



NHSMUN

Background Guide | *UN-HABITAT*

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Analucia Tello

Executive Committee

Ana Margarita Gil

Ming-May Hu

Chris Talamo

Althea Turley

Dear Delegates,

I am honored to welcome you all to NHSMUN 52! My name is Ava Tasharrofi and it is my privilege to serve as this year's Session 1 Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

I have been part of Model United Nations for three years, and I am dedicated to upholding this commitment with my position as director. I joined Model UN as a sophomore in high school, when I was hesitant to try a new extracurricular that required public speaking and presentation. I remember every feeling: the victories, the disappointments, but most importantly, the valuable skills I learned in diplomacy and creativity.

I am currently a student at UCLA, pursuing a degree in Public Health. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, so I love staying close to my family and exploring the city more. I love traveling and learning new languages, and I hope to become a polyglot! Outside of Model UN, I am passionate about health equity and community safety. I have had the privilege of working alongside local Council and Assembly members as an intern, which has lent itself to shaping my perspective of the health discrepancies that plague marginalized communities in LA. I have a strong connection to both topics for this year's UN-Habitat committee, and I hope you all grow one as well through your research process.

While reading this guide, ensure that you are engaging with each topic to the best of your ability by keeping an open mind. The best piece of advice I can give to delegates on this committee is to not just to research, but to understand. The topics of this committee highlight communities that may have been neglected by their respective societies, so ensure that all proceeding actions are done with this in mind. I hope to make NHSMUN 2026 memorable for all delegates and cannot wait to connect with you all during the conference. If you have any questions regarding the topics, committee, or conference in general, Paxton and I are more than happy to help. NHSMUN is marked on my calendar with stars and exclamation points- see you all in March!

Ava Tasharrofi

Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Session I

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Dear Delegates,

I hope everyone is doing well and very excited for NHSMUN 2026! My name is Paxton Hemingway. I am beyond excited to be serving as your director for UN-HABITAT Session II! I live in Bay Shore, NY. I am studying Secondary Education with a concentration in History at the University of Vermont (go catamounts!) and hope to become a high school Social Studies teacher. I am also double minoring in International Politics and Educating Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners. If you have any questions about any of those things, feel free to reach out!

I have been doing Model UN since my sophomore year in high school. That year, I attended NHSMUN for the first time as a delegate in UN-HABITAT, so it is a full circle moment to be chairing that same committee this year. I attended NHSMUN two more times as a delegate in UN-LEGAL and CCPCJ in my junior and senior years. Last year, I had an amazing first year on staff at NHSMUN as an Assistant Director for DISEC in Session II.

A little bit about me: I love to hike and ski, and I am a huge soccer fan (Arsenal through and through). I have two Labrador Retrievers named Flash and Toby. I am also a huge nerd for television shows. In terms of music taste, I like to say I listen to everything, but my main genres are anything folk inspired, yacht rock, and country.

As your Director, I am committed to making this committee an educational experience that you all gain something from as delegates. On top of that, I want all of you to have a good time. Some of my fondest memories in high school are from being a delegate at NHSMUN. You are provided with a unique opportunity to meet people from all around the world with a common interest. I hope that our committee can be somewhere where you have the chance to learn about critical global issues and grow as a person in the process. If this is your first NHSMUN, buckle in for an unforgettable experience. The conference will go by faster than you even realize.

Finally, I hope that you all find this background guide useful in your research. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out. I cannot wait to meet you all.

Best,

Paxton Hemingway

Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Session II

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A NOTE ON RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to the conference.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#), [Advanced Delegate Guide](#), [Research Guide](#), and [Rules of Procedure Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are both prepared to debate throughout the committee. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections.

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic. It is best to focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and 12 point font size. This is a maximum; **3–5 pages per topic is often a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for submitting position papers on or before **February 20, 2026**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 30, 2026**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference. Instructions on how to submit position papers will be shared directly with faculty advisors.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at nhsmun@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

On January 1, 1975, the UN General Assembly created the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). First named as the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation (UNHHSF).¹ The committee was created to help with the fast growth of cities and provide protection.² In 1977, UN Resolution 32/162 transformed the Committee on Housing, Building, and Planning into the Commission of Human Settlements. In 2002, UNHHSF and the Commission on Human Settlements and Habitat combined into UN-Habitat. Creating a single committee headed by the Executive Director and managed by the Secretariat.³

The committee's mission is to boost lasting human settlements, development and fair shelter for all.⁴ UN-Habitat is structured into three main bodies: the Governing Council, Secretariat, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The committee contains all 193 member states of the United Nations.⁵ With an Executive Board of 36 member states. These member states are elected by the UN-Habitat assembly. In addition, they gather three times a year to oversee ongoing actions.⁶

The UN-Habitat headquarter is located in Nairobi, Kenya. Along with two other regional offices in Fukuoka, Japan, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.⁷ These assemblies often judge previous projects completed between committee meetings to discuss results and possible growth.⁸ Through this structural organization, UN-Habitat is able to fairly debate crucial issues. While receiving global input through these different headquarters.

UN-Habitat is most often referred to as a “resolution writing committee”. Each member is given one vote and no special vetoing power. All actions, whether debate or procedural, are decided by majority vote.⁹ The main documents that define UN-Habitat's mandate include the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat I), the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda (Habitat II), the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, and Resolution 56/206. The mandate is also influenced by UN General Assembly Resolution 3327 (XXIX), which in 1975 established the UNHHSF.¹⁰

Since the making of its mandate, the committee has raised awareness on many urban development issues. Every year, UN-Habitat releases a report to address pressing urban issues. Their 2023 report noted concerns about the cost of living and housing, climate change, and the lack of basic necessities and services.¹¹ Following its directive, the committee made plans to lower urban poverty. In addition, the report noted local action to lower climate change and inequality. Issues that are most common in cities across the globe. These ideas are stated in the UN-Habitat 2026-2029 strategic plan. UN-Habitat adapts their directive to respond to these new urban trends.¹² The importance of UN-Habitat's work is known, and they will keep tackling these important missions.

¹ “History, Mandate & Role in the UN System: UN-Habitat,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/history-mandate-role-in-the-un-system>

² “Background,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://evaw-un-inventory.unwomen.org/en/agencies/un-habitat>

³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme, “History, Mandate & Role in the UN System: UN-Habitat.”

⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme, “History, Mandate & Role in the UN System: UN-Habitat.”

⁵ “Our Structure,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed August 24, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/our-structure>.

⁶ “Executive Board,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed August 24, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/governance/executive-board>.

⁷ “Regional Offices,” United Nations Human Settlement Programme, accessed August 24, 2025, <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=22>

⁸ “General Concept,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://unhabitat.org/results-based->

⁹ “United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat),” Special Presentation, accessed September 10, 2021, https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/01/rules_of_procedure_of_the_united_nations_habitat_assembly.pdf

¹⁰ UN-Habitat. 2015. “History, Mandate & Role in the UN System | UN-Habitat.” Unhabitat.org. 2015. <https://unhabitat.org/history-mandate-role-in-the-un-system>.

¹¹ “Goals & strategies of UN-Habitat.” September. UN-Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/goals-and-strategies-of-un-habitat>.

¹² “Strategic Plan 2026–2029,” United Nations Human Settlements Programme, accessed August 24, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/strategic-plan-2026-2029>.

A photograph of a person with dark, curly hair sitting on a grey concrete sidewalk. They are wearing a dark, worn jacket with a large tear on the back and blue jeans. Their back is to the camera. To their right is an open wooden case containing an acoustic guitar. Next to the guitar is a blue tote bag with white text that includes "CIDADE A FAMÍLIA" and a logo. Other items like a red can and a small wheel are also visible. The scene suggests homelessness or displacement.

Addressing Inadequate Housing and the Global Homelessness Crisis

Photo Credit: Wilfredor

Housing insecurity around the world is an issue. An estimated 1.8 billion people lack proper housing and 2 million people yearly are forcibly evicted. Many other individuals, about 150 million worldwide, are without homes.¹ People who are unable to obtain housing and shelter are among the most vulnerable in any society. Being unhoused can be a result of various social issues and is often not a reflection of the individual. Causes of homelessness go beyond state borders, and can be caused by wars, financial trouble, and even climate change. There also are cycles of homelessness to break. Some individuals have always lived in precarious living situations and never had means or opportunities to obtain stable housing.

The United Nations Human Settlement Programme, or UN-Habitat, focuses on the promotion of socially sustainable cities.² This committee promotes adequate housing, which is a human right recognised by the United Nations.³ Primary concerns in tackling this issue include legal definitions of homelessness, criminalization

of such circumstances, and the many causes of homelessness. For example, many places in the world have begun criminalizing homelessness as a strategy to force people into social services and out of downtown hubs.⁴ Homelessness is stigmatized and often met with violence and aggression. Individuals facing such challenges are also discriminated against, to the detriment of their political, economic, and social rights.⁵

Some people may be transient and have periods of housing security, whereas others have long-term housing insecurity, are at constant risk, and have compounding personal circumstances.⁶ Other causes of homelessness make the problem more complicated. Climate change and natural disasters can force people to leave their homes with little notice, or severely impact infrastructure, access to basic services, and the quality of life in cities.⁷ The status of climate refugees and viability of support systems in vulnerable regions further complicates adequate housing on a global scale.

An increase in conflicts in recent years has caused forced migration and displacement across the world. Delegates must take into account the sensitivity of this issue. They should bear in mind the multiple causes of homelessness at an international level to be able to properly equip themselves to shape resolutions that can help people across the world.⁸

1 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Housing Rights," *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/topic/housing>.

2 United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *History, Mandate, and Role Within the UN System*. January 2025 <https://unhabitat.org/history-mandate-role-in-the-un-system>.

3 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Strategies to Combat Homelessness* (n.d.), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Strategies%20To%20Combat%20Homelessness.pdf>

4 United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *History, Mandate, and Role Within the UN System*.

5 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Homelessness and Human Rights," *OHCHR: Special Procedures, Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights>.

6 *Strategies to Combat Homelessness*.

7 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Climate Change," *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/topic/climate-change>.

8 A/HRC/Res/52/10

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Anti-Homelessness Policies and Attitudes

To experience homelessness is not to have stable, safe, and adequate housing, nor the means or ability of obtaining it.⁹ Homelessness encompasses people in severely lacking shelters, like slums, or living in public spaces without any form of shelter.¹⁰ A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on April 3, 2023 reminded the General Assembly of the following documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹¹ These documents entail the obligations and commitments of UN member states on all levels of government, in relation to adequate housing. Still, not all countries protect housing as a human right.

Interestingly, Southeast Asia's cultural focus on family ties and traditional housing structures, built from locally sourced materials, resulted in historically low levels of homelessness. More recently, colonization and industrialization have driven a flow of human capital to urban areas.¹² This has overall disrupted the traditional systems in the area. Homelessness is now more harshly viewed and impacts Indigenous people at higher rates. Similarly, in Australia, public order laws have criminalized homelessness since colonial times and still persist today.¹³

In 2024, the United States Supreme Court upheld a policy that allowed state law enforcement to punish homeless people for sleeping outside and staying in encampments, even when there is inadequate space in shelters.¹⁴ An encampment is considered to be a temporary shelter or makeshift settlement where people live.¹⁵ These policies are common across the world. In the United

Kingdom, lodging “in any deserted or unoccupied building, or in the open air, or under a tent, or in any cart” has been a criminal offense since the Vagrancy Act 1824 was made law.¹⁶ Prosecutions using this Act have declined in recent years, but convictions can still result from it.¹⁷ Additionally, the threat of this Act is often wielded against homeless individuals to force their compliance.

Hungary is another example of a country where homelessness is criminalized. A law came into effect in 2018 and banned what is considered “rough sleeping.” If the person does not find shelter within 90 days, they are subjected to imprisonment and fines.¹⁸ This was designed by the government to clear public spaces. Olatom, a shelter group in Hungary, has publicly criticized this.¹⁹ Banning homelessness is said to be a direct attack on many people and a governmental failure. The Hungarian government instead argues that this law is designed to

9 Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, *Homelessness and Human Rights*, 52/12 April 2023 <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/52/10>

10 G. Lasco, R. M. Yunus, and A. Kulthanmanusorn, “Homelessness: An Invisible Public Health Crisis in Southeast Asia,” *Perspectives in Public Health* (August 3, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/17579139251356929>.

11 A/HRC/Res/52/10

12 Lasco, Yunus, and Kulthanmanusorn, “Homelessness: An Invisible Public Health Crisis.”

13 Tamara Walsh, Thalia Anthony, Jane Beilby, Luke McNamara, and Julia Quilter, “Back Off! Stop Making Us Illegal!": The Criminalisation of Homelessness in Australia,” *Social & Legal Studies* 34, no. 1 (April 2024): 67-88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639241244953>.

14 Jason Pohl, “Supreme Court Has Greenlighted the Criminalization of Homelessness” *Berkely Law*, June 2024. <https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/06/28/supreme-court-has-greenlighted-the-criminalization-of-homelessness-berkeley-experts-say/>

15 Eric S. Tars, *Criminalization of Homelessness: An Advocates Guide* (Washington: National Homelessness Law Center, 2023). https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2021/06-08_Criminalization-of-Homelessness.pdf

16 Sovereign Grant Act 2011, c. 15, § 4 (U.K.). accessed August 23, 2025. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/15/section/4>.

17 Hannah Cromarty, Georgina Sturge, and Joe Ryan, *Rough Sleepers: Enforcement Powers (England)*, Research Briefing, House of Commons Library (London, April 9, 2021), <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7836/>.

18 Guillem Evangelista, *Mean Streets: A Report on The Criminalization of Homelessness in Europe* (Budapest: Housing Rights Watch, 2014) <https://housingrightswatch.org/sites/default/files/8.%20Chapter%205.pdf>

19 World Economic Forum *Hungary has Introduced a Tough New Law on Rough Sleepers* October 2018 <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/10/hungary-introduces-tough-new-law-on-rough-sleepers/>

help homeless people by forcing them to make use of social services and systems.²⁰ Social services in Hungary are supposedly designed to provide shelter for the homeless population. Unfortunately, many shelters are overfilled and lack resources.²¹ Many shelters also face their own social problems that make co-living a challenge for many. For example, couples cannot be placed together. This creates dilemmas within couples as they are forced to choose to break the law to be together, or be separated.

In Singapore, the Destitute Persons Act of 2013 codifies differential treatment of and fines for homeless people.²² This has been criticized as outdated and out of touch. Singapore's law is another example of legislation that misses the root cause of an issue. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, emphasizes how attention is frequently focused on the wrong thing. Often, instead of "addressing the global affordable housing and inequality crises, which are primarily responsible for homelessness, governments are increasingly turning to outdated and vague vagrancy laws, many of

which have their roots in colonial rule, to move people off the streets and make them disappear."²³

Policies considered anti-homeless can exist in several ways. One important way is the use of anti loitering policies and infrastructure. This can be seen in large cities globally. Sleeping, eating, and spending prolonged hours in a public space are often criminalized. The intention behind such a policy is to prevent homeless people from spending long periods of time in one space, establishing a settlement, and possibly discouraging the general public from using that space out of discomfort. Prohibiting long term stays in public spaces prompts homeless people living in these spaces to be pushed out of cities. This pushes them further from the city center, which generally contains the most accessible resources and social services.²⁴

Hostile infrastructure is also common. This term includes any architectural elements placed that make a space unlivable, and that discourage people from spending long periods of time in that space. This phenomenon is also called "defensive architecture" and it purposefully attempts to discourage long term stays in

common spaces. Some designers may call these uncomfortable structures "art," or simply not claim responsibility for their deployment when criticized. Unfortunately, the public is broadly affected by such structures too. These structures create uncomfortable conditions for elderly, disabled, overworked, sick, or pregnant individuals, and other vulnerable citizens.²⁵

Logistically, homeless people also face challenges because of a lack of an official address. This impacts economic, political, and social rights. For example, to vote in most of the world, you must have a registered address to determine the constituency. Lacking this creates a large challenge when looking to vote, participate in referendums, and other political activity. This effectively excludes the homeless political spheres. Their voices become reliant on advocates in government and corporations. Not having a permanent address also creates issues with accessing other social services, like healthcare. Homelessness is thus an associated cause of thousands of preventable deaths per year.²⁶

Homelessness is a condition which comes with a lot of stigma. Stigmatization is a usually negative

20 European Social Policy Network *The Criminalization of Rough Sleeping in Hungary* (Budapest: 2018/62) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259546939>

21 Evangelista, *Mean Streets: A Report on The Criminalization of Homelessness in Europe*.

22 Harry Tan, "'We Are Not like Them': Stigma and the Destitute Persons Act of Singapore," *International Journal of Law in Context* 17, no. 3 (September 2021): 318-335, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552321000410>.

23 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Governments Must Urgently Scrap Unfair Laws Criminalising Homelessness and Poverty," press release, June 25, 2024, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/governments-must-urgently-scrap-unfair-laws-criminalising-homelessness-and-poverty>.

24 Eric S. Tars, *Criminalization of Homelessness: An Advocates Guide*.

25 Karthik Chalavada, "Defensive Architecture - A Design Against Humanity" *International Journal of Research and Advanced Ideas in International Technology* (March 2020):8-32 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339676322_Defensive_architecture_-_A_design_against_humanity

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Chad's refugees (Credit: Henry Wilkins/VOA)

idea that can be widely recognized about a group of people.²⁷

Such stigma allows for further criminalization, and isolation of homeless people from the rest of society. This is problematic because it creates boundaries that keep people from seeking help because of a fear of judgement.²⁸ This can also lead to discrimination, if the rest of society regards the stigmatized group as inferior. The UN posits that failing to provide adequate housing is a violation of

human rights, however countries view fulfilling this responsibility in different ways.

War, Conflict, and Crisis

Housing-insecure individuals might also face displacement by armed conflict. Planning and creating affordable housing remains difficult for most countries in or around conflict or crisis zones. With limited warning, conflict, crisis, and other disasters can erupt in neighbouring countries.

About 85 percent of displaced people are hosted in developing countries, 26 million are refugees, and 77 percent of such individuals have been in prolonged situations lasting more than five years.²⁹ This sudden movement of thousands to millions of people into neighboring countries, often countries which are already economically weak, causes an immense strain on national resources. Additionally, the average length of protracted refugee situations is increasing.³⁰ To fully understand the reality of global homelessness, it is key to understand how governments have previously handled displaced peoples.

One recent conflict which caused mass migration is the two year conflict in Sudan.³¹ This conflict erupted in 2023 and resulted in the movement of close to two million people fleeing from the violence. This resulted in over 720,000 new refugees fleeing to the neighbouring country of Chad, which is already one of the world's poorest countries.³² This has added further strain to a local economy already struggling to cope with housing needs. While UN and EU agencies have been working in the region to help, the situation remains dire. Many refugees remain

27 A/HRC/Res/52/10

28 Karthik Chalavada, "Defensive Architecture - A Design Against Humanity" 8-32

29 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Designing with Children in Displacement (DeCID) Handbook* (2021), accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/12/decid-handbook-eng-2.pdf>.

30 UN-Habitat, *Designing with Children in Displacement (DeCID) Handbook*.

31 Moulid Hujale, "After Two Years of War, Sudanese Refugees Continue to Cross into Chad," UNHCR, April 17, 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/after-two-years-war-sudanese-refugees-continue-cross-chad>.

32 Hujale, "After Two Years of War, Sudanese Refugees Continue to Cross into Chad."

completely unhoused or live in makeshift shelters.³³ Shortages of basic necessities have created a difficult situation in Chad.³⁴ Unable to cope with refugees within their country, the Chadian government will continue to exist in crisis mode until the conflict ends or more robust international aid arrives. The conflict in Sudan highlights one of the most difficult aspects of resolving global homelessness. In many cases, countries experiencing an influx of refugees are some of the least equipped to cope. If the world is to resolve this issue, it will require immense time, resources, and capital to support the countries most affected.

Chad's crisis has largely occurred over recent years. However, many human displacements are compounded over decades. One notable example is the persecution of the Rohingya peoples in Myanmar. The Rohingya people are an ethnically diverse Muslim people from the Rakhine state of Myanmar, one of the poorest regions in the entire country.³⁵ The Muslim population in Rakhine state comprise around 36 percent of the total population and account for around half of the country's Muslim population.³⁶ Persecution

of the Rohingya has been ongoing since at least the 1970s, but it intensified under the military junta that took power in the 1980s. This persecution intensified during 2016 and continues to the present day.³⁷ Many Rohingya people have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh. Presently, around 700,000 Rohingya reside in Bangladesh. Ultimately, this has created an immense financial strain for the Bangladeshi state. Without any clear end to the conflict, Bangladesh has to consider the integration of Rohingya people into society. Changes in government and shifting attitudes toward the Rohingya have largely prevented their integration into larger society.³⁸ This failure to properly integrate increases the financial burden on Bangladesh and worsens the conditions for all refugees in the region. Unable to find work or move out of the refugee camps, they remain stuck in place. Displaced peoples deserve long term support, so that housing and other vital services can be provided.

Similarly, the dictatorship in Venezuela has displaced over 7.9 million people, resulting in one of the largest refugee crises of the 21st century. More than 6.7 million are hosted in Latin American and

Caribbean countries, especially Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and Ecuador. Some host countries in the region have welcomed Venezuelans. Nonetheless, many states are increasingly overstretched and others have turned their backs to a population in need.³⁹ For instance, Chile initially welcomed Venezuelan refugees. Now, because of such a high influx, the country had major changes in policy and increasingly negative public attitudes. Ultimately, Chile's policies led to growing xenophobia and tighter border controls, which have pushed many refugees into poverty and homelessness.⁴⁰ Venezuelan migrants often face discrimination in the housing and labor markets. This makes it difficult for them to find stable jobs or affordable rent. As a result, many are forced to live in overcrowded shelters, camps, or even on the streets. Local authorities in some cities have also carried out evictions of informal migrant camps without offering alternatives. This further increases visible homelessness among Venezuelans.

Displaced peoples place a tremendous strain on host communities. Since most refugees resettle in low and middle-income countries, poverty is usually a factor

33 Beatrice Molinari, "Fleeing and Waiting: The Path of Sudanese Refugees Crossing the Border into Chad - European Commission," EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, December 12, 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/fleeing-and-waiting-path-sudanese-refugees-crossing-border-chad_en.

34 Zeinab Mohammed Salih, "Despair in Chad Camps as Violence and Hunger in Sudan Drive 25,000 across Border in a Week," Global Development, The Guardian, October 21, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/oct/21/despair-chad-camps-refugees-flee-sudan>.

35 Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, "History of Rakhine State and the Origin of the Rohingya Muslims," IKAT : The Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 2, no. 1 (2018): 19, <https://doi.org/10.22146/ikat.v2i1.37391>.

36 Mohajan, "History of Rakhine State and the Origin of the Rohingya Muslims."

37 Kendra L. Duran et al., "Considering the Shrinking Physical, Social, and Psychological Spaces of Rohingya Refugees in Southeast Asia," Wellbeing, Space and Society 4 (January 2023): 100152, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2023.100152>.

38 Duran et al., "Considering the Shrinking Physical, Social, and Psychological Spaces of Rohingya Refugees in Southeast Asia."

39 "Venezuela situation," UNHCR, accessed August 27, 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/venezuela-situation>.

40 Cristián Doña-Reveco, "How Chile's welcome turned sour," Mixed Migration Center, April 18, 2024, <https://mixedmigration.org/chiles-response-to-migration/>.

affecting not only refugees but also host communities. Increases in traffic, transportation, overall costs, and decreases in income may affect school attendance of host community children.⁴¹ Increased food consumption, the need for healthcare, and access to recreation or green spaces might all be negatively affected for both refugee and host communities. Also, in the long term, concerns about returning to one's home country, or working toward integration, often paralyze governments with indecision.

Economic Considerations

Another key consideration is the state of a country's economy. Oftentimes, individual homelessness is the result of inescapable economic conditions, which affect the most vulnerable in societies. While the UN Human Settlements Programme typically focuses directly on housing projects, one of its goals is eradicating housing insecurity around the world. This could include addressing the underlying economic conditions, which are often correlated with homelessness.

Understanding the push and pull of homelessness is critical for countries as they develop policy alongside the UN on how to best handle this issue.

One of the most reliable indicators of increased rates of homelessness is economic decline.⁴² Several risk factors make it more likely for an individual to become homeless due to an economic downturn. One of the strongest risk factors for homelessness is age. Those aged 21 to 44 are less likely to enter homelessness when compared to national averages. This is partially a result of increased physical fitness,

An economic downturn affects homelessness within a region.

allowing them to find work more easily. This in contrast to those aged 45 and above who experience a 7.1 percent increased risk of homelessness compared to most national averages.⁴³ This highlights the vulnerability of older citizens who often struggle to find work, especially after being laid off. As

people age, their support systems often shrink; this presents a major obstacle for many elderly citizens. This decline in support systems usually correlates with decreased well-being and can also impact one's ability to hold onto a job.⁴⁴ This is one example of how economics and social factors come together to create gaps in our systems that result in homelessness across the globe.

Increasing rents are often cited as a primary stress for people around the world, and the trend of increasing rents seems unlikely to pause.⁴⁵ Widespread inflation after the COVID-19 pandemic was coupled with a global economic downturn.⁴⁶ This hit vulnerable populations hard across the world. In Brazil, for example, the homeless population increased by 140 percent between 2012 to 2020.⁴⁷ Even in Chile, one of South America's richest economies, the rate of homelessness jumped more than 30 percent from 2020 to 2024.⁴⁸ In Malaysia, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated homelessness among urban dwellers by 20 to 30 percent, and in Bangkok, Thailand, by 30 percent.⁴⁹

⁴¹ *Designing with Children in Displacement (DeCID) Handbook*.

⁴² Guy Johnson et al., *Entries and Exits from Homelessness: A Dynamic Analysis of the Relationship between Structural Conditions and Individual Characteristics* (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2015).

⁴³ Johnson et al., *Entries and Exits from Homelessness*.

⁴⁴ Karen L. Siedlecki et al., "The Relationship Between Social Support and Subjective Well-Being Across Age," *Social Indicators Research* 117, no. 2 (2014): 561-76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0361-4>.

⁴⁵ Alan Morris et al., "Private Renting and Rental Stress," in *The Private Rental Sector in Australia: Living with Uncertainty*, ed. Alan Morris et al. (Springer, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-6672-5_6.

⁴⁶ Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe (CEPAL), "Pandemia provoca aumento nos níveis de pobreza sem precedentes nas últimas décadas e tem um forte impacto na desigualdade e no emprego," press release, March 4, 2021, www.cepal.org/pt-br/comunicados/pandemia-provoca-aumento-niveis-pobreza-sem-precedentes-ultimas-decadas-tem-forte.

⁴⁷ Thânia Maria Rodrigues Figueiredo et al., "The Hunger and the Defense of Homeless in Brazil," *Lancet Regional Health - Americas*, e-collection 2022; 6 (Nov. 18 2021), article 100108, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2021.100108>.

⁴⁸ Los Angeles Times, "Chileans confront a homelessness crisis, a first for one of South America's richest countries," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2024.

⁴⁹ Lasco, Yunus, and Kulthanmanusorn, "Homelessness: An Invisible Public Health Crisis."

Additionally, with ever-increasing rural to urban migration, rent has also increased at unprecedented rates in the past few years. From 2014 to 2024, Toronto, Canada, saw an increase of over 63 percent in average rent for a single bedroom apartment, moving from USD 1,067 per month to USD 1,715 per month.⁵⁰ Compared with an 8 percent increase in real median wages in the same period, the disparity between rent and wage growth is becoming increasingly untenable.⁵¹ Toronto is not the only city to have seen such large growth in the past 10 years.

According to UN-HABITAT, more than half of urban households in Sub-Saharan Africa had no access to affordable housing in 2014. This is followed by Western Asia, North Africa, Central Asia and South Asia, where nearly one-third of the households faced affordability problems. In Latin America, the Caribbean, and in East and Southeast Asia, approximately one in five urban households had no access to affordable housing. Additionally, according to self-reports, 41 percent of people in Latin America and the Caribbean, 12.8 percent in North America and Europe, and 6 percent in Australia and New Zealand could not find

affordable housing in their city.⁵² Governments around the world have only just begun to properly address the situation. Solutions to slow rent growth or find ways to increase wage growth are critical for any plan to help reduce global homelessness.

Overall, it is clear that the link between economic conditions and global homelessness are strong. Again, in Brazil, the average emergency aid provided only buys about 38 percent of the basic nutritious food needed for the average individual.⁵³ Thus, even with government intervention, people who need assistance might have to choose between sustenance or shelter. Without a proper plan to tackle rent growth and examine how economic factors can affect the world's housing supply, there will be little progress made in eradicating global homelessness. It remains to be seen how the UN Human Settlements Programme will use its vast resources in this area or whether it will continue to focus on its traditional areas of deployment.

Climate Displacement and Infrastructure

UN-Habitat has considered adding sustainability to the necessary components of adequate housing, which already include security of tenure, availability of services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, suitable location, and cultural adequacy.⁵⁴ This demonstrates an acknowledgement of the impact that climate change has on housing security. In 2050, the expected amount of people to be displaced by climate change is 1.2 billion.⁵⁵ This displacement has a ripple effect on the countries that are taking in these refugees. Increased competition over resources, jobs, and social services causes conflict.

Opinions vary on how to handle climate refugees. This is especially true in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SIDS are recognized for their distinct vulnerability to the impacts of climate change because of economic, social, and geographic factors.⁵⁶ A large amount of climate refugees coming from these islands do not have sufficient means to access housing once they arrive in their host countries.

50 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Housing Market Information Portal," CMHC, 2025, <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.2.11&GeographyId=2270&GeographyTypeId=3&DisplayAs=Table&GeographyName=Toronto#October>.

51 Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "Research to Insights: Wages in Canada, 1981 to 2024," Statistics Canada, September 6, 2025, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2025003-eng.htm>.

52 *Progress Report: SDG 11 (Target 11.1)*.

53 Figueiredo et al., "The Hunger and the Defense of Homeless in Brazil."

54 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *State of Efforts to Progressively Realize Adequate Housing for All* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, October 2024), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2024/10/2416772e.pdf>.

55 Tetsju Ida, *Climate Refugees - The Worlds Forgotten Victims*. (Kyoto: World Economic Forum, 2021), <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/06/climate-refugees-the-world-s-forgotten-victims/>

56 UN Human Settlements Programme *Urbanization and Climate Change in Small Island Developing States* HS/004/15E May 2015. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/SIDS_Updated.pdf

In early July 2024, Hurricane Beryl struck the Caribbean. This made history as the earliest ever category 5 hurricane during a typical season.⁵⁷ The storm killed at least 10 people and caused millions of dollars in damages across the region. A majority of the support provided to the impacted countries came from the United Nations Climate fund, which released USD four million for relief.⁵⁸ A gap in support after this event was for countries who were tasked with climate refugee intake. Very little support was given, if any, to the countries accepting refugees from the Caribbean during this crisis. As a result, nearby states saw an influx in homeless populations and a strain on their available social services for refugees and citizens alike.⁵⁹ An influx of refugees and migrants to any country is bound to put a strain on social services available.⁶⁰ Climate change only worsens this. It makes patterns of migration less predictable and damages infrastructure across the world.

SIDS are not isolated in this pattern. As climate change worsens globally, millions of people are constantly at risk of displacement. Not only does this displacement

impact the people leaving, but it places a heavy strain on social services and infrastructure in the countries hosting these refugees. Many individuals affected are among the urban poor who live in vulnerable areas. Such people might live “along river banks, on hillsides and slopes prone to landslides, near polluted grounds, on decertified land, in unstable structures vulnerable to earthquakes, and along waterfronts,” according to UN-Habitat.⁶¹ This vulnerability indicates how improving the physical living structures and surroundings of people could fortify them against disaster-caused housing insecurity. Destroyed homes contribute to a lack of housing across the world. Countries impacted by climate change are losing valuable space to support their current homeless populations.

Such lack of housing contributes to a vast amount of other issues. Internal tension, paired with economic strain, is a common side effect of climate disaster.⁶² These tensions connect directly to government distrust and a strain on public services. Sanitation, healthcare, and public transit are all threatened by an influx of homeless people in any community. Waste

removal is especially difficult. Dirty streets become a breeding ground for harmful bacteria, which will increase illness in the community. This has a chain effect on public healthcare systems. If left unaddressed, it can also lead to political distrust.⁶³ Improper sanitation also has a direct impact on climate change. Garbage-ridden public spaces harm local ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to disease and less fortified in the case of a major climate event.⁶⁴

Homeless individuals are at a disadvantage in terms of climate resilience and the damages caused by climate change.⁶⁵ In recent years, homelessness has been the driving force behind death counts in natural disasters. These people often do not have proper access to shelter and resources for the days of and after the event. For example, a recent study found that homeless people are about 50 percent more likely to be severely injured or perish in severe heat compared to sheltered people.⁶⁶ This highlights gaps in policy that are leaving people behind as climate change worsens globally.

57 “Hurricane Beryl is a Historic Storm. Here’s Why” CBS, 2024 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hurricane-beryl-caribbean-multiple-record-setter/>

58 Vibhu Mishra, “UN Mobilizes \$4 Million for Hurricane Response in the Caribbean” UN News, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07>

59 Tetsju Ida, *Climate Refugees - The Worlds Forgotten Victims*.

60 Jennifer Johansen, “Family Life Under Strain: The Impact of Forced Migration” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2025. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12092455/>

61 “Climate Change” (UN-Habitat).

62 Guy Johnson et al., *Entries and Exits from Homelessness: A Dynamic Analysis of the Relationship between Structural Conditions and Individual Characteristics*

63 Katie Good, *The Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change on People Experiencing Homelessness* Texas Homeless Network, 2024 <https://www.thn.org/2024/04/03/the-disproportionate-impact-of-climate-change-on-people-experiencing-homelessness/>

64 HS/004/15E

65 Tetsju Ida, *Climate Refugees - The Worlds Forgotten Victims*.

66 Katie Good, *The Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change on People Experiencing Homelessness*

CURRENT STATUS

Urban Homelessness

Our world became majority urban in the early 2000s.⁶⁷ An emerging trend in global metropolitan areas is an increase of housing-insecure populations in urban centers. At risk individuals are typically forced into an urban center for a couple of reasons. It is where the resources exist for access to food, water, and basic living conditions. These areas also see high amounts of foot traffic. Greater numbers of people increases the likelihood of homeless individuals accessing support outside of government resources.⁶⁸

A major concern with homelessness in urban centers is the misrepresentation of societal groups and races. This can amplify negative bias and point toward other societal issues. In post-colonial states, Indigenous people seem to be overrepresented at about a five to one ratio. Since being homeless is stigmatized, this pattern can worsen attitudes toward Indigenous groups and creates further societal issues.⁶⁹ In Australia, Indigenous people are 20 percent of the homeless

population, but only 3 percent of the total population.⁷⁰ This situation makes Indigenous people viewed as “trespassers” on land which used to be their own.

Homeless people may be stereotyped as violent or morally deficient. Since many societies are engineered to literally separate homeless individuals, this perpetuates the idea that homeless individuals “deserve” their fate and are less worthy of aid and acceptance.⁷¹ This is even the case with children. The Consortium of Street Children estimates that there are over 150,000 urban street children in Ethiopia, about 30,000 in Ghana and DRC, around a million in Egypt, and between 250,000 and 300,000 in Kenya.⁷² The numbers of urban street children exist at similar levels across Asian and Latin American countries too. The National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH) in the US reports that one in 45 children experience homelessness each year, with nine years old as the average age for a solo homeless child in the USA.⁷³

In recognition of the severity of the issue, especially for young people, UN-Habitat signed a partnership agreement with the NGO Save the Children. This was to ensure that global urban development will be inclusive for urban children, particularly those in slums and informal settlements. This is particularly important, because according to Michal Mlynar, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director of UN-Habitat, 75 percent of areas that will be urban in 2050 are yet to be built.⁷⁴ These urban areas are of a particular focus, since the number of children living in slums is also expected to triple by 2050 to around 1.5 billion.⁷⁵

There is something called the “urban paradox.” In cities, most people have better access to important services like health care, education, clean water, sanitation, and electricity. Because of this, urban populations often enjoy better living conditions than people in rural areas. However, the paradox is that the poorest people in cities sometimes face even worse conditions than the rural poor.

67 Guy Johnson et al., *Entries and Exits from Homelessness: A Dynamic Analysis of the Relationship between Structural Conditions and Individual Characteristics*

68 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World* (United Nations, January 21, 2020), 109, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2020-2.html>.

69 Damian Collins, *Prevalence and Causes of Homelessness Amongst Indigenous Peoples* Taylor & Francis Housing Studies, June 2014 doi.10.1080/02673037.2014.923091

70 Walsh et al., “Back Off! Stop Making Us Illegal!”

71 Lasco, Yunus, and Kulthanmanusorn, “Homelessness: An Invisible Public Health Crisis.”

72 Moses Ogutu, “Under The Bridge: The Invisible Lives Of Street Children,” *Mandela Rhodes Foundation: Alumni on the Move*, published May 13, 2020, www.mandelarhodes.org/news-impact/alumni/under-the-bridge-the-invisible-lives-of-street-children/.

73 Ogutu, *Under The Bridge*.

74 Save the Children International, “UN-Habitat Signs Agreement with Save the Children to Make Cities Greener, Healthier, and More Child-Friendly,” press release, Nairobi, January 30, 2024, accessed August 23, 2025, www.savethechildren.net/news/un-habitat-signs-agreement-save-children-make-cities-greener-healthier-and-more-child-friendly.

75 “UN-Habitat Signs Agreement with Save the Children” (Save the Children International).

They may live in overcrowded neighborhoods, lack access to affordable services, and struggle with higher living costs, which can make their overall outcomes worse despite being surrounded by resources.⁷⁶ This means that street children in urban areas are very at-risk of adverse outcomes. Therefore, careful urban design and planning should be focused on improving adequate housing for children and families.

Additionally, children and families displaced by conflict or disaster who end up in urban areas might not have the means to work as they previously did. This loss of income limits the resources available, and children may be forced to work instead of attend school. Additionally, the spaces where children would usually frequent might no longer be available. An influx of refugees may limit recreation in playgrounds or courtyards if spaces become overcrowded, or converted to refugee housing. Children and other vulnerable adults, desperate for any income, might also be targeted for multiple job schemes by individuals or organizations wanting to utilize cheap labor.⁷⁷ Such projects might include building housing infrastructure, where unskilled and low paid labor could harm individual people but also result in unstable and inadequate housing.⁷⁸

Case Study: Downtown East Side of Vancouver

The Downtown East Side of Vancouver (DTES), Canada, is better recognized as East Hastings. This area has one of the highest rates of homelessness in Canada. It shows how problems like gentrification (when rising costs push out poorer residents) and a lack of funding for social services can lead to long-lasting struggles for people living there. It represents one of the most concentrated examples of urban homelessness in the Global North. Despite Canada's high-income status, this neighborhood has long been known as the country's poorest area. As of 2025, Vancouver continues to have the highest rate of homelessness in British Columbia, with a significant portion of the city's unhoused population living in or near East Hastings.⁷⁹

Historically, the DTES was a working-class neighborhood, home to a vibrant community of laborers and immigrants drawn to Vancouver's industrial and port-related employment opportunities. As industries shifted and economic priorities changed, so did the social fabric of the area. Affordable housing stock began to deteriorate, and what remained was often converted into low-cost single-room

occupancy (SRO) units—some of the last housing options for people living on the brink of homelessness. The onset of the opioid crisis in the late 20th century, coupled with deinstitutionalization policies that released individuals with mental illness into communities without adequate support, added new layers to the neighborhood's challenges. As social services shrank and rents elsewhere in the city soared, many vulnerable individuals found themselves funneled into the DTES as a last refuge. While Vancouver is internationally recognized for its livability, this densely populated area has, over decades, become home to one of the most visibly marginalized communities in the country, where symptoms of housing insecurity converge into a humanitarian emergency.⁸⁰

What distinguishes the DTES is not just the number of unhoused residents, but the intensity of need concentrated in such a compact urban space. It is not uncommon to witness individuals living in makeshift encampments within eyesight of luxury condominiums and high-end retail. The city's ongoing struggle to reconcile these extremes has often played out in public conflict: mass evictions of tent encampments, the controversial expansion of police presence, and debates over supervised consumption sites and

76 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Advantage or Paradox? The Challenge for Children and Young People of Growing Up Urban* (New York: UNICEF, November 2018), www.unicef.org/media/60451/file/Advantage-or-paradox-2018.pdf.

77 *Designing with Children in Displacement (DeCID) Handbook*.

78 *Designing with Children in Displacement (DeCID) Handbook*.

79 "Millions spent, yet homelessness is set to worsen: the Downtown Eastside," Polite Canada, June 2, 2024, <https://politecanada.ca/canadian-polite/2024/millions-spent-yet-homelessness-is-set-to-worsen-the-downtown-eastside>.

80 Kris C, "Harm Reduction Paradox of Downtown Eastside Vancouver," Downtown Eastside, November 17, 2024, <https://downtowneastside.org/harm-reduction-paradox-of-downtown-eastside-vancouver>.

housing-first approaches. At the same time, frontline organizations, volunteers, and peer-led advocacy groups continue to work tirelessly to provide dignity and care amid systemic gaps.⁸¹

Despite periodic influxes of funding and political attention, little has fundamentally shifted for those on the margins. Many in the DTES remain caught in cycles of displacement, trauma, and survival, and the lack of coordinated support between municipal, provincial, and federal agencies has perpetuated a fragmented response. For some, the neighborhood has become a permanent holding space between institutional failure and informal support networks, with little hope of meaningful reintegration.⁸²

East Hastings reveals that homelessness is not a symptom exclusive to fragile states or conflict zones. It emerges in some of the most developed and stable societies in the world when housing systems fail to include the most vulnerable. This case challenges delegates to broaden their understanding of homelessness as a global issue shaped not only by scarcity, but by distribution too. As delegates debate global solutions, the situation in Vancouver illustrates the need for holistic housing policy that balances shelter, health, and dignity,



Downtown east side (DTES) Vancouver (Credit: Ted McGrath)

particularly in urban centers facing housing shortages and shifting political will.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015, all United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that “recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality,

and spur economic growth - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.”⁸³

UN-Habitat highlighted three youth forums in Latin America with the Youth 2030 Cities project, back in early 2022. These youth participants emphasized the importance of achieving the SDGs.⁸⁴ These forums also included local government officials with break-out sessions. Youth and government delegations discussed urban expansion and environmental security, /economic growth and employment opportunities, land rights and management, and gender and sexual rights.⁸⁵

81 Samantha Young and Nadia Fairbairn, “Expanding supervised injection facilities across Canada: lessons from the Vancouver experience,” *Can J Public Health* 109, no 2, (April 2018), <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-018-0089-7>.

82 Polite Canada, “Millions spent, yet homelessness is set to worsen: the Downtown Eastside.”

83 “Goals,” United Nations, accessed August 27, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

84 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), “Youth Partner with Cities to Achieve the SDGs by 2030,” *UN-Habitat* (news story, March 31, 2022), <https://unhabitat.org/news/31-mar-2022/youth-partner-with-cities-to-achieve-the-sdgs-by-2030>.

85 “Youth Partner with Cities to Achieve the SDGs by 2030” (UN-Habitat).

The SDGs highlighted by these young people include specifically #3 - Good Health and Well-Being, #4 - Quality Education, #10 - Reduced Inequalities, #11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, and #13 - Climate Action. Health and homelessness are inherently connected. Integrated urban planning, access to basic services, and access to decent and affordable housing all contribute to better health.⁸⁶ Providing appropriate urban spaces and adequate housing also allows communities to access quality education, which in turn reduces inequalities. Fighting stigma against the unhoused population relates to reducing inequalities, and SDG 11 explicitly mentions making cities ‘inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ for people of all circumstances.⁸⁷ SDG 13 promotes having an adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.⁸⁸ This proactiveness can help with human displacement and homelessness.

Most relevantly, in A/HRC/RES/52/10, the UN itself underlined the importance of the implementation of the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG #11. This goal aims to ensure access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing through economic, social, and environmental policy planning and infrastructure linkages.⁸⁹ However, even before COVID-19, progress toward this goal was slow. According to analysis conducted for the High-Level Political Forum 2020, Target 11.1.1, for decreasing the proportion of urban population living in slums, was not being met. For indicator 3.1 of SDG 11, ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate, data shows that urban land use is growing up to 3.7 times faster than population density.⁹⁰ This unregulated and dramatic expansion may lead to unplanned developments at environmental risk, which struggle to provide essential services and infrastructure.

In the few years after the SDGs were implemented post-2015, the proportion of slum dwellers increased so that 24 percent of the urban population lives in slumlike housing, and the absolute number of slum dwellers increased to 1.03

billion people.⁹¹ Other housing targets have had mixed successes in being achieved. Therefore, in 2023, the UN thus reaffirmed the work of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and extended his mandate for three more years.⁹² Though the work is not easy, UN-Habitat remains committed to achieving all SDGs, including and especially creating sustainable cities and communities.

86 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Lao PDR), “SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being,” *UN-Habitat Lao PDR*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.la/sdg-3/>.

87 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, November 2024), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2024/11/wcr2024_-_full_report.pdf.

88 World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action (UN-Habitat).

89 United Nations Human Rights Council, *A/HRC/RES/52/10: Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and the Right to Non-discrimination in This Context*, (March 2023), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/52/10>

90 State of Efforts to Progressively Realize Adequate Housing for All (UN-Habitat).

91 Habitat for Humanity International, *Progress Report: Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Target 11.1)* (n.d.), https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/SDG%20Progress%20Report_0.pdf

92 *A/HRC/RES/52/10*.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Human Rights and Social Justice Bloc

This bloc is guided by the principle that housing is a fundamental human right. One approach to ending homelessness is referred to as the “staircase” approach, in which those receiving aid move from one level of accommodation to the next by meeting treatment goals.⁹³ Many Nordic countries use this approach. After homelessness rates stagnated, Finland adopted the Housing First principle, where adequate housing does not have to be earned with a complete behavior shift. This method recognizes that if someone does not have a place to live, they cannot worry about employment or setting goals, but instead worry about getting one’s next meal and if they might wake up again.⁹⁴ Finland, Norway, and Denmark, and other countries have started to utilize the Housing First model on a grand scale. Such countries take the

idea of housing as a basic human right very seriously and provide shelter as a very early step for aid.

Colombia has housing as a human right enshrined in its constitution, but still has high rates of homelessness. However, the country aims to formulate effective public policies and rehabilitation programs, alongside urban planning and coordination for improving the situation.⁹⁵ *Medellín Solidaria*, a strategy led by the Mayor’s Office in Medellín, is one public policy which takes a preventative, person-centered approach across social, educational, economic, labor, and healthcare domains.⁹⁶ It promotes social inclusion and provides access to temporary housing, detoxification, and rehabilitation services for unhoused people.

Other countries of this bloc ensure that housing remains affordable for those who currently inhabit it. Vienna, Austria, for example, has been consistently ranked as a top most livable city. It is remarkably affordable because the city itself owns many

properties.⁹⁷ Vienna was once a city in crisis, post World War I, after the Habsburg Empire collapsed and many people were uprooted. Now, these communal buildings ensure social sustainability. Maik Novotny, an architecture critic for the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*, explains that “the city actively strives for a mixing of people from different backgrounds and on different incomes in the same estates,” to emphasize that social housing is not just for the poor.⁹⁸ This provision of low cost housing, coupled with intentional efforts to fight stigma, is emblematic of this bloc.

Kenya and other African countries might align ideologically with this group, even though they face challenges similar to countries of bloc three. The right to housing as a human right is recognized in Kenyan legal documents and the country has had direct partnerships with the UN-Habitat and Shelter-Afrique.⁹⁹ Nairobi also implemented the *Mukuru* Special Planning Area (SPA) which is a flexible land tenure system that addresses unique local

93 Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri, “How Finland Ended Homelessness,” *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2020), chapter 4, 38 lines (PDF), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol22num2/ch4.pdf>.

94 Global Citizen, “‘Housing First’ Approach Is Catching On Around the World,” *Global Citizen*, November 10, 2017, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/housing-first-ending-homelessness-human-right/>.

95 Leandro González Támara and Sandra Patricia Barragán Moreno, “Modeling the Variables That Influence Substance Consumption of People Who Experience Homelessness in Colombia,” *Frontiers in Sociology* 10 (July 30, 2025): article 1474113, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1474113>.

96 González Támara and Barragán Moreno, *Modeling the Variables That Influence Substance Consumption*.

97 Philip Oltermann, “The Social Housing Secret: How Vienna Became the World’s Most Livable City,” *The Guardian*, January 10, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/10/the-social-housing-secret-how-vienna-became-the-worlds-most-livable-city>.

98 Oltermann, “The Social Housing Secret.”

99 Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development, *Updated Sessional Paper No. 3 of 2016 on National Housing Policy* (Nairobi: Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development, 2016), <https://www.housingandurban.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Updated-Sessional-Paper-No.3-of-2016-National-Housing-Policy.pdf>.

challenges.¹⁰⁰ Overall, countries within this bloc push for long-term, inclusive solutions. Their priorities include ending the criminalization of homelessness, fighting stigma against such individuals, and promoting urban planning that protects vulnerable groups. These countries would note the need for tailored policies for children, migrants, and Indigenous people. This bloc might also emphasize how housing challenges are not just a supply problem, because there are many vacant housing units globally yet many unhoused people.¹⁰¹ Such countries would advocate for guidelines and standards on adequate housing, anti-criminalization, and inclusive urban planning.

Sovereignty and Social Order Bloc

This bloc would focus on state sovereignty in determining how to approach the housing crisis. These countries have taken more hard-line approaches to the issue of homelessness. As previously mentioned, the United States Supreme Court upheld laws criminalizing homeless encampments. Further, it has not ratified the International Covenant

on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which recognizes the human right to housing.¹⁰² The United Kingdom has had vagrancy laws and anti-loitering measures (though it is softening in recent years), Hungary has a constitutional ban on rough sleeping, and Singapore has the Destitute Persons Act which allows fines and detention for homeless individuals.

Throughout Australia, anti-camping ordinances, policing of public spaces, loitering and ‘public nuisance’ laws criminalize homeless individuals.¹⁰³ Other survival-related activities, such as begging, are also punishable. In Saudi Arabia, homelessness is similarly stigmatized. Saudi Arabia’s housing policies have lagged in integrating social housing into broader urban development. Housing is framed more as a developmental tool for economic modernization, urban planning, and social stability. This is in alignment with the Saudi Vision 2030 for economic diversification, privatization, and reducing dependency on oil revenue.¹⁰⁴ Saudi Arabia and other countries in this bloc might emphasize more sustainable housing development, but for addressing economic concerns.¹⁰⁵ Unsustainable housing might add an extra economic

burden on vulnerable groups and governmental social support networks in the future, due to the impact of low quality housing and poor maintenance concerns.

Other countries who share similar opinions with this bloc might work toward improved housing solutions, but without rights-based framing. China, for example, has directly invested in improving urban housing and also upgraded infrastructure in rural areas. However, their goal to “accelerate the urbanization of the rural migrant population” has been criticized as also displacing rural migrants and forcing a heavy reliance on shelters.¹⁰⁶ Other countries in this bloc may have low tolerance for visible homelessness and prioritize solutions which remove people from the streets, but not actually resolve the root causes for their circumstances.

The countries who share the views of this bloc are very varied. Countries may emphasize it is without binding obligations when proposing certain innovations or initiatives to resolve the issue. Overall, these countries are usually well-resourced and could potentially support or fund UN-Habitat involvement in directly improving shelters and transitional

100 Muungano Alliance, “Mukuru Special Planning Area (SPA),” *Muungano Alliance*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://www.muungano.net/mukuru-spa>.

101 State of Efforts to Progressively Realize Adequate Housing for All (UN-Habitat).

102 National Housing Law Project (NHLP), *Right to Housing in the U.S.* (n.d.), accessed August 23, 2025, [https://nhlp.org/files/\(2\)%20Right%20to%20Housing%20-%20in%20the%20U.S.pdf](https://nhlp.org/files/(2)%20Right%20to%20Housing%20-%20in%20the%20U.S.pdf).

103 Walsh et al., “Back Off! Stop Making Us Illegal!”

104 Khalid Abdullah Mulhim Al Mulhim, Mohammad Shahidul Hasan Swapan, and Shahed Khan, “Critical Junctures in Sustainable Social Housing Policy Development in Saudi Arabia: A Review,” *Sustainability* 14, no. 5 (2022): 2979, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14052979>.

105 Al Mulhim, Swapan, and Khan, “Critical Junctures in Sustainable Social Housing Policy Development”.

106 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Mainstreaming Migration and Displacement into Urban Policy: A Guide* (2023), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/10/mainstreaming_migration_and_displacement_into_urban_policy_-_a_guide_12-10.pdf.

housing infrastructure. These states emphasize that homelessness could be addressed through local enforcement policies, temporary shelters, and social service integration. They may discuss economic or service-based solutions, but this bloc could resist international declarations which frame housing as a legal right. This bloc may instead prefer flexibility in actions and state-led approaches to solve the issue.

Vulnerable States Bloc

This is the most diverse bloc, comprising countries with the most severe housing crises. Refugee-hosting countries, climate-vulnerable states, and large developing economies are represented. Bangladesh, Chad, and similar countries are overburdened by refugee influxes, but also at risk because of climate change. These countries have large-scale population concerns, including food insecurity, disaster management, fortifying infrastructure, and building capacities.¹⁰⁷ A lack of coordination between responsible parties and weak local government capacity results in limited prioritization of adequate housing provisions.

The housing needs of this third bloc are multi-dimensional and pressing. Such countries also generally require more than social support for at-risk individuals. These aid-recipient countries are those who are directly impacted by UN-Habitat projects. They actively promote the work of aid organizations and NGOs in fortifying new systems. Such countries, like those in Africa, also rely on the African Development Bank and other development partners to strengthen collaboration and partnerships within all levels of governments, NGOs, and private sector or regional economic communities.¹⁰⁸

Caribbean and Pacific island states are facing climate displacement. Informal settlements popular within the region can already be considered inadequate housing, and are further compromised in changing environments.¹⁰⁹ In such countries, necessary solutions are not just for individuals who fall through the gaps of established systems. Instead, whole systems are threatened by physical environment changes. Though facing broadly similar challenges, the countries require research based, regionally-specific solutions for specific crises.¹¹⁰

Countries not yet directly affected by climate change, conflict, or other crises, but who reside within the

larger region, would also support UN-Habitat projects for greater regional stability. For example, the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) is a joint initiative financed by the European Commission and implemented by UN-Habitat.¹¹¹ PSUP and other initiatives inform wider planning approaches and interventions for both developing and vulnerable countries. Building up urban areas and decreasing slum dwellers would fortify target countries. Such countries may be limited in their own ability to contribute, but are fierce advocates for such programs they feel are most relevant to their circumstances.

Other emerging economies highlighted in previous sections, like Brazil, India, and Nigeria, also struggle with affordability crises. As economic struggles further impact country populations, more diverse groups of people live on the streets, like struggling mothers, children, teenagers, and adults with low education or unemployment.¹¹² In better economic times, many of these individuals would be able to obtain resources to prevent them from living on the streets. Thus, countries of this bloc are intimately familiar with how intersecting factors drive people's experiences

107 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Country Case Study: Bangladesh Project* (2019), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-04/bangladesh_final.pdf.

108 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Africa Region," *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/africa-region>.

109 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Caribbean Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading (CSISU)* (2020), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/caribbean_strategy_2020-92.pdf.

110 Caribbean Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading (UN-Habitat).

111 Caribbean Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading (UN-Habitat).

112 Figueiredo et al., "The Hunger and the Defense of Homeless in Brazil."

with inadequate housing. Overall, this bloc highlights the global inequities driving homelessness.

This bloc's priority is securing international aid, climate finance, and burden-sharing commitments from wealthier countries. Global homelessness cannot be solved without addressing root causes

of displacement: conflict, climate change, and economic inequality. This would be done through multilateral cooperation and funding mechanisms.

COMMITTEE MISSION

In this committee, delegates will aim to find new and creative solutions to combat homelessness worldwide. UN-Habitat is tasked by the General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.¹¹³ Ideally, these places should be accommodating to people of all needs. This body is tasked to respond to the rapid and unplanned growth of cities. Drastic growth can benefit certain communities, but it also leaves some individuals behind, especially when urban infrastructure is threatened by crisis or disaster.¹¹⁴

The mandate of this committee is to guide urbanization and human settlement matters. UN-Habitat aims to provide frameworks, resources, and global cooperation necessary for countries to reduce homelessness and ensure adequate shelter for all. A large focus is on people who reside in areas defined as slums by the United Nations. This is an urban area that lacks durable housing, sufficient living

area, access to decent water, access to improved sanitation facilities, and protected tenure.¹¹⁵ UN-Habitat has decades of experience in slum upgrading, sustainable urban development, and rights-based approaches.

Cities use 66 percent of global energy and produce 70 percent of greenhouse gases.¹¹⁶ This trend emphasizes the intertwined nature of human societies with urban development. UN-Habitat must address inadequate housing and the global homelessness crisis with socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable human settlements. To achieve multiple SDG targets, every person should be able to access adequate shelter. Thus, UN-Habitat works to guide states in developing policies and programs which move beyond temporary relief to long-term, inclusive solutions.

Since 2015, this body has officially integrated housing priorities with the Sustainable

Development Goals. International cooperation is essential for sharing solutions, especially considering how so many countries are impacted by common situations like conflict, climate change, refugee influxes, rapid urbanization, or increased housing costs.

Ultimately, this committee aims to achieve adequate shelter for all through the sustainable development of human settlements.¹¹⁷ Delegates should work to mitigate the stigmatization of homelessness by encouraging inclusive policies that respect human dignity. Climate-resilient housing infrastructure is needed now, particularly for SIDS and disaster-prone regions, but will also soon be essential in many more parts of the world. The committee should not seek to enforce certain laws or legally-binding agreements, but rather encourage countries to collaborate on initiatives that promote inclusive urban planning.

113 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "About Us," *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/about-us>.

114 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "History, Mandate & Role in the UN System," *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/history-mandate-role-in-the-un-system>.

115 Laura B. Nolan, "Slum Definitions in Urban India: Implications for the Measurement of Health Inequalities," *Population and Development Review* 41 (1): 59-84, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2015.00026.x>.

116 "UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme," Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/08/un-habitat-united-nations-human-settlements-programme/>.

117 "History, Mandate & Role in the UN System" (UN-Habitat).



Fostering Urban and Rural Links

Photo Credit: Chensiyuan

Cities can expand quickly and rural areas may be left out of development. Globally, people, goods, money, and information move between villages and cities.¹ This flow happens through farming, services, and industries. These links can bring many benefits but also create problems. Natural resources are unevenly distributed. High-income countries account for 74 percent of global excess resource utilization, but the Global South is collectively responsible for 8 percent of usage.² As cities grow, they may take over farmland, which harms local jobs and traditions. However, urbanization can also help rural areas. Cities depend on farm products, which raises farmers' income and creates jobs in food processing and other industries.³ When farmers earn more, they invest back into their communities.

This shows how cities and rural areas are linked, but not all links are positive. For example, wastewater from cities often flows into farmland.⁴ Thus, cities and

rural areas need to work together. Urbanites supporting local farming, food, crafts, and services help connect the two. Food systems that use local produce, cut long supply chains, and support rural communities help the most.⁵ Farmers can sell their goods in cities and keep resources moving both ways, but there are structural barriers.⁶ We are currently seeing a “polycrisis” of persistent poverty, widening inequalities, hunger, malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, conflict-driven shocks, and socio-economic instability.⁷ However, stronger urban-rural partnerships are one way to respond to this interconnected crisis.

Fostering urban and rural links includes building partnerships so cities and villages support each other through trade, technology, services, and cultural exchange. This could entail urban and territorial planning, as well as strengthening small and intermediate towns.⁸ For example, farmers can supply goods

and raw materials for cities, and cities provide markets and services for rural workers. Partnerships can support the flow of people, products, services, and information. They can also strengthen food security systems, reduce the environmental impact of urban–rural connections, and help create laws and governance structures that promote sustainable development and advance UN-Habitat's goals.⁹

1 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Urban-Rural Linkages for Implementing the New Urban Agenda* (2017), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Urban%20Rural%20Linkages%20for%20implementing%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda_08112017.pdf.

2 UN-Habitat and CBD Secretariat, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*.

3 Tewelde Gebre and Berhanu Gebremedhin, “The Mutual Benefits of Promoting Rural-Urban Interdependence through Linked Ecosystem Services,” *Global Ecology and Conservation* 20 (2019): e00707, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2019.e00707>.

4 Gebre and Gebremedhin, “The Mutual Benefits of Promoting Rural-Urban Interdependence.”

5 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable...* (White Paper, 2025), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/07/white_paper.pdf.

6 *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable...* (White Paper, 2025)

7 UN-Habitat, *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable Food Systems*.

8 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), “Urban-Rural Linkages,” *UN-Habitat*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/topic/urban-rural-linkages>.

9 UN-Habitat, “Urban-Rural Linkages.”

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Environmental Impact

Biodiversity loss is accelerating globally. Much of this is driven by urban resource use. High-income countries can “offshore” biodiversity impacts to less developed states through global supply chains.¹⁰ Additionally, ill-managed linkages can create effects such as deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss in the rural areas which are supplying cities. Thus, effective conservation must address the near and distant urban-rural linkages (URLs).

City and rural populations experience nature in very different ways. Rural people meet the environment often and in a direct way. They farm, fish, and gather food each day. City people meet nature less often.¹¹ For them, it is often seen as an escape from daily life. The environment also shapes the link between the two groups as rural areas supply raw goods, food, and water to cities. In return, cities share technology, jobs, and knowledge with rural

areas.¹² The environment, and these relationships, are changing. Over the last 50 years, there has been an average drop of 68 percent in animal populations.¹³ Latin America and the Caribbean have seen a 94 percent decline, Africa has seen a 65 percent decline, Asia and the Pacific have seen a 45 percent decline.¹⁴

Stronger links between rural and urban areas could help protect ecological balance.¹⁵ Encouragingly, rural voices have successfully been included in city policy. Participatory planning in Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, happened when the municipal government invested in priorities like ecosystem restoration, infrastructure to connect rural and urban areas, and civic education.¹⁶ The city of Medellín also has an advanced city region food system planning process that is integrated with these priorities. Overall, URLs can decrease disaster impact in rural areas.¹⁷ This can minimize the vulnerability of rural residents and protect resources used in urban centers. City-region compacts can

jointly finance watershed protection and forest corridors that lower flood risk for cities and sustain rural livelihoods.

Urban growth is overall linked to a sharp drop in biodiversity around the world. While this can be attributed to a number of causes, the largest is excess resource use by extracting and processing materials, fuels, and food. Over 90 percent of biodiversity loss can be attributed to this single factor.¹⁸ This is heavily linked to urbanization, as increased population size has increased consumption.

As cities expand, many consumers become disconnected from the supply chains that provide their goods. At the same time, unclear corporate practices can hide environmental damage, while deforestation speeds up desertification, harms soil quality, and increases heat—creating negative impacts for both urban and rural areas.¹⁹ Exploitation of natural resources for urban growth has also degraded natural defense mechanisms.²⁰

10 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat (CBD), *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity: An Integrated Territorial Approach* (Position Paper for CBD COP 15, 2022), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/12/managing_urban-rural_linkages_for_biodiversity.pdf.

11 Marie Hyland and Masimiliano Mascherini, “Europe’s widening rural-urban divide may make space for far right,” European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, December 11, 2023, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/europes-widening-rural-urban-divide-may-make-space-far-right>.

12 Gebre, “The mutual benefits of promoting rural-urban interdependence through linked ecosystem services.”

13 Thomas Forster and Camilo A. Romero, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*. (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2022), 3, <https://unhabitat.org/managing-urban-rural-linkages-for-nature>.

14 UN-Habitat and CBD Secretariat, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*.

15 Forster, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*, 8.

16 UN-Habitat and CBD Secretariat, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*.

17 P. Mitra, “Urban–Rural Partnership Framework to Enhance Food, Energy and Water Security,” *Current Developments in Nutrition* 5, no. 12 (2021), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8657157/>.

18 Forster, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*, 4.

19 Charles Francis et al., “Food Systems and Environment: Building Positive Rural-Urban Linkages,” *Human Ecology Review*, 12, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24707501>.

20 UN-Habitat, *Regional Assessment on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience in SADC Member States*.

Today, data is the focus of growth. Data can guide farming so it can meet the rising demand for food as the world's population increases. Data can help crops grow more efficiently by tracking water use and other factors. It can also identify sustainable practices that secure a steady food supply.²¹ Cities can also use strategies like food waste prevention, reduction, and management to lessen the burden on rural systems. In Madagascar, the municipal government, NGOs, research organizations, and national ministries have implemented a city-region approach. This integrates urban and rural programs in reforestation, fisheries, and market gardening to fight poverty and food insecurity.²² It even includes protecting mangrove swamps, which buffer storms and protect the community. Similarly, Japan's Fifth Basic Environment Plan recognized the necessity of URLs for economic revitalization and for building a low-carbon, resilient society.²³ It introduced the Circulating and Ecological Sphere (CES) concept, which integrates resource circulation, ecosystem services, and regional economies across urban and rural areas.

Rural and urban communities both shape the environment, but they are also shaped by it. Researchers at the National Bureau of Economic Research have found a link between climate change and human movement into and out of cities.²⁴ Many people leave regions struck by severe storms or natural disasters.²⁵ Long-term changes in climate cause other human movements as well, often sending people to cities.

One study looked at how economic growth and rising temperatures affect migration. It divided countries into three groups: low-income, middle-income, and high-income. The groups were based on gross domestic product (GDP). GDP measures the value of all goods and services made in a country.²⁶ Low-income countries were in the bottom 25 percent of GDP. Middle-income countries were between 25 and 75 percent. High-income countries were above 75 percent. The study found that higher temperatures reduced movement from rural areas to cities in low-income countries. Researchers said this happens because higher temperatures decrease rural income and increase poverty. In

middle-income countries, higher temperatures encouraged people to move from rural areas to cities.²⁷ Ultimately, the study showed that climate change is not only an environmental challenge but also a driver of migration, reinforcing the need for urban–rural cooperation in adaptation strategies.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a serious global problem. It means there is not enough nutritious food for people each day.²⁸ Nutrition is a basic human need and crucial to security. Interestingly, urbanization is rapidly changing human diets. Many non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, are caused by consuming foods high in salt, sugar, and fats.²⁹ Partnerships between cities and rural areas can help improve this public health situation. Fresh, local produce, shorter supply chains, and healthier food systems can allow more individuals to eat balanced diets.

Rural and urban areas should combine strengths and find solutions which fit different needs. Urban and rural vulnerabilities

21 Goedde, et al., "Agriculture's technology future: How connectivity can yield new growth."

22 UN-Habitat and CBD Secretariat, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*.

23 Priyanka Mitra, Rajib Shaw, Vibhas Sukhwani, Bijon Kumer Mitra, Md Abiar Rahman, Sameer Deshkar, and Devesh Sharma, "Urban–Rural Partnership Framework to Enhance Food, Energy and Water Security," *Current Developments in Nutrition* 5, no. 12 (2021), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8657157/>.

24 Giovanni Peri and Akira Sasahara, *The Impact of Global Warming On Rural-Urban Migrations: Evidence from Global Big Data* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2019), 2, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25728/w25728.pdf.

25 Peri and Sasahara, *The Impact of Global Warming On Rural-Urban Migrations: Evidence from Global Big Data*, 3.

26 Tim Callen, "Gross Domestic Product: An Economy's All," International Monetary Fund, accessed June 23, 2025, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/gross-domestic-product-GDP>.

27 Peri, *The Impact of Global Warming On Rural-Urban Migration: Evidence from Global BigData*, 22.

28 "Understanding Global Hunger and Food Insecurity," Heifer International, April 30, 2025, <https://www.heifer.org/blog/understanding-global-hunger-and-food-insecurity.html>.

29 UN-Habitat, *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable Food Systems*.

cannot be separated. For example, when floods damage crops, rural communities lose livelihoods, but cities face food insecurity and higher prices.³⁰ Around 80 percent of people in extreme poverty live in rural areas, where poverty rates are three times higher than in urban areas.³¹ Nevertheless, while rural areas have higher poverty rates, cities are more exposed to price shocks because households rely on purchased food. Thus, urban areas are much more vulnerable to food insecurity than rural areas. Urban agricultural production could be included in urban plans to minimize these shocks.³²

Local people and experts from non-governmental groups are key to finding a fair solution.³³ A UN Committee on World Food Security report states that 75 percent of the population classified as food insecure are from urban areas.³⁴ Urban citizens are dependent on the market for food but in rural areas, people can source food locally or grow it themselves.³⁵ Urban expansion also encroaches on fertile agricultural land, fragmenting landscapes and degrading ecosystems.³⁶ In



Women fighting food insecurity (Credit: Boango545)

some regions, the top 10 percent of landowners control up to 75 percent of agricultural land.³⁷ This is significant because large industrial farms have less diverse crops that are more vulnerable to shocks and land inequality keeps people from earning income, feeding themselves, and investing in their communities.

One major challenge for rural–urban linkages is fragmented land governance. A possible solution is integrated territorial governance,

which can strengthen urban–rural connections and support the goal of Land Degradation Neutrality.³⁸ This approach focuses on functional territories—the real regions where cities and rural areas are linked—and on flow-centered governance, which creates rules and policies to manage the movement of resources, people, and services between them. Land inequality is especially harmful, as it threatens the livelihoods of 2.5 billion small-

30 Lutz Goedde, et al., “Agriculture’s technology future: How connectivity can yield new growth,” McKinsey & Company, October 9, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/agriculture/our-insights/agricultures-connected-future-how-technology-can-lead-new-growth>.

31 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) et al., *Land Tenure and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems* (2022), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/04/land_tenure_and_sustainable_agri-food_system_1.pdf.

32 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Regional Assessment on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience in Southern African Development Community Member States* (2022), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/05/roaf_-_sadc_regional_assessment_final1.pdf.

33 “Bridging the Gap: Building Authentic Partnerships Between Urban and Rural Organizations,” No Kid Hungry, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/resource/bridging-gap-building-authentic-partnerships-between-urban-and-rural-organizations>.

34 “1.7 billion people in urban and peri-urban areas face food insecurity,” Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://cals.cornell.edu/news/2024/07/17-billion-people-urban-and-peri-urban-areas-face-food-insecurity>.

35 Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, “1.7 billion people in urban and peri-urban areas face food insecurity.”

36 UN-Habitat, *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable Food Systems*.

37 Luis Bauluz, Yajna Govind, and Filip Novokmet, *Global Land Inequality* (World Inequality Lab Working Paper No. 2020/10, 2020), <https://wid.world/document/global-land-inequality-world-inequality-lab-wp-2020-10/>.

38 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land* (2024), https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-12/UNCCD-UN-Habitat_Primer%20on%20Urban-Rural%20Linkages%20and%20Land_Web.pdf.

scale farmers and the world's 1.4 billion poorest people, many of whom rely directly on agriculture. Weak land institutions not only put these communities at risk but also damage ecosystems and undermine global food security.³⁹

As urbanization continues, it is imperative that food systems in both rural and urban areas are strengthened. Historically, urban communities have been very dependent on rural areas for their food supply.⁴⁰ Food supply is often met through large, industrialized farming. However, this system does not always meet the food needs of growing urban populations and often excludes small local farmers. Many people in peri-urban and rural areas run their own farms and may produce enough to sell, but they struggle to access urban markets dominated by large corporations. This lack of access undermines their livelihoods, increases food insecurity, and can push people to migrate. At the same time, new tools for communication and transportation have allowed cities to reach far beyond nearby rural areas for resources. This gives urban centers access to a wider variety of goods. In the past,

however, many cities relied mainly on industries tied to local resource use, such as timber or fishing, which was enough during the early years of industrial growth when most trade remained local.⁴¹

As global industry grew, trade grew as well. Advances in transport and communication made global trade possible.⁴² Advances like laser land leveling, grain storage silos, and irrigation systems have changed farming.⁴³ Without these tools, city populations would only have nearby rural areas for food.⁴⁴ Developing public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks can strengthen these innovations. PPPs combine government scale and trust with private sector innovation, helping farmers access both technology and markets. For example, India's Saagu Baagu Project used digital platforms to support chilli farmers. This resulted in 21 percent higher yields, 9 percent lower pesticide use, and 5 percent lower fertilizer use.⁴⁵ Such initiatives demonstrate how urban demand, government support, and private innovation can build more resilient rural-urban food systems.

Shortening food supply chains is promising. However, inefficient transportation, such as many

individual trips to farms, within Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) creates higher carbon footprints, while organized delivery models reduce emissions but often pass higher costs onto consumers.⁴⁶ Further, traditional channels, like on-farm sales and farmers' markets, can decline due to hypermarkets and discount chains, though new formats such as breakfast markets and online retail are emerging.⁴⁷ Food systems should be accessible and sustainable, but food waste is already at two billion tons annually.⁴⁸ Reducing waste through shorter supply chains and better logistics is critical to easing pressure on both rural producers and urban consumers. Delegates in UN-Habitat should consider how to support the digital transformation of food markets and other structural ways to fortify food markets.

Another important cause of food insecurity is high food prices. Recently, prices rose because of the panic before the COVID-19 pandemic, when people stockpiled food. Working together on this issue can make links between rural and urban areas stronger over time. This can happen in many ways. One way is to encourage farmers to

39 Bauluz, Govind, and Novokmet, *Global Land Inequality*.

40 Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, "1.7 billion people in urban and peri-urban areas face food insecurity."

41 Patricia Ballamingie et al., "Integrating a Food Systems Lens into Discussions of Urban Resilience," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9, no. 3 (May 22, 2020): 227-243, <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2020.093.021>; UN-Habitat, *Regional Assessment on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience in SADC Member States*.

42 Forster, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*, 8.

43 Sacha Ruzzante, Ricardo Labarta, and Amy Bilton, "Adoption of agricultural technology in the developing world: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature," *World Development*, 146 (October 2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105599>.

44 Forster, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*, 9.

45 Abhay Pareek and Shreejit Borthakur, "Scaling Digital Technology for Rural Prosperity," *World Economic Forum*, June 23, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/06/scaling-digital-technology-for-rural-prosperity/>.

46 Agata Malak-Rawlikowska, Edward Majewski, Adam Was, Svein Ole Borgen, Peter Csillag, Michele Donati, Richard Freeman, Viet Hoàng, Jean-Loup Lecoœur, Maria Cecilia Mancini, et al., "Measuring the Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains," *Sustainability* 11, no. 15 (2019): 4004, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154004>.

47 Malak-Rawlikowska et al., "Measuring the Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains."

48 UN-Habitat et al., *Land Tenure and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems*.

sell directly to city consumers. Small scale initiatives like community gardens can improve food security and nutrition, but also provide social benefits.⁴⁹ Local solutions are very useful because they help people understand where their food comes from.⁵⁰ When people see how food is made from start to finish, they form a stronger connection. This can help close gaps between rural and city life. Local solutions also build social and economic links by creating new ways for rural and urban people to interact.

SFSCs and local food markets can improve global outcomes with URLs. Local markets are more resilient to shocks like pandemics and climate events than globalized supply chains, because SFSCs rely on shorter, more diverse value chains. Local markets may even serve as tourist attractions and subsequent economic drivers.⁵¹ EU regulations define a short supply chain as one “involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to co-operation, local economic development, and close geographical and social

relations between producers, processors and consumers.”⁵² These SFSCs give farmers more bargaining power and consumers more knowledge of agricultural origins.⁵³ Rural producers can sell at a higher price without the intermediaries and consumers can access fresh food products more directly.⁵⁴ Additionally, shorter chains promote more employment opportunities and a greater gender balance.⁵⁵ Small and medium producers who might otherwise struggle to access conventional long chains benefit from SFSCs.

Spatial Inequality

The rural-urban divide widens due to unequal access to resources in rural and urban areas. Urban areas have stronger public resources, like education and healthcare.⁵⁶ This helps city populations adjust to the constantly changing world.⁵⁷ The UN has noted that rural communities are more likely to face human rights abuses, gender inequality, poor working conditions, and Indigenous land

rights violations.⁵⁸ Globally, about 45 percent of people live in rural areas, but over 80 percent of the global impoverished population lives in rural areas.⁵⁹ Additionally, only about 5 percent suffer extreme poverty in cities, compared to 18 percent of rural residents.⁶⁰

Spatial inequality is when some places have more or less access to help, money, and services.⁶¹ This is an important part of the relationships between rural and city areas. National economies risk leaving rural areas behind because services and investments are often concentrated in cities. Yet this imbalance also creates opportunities for urban–rural partnerships. Cities can extend education, healthcare, and digital services outward, in ways such as using mobile health clinics and e-learning programs.⁶² In return, rural areas can support cities with food, energy, and ecosystem services. City-based companies can also invest in rural supply chains. This can create a more skilled and empowered rural population, by which corporations unlock a larger consumer base.⁶³

49 J. Chan, “*Refuges of Local Resilience: Community Gardens in Post-Sandy New York City*,” *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 2015, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1618866715000862>.

50 Francis et al., “Food Systems and Environment: Building Positive Rural-Urban Linkages,” 69.

51 UN-Habitat, *Territorial Governance and Food Markets for Sustainable Food Systems*.

52 European Parliament and Council of the European Union, *Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)*, OJ L 347, 487–548 (20 December 2013), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1305>.

53 Nina Drejerska and Wioleta Sobczak-Malicka, “*Nurturing Sustainability and Health: Exploring the Role of Short Supply Chains in the Evolution of Food Systems — The Case of Poland*,” *Foods* 12, no. 22 (2023), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10670132/>.

54 Drejerska and Sobczak-Malicka, “*Nurturing Sustainability and Health*.”

55 Malak-Rawlikowska et al., “*Measuring the Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains*.”

56 Hyland and Mascherini, “Europe’s widening rural-urban divide may make space for far right.”

57 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*, 110.

58 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), “*Leaving No Village Behind*,” *UN DESA Voice*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/desa/leaving-no-village-behind-0>.

59 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*, 110.

60 UN DESA, “*Leaving No Village Behind*.”

61 “Addressing Spatial Inequality,” United Way of the National Capital Area, November 27, 2023, <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/addressing-spatial-inequality/>.

62 Pareek and Borthakur, “*Scaling Digital Technology for Rural Prosperity*.”

63 Swapnil Mane, “*Benefits to Corporate in Investing in Rural Development through Corporate Social Responsibility*,” *EcoTchtonic*, April 7, 2024, <https://ecotechtonic.com/rural-development-through-corporate-social-responsibility/>.

The European Union promotes URLs through research initiatives. The Study Programme on European Spatial Planning (SPESP), the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON), and the 6th Research Framework Program have inspired national-level initiatives.⁶⁴ Germany, the UK, France, and Spain show how coordinated policy can drive stronger links between rural and urban regions. Joint training programs can also link urban industries with rural workers. For instance, agricultural training programs eventually yield higher demand for farm equipment as farmers adopt better practices.⁶⁵ Mutual benefit can come through cooperation.

Rural communities often struggle to access urban resources when transport infrastructure is weak. Without reliable transit, farmers cannot sell surplus crops in city markets, medical care may be out of reach, and schools, jobs, and basic goods remain inaccessible. The lack of proper addresses and maps makes delivery even harder. Cities can help by improving storage, logistics, and digital marketplaces that connect producers directly with consumers. Stronger rural–urban connections have already lifted more than 750 million people out of poverty.⁶⁶

Further, diversifying rural livelihoods through rural tourism, agri-processing, logistics, drone use, and local entrepreneurship can help bridge the divide.⁶⁷ Improving infrastructure through URLs can create pathways that connect villages and cities into one economic and social system.

Many cities grow before their needs are met.⁶⁸ Currently, rural incomes are declining, fueling rapid urban migration, and 80 percent of future urban growth is predicted in the least prepared countries.⁶⁹ This makes retrofitting

A city needs solid housing and strong infrastructure to succeed.

far more expensive and slower. Cities also place a heavy strain on nature. Cities use about 66 percent of global energy and emit about 70 percent of greenhouse gases.⁷⁰ Delegates should consider how to encourage planned urban development and be mindful that without good transport and stable infrastructure, benefits cannot reach everyone.⁷¹

The issue of spatial inequality in urban areas is highlighted by slums. Slums are a concern in all types of cities, regardless of size. Slums demonstrate spatial inequality as they have an inherent lack of access to resources. These challenges include lack of access to clean water, proper sanitation, and adequate housing.⁷² If rural areas have better resources, fewer people may be forced into informal urban housing. Thus, strengthening rural economies can reduce slum growth by making migration a choice, rather than a necessity. Bridging this gap requires investing in rural communities and creating partnerships. Stronger URLs reduce inequality on both sides and make development more balanced. Governments could offer technical assistance and funding to foster city-region cooperation for sustainable population growth.

Socioeconomic Integration and Urban Migration

There has been a pattern of rural–urban migration where the global urban population is expected to surpass 6.2 billion in the next 25 years.⁷³ Migrants face challenges with integrating both socially and economically. The UN-Habitat and

64 Mitra et al., “Urban–Rural Partnership Framework to Enhance Food–Energy–Water Security in the Post-COVID-19 Era.”

65 Mane, “Benefits to Corporate in Investing in Rural Development through Corporate Social Responsibility.”

66 Michael Marron, “Why Urbanization Drives Spatial Inequality,” *Medium*, June 11, 2020, <https://medium.com/@mjmaron402/why-urbanization-drives-spatial-inequality-ed43898899c4>.

67 Pareek and Borthakur, “Scaling Digital Technology for Rural Prosperity.”

68 World Bank Group, “Urban Development.”

69 Pareek and Borthakur, “Scaling Digital Technology for Rural Prosperity.”

70 World Bank Group, “Urban Development.”

71 Marron, “Why Urbanization Drives Spatial Inequality.”

72 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*, 119.

73 Filipe Decorte and Rina Ito, “Urban Migration,” UN-HABITAT, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/topic/urban-migration>.

the International Organization for Migration (IOM) define integration as “the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live.”⁷⁴ After migration, not only is the environment very different, but the relative status in different settings can throw off some people.⁷⁵ Urban policies that create mentorship programs or neighborhood associations can help migrants regain a sense of belonging and purpose.

Social adjustment can be very challenging for migrants, especially those making the transition from rural to urban communities. Many previous habits for migrants in their rural origins are disrupted by this move. Urban communities have a tendency to be diverse in a variety of ways. This can be difficult to adjust to for those coming from rural areas because most rural areas are uniform in their cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds.⁷⁶ Students coming from rural areas can also struggle when moving to new areas due to their lack of exposure to foreign languages.⁷⁷ Cities could foster smoother transitions by promoting cultural exchange programs,

bilingual education, and inclusive community events that value rural traditions.

Urban migration is dominated by refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A UN report states that more than 60 percent of refugees are in urban areas and communities directly outside of urban areas. It further states that 80 percent of IDPs are also in urban or peri-urban areas.⁷⁸ The same report emphasizes the difficulties of economic integration for migrants in urban communities.

Often, migrants will struggle to find jobs in the competitive urban market and have no choice but to self-employ. This informal means of employment has a pattern of trapping migrants into “working poverty” where they are not able to bring in more money than what they need to sustain themselves at a basic level.⁷⁹ This prevents them from fully joining the economic system of their new urban communities. Thus, partnerships between cities, rural cooperatives, and private companies can help break this cycle. Migrants can enroll in training programs, governments can support market linkages, and microfinance initiatives can formalize employment opportunities.

Urban migration is not always permanent. Seasonal migration is where the migrant’s place of residence is driven by agricultural motivations. During the agricultural seasons, people will live in rural areas to work in farm maintenance and harvests. Similarly, return migration means that many rural-urban migrants will, at some point in their lives, return to their rural communities. Return migration can become a channel of knowledge exchange, allowing rural areas to benefit from urban skills and networks. This exchange is helpful in bridging the rural-urban gap as it helps both populations to better understand the perspectives and lifestyles of the other. Governments and NGOs can strengthen this process by creating “returnee programs” that encourage skill-sharing, entrepreneurship, and rural investment based on lessons learned in cities.⁸⁰

Rural-urban migration has worsened urban issues like overcrowding and exposure to environmental hazards. Local and national governments are often unprepared to handle a changing population. There may be a lack of support systems to combat the rapid changes. However, proper planning and preparation can counter

74 Katy Barwise, et al., *Integrating Migration into Urban Development Interventions*. (Brussels, Belgium: International Organization for Migration, 2021), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/02/urban-development-migration-toolkit.pdf>.

75 Gudrun Østby, “Rural-urban migration, inequality and urban social disorder: Evidence from African and Asian cities,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 33, no. 5, (November 2016), 493, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26271440>.

76 Østby, “Rural-urban migration, inequality and urban social disorder: Evidence from African and Asian cities,” 494.

77 “International learning mobility: lack of language skills and information discourage rural areas’ students,” European Commission, January 9, 2024, https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/international-learning-mobility-lack-language-skills-and-information-discourage-rural-areas-students-2024-01-09_en.

78 Loren B. Landau, et al., *Local inclusion of migrants and refugees*, (UN-Habitat, 2021), 30, <https://unhabitat.org/local-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-gateway-to-existing-ideas-resources-and-capacities-for>.

79 Landau, et al., *Local inclusion of migrants and refugees*, 30.

80 Harris Selod and Forhod Shilpi, “Rural-urban migration in developing countries: Lessons from the literature,” *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 91 (November 2021): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2021.103713>.

many drawbacks of rural-urban migration. When urban expansion is well-planned, it can positively contribute to the economy. City planning that integrates rural supply chains, energy systems,

and housing strategies ensures that migration strengthens rather than destabilizes urban growth. When urban migration is supported, it can provide benefits to cities on a broad scale. For example, rural-urban

migrants can grow connections through their shared experiences adapting to these changes.⁸¹ These experiences will help to enrich the diversity of the urban landscape.

CURRENT STATUS

Rural-Urban Linkages and Conflict

A current primary factor in this issue is the role that conflict plays in the rural-urban relationship. Conflict is one of the most powerful forces shaping rural-urban linkages today. Wars and instability often push people from rural areas into cities. Then, strained urban systems must absorb displaced populations. This dynamic deepens inequalities and reshapes demographics. It also creates opportunities for cooperation between rural and urban communities. Additionally, there is a connection between urban migration and increased urban violence.⁸²

The Middle East and North Africa have experienced large amounts of urban migration due to conflict. Jordan hosts the second-highest number of refugees globally. These refugees largely come from

Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, and Syria. This puts a strain on urban areas as over 80 percent of Jordan's refugees reside in their major cities.⁸³ The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) lists Iran, Turkey, Colombia, Germany, and Uganda as the top five countries hosting refugees.⁸⁴

Conflict in urban communities is also driven by the government's response to violence. This is seen in the contrasting approaches to violence taken by Ecuador and Colombia. Ecuador legalized gangs in 2007 and has since invested in programs to provide economic and social support. This program recognizes the role that gangs play in the urban landscape as active members of the community. It gives officials a formal justification to involve these groups in the discussion of potential improvements to the city.⁸⁵ When these individuals feel recognized by their government, they will be less

likely to engage in violent behavior and promote conflict in urban spaces.

On the other hand, Colombia took a more ground-level approach. City officials in Medellín paired up with local justice NGOs to create "Justice Houses." These Justice Houses are intended to be centers that address community justice needs with a focus on marginalized communities who have historically not been given access to such resources. Additionally, city officials have taken some more direct approaches to reducing violence in Medellín. They have tried to bring institutions "closer to citizens" by promoting the city's general and social infrastructure. This has seen a focus on improving the city's libraries, education systems, and public transportation systems.⁸⁶ These approaches highlight how urban violence is not just a city problem but also tied to rural marginalization. Stronger rural

81 Gordon McGranahan, David Satterthwaite, and Cecilia Tacoli, *Urbanisation, rural-urban migration and urban poverty* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, March 2015), 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep01308>.

82 Gabriela Nagle Alverio, Jeannie Sowers, and Erika Weinthal, *The Climate-Conflict-Urban Migration Nexus: Honduras, Jordan, and Pakistan* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2023), 5, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06/displaced-cities-conflict-climate-change-and-rural-urban-migration>.

83 Alverio, Sowers, and Weinthal, *The Climate-Conflict-Urban Migration Nexus: Honduras, Jordan, and Pakistan*, 9.

84 "Refugee Data Finder," UNHCR, last modified June 12, 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.

85 Blaine et al., "Climate change, migration and the risk of conflict in growing urban centers."

86 Blaine et al., "Climate change, migration and the risk of conflict in growing urban centers."

development and partnerships could reduce the pressure of migration into fragile urban environments, complementing these urban-based interventions.

Building off this base approach to violence in urban areas, there has recently been an increased focus on keeping Medellín's youth out of gangs and other violent groups. The total number of youth offenders in Colombia has dropped from 13,527 in 2019 to 7,509 in 2024.⁸⁷ This drop is a massive improvement and shows the credibility of existing youth intervention programs.

With this progress, the city can now turn to some of the more specific issues with youth offenders. One of these is recidivism rates in youth offenders.⁸⁸ Recidivism refers to an offender's tendency to fall back into criminal activity following intervention for a previous crime.⁸⁹ The recidivism rate rises with the amount of time after release. Two years after release it is 13 percent, 16.6 percent at three years, 19.2 percent at four years, and 21 percent at five years. *La Confraternidad Carcelaria de Colombia* (Prison Fellowship Colombia) is an organization that educates youth offenders on a variety of topics related to justice. Last year they started to offer education in different trades like carpentry and blacksmithing so that these individuals can begin



Graffiti protesting violence in Medellín (Credit: JoranL)

to make the money they need to move away from criminal life.⁹⁰ Expanding rural-urban partnerships could make such programs more sustainable. By connecting rural skills and urban demand, NGOs could bridge divides while reducing recidivism.

To combat conflict in any setting, trust-building is very important. Not only do citizens need to have trust in their government, they need to trust each other. This is why the proper integration of immigrants is so important to the migration process. The Belgian city of Mechelen has been a leading example for the integration of migrants with their “The People

Make the City” campaign. This project emphasizes refugees should be safe and have adequate shelter and support. Mechelen also focuses on preventing the “othering” of immigrants in the city. This has led to a decrease in divides that cause conflict and extremism amongst city natives and new migrants.⁹¹ Seeing the success of the “The People Make the City” campaign, other cities have followed with similar programs. This is very helpful as many European countries are experiencing an uptick in xenophobia with increased immigration rates.

⁸⁷ Sophia Adamson, “Prison Fellowship Colombia uses restorative justice to keep youth away from crime in Medellín,” *Latin America Reports*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.latinamericareports.com/prison-fellowship-colombia-uses-restorative-justice-to-keep-youth-away-from-crime-in-medellin/10877/>.

⁸⁸ Adamson, “Prison Fellowship Colombia uses restorative justice to keep youth away from crime in Medellín.”

⁸⁹ “Recidivism,” National Institute of Justice, accessed August 9, 2025, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism>.

⁹⁰ Adamson, “Prison Fellowship Colombia uses restorative justice to keep youth away from crime in Medellín.”

⁹¹ Blaine et al., “Climate change, migration and the risk of conflict in growing urban centers.”

Conflict is clearly an issue for both rural and urban communities. It drives people out of rural areas. It also makes urban communities be seen as dangerous places to live. Addressing these issues requires policies that strengthen both ends of the rural-urban spectrum. Safe rural communities reduce forced migration, while inclusive cities can transform displacement into opportunities for social and economic exchange. Lasting solutions can be found by viewing conflict through the lens of rural-urban partnership.

Case Study: Urban-Rural Linkages (URLs) in China

In China, rural labor, land, and resources flow into cities, while urban technology, finance, and services unevenly flow outward. China's previous economic development policy followed the central planning model, which prioritized rapid industrialization.⁹² This urban growth came at the expense of rural development. This divide poses a threat to China's economic expansion.⁹³ Rural residents arrive in bigger cities and

join the informal urban workforce, but often without an urban residency permit (*hukou* system) that grants access to a variety of welfare services, including pension benefits, healthcare insurance, and unemployment insurance.⁹⁴

The *hukou* system illustrates how governance can either enable or block urban-rural linkages. Without permits, rural workers cannot access urban schools or healthcare, limiting both their opportunities and the cities' ability to integrate new talent.⁹⁵ Now, *hukou* reforms in selected cities widen access to healthcare, education, and social protection for rural residents who work in cities. Telemedicine and digital learning extend urban expertise outward, while commuter links and public transport reduce informal settlements by making circular mobility safer and cheaper. Rural communities can receive more benefits in a targeted development process.⁹⁶

The rapid influx of resources from rural to urban spaces can lead to extensive rural decline, evidenced by population aging and village hollowing that weakens URLs.⁹⁷ Recognizing this trend, China

began national policymaking campaigns for balanced rural-urban development. This was first outlined in the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth National Party Congress, after which China repealed the longstanding agricultural tax.⁹⁸ This allowed local governments to redirect efforts toward advancing rural development. Further, the Chinese Government proposed a rural revitalization strategy in 2017 that emphasizes integrated rural-urban development.⁹⁹ Recent revitalization measures have emphasized rural production to increase farm production and create new rural job opportunities in the manufacturing and service sectors.¹⁰⁰

Importantly, these reforms highlight the need for functional territories, which treats cities, towns, and surrounding villages as one interconnected system.¹⁰¹ China is moving toward a governance model that makes URLs more balanced and mutually beneficial. It is strengthening county-level integration, improving city-region planning, and managing urban-rural flows of labor, capital, and services. The long-term vision for integrated urban-rural development

92 C. Zhang, *When Will China Realize Urban-Rural Integration? A Case Study* (2024), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751\(24\)00504-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751(24)00504-3).

93 Patrick Body, "Growing Closer: China's rural-urban divide and its effects," CKGSB Knowledge, October 24, 2024, <https://english.ckgsb.edu.cn/knowledge/article/growing-closer-chinas-rural-urban-divide-and-its-effects/>.

94 Ilaria Mazzocco, *How Inequality Is Undermining China's Prosperity* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 26, 2022), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-inequality-undermining-chinas-prosperity>.

95 Mazzocco, *How Inequality Is Undermining China's Prosperity*.

96 Zhang, *When Will China Realize Urban-Rural Integration?*

97 Xin Chen et al., "China's Ongoing Rural to Urban Transformation Benefits the Population but Is Not Evenly Spread," *Communications Earth & Environment* 5, no. 1 (August 4, 2024): article 416, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-024-01580-8>.

98 Chen et al., "China's Ongoing Rural to Urban Transformation."

99 Zhongqi Feng, Guy M. Robinson, and Yan Tan, "Rural Revitalization in China: Reversing Rural Decline and Eliminating Poverty," *Geography Compass* 19, no. 7 (June 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.70039>.

100 Feng, Robinson, and Tan, "Rural Revitalization in China."

101 URBACT, "Functional Territories for Better Integrated Governance: Towards Spatially Coordinated Development in Metropolitan and Urban-Rural Area," URBACT, edited March 11, 2025, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://urbact.eu/articles/functional-territories-better-integrated-governance-towards-spatially-coordinated-development-in-metropolitan-and-urban-rural-area>.

by 2045 is improving industrial structures, employment conditions, living environments, and social security systems in a coordinated way.¹⁰²

UN-Habitat promotes rural poverty reduction through specifically improving the rural environment. As evidenced above, the growth of urban communities does not equally correlate with rural expansion. China's past rapid economic expansion caused excessive land exploitation, resource overconsumption, and increased environmental pollution, but the coordinated development of urban and rural areas can improve both systems.¹⁰³ UN-Habitat focuses on improving human settlements overall. When physical living conditions meet basic human needs, other systems can also be fortified.

In China, regional disparities show how uneven urban-rural linkages weaken national integration. Coastal provinces like Zhejiang are home to many large cities and globally connected industries. It has a per capita GDP above USD 17,000 and citizens benefit from strong infrastructure, education, and healthcare systems.¹⁰⁴ By contrast, inland provinces such as Gansu remain excluded from these flows of opportunity and have a GDP per capita of USD 6,185. While coastal provinces are deeply integrated



Songyang County (Credit: Lishuilynn)

into global markets, inland rural areas struggle with weak transport, poor healthcare access, and low business investment. However, simple investments in rural infrastructure, like renovating 40 million rural household toilets, have increased sanitation, health, and productivity in rural areas. Further, at the end of 2019, 226,000 square kilometers of land was upgraded with water-saving irrigation systems.¹⁰⁵ However, such upgrades remain uneven as many interior provinces are still lacking. Without closing these gaps, national-level rural revitalization will remain fragmented.

Encouragingly, Songyang County in China recognizes the importance of a multilevel governance model for improving urban-rural relations. Thus, locals have rebuilt traditional rural mountain villages and revived smaller craft industries.¹⁰⁶ In some places, urban sprawl has been managed so that rural heritage attracts urban visitors, creating two-way flows of income and culture. In Songyang, local governments have protected cultural assets like traditional crafts and heritage villages while connecting them to urban tourism and markets. This approach shows how multi-level governance can preserve rural culture while also supporting economic growth.

¹⁰² Zhang, *When Will China Realize Urban-Rural Integration?*

¹⁰³ Zhang, *When Will China Realize Urban-Rural Integration?*

¹⁰⁴ Body, "Growing Closer: China's Rural-Urban Divide."

¹⁰⁵ UNDP in China, *Rural Revitalization in China*.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD Secretariat). *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity: An Integrated Territorial Approach*. Position Paper for CBD COP 15. Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2022. https://www.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/managing_urban-rural_linkages_for_biodiversity.pdf

China's development goals are at risk if rural populations remain marginalized. However, recent reforms show that building equitable URLs is critical for inclusive growth. This case study demonstrates how sustainable development is not just rural aid. It relates to managing flows of people, goods, services, and ecosystems as one interconnected system.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals aim to make this world more sustainable. All United Nations General Assembly meetings focus on these goals for 2030.¹⁰⁷ UN-Habitat has made several city development plans that fit these goals. It also helps with local and global projects to build stronger communities. For URLs, three main goals are important: SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).¹⁰⁸

Globally, progress towards SDG 2 has minimally changed. In fact, global hunger has shown a drastic increase since 2015.¹⁰⁹ Food insecurity remains a threat between rural, and urban regions alike. Because of this, improving their linkages can strengthen local markets, shorten supply chains, and reduce urban food deserts. Thus, investing in rural-urban food systems helps reduce conflict and builds resilience, as desperation over food can heighten tensions.¹¹⁰ Access to proper nutrition has direct correlation to a number of other social factors that create a liveable community.

SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities, tries to make life fair for all people.¹¹¹ Subgoals are income, access to goods, and movement of people.¹¹² Moving between cities and rural areas can improve life and outcomes for everyone. Businesses need workers nearby and workers can help their communities grow.

SDG 11 calls for stronger connections between cities, nearby towns, and rural areas, supported by effective national and regional planning. It emphasizes making settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. This goal is closely tied to URLs, since strong

links between rural and urban areas can improve access to jobs, services, and markets while protecting cultural and environmental resources. Any resolutions on rural–urban linkages should reflect these broader goals.¹¹³

SDG 13 reinforces the urgency of integrating environmental considerations into URLs. Rural areas often absorb the brunt of climate impacts with droughts, floods, and land degradation. However, urban centers generate most greenhouse gas emissions.¹¹⁴ Coordinated strategies, such as investing in green infrastructure, renewable energy networks, and joint disaster risk reduction programs, can connect the urban and rural areas in climate adaptation and mitigation.

Lastly, SDG 15 focuses on protecting biodiversity and ecosystems. Unsustainable urban consumption drives deforestation, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss in rural regions. URLs can help reverse this trend. Reforestation, sustainable farming, and conservation programs can all help biodiversity and whole ecosystems.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ "About Us" (UN-Habitat).

¹⁰⁸ UN-Habitat "Sustainable Development Goals"

¹⁰⁹ Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 2; Zero Hunger" SDGs.Un.Org, 2025 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

¹¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 2; Zero Hunger"

¹¹¹ Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 10; Reduced Inequality" SDGs.Un.Org, 2025 https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10#targets_and_indicators

¹¹² Sustainable Development Goals, "Goal 10; Reduced Inequality"

¹¹³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Goal 11: Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable," *UN SDG Knowledge Platform*, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>.

¹¹⁴ Sumanta Das, Malini Roy Choudhury, Bhagyasree Chatterjee, Pinanki Das, Sandeep Bagri, Debashis Paul, Mahadev Bera, and Suman Dutta, "Unraveling the Urban Climate Crisis: Exploring the Nexus of Urbanization, Climate Change, and Their Impacts on the Environment and Human Well-Being – A Global Perspective," *AIMS Public Health* 11, no. 3 (August 27, 2024), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11474320/>.

¹¹⁵ UN-Habitat and CBD Secretariat, *Managing Urban-Rural Linkages for Biodiversity*.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Blocs can be divided based on how countries manage the urban–rural divide. Some states focus mainly on governance capacity, building strong institutions and policies to guide rural–urban development. Others prioritize rural protection, working to safeguard farmland, cultural heritage, and small-scale livelihoods. A third group emphasizes mobility and flows, aiming to improve the movement of people, goods, and services between urban and rural areas. It is important to note that many countries share characteristics with more than one bloc. Delegates should carefully research their country's priorities to determine which approach best represents their national development strategy.

City-Region Planning Bloc

This bloc emphasizes that sustainable development requires territorial governance frameworks that manage urban and rural areas as one functional system. Members include EU states, Nordic countries, Canada, Japan, and Australia. These countries already use functional territories such as metropolitan regions, commuting zones, and

city–hinterland systems for planning.¹¹⁶ For example, the EU's Integrated Territorial Investments allows cities, towns, and rural municipalities in functional urban areas to bundle funding from multiple EU programmes (ERDF, ESF, Interreg) into a single strategy.¹¹⁷ In this way, ITIs coordinate service delivery across housing, transport, environment, and social policy sectors.

This bloc focuses on integrated city–region planning, where land, water, food, biodiversity, and energy are managed together. In Spain, the autonomous communities show how fiscal decentralization allows for tailored, place-based strategies. In contrast, France and Greece demonstrate how limited financial autonomy can restrict meaningful cooperation, even when political powers are devolved.¹¹⁸ This bloc encourages functional-territory plans linking metropolitan centers with small and intermediate towns through integrated land-use, transport, and ecosystem management. In these countries, some funding is already set aside for functional urban areas in policy, specifically for promoting balanced regional development and stronger urban-rural linkages.¹¹⁹

Rural Empowerment Bloc

This bloc argues that balanced development must begin by investing in and empowering rural communities. Members are primarily farming and resource-based economies across Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Africa faces rapid urbanization and widening rural–urban gaps. Amidst the development, countries like Nigeria and Cameroon advocate for stronger rural governance and inter-municipal collaboration. With a similar rural-first focus, Mexico has integrated biodiversity into rural policy.¹²⁰ This demonstrates how ecological wealth and rural assets can directly sustain people's livelihoods.

The bloc emphasizes short food supply chains, rural logistics, and inclusive digital marketplaces.¹²¹ Kenya, for example, prioritizes smallholder farmers and similar goals.¹²² This bloc might call for further investments in advantageous infrastructure. This includes farm-to-market roads, cold storage, irrigation, rural broadband, as well as training and microfinancing for rural residents. Similarly, SIDS

116 URBACT, “Functional Territories for Better Integrated Governance.”

117 URBACT, “Functional Territories for Better Integrated Governance.”

118 Bilal Rammal, “Decentralized planning: empowering regional leadership,” Roland Berger, August 17, 2025, www.rolandberger.com/en/Insights/Publications/Decentralized-planning-empowering-regional-leadership.html.

119 URBACT, “Functional Territories for Better Integrated Governance.”

120 UN-Habitat, *PLGS Annual Report 2023*.

121 UN-Habitat, “Urban-Rural Linkages.”

122 Joyce Kamau, Collins Okoyo, Tabitha Kanyui, Charles Mwandawiro, Samrat Singh, and Lesley Drake, “Exploring smallholder farmers’ access and participation in the Home Grown School Feeding Programme in selected counties of Kenya,” *Frontiers in Public Health* 12 (2025): Article 1476888, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11794197/>.

understand the importance of rural empowerment for survival.¹²³ Thus, for this bloc, climate adaptation, food sovereignty, and smallholder resilience take precedence over corporate interests. This bloc might also advocate for public procurement policies in public institutions to stabilize demand for local farmers and reduce demand for imports.

This bloc resists corporate industrial farming and foreign trade rules that undermine smallholders. Various countries in South America like Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador have begun to prioritize Indigenous land rights, smallholder protections, and biodiversity-friendly farming.¹²⁴ India's *National RURBAN Mission* clusters villages for integrated planning in agriculture, services, and manufacturing.¹²⁵ Additionally, rural revitalization and reinvestment in cultural industries shows how

youth retention, subsequent job creation, and rural entrepreneurship improves rural communities.

Urban-Rural Connectivity Bloc

This bloc focuses on managing flows of people, goods, services, and information across corridors, commuter links, and county-level integration. These countries realize that growth depends on linkages, through corridors, broadband, and logistics. Member countries could include China, Vietnam, Thailand, Türkiye, Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and other fast-urbanizing African states. Refugee-host countries like Jordan also have similar interests.

Indonesia and the Philippines hosted an event in 2024 for “Innovative Technologies for Urban Infrastructure Development.”¹²⁶ Both countries support urban infrastructure, smart city

technologies, and digital platforms which connect urban markets with rural producers. Brazil emphasizes agro-logistics chains and intermediate city growth. The country has linked urban-rural areas in ways such as pledging to expand its railway network by up to 91 percent by 2035.¹²⁷

This bloc's core principle is that development happens through movement and exchange. Thus, policies would look to strengthen transport corridors, agro-processing hubs, logistics parks, and broadband corridors. Türkiye's Middle Corridor strategy aims to triple trade by 2030 and cut transit times down by 75 percent.¹²⁸ This shows how infrastructure investment can drive regional connectivity and integrate rural economies into global markets. Uganda also has a municipal infrastructure development program that stresses connectivity via participatory land use and integrated systems.¹²⁹

COMMITTEE MISSION

The UN-Habitat is the UN's lead agency on sustainable urban development. Its mandate is to promote socially and

environmentally sustainable towns and cities, ensuring adequate shelter and inclusive growth for all. Urbanization can bring benefits,

but cities also face many problems. These include disease, crime, pollution, and poverty. The UN created UN-Habitat to protect

123 Achim Steiner, “Small Island Developing States Can Be Nature-Positive Leaders for the World,” *GEF Blog*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/blog/small-island-developing-states-can-be-nature-positive-leaders-world>.

124 Steiner, “Small Island Developing States Can Be Nature-Positive Leaders for the World.”

125 UN-Habitat, *PLGS Annual Report 2023*.

126 U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, “Innovative Technologies for Urban Infrastructure Development Mission to the Philippines and Indonesia, November 12–20, 2024,” trade mission webpage, accessed September 6, 2025, <https://events.trade.gov/TradeGov/InnovativeTechnologiesforUrbanInfrastructureDevelo/hotsite.php>.

127 Zhan Wang, Geraldo B. Martha Jr., Jing Liu, Cicero Z. Lima, and Thomas W. Hertel, “Planned Expansion of Transportation Infrastructure in Brazil Has Implications for the Pattern of Agricultural Production and Carbon Emissions” (*Science of the Total Environment* 928 [2024]: 172434), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.172434>.

128 TRENDS Research & Advisory, “Charting a Course: Türkiye's Ambitious Plan for Middle Corridor Trade Expansion,” August 7, 2024, <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/charting-a-course-turkiyes-ambitious-plan-for-middle-corridor-trade-expansion/>.

129 UN-Habitat, *PLGS Annual Report 2023*.

people who are vulnerable. It does this by improving city areas.¹³⁰

UN-Habitat works to turn these challenges into opportunities for more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

UN-Habitat has helped cities in over 90 countries. It works through knowledge, advice, technical help, and teamwork.¹³¹ The Programme believes that city growth can bring positive change to communities.¹³² UN-Habitat publishes flagship reports, such as the *World Cities Report*, which provide updates and guidance on sustainable growth strategies.¹³³ The Committee encourages countries to adopt insights to improve living conditions and quality of life while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals. The committee helps countries improve living conditions and overall quality of life. According to UN-Habitat, it is “mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.”¹³⁴ This makes it well suited to focus on broad development issues in all human settlements.

Because rural and urban futures are interconnected, UN-Habitat also emphasizes urban-rural linkages.¹³⁵ This helps cities and surrounding communities coordinate on food systems, infrastructure, and environmental

management. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, member states also committed “to work towards improving the quality of human settlements, including the living and working conditions of both urban and rural dwellers in the context of poverty eradication so that all people have access to basic services, housing, and mobility.”¹³⁶ This reinforced the idea that urban–rural linkages are essential for inclusive development. UN-Habitat must be strong in showing how sustainability helps both businesses and the public. Delegates must think about which communities have the resources, roads, and funds to make changes. Decisions from UN-Habitat are not legally binding for any country. All discussions and proposals should respect culture and national laws.

¹³⁰ Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, “UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme.”

¹³¹ “About Us” (UN-Habitat).

¹³² “About us,” UN-Habitat; OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Housing*.

¹³³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *World Cities Report 2024*.

¹³⁴ “Mandate,” UN Habitat, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://unhabitat.org/es/node/2971>.

¹³⁵ UN-Habitat, “Urban–Rural Linkages.”

¹³⁶ Mitra *et al.*, “Urban–Rural Partnership Framework to Enhance Food–Energy–Water Security in the Post-COVID-19 Era.”

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION QUESTIONS

The following research and preparation questions are meant to help you begin your research on your country's policy. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. Has your country experienced short- or long-term displacement due to natural disasters, conflict, or economic crises? If so, what measures can your country take to support displaced people and ensure resilient housing in future emergencies?
2. What form of relief does your country prioritize? For example, short-term aid (emergency shelters, food and supply packages), long-term structural solutions (urban planning reforms, public housing projects), a combination of both, or other approaches?
3. In what ways has your country engaged with others to take steps toward global solutions?
4. How does the scale of the issue differ across regions within your country (urban vs. rural), and how must potential solutions be adapted to address these differences?
5. How does your country address the economic drivers of homelessness, such as rising rents, inflation, or wage stagnation?
6. How does your country respond to the disproportionate impact of this issue on marginalized communities?
7. What barriers—such as limited funding, social stigma, or governmental inefficiencies—hinder global efforts to ensure housing for all?

Topic B

1. How do the past actions or solutions your country has taken help foster stronger urban–rural links? Are these approaches feasible on a global scale?
2. In past actions, which areas—social, economic, or environmental—has your country focused on most? How have efforts in each of these areas specifically impacted the issue?
3. Does your country have accessible roads, bridges, and highways that connect rural and urban areas? If not, how does this limit your country's ability to address spatial inequality?
4. In what ways has your country used urban–rural linkages to promote its leading industries? For example, through protected roads, sea routes, or air travel for transporting resources.
5. How has conflict or political instability in your region affected the relationship between rural and urban areas? What measures could strengthen resilience in this context?
6. What policies or technologies has your country implemented to improve rural–urban connectivity, such as digital access, transportation networks, or agricultural innovations?
7. How has your country been affected by rural–urban migration? What steps has it taken to support the social and economic integration of migrants moving from rural to urban areas?

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Topic A

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Topic B

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United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World. United Nations, January 21, 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2020-2.html>.

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