

RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION

2020 Urban Learning Brief for Mission Staff



This Urban Learning Brief was written to inform USAID Mission staff about trends and developments in urban programming and is now being distributed to a wider audience. The content of this brief is based on learning from the 2020 World Urban Forum (WUF). WUF is a biennial meeting of UN Habitat focused on city-action for the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

By 2050, more than two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas and most of the urban growth will occur in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. A major driver of this urban growth is migration, as people move from rural areas to cities in pursuit of economic opportunities. Common factors that drive migrants to cities include family ties, natural disasters (e.g. floods and drought), or political upheaval (e.g. conflict) push factors. This **urbanization will create a sharp demand for land, infrastructure, and services in urban areas.**

Big cities are major destinations for internal migration, but **secondary cities are becoming increasingly important** places for population and economic growth. These cities can take the pressure off overcrowded capital cities. As a result, some national governments are promoting development of secondary cities through special economic zones.

It is imperative to pay attention to the evolving relationship between urban and rural places – including the bi-directional flow of people, goods, and services. A better understanding of the social and economic **links between rural and urban** areas is essential to unlock the **poverty reduction potential of urbanization.**

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KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do rural and urban social, economic, and environmental systems interlink with each other? What are the mechanisms for integrated territorial planning?
2. What are the urban growth trajectories in the country? What is the role of smaller secondary cities and towns to absorb urban population growth? How is this connected to economic growth projections?
3. Which cities (primary and secondary) are expecting growth in the next decade and what investments are necessary to ensure service delivery in these cities? How can municipal finance and planning help address increasing demands on public services?
4. Do rural-urban migrants and seasonal migrants have unique service delivery needs that differ from the needs of other urban residents? How can urban governments anticipate or respond to those needs?
5. What implications do rural-urban linkages have for USAID programming and its development objectives in rural, peri-urban, and urban settings?

HEADLINES FROM THE WORLD URBAN FORUM 2020

Projections that more than two-thirds of the world population will be urban by 2050 can be misleading. There is huge variation in regional and country-level urbanization rates. While most Latin American countries are 70-80 percent urbanized, many parts of Africa are only 10-30 percent urban. Understanding the national and regional context for urbanization is essential for local action.

Rural and urban territories are linked at household, community, and national levels. The common binary relationship between urban and rural does not accurately reflect the lived experience of communities, many of whom interact between rural and urban settings for social, economic, and environmental exchange. At a system level, rural and urban economies are interconnected and as a result there is a call for “balanced territorial development”, e.g. approaches to policy and planning that pays attention to different areas through a systems approach.

Informality is a key issue across growing cities, peri-urban areas, and small towns. Many rural-urban migrants arrive with limited resources, and despite the promise of the city, are faced with major challenges in finding shelter or accessing services. Cities are often ill-equipped to meet needs of a growing population.

Secondary cities offer opportunities for rural to urban migrants and can support balanced territorial development. Secondary cities are closest to rural areas and play the largest role in absorbing rural to urban migration. Additionally, networks of secondary cities can prevent over congestion in capital cities. However, it is a challenge to build capacity in secondary cities to plan for growth, rather than react to that growth. New land use planning tools and national programs may aid leaders in secondary cities in getting ahead of the growth and become attractive migration alternatives to major cities.

RESOURCES

Migration data Portal

International Organization of Migration

Portal launched in 2017 to serve as access point to timely, comprehensive migration statistics and reliable information about migration data globally. Includes data by theme, country and tools, <https://migrationdataportal.org/latest>

Secondary Cities Program, *Cities Alliance*

Lead program in building skills and capacities of secondary cities to manage urban and economic growth. Program of work focused in Africa. <https://citiesalliance.org/how-we-work/our-themes/secondary-cities>

Urban Expansion Project,

New York University

A platform to work with rapidly growing cities to make room for their inevitable expansion. For example, in Ethiopia, land use planning in secondary cities is a critical component for addressing migration. <https://marroninstitute.nyu.edu/programs/urban-expansion>

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Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development Example (2019),

UN Habitat

Policy framework to support integrated territorial development and address asymmetry between cities and rural areas. Reference for revising national and subnational rural, urban and territorial policy frameworks.

<https://urbanrurallinkages.wordpress.com/>

Seven city-case studies to illustrate the guiding principles for integrated territorial development. https://urbanrurallinkages.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/compendium_of_url_case_studies_first_edition-1.pdf

“We don’t want to simply see shift from rural poor to urban poor. Cities can be engines of growth and equitable economic growth.”

- Bridgitte Hoermann, Cities Alliance, 2020

MOVING THE NEEDLE IN YOUR MISSION

Diagnose the Issue

Staff should review demographic information to determine the rate of rural to urban migration. There are several sites and resources that can help Missions understand the dynamics that impact populations groups. With this information, Missions will better understand the strains and impacts upon services in cities and urbanized area. First, review the UN country profiles, <https://population.un.org/wup/Country-Profiles/>. Another option is to explore city migration patterns at <https://migrationdataportal.org/latest>. Next, staff should see who else in their Mission or bureau is interested in population trends and how migration might affect urban services and connect with them. Meeting across offices, including staff coordinating with the new Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, will help ensure connectivity of migration trends with secondary city investments and economic development – all issues that feed into the journey to self-reliance.

Understand the Policy and Regulatory Environment

The second step is to understand the enabling environment. This can be done by working with Democracy and Governance (DG) staff to review trends in urban service delivery and to determine where demand has increased due to migration. Discuss together how each city manages or monitors demand on their services including topics of: how and if demand translates into action by local government, an increase in population above certain levels spurs the government to seek additional resources, and the city has capacity to address an influx of population. Meet with planning, public works, housing, and infrastructure ministries or departments in each city you are interested in investing in to determine how and if each city can act on these conversations.

Contact the Agency's Urban Team

Finally, reach out the USAID's Urban Team by emailing urban@usaid.gov to request a consultation or an assessment that can lead to the development of options for addressing burdens placed on urban services as a result of rural to urban migration. The Urban Team will coordinate and consult with other relevant technical and regional bureaus within USAID and facilitate a conversation with the Mission that will lead to a tailored plan of action.

USAID Rural to Urban Migration Resources

Sustainable Service Delivery in an Increasingly Urbanized World

This 2013 document, otherwise known as the Urban Policy, provides guidelines to help countries and communities improve the delivery of essential services in urban areas. It seeks to harness the rapid growth of cities to achieve core development objectives while recognizing that unprecedented rates of urbanization are reshaping the nature and geography of global poverty. Throughout the report, the impacts of rural migration are evident related to economic development, infrastructure, transportation, energy, and other sectors. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDSustainableUrbanServicesPolicy.pdf>

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