management and investment support.

e) Need for Technical Support on Urban-Rural Linkages

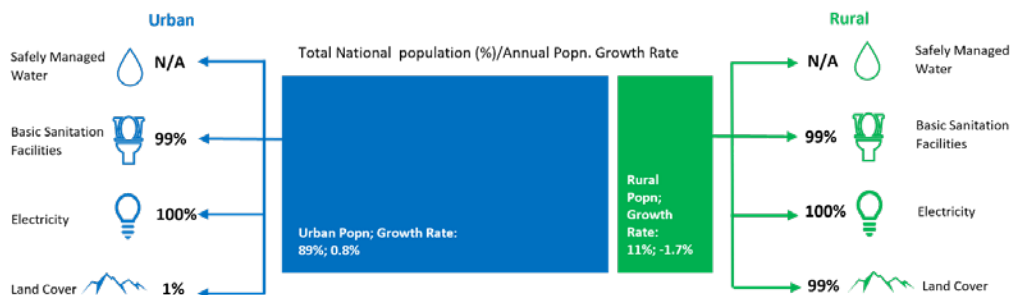
Support is recognized as necessary at both national and subnational levels in the following areas:

- Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages
- Development of tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages
- Urban policy review and implementation
- Urban and territorial planning guidance
- Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance
- Support for fostering small and intermediary towns
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns and managing urban-rural linkages
- Building partnerships between intermediary cities and their surrounding territories, including remote and rural areas



Sweden:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the Sustainable Development Goals

- Strengthening urban-rural linkages is essential for an effective labour market and service region, benefiting both urban and neighbouring rural areas.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Sweden recognizes the UN Habitat Assembly resolution from the 2019 Assembly and has undertaken actions to enhance urban-rural linkages.
- Regional development strategies in Sweden have historically integrated urban-rural linkages, further supported by the National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development established in 2021.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000–2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2015	Transport, infrastructure, partnerships, inclusive finance	Focused on transport provision, infrastructure for rural communities, urban-rural partnerships, and inclusive finance.
2015-Present	Environmental impacts, land-related issues	Continued emphasis on previous themes, with new focus on reducing environmental impacts and addressing land-related matters.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000–2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2015	Multilevel governance, financing, infrastructure provision	Established integrated governance structures and financing for urban, rural, and small towns.
2015-Present	Urban and territorial planning	Emphasized urban and territorial planning to supplement ongoing initiatives.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

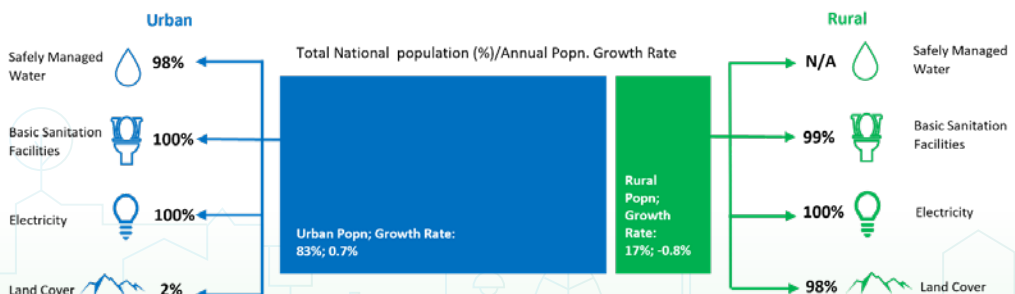
- Policies exist at all government levels for urban and territorial planning, transport infrastructure in rural areas, disaster management, and environmental management.
- National-level policies focus on food security and conflict management, while migration, communication, and land-related policies exist at both national and local levels.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Support is required for implementing the national urban policy at both national and subnational levels, particularly in:
 - Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages
 - Development of tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages
 - Urban policy review
 - Urban and territorial planning
 - Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance
 - Support for small and intermediary towns

United States of America:

Country Profile (Source: World Bank)



Survey Data Analysis (Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- The USA acknowledges the relevance of urban-rural linkages in achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- The USA recognizes the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages (2019).
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to integrate urban-rural linkages into sustainable development initiatives.
 - Strengthening capacity for national, subnational, and other stakeholders on urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Food security, transport, partnerships	Focus on strengthening urban-rural connections through various sectors, including agriculture and transport.
2005-2010	Conflict management, environmental impact	Continued focus on prior themes, emphasizing land use improvement and natural resource protection.
2010-2015	-	No significant thematic focus reported.
2015-2020	Food security, infrastructure	Sustained emphasis on food security and infrastructure provision in rural areas.
2020-Present	Migration, urban-rural linkages	Current focus on migration dynamics and enhancing urban-rural linkages.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2005	Integrated governance, capacity-building	Efforts to strengthen governance structures and enhance capacity for managing urban-rural linkages.

Period	Actions	Description
2005-2010	Urban planning, financial allocation	Continued actions supporting urban-rural linkages through planning and budget allocation.
2010-2015	Infrastructure provision	Emphasis on providing infrastructure in rural and intermediary towns.
2015-Present	Comprehensive policy integration	Ongoing integration of urban-rural linkages in policies, focusing on governance and financing initiatives.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

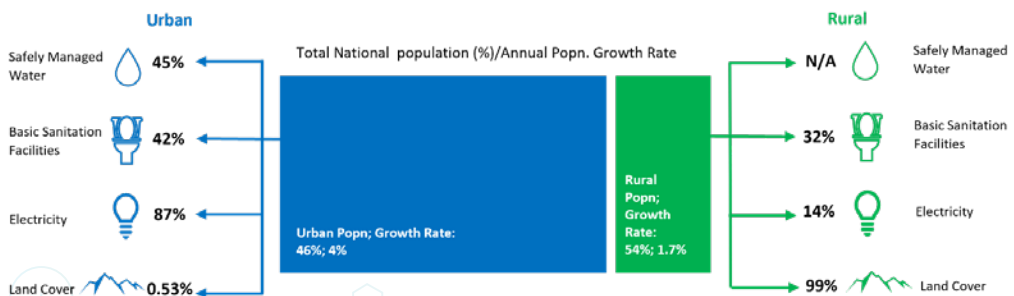
- National Policies: Food security, disaster management, inclusive financing.
- Subnational Policies: Urban and territorial planning, environmental management.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Capacity-building and training for managing urban-rural linkages.
- Development of tools and guidelines relevant to urban-rural linkages.
- Support for urban policy reviews and national policy implementation.
- Guidance for multilevel governance and planning initiatives for small and intermediary towns.
- Financing initiatives for intermediary towns and fostering partnerships.

Zambia:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

- Zambia recognizes the significance of its urban-rural linkages efforts in contributing to various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

- Zambia did not affirm recognition of the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages (2019).
- Key actions include:
 - Promoting policy reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages through integration into sustainable development policies.
 - Enhancing capacity for national, subnational, and other stakeholders on urban-rural linkages.
 - Developing a vision or strategy focused on urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2010	Conflict management, natural resource protection	Focus on managing conflicts and protecting natural resources to strengthen urban-rural linkages.
2010-2015	Communication, migration, infrastructure	Emphasis on communication, migration, infrastructure provision for rural communities, and fostering small/intermediary towns.
2015-2020	Partnerships, environmental impacts, finance	Focus on urban-rural partnerships, reducing environmental impacts, land issues, and supporting inclusive finance.
2020-Present	Food security, agriculture, transport	Current emphasis on food security and agriculture, with transport emerging as a key aspect.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2010	No significant actions reported	No actions reported to strengthen urban-rural linkages during this period.

Period	Actions	Description
2010-2015	Policy integration and governance	Actions included integrating urban-rural linkages in urban policies, fostering urban planning, and establishing governance structures.
2015-2020	Capacity building and institutional reforms	Continued actions from the previous period, with an emphasis on building capacities for intermediary towns.
2020-Present	Financing and budgeting	Additional efforts include financing and budgeting for urban, rural, and small towns, while continuing previous initiatives.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, conflict management, communication and ICT, land management.
- Subnational Policies: Urban and territorial planning, transport infrastructure in rural areas, environmental management, disaster management, and inclusive finance.

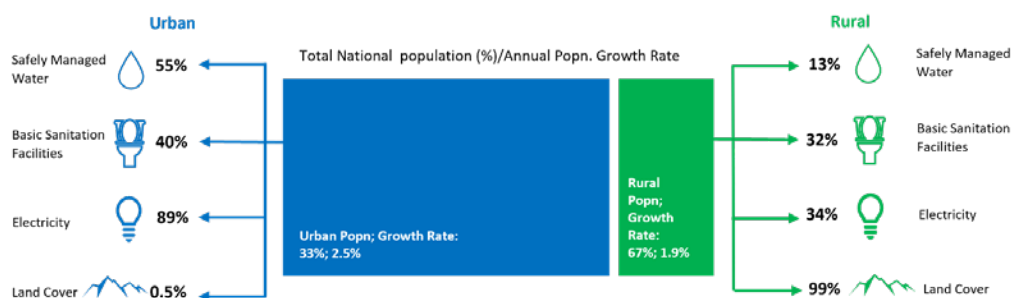
Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Development of guidelines and tools relevant to urban-rural linkages.
- Support for implementation of national urban policies and urban/territorial planning.
- Promotion of small and intermediary towns and financial initiatives for managing urban-rural linkages.
- Establishing partnerships between intermediary cities and their surrounding territories.
- Technical assistance for conducting reviews of urban policies and developing guidance for multilevel governance.



Zimbabwe:

Country Profile *(Source: World Bank)*



Survey Data Analysis *(Source: UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Survey, 2022)*

Urban-Rural Linkages and the SDGs

Zimbabwe identifies Goal 11 as significant in relation to its urban-rural linkages efforts.

Awareness and Actions on the 2019 UN-Habitat Resolution

Zimbabwe affirms recognition of the UN Habitat Assembly resolution on urban-rural linkages (2019).

Key actions include:

- Promoting policy reforms to integrate urban-rural linkages into sustainable development initiatives.
- Enhancing capacity for national and subnational stakeholders on urban-rural linkages.
- Developing a vision or strategy focused on urban-rural linkages.

Urban-Rural Linkages Thematic Aspects (2000-2022)

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2000-2005	Migration management	Focus on managing migration between urban and rural areas to strengthen linkages.
2005-2010	-	No significant thematic emphasis noted during this period.
2010-2015	Urban-rural partnerships	Encouragement of partnerships between urban and rural areas.

Period	Key Thematic Areas	Description
2015-2020	Infrastructure, environmental impact	Infrastructure provision for rural communities and reducing environmental impacts became prominent.
2020-Present	Land factors, small and intermediary towns	Current focus includes land management and fostering small/intermediary towns.

Actions to Strengthen Urban-Rural Linkages (2000-2022)

Period	Actions	Description
2000-2020	-	No actions specifically reported during this period.
2020-Present	Integration in urban policies	Active integration of urban-rural linkages in urban policies, focusing on finance and infrastructure.

Relevant Sectoral Policies

- National Policies: Food security, natural resource protection, inclusive finance.
- Subnational Policies: Urban and territorial planning, disaster management, environmental management.

Priority Areas for Technical Support

- Development of tools and guidelines for urban-rural linkages.
- Urban policy reviews and support for financial initiatives for intermediary towns.
- Building partnerships between intermediary cities and their surrounding territories.



Annex II: Urban-Rural Linkages Survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEMBER STATES

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Respondent Country:

Country Name	
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1.2. Respondent Organization (s) / Institution (s):

Ministry	Department / Institute

1.3. Respondent Person (s):

Name & Surname *	Section / Unit	Position / Duty	E-Mail address

* Please start with the first correspondent person.

2. DETAILED INFORMATION ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

2.1	Do you consider strengthening urban-rural linkages as key to achieving the SDGs?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Don't know about SDGs <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Don't know about urban-rural linkage <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Other (Please specify in the text box):
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2.2	<p>Which SDGs will you contribute to, through your works on strengthening urban-rural linkages? (Multi-selection enabled)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 1- No Poverty. <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 2- Zero Hunger <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 3- Good Health and Well-being <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 4- Quality Education <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 5- Gender Equality <input type="checkbox"/> SDG6- Clean Water and Sanitation <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 7- Affordable and Clean Energy <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 10- Reduced Inequality <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 12- Responsible Consumption and Production <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 13- Climate Action <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 14- Life Below Water <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 15- Life on Land <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 16- Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions <input type="checkbox"/> SDG 17- Partnerships to Achieve the Goal <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2.3	<p>Have you ever been informed / heard about the resolution on urban-rural connections adopted during the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019? <i>(Please see the solution text at the end of the questionnaire)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Other (Please specify in the text box): <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Don't know
2.4	<p>Since 2019 when the resolution was adopted, what actions have you taken towards managing and enhancing urban-rural linkages? (Multi-selection enabled)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Promoting policy reforms to strengthen urban-rural linkages: Integrating urban-rural linkages in sustainable development policies, including national urban policies, energy, food, biodiversity, climate etc. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Strengthening capacity of national, sub-national and other stakeholders on urban-rural linkages. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Law/ constitution available to support enhancement of urban-rural linkages <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Development of a vision/strategy specific to urban-rural linkages, or with major provisions on urban-rural linkages <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Other (Please specify in the text box): <input type="checkbox"/> 6. None for now <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Don't know

	Do you have a specific policy, law or strategy for addressing urban-rural linkages and fostering intermediary towns and cities in terms of:	
2.5	Urban-rural linkages?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Yes (Please specify or name in the text box): <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Don't know
	Fostering intermediary towns and cities?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Yes (Please specify or name in the text box): <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Don't know

3. PROGRESS SINCE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENIUM

(For question three below, please only select what you consider as important aspects, and in correspondence to the period the aspects were recognized in your development plans. The aspects can be one or multiple, and the time periods can also be one or multiple)

3.1	<p>What do your national and local governments consider to be the most important aspects towards strengthening urban-rural linkages in your country since the beginning of the millennium?</p> <p><i>(Please tick in the box as appropriate) (Multi-selection enabled)</i></p>	Options (Times Periods)				
		2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020- -Present
3.1.1	Food security and agriculture (incl. farmers markets, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.2	Transportation (Flow of people, products)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.3	Communication (Network coverage, media for the flow of information and services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.4	Migration between urban and rural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.5	Infrastructural provision including rural communities (Electricity, ICT social amenities, basic services...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.6	Managing conflict and disasters (Supporting rural migrants in towns with housing, employment etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.7	Encouraging urban-rural partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.1.8	Fostering small and intermediary towns and cities (Budget allocation, capacity-building, initiatives for peer learning and collaboration ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.9	Reducing environmental impacts in urban-rural convergences (Managing urban sprawl, managing change of use of rural land...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.10	Land (Tenure, degradation, pollution from urban industrial waste, urban sprawl, quarrying for urban land uses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.11	Natural resources (Protecting water, forest cover in peri-urban and rural areas)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.12	Supporting inclusive finance and investment (Integrated spatial (rural, peri-urban, and urban) and sectoral budget allocations,)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	<p><i>What action(s) have relevant authorities in your country (national and subnational levels) taken to manage and strengthen urban-rural linkages in the last 20 years?</i></p> <p>(Please tick in the box as appropriate) (Multi-selection enabled)</p>					
		Options (Times Periods)				
		2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020 -Present
3.2.1	Integrating urban-rural linkages (including intermediary cities/towns issues) in urban policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.2	Fostering urban and territorial planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.3	Multilevel and integrated governance structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.4	Finance and budgeting for urban, rural and small towns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.5	Infrastructure provision in rural and intermediary towns/cities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.6	Capacity building and institutional reforms for intermediary towns and urban-rural linkages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2.7	Thematic oriented interventions (Please specify e.g. food and agriculture, transportation etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.8	Other (Please specify in the text box):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. POLICYMAKING

4.1		Which level of government has policies to address the following? (Please tick in the box as appropriate) (Multi-selection enabled)			
		Options (Government levels)			
		National government	Subnational government (Regional / State/ County)	Local Government (City or Rural Authority)	Not available
4.1.1	Food security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.2	Urban and territorial planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.3	Transportation infrastructure provision in rural areas and intermediary towns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.4	Internal migration (urban-rural, rural-urban)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.5	Disaster management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.6	Conflict management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.7	Environmental management in urban-rural convergences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.8	Communication and ICT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.9	Protection of catchment areas and natural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.10	Land (tenure, degradation, pollution, urban sprawl)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.11	Supporting inclusive finance and investment (Integrated spatial (rural, peri-urban and urban) and sectoral budget allocations, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.1.12	Other (Please specify in the text box):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5. FUTURE PLANS

5.1 Do you think that you need this kind of support to strengthen urban-rural linkages in the next five years? (Please tick in the box as appropriate) (Multi-selection enabled)			
(Category of Support)		Options (Government levels)	
		National level	Sub-national level (Intermediary towns and cities?)
5.1.1	Capacity-building and training on managing urban-rural linkages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.2	Tools and guidelines relevant to urban-rural linkages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.3	Urban policy review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.4	National urban policy implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.5	Urban and territorial planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.6	Guidance for multilevel and territorial governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.7	Guidance for fostering small and intermediary towns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1.8	Financing initiatives for intermediary towns and managing urban-rural linkages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1.9	Building intermediary city-to-city (and their respective territories, including remote and rural areas) partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This is the end of the questionnaire.

Thank You!



Annex III: UN Habitat Assembly Resolution on Urban-Rural Linkages



UNITED
NATIONS

HSP

HSP/HA.1/Res.5

UN HABITAT United Nations
Habitat Assembly
of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme

Distr.: General
13 June 2019
Original: English

United Nations Habitat Assembly of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
First session
Nairobi, 27–31 May 2019

Resolution adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly on 31 May 2019

1/5. Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements

The UN-Habitat Assembly,

Welcoming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ as a framework for international, regional, national and local action, and the commitment of Member States to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recalling the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,²

Recalling also the New Urban Agenda³ as a key instrument for achieving safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable urban and human settlements,

Recalling further resolution 19/10 of 9 May 2003 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on urban-rural linkages and sustainable urbanization,

Recalling Governing Council resolution 25/1 of 23 April 2015, in which the Executive Director of UN-Habitat was requested to develop tools and disseminate good practices to promote urban-rural linkages through integrated regional and territorial planning, working closely with other intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders,

Recalling also the ninth session of the World Urban Forum, which aimed to localize and scale up the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in order to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Taking note of the publication *Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles: Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development*,⁴

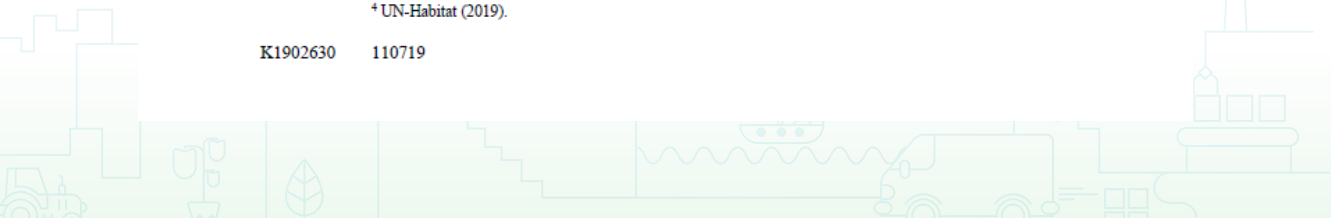
1. *Requests* the Executive Director, in consultation with relevant international and regional institutions, to develop mechanisms, within the scope of available resources, for enhancing urban-rural linkages, and calls upon the Executive Board of UN-Habitat to consider possible implementation options;

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

³ General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

⁴ UN-Habitat (2019).



HSP/HA.1/Res.5

2. *Strongly encourages* Member States to take into account urban-rural linkages in their respective national and subnational development planning policies and processes in order to strengthen the economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, including their surrounding territories;
 3. *Requests* the Executive Director, within the scope of available resources, to raise awareness among Member States and local authorities regarding the impact of urban-rural linkages on sustainable urbanization, territorial cohesion and national development;
 4. *Also requests* the Executive Director, in cooperation with appropriate partners, to disseminate and share good practices and policies relating to the impact of urban-rural linkages that could be replicated in other countries;
 5. *Further requests* the Executive Director, in consultation with appropriate partners and within the scope of available resources, to assist Member States, upon request, in developing policies and programmes to address migration from rural to urban areas;
 6. *Requests* the Executive Director to submit, through the Executive Board, a report to the United Nations Habitat Assembly at its second session on progress in the implementation of the present resolution.
-



Annex IV: Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles and Framework for Action



Guiding Principles

UN-Habitat defines urban rural linkages as the as non-linear, diverse urban-rural interactions and linkages across space within an urban-rural continuum, including flows of people, goods, capital and information, but also between sectors and activities such as agriculture, services and manufacturing. In general, they can be defined as a complex web of connections between rural and urban dimensions.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ (UN-HABITAT, 2017)

Through a consultation process with numerous stakeholders UN-Habitat has developed 10 guiding principles and 11 Framework of Action areas or thematic entry points. The collection of inspiring practices will help to raise awareness and build evidence encouraging others to apply the guiding principles through the framework of action to strengthen urban-rural linkages.

The 10 guiding principles are:



1. **Locally grounded interventions:** The local context matters a lot in making urban-rural linkages work and should inform and guide the translation of global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (including the Sustainable Development Goals), the New Urban Agenda and others.



2. **Integrated governance:** Strengthen governance mechanisms by incorporating urban-rural linkages into multisectoral, multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance.



3. **Functional spatial systems-based approaches:** Use system-based approaches to promote integrative and inclusive urban, territorial and rural policy and planning to support the analysis of the flow of resources such as people, water, biodiversity and food.



4. **Financially inclusive:** Secure and prioritize sustainable public and private investment to balance and strengthen urban-rural linkages. Where possible, adjust funding to meet objectives for integrated rural and urban economic, social and environmental development.



5. **Balanced partnership:** Foster partnerships, alliances and networks that link urban and rural actors and different sectors. Develop and harness capacities and skills across a wide range of stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector and academic institutions through inclusive and participatory processes.



6. **Human rights-based:** Embed human rights-based approaches in all policy instruments and actions to ensure that development initiatives and processes do not negatively affect anyone's human rights across the urban-rural continuum.



7. **Do no harm and provide social protection:** Strengthen urban-rural linkages to overcome conflict, recognize cultural diversity and reduce inequalities.



8. **Environmentally sensitive:** The resources needed by the current population must be addressed without compromising the ability of future generations to meet future needs.



9. **Participatory engagement:** Ensure meaningful participation by people, local institutions and communities across the urban-rural continuum.



10. **Data-driven and evidence-based:** Establish or improve knowledge systems and fill data gaps so that there is evidence to support planning methods that will reinforce the urban-rural continuum and improve territorial cohesion.

Framework for Action

The guiding principles provide for flexible application by different levels of government, intergovernmental organizations, development partners and stakeholders from academia, research, civil society, including grassroots organizations, and the private sector. The Framework for Action addresses measures to create an enabling environment and measures related to 11 sectoral and thematic entry points including the following:

- **Governance, legislation and capacity development:** Assess capacity and needs for policy tools; enhance dialogue and cooperation across sectors and planning levels and convene new multilevel, multi-sector and multi-actor governance mechanisms, and support inclusion of affected urban and rural populations.
- **Integrated planning across the urban-rural continuum:** Support localization of national planning; integrate urban-rural linkages and integrated territorial development in national urban policies and promote networks and associations of planners in different jurisdictions.
- **Investment and finance for inclusive urban-rural development:** Address and improve public and private finance and access to credit across the urban-rural continuum, focusing on small and intermediate towns and cities and integrated urban-rural territories. Strengthen financial intermediation services and enable ecosystem service provision in peri-urban and rural areas.
- **Empower people and communities:** Assess and support inclusive multi-actor participatory processes and partnerships; directly address and compensate for inequities across the urban-rural continuum to create balance and inclusion from informal and formal sectors.
- **Knowledge/data management for dynamic spatial flows of people, products, services and information:** Improve collection and management of spatially and gender disaggregated data and knowledge, including ensuring a balance between inclusion of the formal and informal sectors.

- ***Territorial economic development and employment:*** Coordinate urban and rural economic development to enhance synergies; harness the potential of small and medium size towns and apply innovations in participatory credit, finance and enterprise incubation schemes to create new jobs that improve territorial flows of products, services and information.
- ***Coherent approaches to social service provision:*** Identify needs and opportunities where stronger urban-rural linkages can impact more spatially and socially equitable service provision; pilot new urban-rural partnerships for health and social services outside cities.
- ***Infrastructure and communications:*** Perform integrated and inclusive urban-rural infrastructure needs analysis; jointly plan, finance and construct infrastructure for water, sanitation, roads and public transport, electrification and communication, etc.
- ***Integrated approaches for food security, nutrition, and public health:*** Mainstream health and well-being by building coherent and linked urban-rural approaches to food, water, energy and health systems with attention to the multiple benefits of the circular economy of the urban-rural nexus, especially when coupled with capacity development and inclusion.
- ***Environmental impact and natural resource and land management:*** Conduct strategic environmental assessments to reduce environmental risk from severe flooding, drought, storms, etc.; address land and water tenure and sustainable use of natural resources, protect biodiversity, promote ecosystem-based production systems and build resilient landscapes.
- ***Conflict and disaster:*** Assess risks, gaps and vulnerable populations in relation to potential hazards in urban, peri-urban and rural areas; jointly plan for resilience measures and invest across jurisdictions to protect transport, energy, information, health, education, food and water systems, etc.



Annex V: UN-Habitat catalogue of services on urban-rural linkages

UN-Habitat work on urban-rural linkages: UN-Habitat has been working with partners on this topic over the years, but more specifically since 2019 when a resolution was adopted by member states at the first UN-Habitat assembly (see box 20).

Box 20. UN-Habitat Services on Urban-Rural Linkages

1. *Technical assistance* to member States is provided through country-oriented initiatives and projects, with a particular focus on mainstreaming urban-rural linkages into policies, strategies and frameworks. This includes supporting the development and implementation of pilot projects where appropriate, as well as conducting research on relevant topics in collaboration with academic institutions, UN agencies, and other partners. These efforts enhance the integration of urban-rural dynamics into broader development frameworks, ensuring that countries have the tools and knowledge necessary to foster sustainable and balanced growth across both urban and rural areas.

To this end, UN-Habitat has provided technical assistance in various countries, to integrate urban-rural linkages into country policies and frameworks. The countries include Cameroon, Guinea Conakry, Mozambique, Nigeria (Niger State) and Tanzania (Zanzibar). Additionally, with partners, UN-Habitat has carried out thematic policy research which could inform policymaking in Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Extensive support provided to **13+** countries in addressing URL

UN-Habitat has worked with:

- Governments
- Local authorities
- Civil society organizations
- Stakeholders

& Partnered with:

- Academia
- Think tanks
- Development agencies



Norms and standards



2. *Capacity Development*: This is a key component to empower stakeholders with the knowledge, know-how, and tools necessary to effectively address their contextual priorities. UN-Habitat does this through activities as training Workshops, offering learning tools, courses or manuals and sharing Best Practices

Examples:

- Over 500 stakeholders from 10+ countries with enhanced capacity on urban-rural linkages
- Continued dissemination of the e-learning course on urban-rural linkages.
- Three editions of the compendium of inspiring practices on urban-rural linkages (over 58 cases from 60 countries)
- Global URL case studies online repository.

ENHANCING CAPACITY

15+ training workshops on URL linkages virtually and in-person in **7** countries, bringing together over **500** diverse stakeholders

Training Workshops



3 compendia of case studies have been developed covering **60+** case studies from **58** countries globally

Sharing Best Practices



3. *Advocacy & Partnerships*: This includes global and country-level events, conferences, and forums with virtual and in-person modalities. For example, every two years stakeholders working on the topic also gather to share experiences, emerging issues and inspiring practices in the international forum on urban-rural linkages. Also, series of newsletters on urban-rural linkages keep stakeholders updated on what UN-Habitat and partners are engaged in to advance urban-rural linkages.

Examples:

- Organized three editions of the *International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL)* in partnership with Songyang County, China.
- Published *eight editions of newsletters* highlighting progress, best practices and innovative initiatives on urban-rural linkages from different contexts.

- Ongoing partnerships to advance URL thematic areas such as food systems, land, markets, biodiversity and climate change.

ADVANCING ADVOCACY & PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS



Events

Active participation in international forums, conferences, and summits focused on urban-rural linkages.



Newsletters



4. *Expanding Knowledge*: by developing norms and standards, offering thematic guidance on urban-rural linkages on various dimensions related to urban-rural linkages. Central to these efforts are the ***Guiding Principles of Urban-Rural Linkages (URL-GP)***, launched in 2019, which consists of ten guiding principles and eleven entry points for practical implementation across sectors. Since launch of the URL-GP, thematic papers have been developed to offer in-depth insights on various topics, including national urban policies, SMART villages, land, nutrition, food systems, and biodiversity, assisting stakeholders in crafting context-specific strategies. Furthermore, technical materials such as policy papers and articles contribute to the global discourse on urban-rural linkages by highlighting emerging trends and innovative practices.

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE

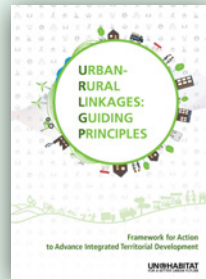


Norms and standards



Thematic guidance on urban-rural linkages on:

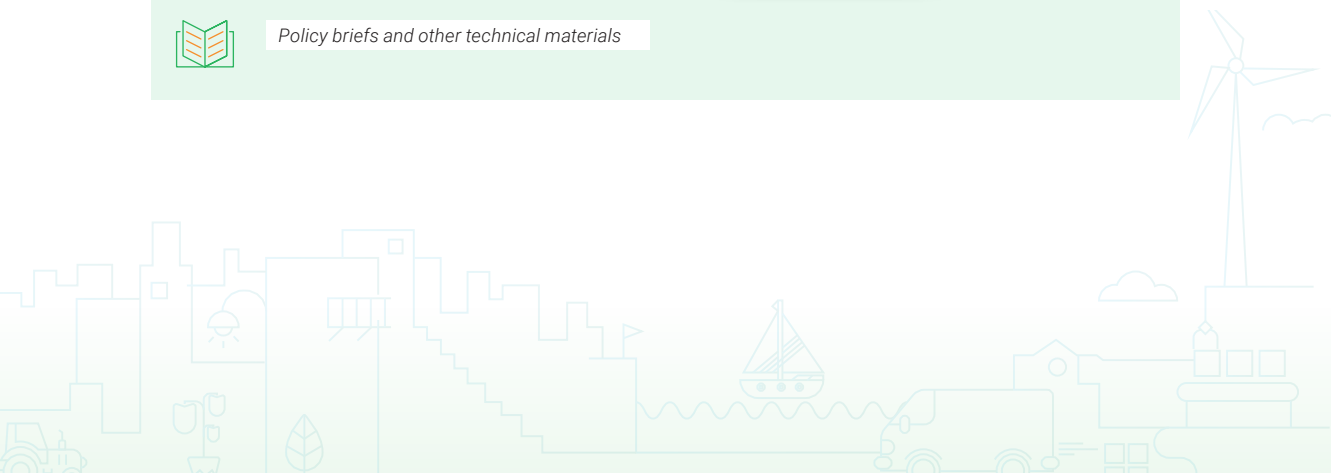
- nutrition
- food systems
- biodiversity
- land
- transportation
- urban policy



Developed through a participatory process of **130+** stakeholders from **40+** international institutions



Policy briefs and other technical materials



Endnotes

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2. Recent analyses on this regard can be consulted at the UN-Habitat (2022a; 2020) World Cities Reports (WCR), especially at WCR 2020 Chapter 1.4. “Recent Global Urban Trends and Conditions” and WCR 2022 Chapter 2.3. “What is Driving Population Growth in Cities?”
3. A recommendation on the method to delineate cities, urban and rural areas for international statistical comparisons can be found in: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/BG-Item3j-Recommendation-E.pdf>
4. UN-Habitat. (2022d). 1st Global State of Metropolis: Metropolitan Management from Policy, Legislation, Governance, Planning, Finance and Economics – Preliminary Findings and Key Messages Booklet available in: <https://unhabitat.org/1st-global-state-of-metropolis-preliminary-findings-and-key-messages-booklet>
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6. Finland’s reply to UN-Habitat’s Urban-Rural Linkages Global Survey.
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22. [https://joburg.org.za/documents_/Documents/Policies%20Blayi/Economic%20Development/Broadband%20Policy%20May%202009.doc%20\[2\].doc](https://joburg.org.za/documents_/Documents/Policies%20Blayi/Economic%20Development/Broadband%20Policy%20May%202009.doc%20[2].doc)
23. Detailed recommendations on mainstreaming URLs into metropolitan management will be available at the forthcoming UN-Habitat's 1st Global State of Metropolis Report, specially at Chapter 2 "Integrative Metropolitan Management".



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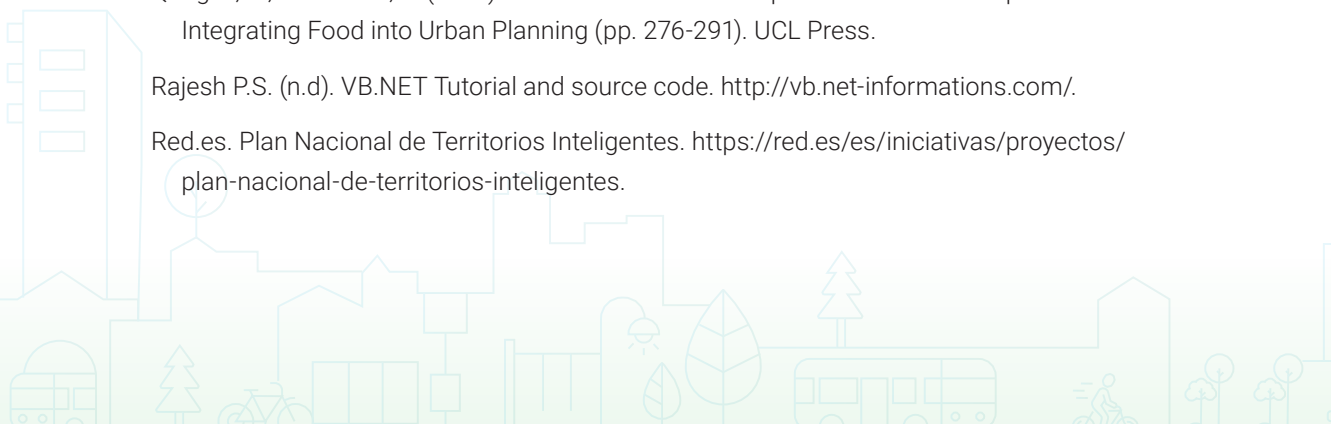
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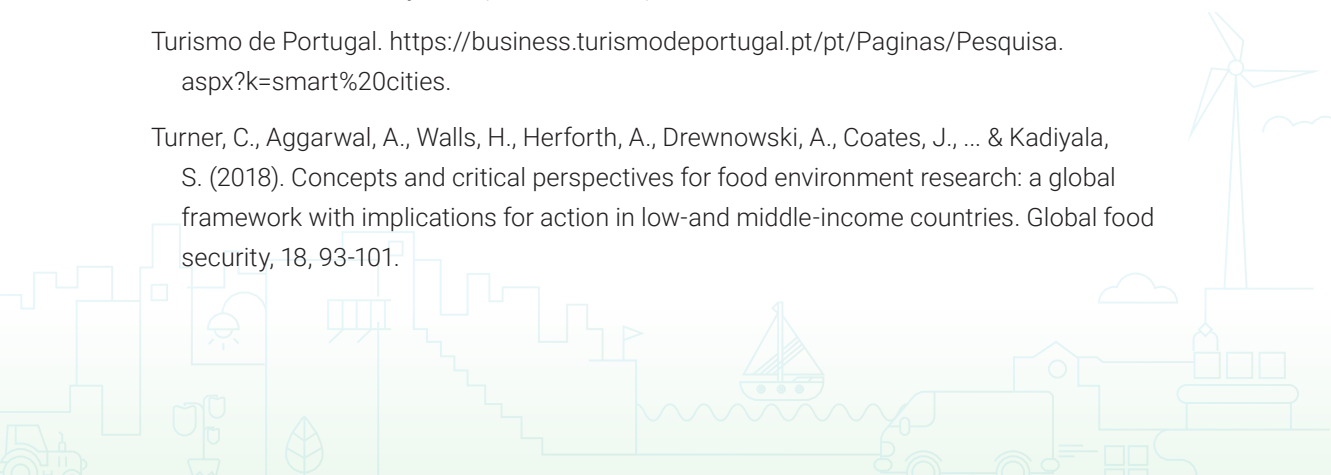
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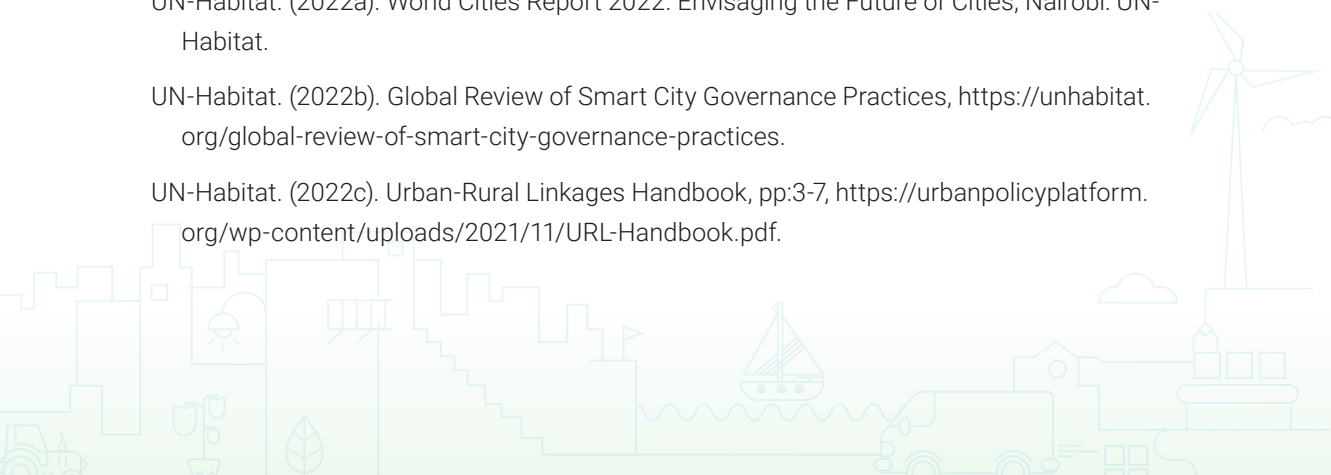
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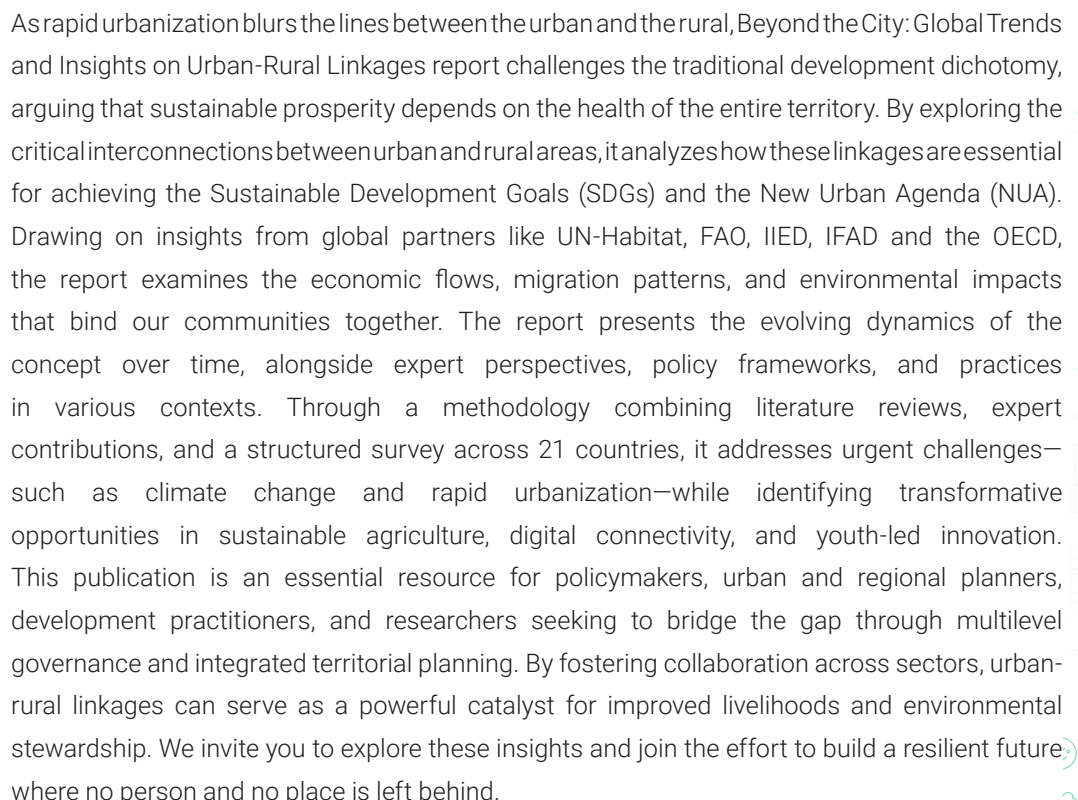
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Beyond the City: Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages



As rapid urbanization blurs the lines between the urban and the rural, *Beyond the City: Global Trends and Insights on Urban-Rural Linkages* report challenges the traditional development dichotomy, arguing that sustainable prosperity depends on the health of the entire territory. By exploring the critical interconnections between urban and rural areas, it analyzes how these linkages are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Drawing on insights from global partners like UN-Habitat, FAO, IIED, IFAD and the OECD, the report examines the economic flows, migration patterns, and environmental impacts that bind our communities together. The report presents the evolving dynamics of the concept over time, alongside expert perspectives, policy frameworks, and practices in various contexts. Through a methodology combining literature reviews, expert contributions, and a structured survey across 21 countries, it addresses urgent challenges—such as climate change and rapid urbanization—while identifying transformative opportunities in sustainable agriculture, digital connectivity, and youth-led innovation. This publication is an essential resource for policymakers, urban and regional planners, development practitioners, and researchers seeking to bridge the gap through multilevel governance and integrated territorial planning. By fostering collaboration across sectors, urban-rural linkages can serve as a powerful catalyst for improved livelihoods and environmental stewardship. We invite you to explore these insights and join the effort to build a resilient future, where no person and no place is left behind.

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