



**SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**

Songyang County LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE,
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA | 19th - 20th October, 2021

SECOND INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

Integrating Health and Territorial Development for
Sustainable Livelihoods

IFURL2 key messages

Introduction

The Second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages, was co-organized by UN-Habitat, the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban Rural Development, the Health Commission of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People's Government and the Songyang County People's Government.

Themed Integrating *Health and Territorial Development for Sustainable Livelihoods*, the forum demonstrated the importance of urban-rural linkages in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in communities strengthening cooperation and working together to promote health and well-being across the urban-rural continuum. The Forum's speakers and sessions were designed

to address the growing volume of requests from both national and local governments to help plan for prevention, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key conclusion was that, at the global level, governance measures and management approaches need to be tailored to learn from responses to the pandemic in cities, towns, and communities as well as in informal settlements so that the most vulnerable are protected.

This document presents the key messages from presentations, in-depth discussions, shared experiences, session outcomes, expert contributions, and lessons learned from the five sessions held.



Dr Wang Zehn addressing the participants during the forum © Songyang County

Key Messages



Urban and rural systems are a unified territories that encompasses daily patterns of life, the complexity of which can best be seen through a “living systems” perspective as articulated in the first World Forum of Intermediary Cities ¹. Enhancing the territorial dimension of cities allows a two-way perspective from the city to its territory and from the rural hinterland to the urban core.



The COVID-19 global pandemic has generated an urgent demand for a better quality of life from the people around the world. Inclusive governance and democratic processes need to be reinforced to better includes rural communities and Indigenous Peoples. The COVID-19 pandemic has put on the table and made visible pre-existing inequities in every region. Lasting resilience will only be possible if disparities in access to services including social protection persist, especially for those living in rural areas including smaller cities and settlements. The COVID-19 pandemic has also generated a will for changing our models of development as a global community, requiring us to be more conscious of the fragility of life (including economic and socio-cultural systems) on our planet. We need new development models that strengthen these systems and take into account the services of ecosystems or nature, and lead to a greener way of life that better balances environment and development.



The concept of care must be at the heart of new development models, generating caring economies which take into account growing internal displacement, external migration with special attention to minorities and female empowerment. The concept of care also means taking responsibility for nature and our relationship with it, being more careful with life and its ecosystems. Beyond technology and investment, the human dimension of transformation needs to be at the heart of a renewed contract between governance at multiple levels and citizens.

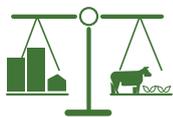
¹ UCLG World Forum of Intermediary Cities Kütahya, Turkey



Intermediary cities play an important role, linking rural and urban areas, as well as small and big agglomerations within urban systems. They host more than half of the world's population and are expected to contribute to more than 40% of urban population growth between 2010 and 2030 in less-developed regions. And they serve as key actors of the urban-rural continuum. The often unplanned growth patterns of intermediary cities expose them to compounded effects of climate change. All places including intermediary and large cities are connected through the flow of people, of goods, information, and services.



There will be no resilience without recognizing the role of intermediary cities and their function to mediate between rural and urban, providing once again a balance of yin and yang that can bring to planetary civilization a strengthening of smaller cities, towns and rural areas that include both cultivated and wild nature. Global resilience must be the key driver now for vision, policy, and actions to be pursued. The world demands resolution of inequities, focused on climate change, and territorial food and water access for all in settlements of all sizes. Such resolution will be the parameter by which a peaceful and resilient world post-COVID and urban-rural balance will be realized. The pressure to resolve inequity, injustices and disempowerment will be a critical driver for the transformations needed to achieve justice, peace and resilience.



The climate emergency requires territorial actions that encompass a balance between the urban and the rural as a balance of yin and yang, a resilient balance that embraces culture as well as economics as a driver to achieve that balance.



Climate change will change the urban-rural interface, and all flows including those that underpin food and water systems, biodiversity and other ecosystem services, placing intermediary cities on the front lines of climate change impacts. Internal (domestic) migration patterns will also be dramatically affected by climate change. Fast onsetting climate events will affect territories in different ways making a territorial approach essential to assess and identify areas of collaboration to limit the effects of climate change. Small and medium-sized cities have the potential to make strong contributions to achieving net zero transmission. Therefore, multi-level governance aligning small, intermediary, and larger cities, territories and national governments is key to promote the cooperation and collaboration between urban and rural areas.

**A better quality of life for all
in an urbanizing world**

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