

# URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES Newsletter

## 7<sup>th</sup> Edition | June 2024



© Songyang TV

### NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Hello reader,

Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of our newsletter on urban-rural linkages! Since our last edition in October 2023, significant developments have unfolded for UN-Habitat urban-rural linkages work.

In this edition we reflect on the highlights of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages. We also share updates on UN-Habitat's collaborations with esteemed partners, including Shanghai University, the Urban-Rural Assembly, the Center for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa and other recently firmed up partnership agreements

Additionally, this newsletter delves into the outcomes of the recently concluded expert group meeting on intermediary cities, held in Jinja, Uganda.

Looking ahead, this edition previews forthcoming initiatives, such as the upcoming global report on urban-rural linkages, other collaborative knowledge products, and notable events including the 12<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum.

Enjoy the read.

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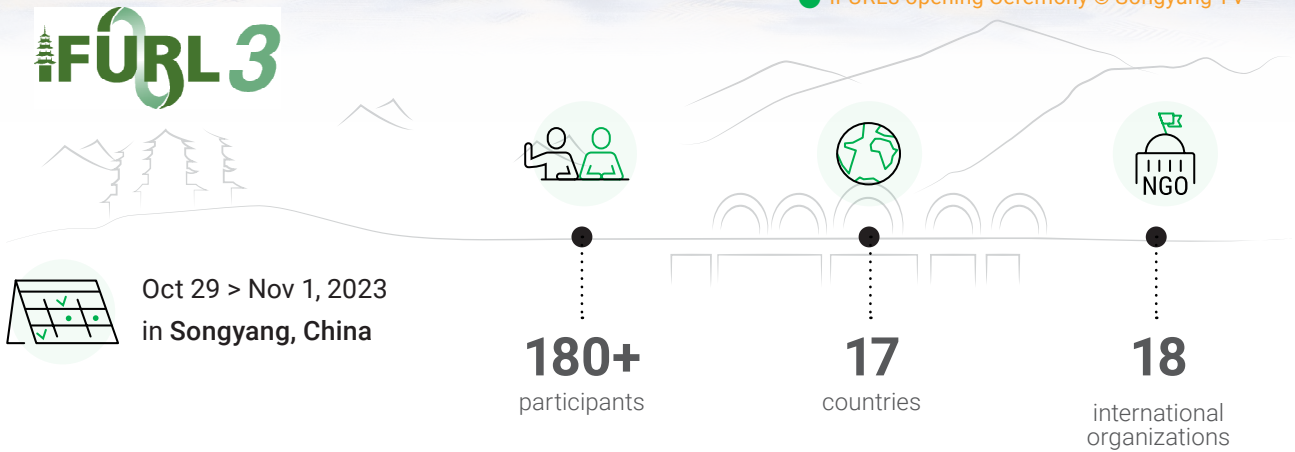
**CONTACTS:** unhabitat-url@un.org | **EDITORIAL TEAM :** Grace Githiri and Antonio Kipyegon



# 智慧互联城乡 共建美好家园

ENHANCING URBAN-RURAL CONNECTIVITY TO BUILD BETTER LIVELIHOODS

● IFURL3 opening Ceremony © Songyang TV



## 1. IFURL3 Highlights

In wrapping up the 2023 commemoration of [Urban October](#), the [third International Forum on International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages](#) (IFURL3), was held from October 29 to November 1, 2023 in Songyang, China, marking a significant milestone in the global conversation on **urban-rural connectivity**. This pivotal occasion, co-hosted by UN-Habitat, the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Zhejiang Province, the Department of Transportation of Zhejiang Province, Lishui Municipal People’s Government, and Songyang County, China, highlighted the promising potential of harmoniously integrating urban and rural areas.

The forum generated a dynamic exchange of ideas, experiences, and solutions. The forum was designed to provide an in-depth exploration of urban-rural connectivity, with a particular focus on the experiences and strategies from Songyang County, other parts of China, and different global contexts.

IFURL3 was more than just a series of plenary sessions. It included thematic side events and curated site visits that allowed participants to grasp the nuances of urban-rural issues in a real-world context, with practical examples presented by a diverse group of experts.





The first day of the forum kicked off with a visit to the Window of Songyang, introducing participants to Songyang and its diverse blend of urban and rural interactions. This was followed by an inspiring opening ceremony with keynote addresses in which speakers demonstrated various aspects of urban rural linkages with insightful examples and experiences.

● **Trying out local tea sold through e-commerce platforms at the Xiangrui e-commerce Industrial Park @ Songyang TV**

Participants then engaged in two thematic group sessions coupled with site visits:

1. A group session on **Youth** explored the role of youth in fostering urban-rural interactions. This session included site visits to Songyang Xiangrui e-commerce Industrial Park (an enabling commerce environment for young people), and Dalutan Post, which doubles as a community center and a library.



**HIGHLIGHTS**

visit to Xiangrui e-commerce industrial park



**Group sessions themes**

Youth

Resource distribution



Visit to Shanxiayang Village



● **Participants during a site visit to Chenjiapu Village @ UN-Habitat**

2. A second group of participants attended a session on **Resource Distribution**, with the objective of exploring how various resources in urban and rural spaces can be harnessed for equitable development and mutual benefit for both urban and rural communities. Participants also visited Shanxiayang Village as a concrete example of the topic for discussion.

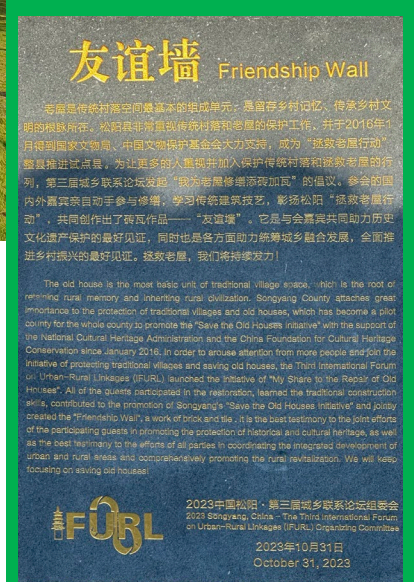




● As part of IFURL legacy initiatives, UN-Habitat and Songyang County visited the Friendship Garden (Top), and built the Friendship Wall (Right).

The second day of the forum involved two more thematic sessions and the closing ceremony.

3. A session on **Transportation** was held to discuss the ways in which well-designed transportation can contribute to balanced development along the urban rural continuum. Along with this, participants visited the Songyang Rural Distribution Centre, as well as Chenjiapu traditional village, one of over 100 revitalized villages.
4. A second session on **Rural Development** provided participants with an understanding of rural development in the contexts of urban development and the relationship between urban and rural spaces. As part of the session, a site visit to Hengkeng Village was organized, to demonstrate artistic rural construction and rehabilitation of rural infrastructure.



Wall of Friendship © UN-Habitat

One final visit to Jieshou Village involved UN-Habitat, Songyang County and all participants building a brick Wall of Friendship. The forum then culminated in a series of inspiring closing remarks at the closing ceremony.



For many attendees, IFURL3 was an enlightening experience. The forum underscored the urgency to bridge the urban-rural divide as part of the global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As delegates left Songyang, they carried with them a renewed commitment to not only forge partnerships but also to transform

these partnerships into lasting friendships. The third International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages was more than just a conference – it was a call to action. A call for a unified global effort to build inclusive and sustainable urban-rural linkages, essential for the world’s future.

# Insights from IFURL3 Participants



**Muhamad Gambo,**  
Shelter Afrique

**Interesting, practical, and very knowledgeable.** I've learned so much in aspects relating to urban-rural linkages with clear practical examples which I believe could be adopted in our respective countries.



**Michela Quadrelli,**  
Christoph Hesse Architects

**Great** because first, this is a very multidisciplinary forum. Therefore, I could learn from fields that normally maybe I'm not really in contact with. What I also find very interesting is that we can go around and see with our own eyes [the initiatives implemented by Songyang County to strengthen urban-rural linkages]



**Paolo Gerli,**  
Napier University

**Eye opening** - We've been learning a lot, including new things. Quite interesting and creating new knowledge for everyone attending.



**Ann Therese Trevenen-Jones,**  
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

It was a wonderful opportunity to come because of the content. I have been **inspired** by the work that the county is doing. My impression has been to see implementation action on what we all dream about, an **urban-rural relationship**. Well, for us at the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, we're very interested in reinvigorating urban rural relationships and the county that you have here in Songyang, with multiple cities and small towns and villages, all connecting but all unique in their own ways of creating that unique brand. I think that Songyang has a very good model.



**Abdul Husaini,**  
Niger State-Nigeria

What I have learned during my first and second visit is that there is **communication between the rural and urban**. A flow, in and out on a continuous basis. Learning to do is more important than just learning for the purpose of learning. They are not telling you this is how to do it, they are showing what they are doing. It's now for one to go home and do the right thing. And I think what they have done is more of popularizing what they are doing, and that is where I think the relationship with UN-Habitat is very important.





## 2. Exploring the potential of Intermediary Cities: Expert Group Meeting Recap



A two-day expert group meeting was held in Jinja, Uganda, between *17-19 April 2024* on *leveraging the role and potential of intermediary cities for urban-rural synergy and territorial resilience in East Africa*. Central to the deliberations was the **recognition of intermediary cities** as key players in facilitating the exchange of goods and services between urban and rural areas while promoting ecosystems.



© UN-Habitat

Participants from diverse backgrounds converged to explore strategies for enhancing urban-rural linkages, along the themes of:



> Leveraging **digital solutions**, including the use of **e-commerce platforms**



> Preserving **biodiversity**



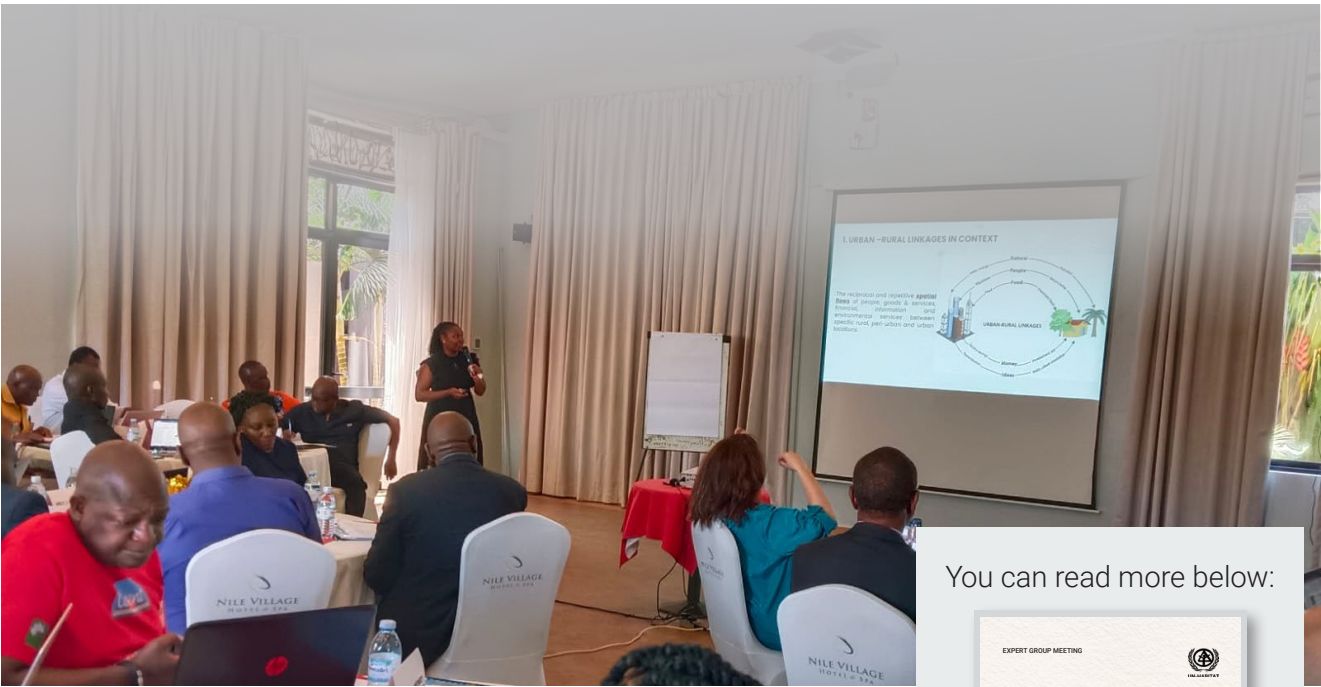
> Promoting sustainable **food systems**

Insights gleaned from East African case studies underscored the importance of ecological conservation and effective governance in intermediary cities. Challenges such as multi-level cooperation and transboundary issues were addressed, emphasizing the need for collaborative frameworks and innovative funding mechanisms.

Continued capacity development to improve policy effectiveness also emerged as a quick-win opportunity for intermediary cities. In addition, some partners underscored the need to reimagine intermediary cities as integrated ecosystems, where, for example, urban and peri-urban farming play pivotal roles.

Read the article [here](#)



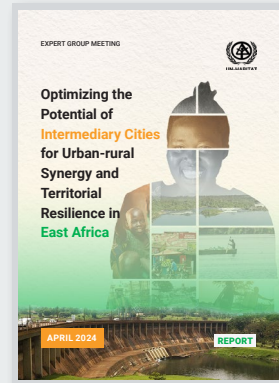


● Elizabeth Kanini (University of Nairobi) presenting on URL indicators © UN-Habitat

Overall, the meeting provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas, identify gaps, and propose actionable solutions. The outcomes of the EGM will help to inform future global events, advancing discourse on urban-rural synergy and territorial resilience.

Additionally, discussions highlighted the importance of inclusive governance, diverse stakeholder involvement, and the development of comprehensive frameworks to drive sustainable development in intermediary cities across Africa and beyond.

You can read more below:



● Groups discussing using guiding questions © UN-Habitat



## Trust and Ecosystem Restoration: an imperative for the future of life systems

Africa has solutions, creativity and a human dimension that is forgotten or not well known in other regions of the world. This very same human dimension reminds us that urban development and rural life are about human lives and evolution. Nearly invisible in many urbanized societies, rurality shapes the way humankind lives in human settlements that nurture and allow urbanity to happen and unfold. When we talk about the urban, we are not talking only about what is generated when human beings are gathered to live together in the same space, we talk about governance. Governance of human spaces is the mandate given by citizenship to the elected leaders of local and regional governments.

Having to manage the daily life of citizens is these leaders' core work, while the environment also has to be managed to continuously offer the possibility to unfold our lives in both urban and rural spaces. Nature deserves our respect and to be addressed in a different relationship with our daily lives, in order to allow a future for our lives and those of coming generations to continue to unfold. This is where we all meet. Therefore, urban life must be developed in respect for the natural ecosystems that nurture our lives, or life systems. How can we make the unification of nature and humanity a reality, a concrete reality, locally capable to hold the future of our people and territories?

We need to find solutions that allow life systems to continue unfolding. We need institutional ecosystems that allow the local & territorial natural ecosystems to be protected, restored and safeguarded. Currently, humanity is beginning to pay the cost of not having acted before – so what will be the cost if we do not act now?

A key turning point, in my view, is connecting the global processes regarding climate, nature and the environment through the 'Loss and Damage' mechanism in the international climate negotiations. It is the only formula that the world has today that can bring back nature and environment to a 'necessary state'.

We could envision a concept of 'reversibility', through restoration or regeneration of essential ecosystems. We must be pragmatic in a world where climate is losing its emergency dimension before the threat of global conflicts.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is currently working on the Loss and Damage mechanism within the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency, as a holistic perspective with key asks for the global development: Climate Justice? Growth or degrowth? Inequalities? Indigenous communities and traditions? Loss of identity with climate-induced migration? Land safeguarding or land over-exploitation and extraction? Food resources or food emergency? Global north and global south in a new balance of mutual respect? What is the state of citizens' trust in the policies and decision makers when the right decisions were not taken in the past? Should we therefore call this objective Trust Restoration?

A holistic approach will need powerful tools to enable all this to happen: the concept of Intermediary Cities is one of these holistic tools. I would like us to be audacious and say: the Intermediary Cities that we need will help to save the planet's resilience, to save future generations. This is because intermediary cities, through their scale, proximity to the rural and their functionality will allow the generation of new policymaking from and for the rural and urban communities one and the same cause. Policy coupled with action will remake Intermediary Cities as climate and environment positive cities, allowing rurality and urbanity to integrate in a smarter definition: in rural-urban unity. We must unify key transversalities that are no longer luxuries, but necessities. Restoring ecosystems and restoring trust will require the regeneration of necessary cycles (soil, water, all species' habitat) through human stewardship by both rural and urban peoples to restore the ecosystems on a planetary scale.

*Firdaous Oussidhoum*

*Assistant-Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)<sup>1</sup>*

.....  
<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from a keynote address to an expert group meeting on intermediary cities, urban-rural linkages and territorial resilience organized by UN-Habitat in Jinja, Uganda, 24-26 April 2024. See [here](#) for a full report.





## Other events

### URBAN - RURAL ASSEMBLY

#### Urban-Rural Assembly workshops

As part of the collaborative efforts with the Urban-Rural Assembly, UN-Habitat engaged in a week-long (15 to 23 March 2024) series of capacity building and awareness workshops, bilateral consultations, as well as field visits in Huangyan, China.

Engagements were made with various stakeholders, including local governments, academia, and international organizations. During these sessions, UN-Habitat presented its work on urban-rural linkages for sustainable development and offered insights to the recently completed research in Huangyan. This included discussions on potential policy recommendations and preliminary strategies for implementation.



You can read more about the urban-rural assembly [here](#)



#### Kongamano on Resilient Markets and Food Systems Governance

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) held a Kongamano (*Swahili for a gathering or symposium*) on Resilient Markets and Food Systems Governance on 23-26 April in Nairobi, Kenya. GAIN brought together market committees from five counties in Kenya with county and national government representatives and partner organizations including Rikolto, ICLEI, FAO, WHO, and UN-Habitat among others.

The Kongamano showcased a selection of local and traditional food markets and food systems governance interventions. Interactions between market actors, county officials and national government agencies shared insights and explored opportunities to strengthen the informal food sector as essential for socio-ecological resilience, access to affordable and diverse nutritious foods and enhanced urban-rural linkages.

You can read more about the event and GAIN's work in market systems [here](#)



## Partnerships Spotlight

A key part of UN-Habitat's work to strengthen URLs occurs with and through partnerships. Partnerships offer mutual benefits and are more likely to succeed compared to individual efforts. UN-Habitat therefore establishes and strengthens strategic relations with a diverse range of partners at national, regional, and international levels, including political actors, civil society, professional organizations, the private sector, and academia to work towards a better urban future for everyone.



### SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY

UN-Habitat and Shanghai University recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This is one example of UN-Habitat collaboration with academia towards linking research and practice. Some core areas of collaboration will be on rural revitalization as an approach to strengthening urban-rural linkages. The overall entry points of the collaboration are capacity building, knowledge generation and dissemination and advocacy on subjects of mutual interests.



### CENTER FOR URBAN- RURAL LINKAGES FOR AFRICA

As part of the agreement of cooperation with the Center for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa (CURLA, hosted by University of Nairobi), UN-Habitat aims to continue providing support to enable CURLA to advance its research and advocacy work, capacity development, and

policy dialogues on urban-rural linkages in Africa.

In addition, UN-Habitat facilitated consultations between Shanghai University and the University of Nairobi (UoN) on possible collaboration between the two institutions.

### THE NATURE OF CITIES (TNOC)

UN-Habitat and TNOC signed a Letter of Intent to collaborate towards a joint agenda on advocacy, capacity development and outreach events encompassing policy, governance, and regional integration, including city-to-city cooperation. As part of the collaboration, UN-Habitat is supporting the preparation and holding of TNOC Festivals (April and June 2024).





## OBSERVATORY ON DIGITAL COMMUNICATION (OCCAM)



In this Letter of Intent, **UN-Habitat and OCCAM** will collaborate on strengthening urban-rural linkages through sharing of best practices and knowledge related to digital solutions, as well as scaling up of good practices identified at the local and subnational levels.

The partners will also strengthen cooperation with other UN agencies to foster a better understanding of urban-rural linkages. UN-Habitat contributed to the 23<sup>rd</sup> info-poverty conference on urban-rural linkages and the role of AI in achieving development sustainable.

**UN-Habitat and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization** also signed a Memorandum of Understanding. In the MoU, the two parties will collaborate on “strengthening and developing sustainable and inclusive urban and territorial food systems, urban and peri-urban agriculture and urban and peri-urban forestry for:

1. enhanced food security, nutrition and healthy diets;
2. the preservation of natural and agricultural ecosystems in and around cities; and
3. sustainable development through the urban-rural continuum.”



● FAO in South-Sudan © FAO

## Forthcoming Knowledge Releases

### 1. GLOBAL REPORT ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

UN-Habitat is currently finalizing its first global report on urban-rural linkages, to take stock of the challenges, opportunities, trends, and progress in strengthening urban-rural linkages to advance territorial development. This report is a direct contribution to the Domains of Change in the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> and the resolution 1/5 on Urban-Rural Linkages adopted by Member States during the first UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019.<sup>2</sup>

1 Stronger URLs will contribute to especially the first two, but also all four of the Strategic Plan Domains of Change: (a) Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum; (b) Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions; (c) Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment; (d) Effective urban crisis prevention and response. See page [17](#)

2 Resolution 1/5: Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements (HSP/HA.1/Res.5) [see](#)



The report introduces varied definitions of urban-rural linkages from organizations such as UN-Habitat, IIED, UCLG, OECD, and the Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Adopting a combined definition, it considers recurrent flows and interconnectedness between urban and rural sectors, providing a comprehensive context for analysis.

The report also explores the global processes and events that have shaped discourse and actions for strengthening urban-rural linkages. Using a global survey sent out to UN Member States, the report analyses and provides a comprehensive review of the state of urban-rural linkages in the surveyed countries.

The report concludes by providing a series of policy recommendations to accelerate efforts towards balanced territorial development.

## 2. 5TH COMPENDIUM OF INSPIRING PRACTICES ON URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

The Compendia of Inspiring Practices on Urban-Rural Linkages are a series of reports with examples showing how various countries and territories are contributing to strengthening urban-rural linkages.

All the case studies provide details on how they have applied the 10 urban-rural linkages guiding principles and the accompanying 11 Frameworks of Action. Access previous editions [here](#):



More on URL on UPP



The 5<sup>th</sup> compendium will be a special edition, focusing on intermediary cities. With the growing importance of intermediary cities in enhancing urban-rural synergy, this edition will aim to elevate how countries, intermediary cities and their partners are implementing policies, programmes, and frameworks to enhance urban-rural connectivity.

UN-Habitat has launched an open call for case studies. You can access the call [here](#).



Scan here





# PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES NEWSLETTERS



Issue 1



Issue 2



Issue 3



Issue 4



Issue 5



Issue 6

## Contact us

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
 P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi, 00100, Kenya  
<https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/urban-rural-linkages/>

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