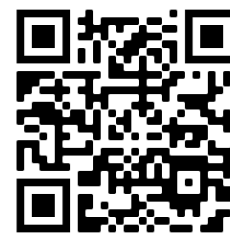## Policy, Legislation and Governance Webinar Series

Human mobility across the urban-rural continuum in the time of COVID-19

Please register [here](#)

21 July 2020 | 16:00
East AfricaTime (15:00 CEST)

The COVID-19 pandemic has a clear impact on human mobility and migration patterns around the globe. While COVID-19 is a global phenomenon, the impacts on human mobility and migration patterns have been determined by the economic, political, and institutional differences among regions and countries. Likewise, human mobility is one of the main drivers of the pandemic and so understanding the connectivity between urban areas and their sub-regional, regional and global links is crucial.

Lockdowns and travel restrictions have constrained the movement of people at local, national , regional and international level, impacting labor markets and severely affecting value chains and the flow of goods. The current situation highlights key vulnerabilities of regional and urban systems, and has adverse impacts on individuals, specifically those in vulnerable situations, including migrants, refugees, and people on the move.

Some economic sectors, particularly those which depend on migrant seasonal workers for their labor intense activities are experiencing labor shortfalls. These labor shortfalls, and the reduced flows of goods and products, have put pressure on the availability and prices of goods in urban areas, including basic commodities and food. In turn, declining economies and the practical impossibility for some migrant workers to access "jobs" currently leads to reduced employment and income opportunities. This has resulted in a steep decline in migrants' remittances, a vital income source and foreign exchange for households and governments in territories with a limited livelihood opportunity. Furthermore, regions and communities that heavily rely on tourism are particularly affected by the restrictions on movement as well.

In addition to migrants' vulnerabilities regarding social and economic inclusion, COVID-19 has highlighted the inequalities in migrants' access to adequate housing, services and information. Many migrants live in environmentally precarious conditions, including in underserviced poor urban and peri-urban areas, and work in informal, unsafe and unstable working conditions. COVID-19 has illustrated the fragile balance between migrants' contributions to societies and their inherent vulnerabilities.

In cities, confinement measures and economic shutdowns have led to diminished incomes and livelihoods for many. Paradoxically, in some cases, restrictions to mobility have changed migration patterns with many (former) rural-to-urban migrants returning to their place of origin in rural areas (within the country or across international borders) or from larger to small and intermediate cities. In other cases, wealthier people has fled large cities, seeking shelter in small cities and rural areas, while most people don't have more options rather than biding time at home until the virus has passed.

Migration patterns and flows exemplify how urban and rural regions and cities are inextricably connected. Effective responses to the challenges that migrant communities are facing in the time of COVID-19 may necessarily look beyond administrative boundaries and consider the connections and interlinkages between urban and rural systems and at the "systems of cities." Under the current circumstances, innovative approaches that look at the linkages between cities, towns and rural area emerge as a framework to reduce migrants' specific vulnerabilities during the outbreak and foster increased recognition of their contribution to their host societies and place of origin.

UN-Habitat's Urban-Rural Linkages team from the Policy, Legislation, and Governance Section, in cooperation with the Programme Development Branch, is organizing this webinar session on **Human mobility across the urban-rural continuum in the time of COVID-19** to contribute to the learning process regarding COVID-19's global impact.

This webinar is part of a series of webinars (PLG Webinar Series and URL Webinar Series) that aim to contribute to the thinking processes on integrated territorial development and increase understanding how the impacts of COVID-19 can advance opportunities to reorient policies and development practices and to catalyze territorial approaches and promote transformative change. Together with relevant partners, we aim to co-develop a deeper understanding and exchange on how stronger urban-rural linkages and other territorial approaches - such as food systems, landscape and ecosystem approaches - can become an integral part of the COVID-19 recovery responses and global long-term sustainable actions.

This webinar session will take place on **Tuesday July 14, 2020**, from **16:00** to **17:30 East Africa Time (EAT).**

The objectives of this session are to:

- Understand the human mobility impacts of COVID-19 on the spread of the pandemic across the urban-rural continuum and resulting new connectivity between cities, neighbouring communities and sub-regions.

- Develop a deeper understanding of territorial responses that can be adopted in light of new migration patterns.

- Learn how integrated urban-rural policies can have a positive impact for migrants and their families regarding livelihood generation, living conditions and access to services;

BACKGROUND:

On 19 September 2016, Heads of State and Government came together at the UN General Assembly for the first time ever to discuss issues related to migration and refugees. In December 2018, following two years of intergovernmental consultations and negotiations, in December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The Global Compact for Migration is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations and led by IOM, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It presents a significant opportunity to improve the governance of migration, to address the challenges associated with today's migration, and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development.

In an effort to acknowledge the wealth and contribution implied by human mobility and approach to migration and migrants from a human rights perspective, in December 2018 local governments committed in the Marrakech Mayoral Declaration to fulfill the Global Compacts for Migration (GCM) and on Refugees (GCR) in coordination with all levels of government and with all the actors engaged, building upon whole-of-government and whole-of-society principles in both compacts.

In February 2020, UN-Habitat introduced the agency's flagship initiative on "Inclusive cities: Enhancing the positive impact of urban migration" at the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi. The flagship will advance UN-Habitat's work on urban migration, in both development and crisis contexts, within UN-Habitat's strategic workstream on "Urban preparedness and response" (Domain of Change-DoC 4), but also linked to DoC 2, "Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions".

In the face of COVID-19, the Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles (URL-GP), such as *Locally Grounded Interventions*, *Integrated Governance*, *Balanced Partnerships*, *Human Rights- Based*, *Provide Social Protection and Do No Harm*, along with other principles and actions from the URL-GP Framework of Action, such as the recommendation to apply "whole-of-government approaches"- have become even more relevant in orienting the actions of national, local, and other actors to respond to the new challenges that have emerged from the pandemic and ensure an inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What are some changes that have occurred regarding migration patterns for urban areas (including small and intermediate cities) due to the COVID -19 pandemic?

- Has an increased reverse migration (from urban to rural) in regions occurred? Who has benefited and who has suffered from reverse migration (from urban to rural)?

- What challenges have emerged due to the novel migration flows? (e.g. labor shortages, food insecurity, diminished migrant remittances, impact on the service industry)

- What specific responses have local and national authorities adopted to manage migration flows across territories and different jurisdictions in the time of COVID-19?

- Which shifts in human mobility and migration could be supported or discouraged by policy-responses?

FORMAT:

Virtual zoom meeting (around an hour and a half). Speakers are invited to deliver remarks, discussing for about 5 minutes each, with 2-4 slides (optional) to discuss the situation in their country/city on the above-mentioned guiding questions. After the initial remarks, the moderator will encourage the discussion and dialogue between the speakers asking questions to the speakers and to comment on the other speakers' presentations.

The session will allow a few discussants selected from the registered audience to comment (around 2-4 minutes) on speakers' presentation to promote debate. The session will allow participants to share their comments through the chat box. As time allows, questions and comments will be transmitted to the speakers by the moderators.

Members of the Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, Urban Practices Branch, and the Programme Development Branch of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) will provide the facilitation and moderation of the session. Following the webinar there will be a summary report with presentations and issues from the chat box presented online with other webinar outcomes in the series.