

Final publishable summary report

Executive summary

Africa currently has a low proportion of its population living in cities and towns. This is rapidly changing, however, and by the middle of this century it is predicted that the majority of Africans will be urban residents. Understanding the connections between rural areas and cities is thus vital for planning for the future needs of the residents of sub-Saharan African countries. For this purpose, the overall objective of the African Rural-City Connections (RurbanAfrica) project has been to explore the connections between rural transformations, mobility, and urbanization processes and analyze how these contribute to an understanding of the scale, nature and location of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. This has included critically scrutinizing the assumption that migration from rural areas to cities is one of the major development challenges faced by national and local governments in their efforts to stimulate economic growth and curb poverty. The project has been in operation from April 2012 to March 2016 and has focused on four sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Cameroon, Rwanda and Tanzania. Research was led by the University of Copenhagen and organized into four thematic work packages; Agricultural Transformation, Rural Livelihoods, City Dynamics, and Access to Services; and two work packages working on dissemination and policy dialogues and management and syntheses. Analyses of secondary data, collection of empirical data and work package wise analyses have been undertaken with similar methodologies in all countries and facilitated comparisons at various levels. The RurbanAfrica research has developed insights into how rural-urban connections form social transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was found that rural transformation as it develops in dynamic rural regions, as has been the focus of the empirical research, clearly interacts with urbanization and urban-based economies through e.g. urban-rural investments. This clearly interacts with increasingly multi-local livelihood arrangements, multi-directional migration flows and the formation of small urban centres (located in rural regions). With a focus of the primary and a secondary city in each country it has been shown that urban growth is increasingly driven by natural growth rather than migration, meaning that rural-urban connections are less tangible and unidirectional than popular assumptions prescribe. However, generally secondary cities have more direct demographic and economic connections with rural hinterland regions than primate cities, but this vary, depending on e.g. matters such as the size and growth of the city, their ordained roles in the national planning system, and roles in servicing agricultural/resource value chains. These insights relate to the availability and appraisals of services such as water, sanitation, electricity, transport and mobile telephony which shall not only serve the low-income areas often located in the centre of the cities, but also the periphery of the cities where relocation for homeownership purposes of people and families from the centre of the city dominates. Policy research and consultations show that despite documentations of the intimate relationships between urbanization dynamics and rural transformations, these complex links are poorly mirrored in governance and planning at national and local levels, which continues to be dominated by sectoral policies that leaves 'rural-urban linkages' to remain a policy grey area. Thus, the RurbanAfrica research has accentuated the need for a ***new governance architecture*** and insights from each case study and across case country comparisons shall advance current (global) policy debates on territorial development, sustainable housing and urbanization, and UNs new Sustainable Development Goals.