

# URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES Newsletter

## 4<sup>th</sup> Edition | May 2022



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Bamboo pavilion, Hengkeng village, Songyang, China 2019 © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

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### INTRODUCTION

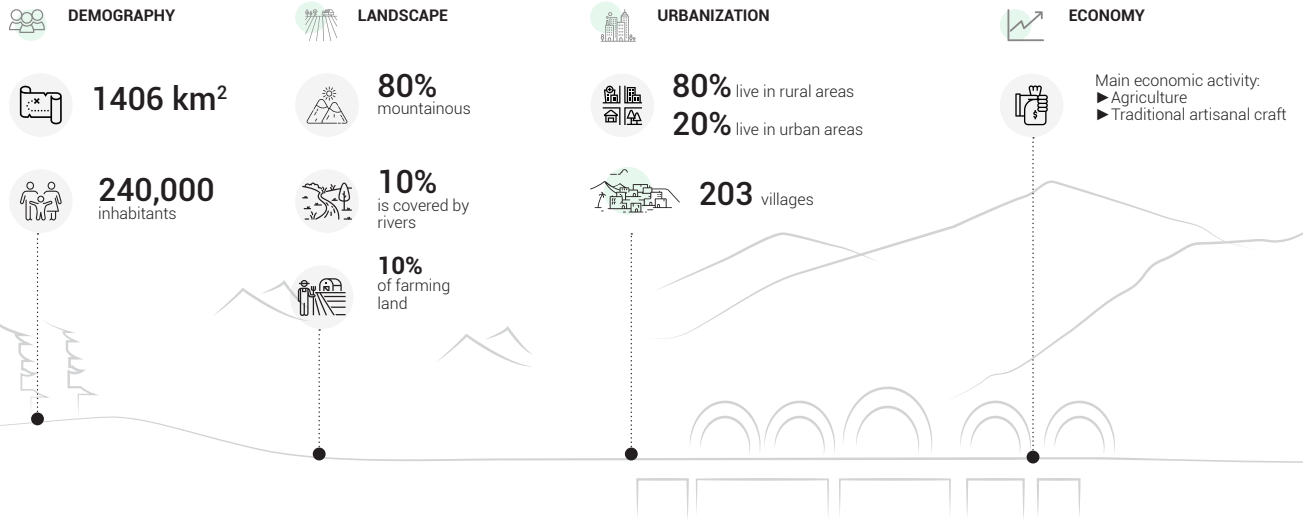
We would like to welcome our readers to the fourth edition of the Urban-Rural Linkages Newsletter (URL). Since the launch of the [Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding principles and a Framework for Action to Advance Territorial Development](#) (URL-GP) in 2019, three editions have been released: [issue 1](#), [issue 2](#), [issue 3](#).

The fourth edition covers the [Second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages](#) (IFURL2) held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021 in Songyang County, Southeast China. Included are reports on other events and achievements such as new collaborations under the section “URL Spotlight 2021”.

This issue also highlights a selection of projects that UN-Habitat has been implementing with partners on the localization of the URL-GP through policies and strategies. These projects contribute to the implementation of the URL Resolution titled “[HSP/HA.1/Res.5 Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements](#)” which was adopted by member states in 2019. Along with other sections, the issue presents new knowledge materials by UN-Habitat and partners on urban-rural linkages as well as upcoming events.

# 1. Second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL2)

## ► SONGYANG COUNTY: HOST OF TWO IFURLs



Songyang county has been described in many publications as among the most beautiful villages in China and the last “fairyland” in Jiangnan. It is located in the southwest of Zhejiang province, China in the foothills of Changsong Mountain, and is surrounded by mountains on four sides. The landscape is 80 percent mountainous, 10 percent rivers and 10 percent agriculture with a total area of 1406 km<sup>2</sup> which has around 203 villages. The county has a population of 240,000. 80 per cent of whom reside in rural areas and the other 20 per cent in urban areas. With majority of the population living in rural areas and the geographic features of the region, agriculture is a main economic activity as well as traditional artisanal craft which are still operational.

Until the last decade, the local community of the county faced challenges from a decline in economic activities, including unemployment and migration of youth to cities for jobs. To overcome such challenges, in January 2014, the DnA - Design and Architecture Company implemented the “Architectural Acupuncture” strategy through collective collaborations between architects and county government, local communities, and traditional craftsmen.

These collaborations led to tailored interventions in traditional villages of Songyang. For example, the public spaces and programmes of the Pingtian Village Centre were renovated using sustainable technology while in Shicang village the Hakka Indenture Museum was built using local stones and construction techniques. The restored and renovated spaces were opened to tourism that began to flourish in this area. This development created economic activities generating employment, developing a sense of cultural identity and the satisfaction from restoration in the local community. It also attracted young people to move back to rural areas from major Chinese cities. Building on the agricultural landscape of the region, in Caizhai Village a traditional tofu manufacturing unit was built as an extension of the landscape and village fabric. These and other projects in Songyang county also illustrate the application of several principles from the URL-GP such as principle 5, Balanced Partnerships, and principle 9, Participatory Engagement, considering the collaboration between governmental authorities, private sector, and local communities towards improved livelihoods and prosperity across the urban-rural continuum.



## ► OVERVIEW AND OUTCOMES OF IFURL2

# IFURL2



International forums on urban-rural linkages are biennial events organized by UN-Habitat that bring together partners and practitioners to discuss and share experiences on matters related to urban-rural linkages. The first forum was held in 2019 at Songyang County China. It was attended by over 200 participants from 17 countries majority being from China. The second International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages (IFURL) was held on 19th and 20th October, 2021 in the same venue, under the theme, "Integrating health and territorial development for sustainable livelihoods". The forum was co-organised 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 Songyang County People's Government. The event brought together more than 200 participants from 19 countries, 32 guest speakers and 18 international organizations. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in travel restrictions, the forum was held in a hybrid format, with international speakers and audience connecting virtually, and domestic speakers and audience participating in person at the venue in Songyang County.

During the event, critical themes, practices, and approaches from different entry points and contexts were discussed on the topic of health and territorial development. The forum also focused on selected concrete experiences and good practices in the prevention and containment of infectious diseases and the post-outbreak recovery measures in urban, rural, and peri-urban areas from Melbourne in Australia, Minna in Nigeria, and Opsterland in the Netherlands and from Songyang and other locations in China. The relevance of urban-rural linkages in public health to promote well-being for all were highlighted across the Forum.

The key messages from the event were:

1. Urban and rural systems are unified territories that encompass many patterns of life through a "living systems" perspective.
2. The COVID-19 global pandemic has generated an urgent demand for a better quality of life for all
3. The climate emergency requires territorial actions that encompass a balance between urban and the rural, as a balance of yin and yang, a balance that employs culture as a driver to achieve resilience
4. There will be no resilience without recognizing the role of intermediary cities' function to mediate between rural and urban, that also providing a yin and yang balance to bring to planetary civilization a strengthening of smaller cities, towns along with rural areas dominated by nature that is both cultivated and wild.
5. The concept of care must be at the heart of new development models to generate caring economies, which take into account nature, migration, minorities and female empowerment, and are thus more careful with life and its ecosystems.
6. Intermediary cities play the linkage role between rural and urban areas, as well as between small and big agglomerations within urban systems.
7. Climate change will change the urban-rural interface, and all the flows including those that underpin food systems, placing intermediary cities at the frontline of climate change impacts

For more details on the event, including information about each of the sessions, please visit <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl2/> and the summary document of the forum can be found [here](#).

Read More ▾



IFURL2  
[urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl2/](https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/ifurl2/)

## 2. Urban-Rural Linkages Projects

2018



AIM

Capacity Development

### HIGHLIGHTS



2500 stakeholders



19+ Workshops

20+ Participants each

### RESULTS



Identification of priorities



Data collection

### ► “Leaving no-place behind: Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa”

This project was implemented by UN-Habitat with partners between 2018 and 2021. The aim of the project was to support Cameroon, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria (Niger State) and Tanzania (Zanzibar) to bridge the urban-rural divide by integrating urban-rural linkages into Urban Policies. The objective of the project was to strengthen capacities of policy makers and change agents at all levels to collect and use evidence for fostering cross-sectional, multi-level policies, frameworks and action plans for integrated and inclusive territorial development that promote urban-rural linkages and reduce the development gap. Over 2,500 stakeholders were involved in the various project activities including capacity development workshops and data collection field activities. A total of nineteen workshops with over 20 participants each were conducted at the local level in each country and five regional workshops were also held for the four countries. These engagements contributed to identification of priorities in strengthening urban-rural linkages in each project context and for collection of data. Countries demonstrated different priorities for their contexts including food, transportation, and migration, among others. The project provided for development and piloting of an urban-rural linkages toolkit and [handbook](#). Similarly, the [first](#) and [second](#) compendia of best practices on urban-rural linkages were developed during the project period in quest for existing practices that could be replicated.

The project successfully achieved the key goal of integrating urban rural linkages into Urban Policies. In Niger State, Nigeria, a chapter on urban-rural linkages was inserted in the urban policy of Niger State which was adopted in 2021. In Zanzibar the diagnostic report of urban policy included urban-rural linkages as a section. In Cameroon the already completed draft urban policy was reviewed through the lens of urban-rural linkages and proposals for changes were made. In Guinea Conakry, the ongoing drafting of urban policy includes urban-rural linkages as an overarching issue. The subject of urban-rural linkages was also covered by national media in the contexts of the project in Guinea Conakry and Zanzibar. The project was closed in March, 2022 at Conakry, Guinea in a multi-country multi-stakeholder [workshop](#) attended by over 35 participants from the project countries, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD) and the World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM partners).

A key outcome of the project agreed upon in the final workshop was that ***national and local authorities need to invest in relevant infrastructure to connect rural to urban areas, promote the mobility of goods and services, particularly food products.*** Knowledge materials from the project include workshop reports, policy reviews, country reports on urban-rural linkages from secondary sources and data collection and can be found [here](#).



Leaving No Place Behind: Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa

2021





#### PHASE 1



Capacity developments

#### PHASE 2



Policy reviews



Data collection

### ► Supporting Effective Implementation of the New Urban Agenda through National and Subnational Urban Policies in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo

The project on “Supporting the Effective Implementation of the New Urban Agenda through National and Subnational Urban Policies” was implemented in two phases. The first phase was in Burkina Faso and Senegal and the second phase was in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mali. The project supports the development of action plans in these countries to strengthen urban-rural linkages and territorial approaches within their National Urban Policy processes based on Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda. This project also serves as guidance to governments at national, sub-national and local levels and to other urban and rural stakeholders in order to work collaboratively towards a more inclusive and integrated territorial development across the urban-rural continuum.

To achieve the project outcomes, policy reviews through the lens of urban-rural linkages were conducted in Burkina Faso, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). To accomplish this, various evidence-based, normative toolkits developed by UN-Habitat were applied to generate areas for policy action. The policy reviews were conducted in consultation with national ministries based on the country's challenges and opportunities. These policy review outcome documents will be shared in the fifth issue of the URL newsletter. In the DRC, data collection and related activities were conducted in the smaller town of Beni in order to generate a detailed analysis of the state of urban-rural linkages at the local level. In Mali and the DRC, amidst COVID-19, additional activities are being conducted to address the challenges stemming from the pandemic affecting the urban policy development processes.



## 3. Urban Rural Linkages SPOTLIGHT

### ► UN-Habitat and World Union of Wholesale Markets sign Memorandum of Understanding in Florence, Italy

The Executive Director of the United Nations Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, and Acting Chairman of the World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM), Mr. Stéphane Layani, signed a Five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the 2021 WUWM Conference, held in Florence (Italy). The MoU highlights the integral role of market and food systems to the rural and peri-urban areas, including the need for both organizations

to enhance resilient approaches during COVID-19 recovery and support more inclusive, resilient, safe, and sustainable cities and human settlements globally. Market and food systems are part of a complex web of physical spaces, where flows of people, goods and services occur daily, between rural and urban communities, through a diversity of parallel distribution systems. The two organizations share the common alignment of the markets and food systems anchored through urban-rural linkages. This cooperation is also in the context of multi-level governance and multi-sector approaches to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.



Source: <https://wuum.org>; [https://wuum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WUWM\\_2021\\_Conference\\_Report.pdf](https://wuum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WUWM_2021_Conference_Report.pdf)



► **UN-Habitat joins the Food and Agriculture Organization in signing letters of intent in six African cities for the Green Cities Initiative**

On 21st June 2021, the Green Cities High-Level Signing Ceremony marked the launch of the Regional Action Program for Africa. This is part of the FAO Green Cities Initiative launched in September 2020 in New York to promote sustainable agri-food systems and green lifestyles for better African cities. While addressing the ceremony as one of the high-level speakers, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif thanked FAO for being a traditional

and long-term partner of UN Habitat and praised the promising joint efforts on integrated territorial approaches, strengthening urban-rural linkages and innovative approaches to urban and territorial food systems. The event featured high-level speakers and a virtual signing of Letters of Intent with six African cities namely: Praia (Cabo Verde), Kisumu (Kenya), Nairobi (Kenya), Antananarivo (Madagascar), Quelimane (Mozambique) and Kigali (Rwanda) to transform to sustainable agri-food systems and green lifestyles in urban areas to become greener, cleaner, more resilient, and regenerative.

The Executive Director of the UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif speaking at the event ►



► **UN-Habitat and the University of Nairobi sign an agreement of collaboration on Urban Rural Linkages**

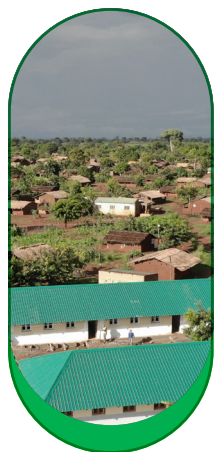
In November 2021, UN-Habitat and the University of Nairobi signed an agreement to research on impacts of COVID-19 on the transportation of food along the urban - rural continuum in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. The main activities in the agreement include research on urban-rural linkages, policy reviews, capacity building for county government planners in Kenya and academic support and training for students of Planning.

The agreement will play a vital role in establishing a Centre of Excellence for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa, with support of the urban and regional planning department of the University of Nairobi. Research on the impacts of COVID-19 on food mobility along the urban - rural continuum is being undertaken in all the project countries. Establishment of the Center was endorsed by Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Prof Kiama, together with other academic leaders during a project consultation session with UN-Habitat in January 2022.

Meeting with University of Nairobi Vice Chancellor, Professor Stephen Kiama Gitahi ►







100+  
Participants

## ► Urban-Rural Linkages Webinar in Preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Africities Summit: “The Role of Intermediary Cities in Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages Amid Rapid Urbanization in Africa”

On 21st January 2022, and as part of preparations for the Africities Summit, UN-Habitat and UCLG-Africa organized a webinar to discuss the role of intermediary cities in strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages amid rapid urbanization in Africa.

Speaker’s presentations and webinar recordings can be found [here](#). More details on Africities Summit to be held in Kisumu, Kenya on 17<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022, are in the last section of the newsletter. The key messages from the webinar were:

- Urbanization in Africa has been characterized by having less density in comparison to other regions; however, small, and intermediary cities are growing faster than large cities.
- There is an urgent need to rethink how to manage rapid urbanization in Africa and focus on intermediary cities along with other human settlements in the continuum of space and defining how the places are connected, this will be a necessary stepping-stone towards sustainable urbanization.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the important role of intermediary cities to focus on localizing production near the consumers. The pandemic has also shown how relevant universal access to healthcare services is in intermediary cities and how restrictions to mobility between urban and rural areas can affect different sectors of the economy, including food security.
- With empowerment the intermediate cities of Africa can play a critical role in enhancing the balance of territorial development, linking urban and rural communities by acting as service centers for rural and urban populations, and playing a major role in accessing goods and services. Also, by adopting integrated governance, intermediary cities can play a central role in ensuring that rural voices are incorporated, and trust is built between the people and leaders.
- Intermediate cities can be empowered through producing coherent policies and enhanced management of integrated development plans including local governance. This can be achieved by continued coordinated partnerships among the stakeholders in the continuum of human settlements (UN agencies, governments, civil society, private sector) and by strengthening governance systems.
- There should be a focus on the importance of mainstreaming food systems in local policy and planning in intermediary cities to enhance Urban Rural Linkages.
- A Moroccan case study highlights the unique characteristics of intermediate cities in Africa such as a sense of belonging and greater resilience compared to larger metropolitan areas. Intermediary cities are key players for agricultural food security and managing natural landscapes between cities and towns should be prioritized in policy making and governance mechanisms.
- Intermediary cities offer an opportunity to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, taking into consideration the heterogeneity in climate change data and the rapid changing character of growth in human settlements.
- Connectivity between the system of cities can be achieved by applying systems-based approaches, analyzing various relevant indicators (i.e. Connectivity Index Analysis), by understanding the formal and informal economies better and by investing in hard infrastructure (roads, electricity) as well as in soft infrastructure (governance, data, digital).
- In order to enhance urban rural linkages through intermediary cities, it is essential to initiate the use of the Regional and Territorial Plans as a major planning tool through national visions and strategies. Strong national visionary documents and development plans help cover the gap between policies.







VIRTUAL TECHNICAL  
CONSULTATION



115  
Participants

## ► Webinar on “Building sustainable and resilient food environments: Market Systems at the centre of Urban-Rural Linkages”

Held on 21st April, the technical consultation was jointly organized by World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM), the World Farmers Markets Coalition, the Market Cities Initiative, with the support of UN-Habitat, FAO, ICLEI, Regions4 and UCLG. The session on markets and food systems aim was to build on lessons from the impacts of COVID-19 and ongoing crisis (economic volatility, increased food insecurity, armed conflicts, climate change, etc.) affecting food supply chains for all types of food markets. The webinar was attended by 115 participants from around the world. Market actors have been on the front lines of market innovation, and they need to be represented in policy debates at local, national and international decision venues such as parliamentary or intergovernmental spaces.

The key messages from the technical consultation include:

- COVID-19 and conflict induced price volatility has reinforced the importance of addressing both informal and formal markets across the urban-rural continuum and their interaction to promote synergy, fairness, and inclusion.
- Market systems are where urban and rural communities intersect on a daily basis, exchanging goods, services, information, social and monetary capital and these linkages are essential for resilience and sustainability for cities and territories.

• Public sector support for market infrastructure needs to be adapted to the new fragility of supply chains and support a more complex web of markets for resilience in food systems.

• Processes of dialogue and policy formation for all markets critical to feeding human settlements need investment and capacity development.

• Public and private sector investment in markets and market actors needs to be balanced between support for larger formal wholesale and retail markets, and support for informal and direct markets.

• Informal markets are where smallholders are a majority of producers and traders in many countries – with upwards of 90% of food for certain cities in Africa and Asia being supplied by informal markets.

• Small, medium and large farmers, traders and other intermediaries need fair and transparent economic conditions and governance frameworks for functional and mutually prosperous interaction.

UN-Habitat and its partners will carry these messages into coming venues and processes including Africities Summit, World Urban Forum (WUF 11), the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) to review progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global fora. At subnational and national levels, mapping of market systems is important for strengthening market systems as part of sustainable urbanization and preparation for future crises Along the urban-rural continuum.



## 5. UPCOMING KEY EVENTS

### ► Ninth Session of the Africities Summit

The upcoming ninth edition of the Africities Summit will be held from the 17th to 21st of May 2022 in Kisumu, Kenya. The theme of the 9th Africities Summit is "The Role of Intermediary Cities of Africa in the Implementation of Agenda 2030 of the United Nations and the African Union Agenda 2063". The purpose of the summit is to review policies and institutional frameworks supporting the integration of rural and urban communities. The summit will explore the potential for such integration to help establish the foundation for local economic development connecting markets and systems of cities. As intermediary cities are

the spatial interface between urban and rural development, they can play a significant role in strengthening urban rural linkages. The summit will be a major milestone for defining a new development trajectory in Urban Rural Linkages through intermediary cities of Africa.

The summit has been organised in consultation with the Government of Kenya, the Council of Governors of Kenya, and lead partners including UN-Habitat, UCLG World, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). To find out more information of the summit, please click [here](#) or visit the website for more updates <https://africities.org/>



### ► WORLD URBAN FORUM 11

The Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF11) will take place in Katowice, Poland from 26 to 30 June 2022. The theme of WUF11 "Transforming our Cities for a Better Urban Future" will provide greater insight on the future of cities based on existing trends, challenges, and opportunities, as well as suggest ways cities can be better prepared to address future crises from pandemics to other shocks including climate change and economic volatility. Also, without making the urban spaces livable, more accessible, and more equitable, it is impossible to progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

► Further information about WUF 11 is accessible through the following link.

<https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-opens-application-for-wuf11-events-and-exhibition-space>

The World Urban Forum has taken place biannually since its first convening in Nairobi, Kenya in 2002 and is considered as the world's premier meeting on sustainable urbanization. This year more than 10,000 participants (virtually and in person) will participate in discussions related to the theme of the forum. Other 5,000 observers will be able to participate remotely through the "WUF Alumni Network" initiative. The last World Urban Forum 10 convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was held 2 years ago in Abu Dhabi, in February 2020.





# 6. Outlook for 2022



## NORMATIVE PRODUCTS



## TOOL DEVELOPMENT



## TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



## ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS

### 2022

- ▶ Compendium of case studies 3rd edition
- ▶ Draft URL Global Report and working papers (partner contributions)
- ▶ Online database of case studies
- ▶ Biodiversity and Urban-Rural Linkages thematic paper

- ▶ Updated assessment tools
- ▶ Interactive assessment tool pilot
- ▶ Resource collection: URL policies, tools, laws

- ▶ Online URL learning
- ▶ URL-GP for planners, academia etc.

- ▶ URL global consultations and webinars
- ▶ Partner organized URL activities
- ▶ URL capacity development events
- ▶ 4th and 5th issue URL newsletter

### 2023

- ▶ Compendium of case studies 4th edition
- ▶ URL Global Report

- ▶ Evaluation of tool use/ adaptation by countries and subnational actors

- ▶ Evaluation of learning manual/guides use

- ▶ URL webinar series
- ▶ Partner inclusion in events related to launch of URL Global Report



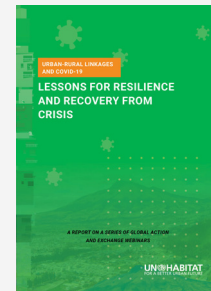


# 7. Knowledge Products on Urban-Rural Linkages

## 2021-2022 KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

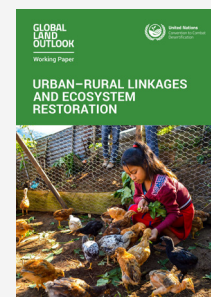
### ► Urban-Rural Linkages and COVID-19: Lessons for Resilience and Recovery from Crisis

The report was published in 2022 and provides a summary analysis of the global webinar series on the experiences and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of urban-rural linkages. The live webinars featured speakers and interactive discussions from 109 countries with nearly 6,000 registrants. The report captures new forms of cross-sector engagement and collaboration among international organizations, national and subnational governments, civil society organizations, research and professional institutions. Themes addressed include integrated urban-rural policy and governance, metropolitan and intermediate cities' governance, food and market systems, migration as well as the application of the URL-GP in the context of climate change and ecosystem restoration.



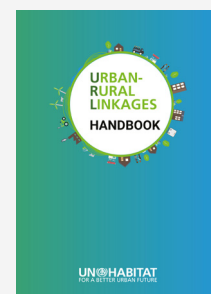
### ► Urban-Rural Linkages and Ecosystem Restoration

This is a [working paper](#) for the signature report of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Global Land Outlook published in March 2022. The paper provides case studies, analysis and recommendations for land and ecosystem restoration at the urban-rural interface at a time of heightened urgency on multiple fronts on local, national, and international levels. It provides an overview of how selected cities and subnational governments have utilized specific entry points or pathways to restoration through, for example, land-use planning, biodiversity protection, urban forestry, open-space conservation and food system transformation.



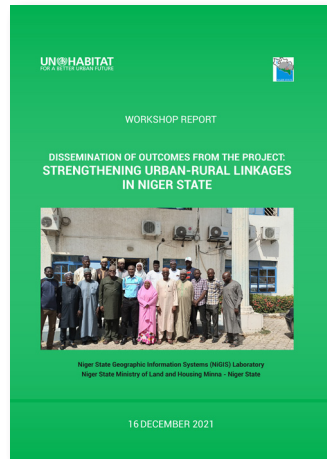
### ► Urban Rural Linkages- Handbook

The URL handbook was published to collate the resources of the Urban-Rural Linkages program in the Policy, Legislation and Governance Section (PLGS) of UN-Habitat's Urban Practices Branch. This compilation presents an adaptable methodology for strengthening urban-rural linkages at different levels of governance. The handbook follows a series of significant progress and results achieved on urban-rural linkages since the launch of the Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles and Framework for Action, in 2019.





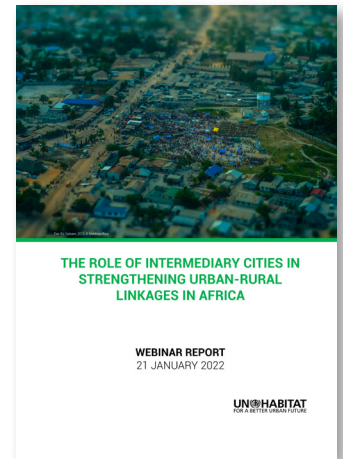
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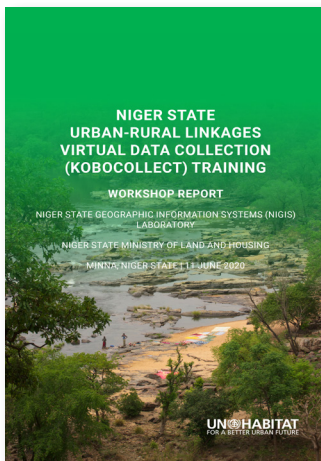
Dissemination of Outcomes from the Project: Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages in Niger State



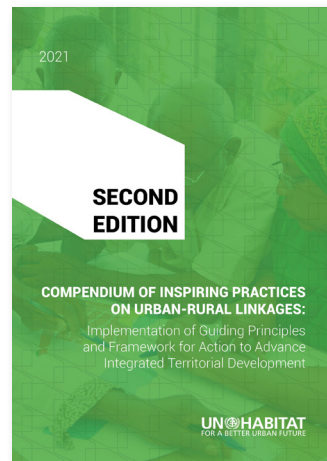
Localizing Urban-Rural Linkages Tools and Methodologies in Selected African Countries in Expert Group Meeting (EGM)



The Role of Intermediary Cities in Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa



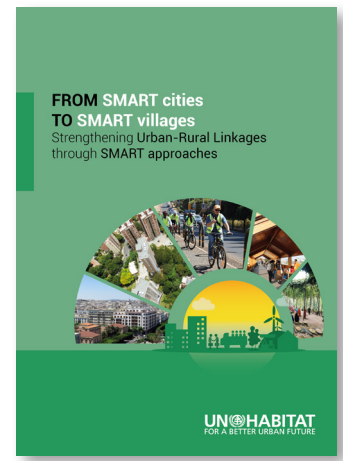
Niger State Urban-Rural Linkages Virtual Data Collection (Kobocollect) Training Workshop Report



Compendium of inspiring practices on Urban-Rural Linkages - Second Edition



Territorial Approaches for Sustainable Development: Stocktaking on Territorial Approaches-Experiences and Lessons



Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages through smart approaches



[Read More](#)

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