



## UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT HABITAT III

### 10 ISSUE PAPER ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

#### Key words:

Rural and urban poverty, nexus, market towns, spatial development, regional planning, rural urbanization, continuum of settlements, jobs and livelihoods, transport and mobility, climate change, mobility, migration and refugees, inclusive cities, urban land, food systems, partnership, peri-urban, urban sprawl, land fragmentation, national urban policies, green infrastructure.

#### Key facts and key figures:

// The proportion of urban population to total population stood at 16% in the 19th century; in 1996 it was 46%. Currently more than 50 per cent of the world's population lives in cities and large towns and this figure is projected to rise to 66 per cent by 2050. At the same time a significant proportion of the world's population – some 35-40 per cent – will continue to live in rural areas. Small and medium sized towns will often provide a bridge between rural dwellers and urban centers, markets and services.

// Currently, large cities account for only 13% of the World's urban population and almost half live in cities and towns of less than 500,000 inhabitants. Of the estimated 4,000 cities with a population in excess of 100,000, more than half – 2400 – have fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. As such, the boundaries between urban and rural are becoming less clear, particularly with increased peri-urbanization and greater mobility and linkages between the urban and rural.

// It is estimated that smallholder farmers produce 80% of the food consumed in developing countries.

// Cities and towns over 100,000 will extend outwards by 175 percent by 2030 (Angel: 2012 City of Planets) which will have a major impact on their rural surroundings.

// Urbanization is a process that can take many different forms depending on context, drivers, and policy choices. Among other things, it is a process that profoundly reshapes urban and rural areas and their economies, in ways that can be positive or negative for inclusive and sustainable development.

// According to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2014, 85% of poor people live in rural areas. By income levels, 78% of the extreme poor (living below 1.25US\$ a day) live in rural areas (WB 2015 calculations).

// Urban centers depend on rural areas and the rural sector for a range of goods and services, notably food, clean water, environmental services, raw materials among others. Rural areas in turn typically depend on urban areas for access to services, employment opportunities, and markets. Urban-rural linkages can thus cover a range of complementary functions and flows of people, capital, goods, employment, information and technology between rural and urban areas.

// Smallholders and rural people especially in peri-urban areas and in rural hinterlands continue to provide essential agricultural products, food, and labor to urban centers. Sustainable urbanization and inclusive rural development depend on strong linkages between cities and rural communities.

#### Issue Summary

// Urbanization is reshaping urban and rural societies and economies and the connections between them, in ways that critically impact on the attainment of inclusive and sustainable development. With the increasing urbanizing world, there is renewed interest to ensure complementary and mutually reinforcing development across rural, peri-urban and urban areas, as an integral part of both the Post 2015 development agenda and the New Urban Agenda.

// The interdependencies between urban and rural areas, their flows and functions are further asserted through the economic dynamics, social links and environmental synergies that occur across the urban-rural nexus or continuum. These interdependencies include access to food, ecosystem services, social services, transport, employment and markets. Although the specific context and priorities may differ, these flows, interdependencies and synergies are a reality in both developing and developed countries.

// Urban and rural development have different, though equally important, sectoral focuses and benefits. Given global economic transitions to secondary and tertiary sectors, urban areas tend to draw most domestic and international resources (public and private). This uneven spatial development is the crux of why strong urban-rural linkages are so essential, in evening out access to resources, services and livelihood opportunities, and equally distributing the economic and other benefits long observed in the urbanization process. Balanced outcomes across space, and across urban and rural areas, are a vital objective of sustainable development that leaves no one behind, and should also include ensuring strong investment in rural areas.

// The need for territorial planning is underlined by the negative impact of the unregulated expansion of urban development (loss of the most valuable agricultural land) on peri-urban land use and related resources (water, land and forests).

// Urban-rural linkages represent transformative potential for universal sustainable human development. **Knowledge** generation and management shall ensure that there is enhanced understanding on how functions and flows operate. It will also be essential to ensure sufficient documentation and dissemination of inspiring experiences, tools, practices and strategies in urban-rural linkages in collaboration with research institutions, academia, civil society, rural people and their organizations and governments at all levels. Further, there is an urgent need to identify knowledge gaps especially in relation to current challenges such as climate change, disaster resilience, food security and nutrition.

// In addition it is important to develop **guiding principles and indicators** to assess trends in relation to rural – urban interactions. Tools and frameworks shall be oriented to creating effective and inclusive links throughout the territory that support and address the issues such as infrastructure and services, food security and nutrition, energy,

migration, capital, goods, employment, information and technology between rural and urban territories of various sizes including metropolitan regions, networks of small- and medium-sized cities, sparsely populated areas and market towns.

// **Policy** interventions have been characterized by sectoral approaches by agencies or governments depending on their mandates. Different government ministries have been mandated to deal with specific urban or rural issues creating a dichotomy, and sometimes competition between sectors, rather than an integrated and complementary approach. There has also been limited effort to develop legislative frameworks to strengthen urban-rural linkages and to ensure they serve an agenda of balanced sustainable and inclusive development. In addition cross-cutting synergies have also not been operationalized and actors have largely been implementing various thematic issues relating to urban-rural linkages.

// Urban-rural linkages ties together a broad range of themes and an equally broad range of actors across the territory. It is imperative to establish partnership of **engagement** at various scales (global, national, regional/ metropolitan and local) and on various urban-rural issues should be developed to enhance urban-rural linkages within the respective mandate of all partners involved, thus complementing expertise, efforts and interventions. There is a need for an effective partnership and networking within and across government at all levels, international agencies, research and academia, civil society and the private sector among others. It is essential to map out actors, their assets and gaps in knowledge, tools, policy and other means of implementation, and to strengthen the capacity of actors to address the gaps between urban and rural areas is also required.

### Key drivers for action

// Focusing on territorial and spatial planning at city-region scale for balanced and inclusive urban and rural development including strengthening the capacity of small and intermediate cities to attract and manage

// Ensuring a sustainable future for cities requires urban forestry, urban agriculture, horticulture, gardens and parks, bioengineering, bio filters, phytoremediation, and other disciplines to be strategically integrated. Green infrastructure (GI) can provide the unifying framework for creating a continuum between the green elements of rural and urban landscapes.

// Improving transportation networks between urban and rural areas to allow rural residents to benefit from access to quality public services, which tend to be concentrated in urban areas due to population density and economies of scale.

// Protecting of high value ecosystems while promoting the spatial flows through regional planning that establish connections between urban areas and their rural hinterlands and ensures complementarity between them, while encouraging overlapping spatial flows and hence break down false dichotomies and strengthen urban-rural linkages and connectivity.

// Reducing environmental impacts through protection of ecosystem in the urban-rural spheres especially in reducing air and land pollution, protection of forests, water and watersheds, land fragmentation, ecosystems and biodiversity.

Also use planned city extensions, low-carbon and smart cities, among the strategies to promote density and compact human settlements as well as to reduce per capita rates of energy use and emissions and mitigate climate change.

// Strengthening city-region food systems for improved food security and nutrition through inclusion of efficient and accessible markets and distribution system in the city planning, as well as taking into consideration the change of diets in urban populations. Further, developing control measures to safeguard agricultural land in peri-urban areas from urban sprawl while encouraging sustainable urban agriculture where appropriate, and ensuring that measures are in place to protect or compensate for damage to the livelihoods of rural households and communities living in the proximate and hinterland agricultural areas that may result from urban sprawl, even when these areas are not high-potential. Environmental impact of agriculture on urban space and vice versa must be considered.

// Developing principles, legislative and governance mechanisms to secure land rights, including common property natural resources, and improve inclusive access to markets, finance, services, technologies and decent employment opportunities for rural and urban women and men living in poverty.

// Developing legislative and governance mechanisms and tools to enhance and support urban-rural partnerships such as National Urban Policies, Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning.

// Promoting inclusive investment and finance instruments and systems to support both urban and rural areas and reducing disparity in the provision of sustainable infrastructure and services between urban and rural areas, particularly in energy, transport, health, education, water, green spaces and sanitation.

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