

An aerial photograph of a city park. In the foreground, there is a large green lawn with a winding path and a small pond. A clock tower is visible in the bottom left corner. In the background, there are several buildings, including a tall one under construction with a crane. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# STRENGTHENING URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES TO REDUCE SPATIAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY BY LEVERAGING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS ACTIONS

First UN-Habitat Assembly | Side Event Report

UN  HABITAT

Strengthening urban-rural linkages to reduce spatial inequality and poverty by leveraging sustainable food systems actions  
First UN-Habitat Assembly | Side Event Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction** A side event as part of the first UN-Habitat Assembly (UNHA) was held on 30 May, 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, organized by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the UN-Habitat with supporting partners<sup>2</sup>. The side event was held to underscore the importance of integrating urban and rural planning and development, helping urban-rural relations become more equal, more inclusive and balanced. The objectives for the side event were to:

- Focus on improvement of urban-rural linkages (URL) as a key entry point for reducing spatial inequalities and alleviating both rural and urban poverty
- Present initiatives and concrete efforts to strengthen URL in relation to global normative agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA)
- Showcase selected national and subnational experiences addressing inequality and poverty through integrated actions on sustainable food systems nutrition and other public services
- Highlight tools and solutions for supporting governments at all levels on sustainable food systems aiming at addressing food insecurity and malnutrition while protecting biodiversity and responding to challenges posed by climate change.

Panel speakers and discussants addressed these issues from national, regional and local government, civil society, city networks, and UN agency perspectives. These are among the many actors collaborating in multi-sector, multi-level

approaches to support innovation at subnational and national levels through new and more inclusive governance mechanisms that bring urban and rural together. The UNHA saw the approval of the 2020-2025 UN-Habitat strategic plan which, among other strategic objectives, aims to address the challenges in the urban-rural nexus through two domains of change. The first domain of change is "Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum" and the second is "Enhanced shared prosperity for cities and regions".

Global tools developed to address these objectives were discussed by speakers in the event, including:

- Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action (URL-GP) tools
- FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda
- City Regions Food System (CRFS) Assessment Toolkit
- Mainstreaming Food Systems and Nutrition and Urban-Rural Linkages in National Urban Policies (NUP)
- Integrating Food Systems and Nutrition in Urban and Territorial Planning among others.

## Key messages from side event speakers

A panel of speakers moderated by Remy Sietchiping addressed the importance of URL and food systems from the perspectives of UN agencies, national and regional government, local government and civil society.

Shipra Narang Suri, Coordinator, Urban Planning

<sup>1</sup> The report of the side event can be read in full here.

<sup>2</sup> Supporting partners included C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo (RIMISP), Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), UN Environment, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), French Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD), Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Mazingira institute, Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), RIKOLTO, and the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN).



Participants during the event © UN-Habitat



Participants during the event © UN-Habitat

and Design Branch, UN-Habitat stressed the important strategic moment for UN-Habitat with the start of the New Strategic Plan that mainstreams the discussion on URL in different approaches to sustainable urbanization for example to reduce inequalities and generate shared prosperities. She introduced the launching of the URL-GP and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development, produced with the involvement of 150 experts, organizations, and expert group meetings in Latin America, Africa and Europe. Jorge Fonseca, FAO Programme Advisor, emphasized integrated governance and collaboration not only at the global national levels, but also at subnational and local levels with governments that are prioritizing this agenda. He announced the FAO's newly launched Framework for the Urban Food Agenda to promote rural-urban synergies and interconnect food systems with other sectors. He spoke of efforts underway in the County of Nairobi in Kenya and Lima, Peru as examples.

Nene Mariama Balde, representing the government of Guinea, spoke of strengthening URL to help to increase capacity and awareness about the SDGs and the urban-rural agenda, and the need to incorporate into national planning rules and documents urban-rural connections and to mobilize financial resources to support this work. Carme Gual from the Catalan Cooperation Agency in Spain stressed that cities should understand the importance of rural areas, without which cities will never survive. It is necessary to reverse the usual urban bias and look at the city from a rural perspective and challenge the economic, technological and resilience gap between rural and urban areas. Xu Tiantian, Mayor of Songyang County in China described a multisector collaboration to adopt "architectural acupuncture" as a healing treatment for rural regions to restore their rural identity, open up to tourism, and stimulate economic development including food production and manufacturing.

Acupuncture projects aim to activate circulation between villages and nearby cities in order to promote interaction between rural and urban areas. Diana Lee Smith of Mazingira Institute in Nairobi, Kenya addressed civil society action in support of URL and food systems at different levels. She highlighted the power of civil society and of coalitions of civil society organizations that influence local, national and international decision-making, often bridging gaps that otherwise are not addressed by governments alone.

### Comments from discussants and participants

Following the panel speakers a number of discussants addressed perspectives that are reflected in the URL-GP Framework for Action. Oliver Hillel, from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity stated in a video message that sustainable urbanization and rural transformation can no longer be addressed separately and that this process must be mutually reinforcing across the urban-rural continuum. Martina Otto from UN Environment addressed the importance of ecosystem services and the circular economy linking urban and rural areas to reduce pressure on ecosystems and to create more local job opportunities. Edlam Yemeru from the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) focused on lost opportunities due to siloed thinking, which remains very strong in urban policy and has serious implications in terms of normative policy and investment. Daniel Günther, from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany (BMZ) spoke of financially inclusive strategies to target secondary and tertiary cities, supported by integrated governance. Stephen Otieno from C40 Climate Leadership Network mentioned working with mayors on thematic areas, such as food, soil, air quality and waste, linked with other urban issues. Other participants voiced appreciation for the URL programme as relates to core values of the UN-Habitat agenda and

the necessity to integrate the rural dimension in sustainable urbanization and undertake actions to fill this gap at all levels.

### **Concluding remarks and next steps**

Shipra Narang Suri and Remy Sietchiping wrapped up the side event attended by a diversity of participants from different levels of government, UN agencies and civil society. Key issues raised in the event included the need for a multi-dimensional and multi-partnership approach as fundamental to continue the momentum to strengthen URL. This is especially urgent given that URL and food systems are critical for climate resilience. With the new UN-Habitat Strategic Plan there is a renewed focus on territorial development across the urban-rural continuum<sup>3</sup>. Important issues covered by speakers included the role of local authorities, the attention to nature, the importance of secondary cities and putting people at the center of the URL processes. The session closed with an invitation to join a first rural development forum this October in Songyang, China.

<sup>3</sup> Following the side event at the closing plenary of the UN Habitat Assembly Member States adopted a resolution on “Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements”, calling for new mechanisms to take into account URL, awareness raising and sharing of good practices, including addressing migration from rural to urban areas and providing a report on progress at the next UN-Habitat Assembly in four years.

# 1. BACKGROUND

The importance of integrating urban and rural planning and development, helping urban-rural relations become more equal, more inclusive and balanced, underlies the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11.a target, "Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning", and related provisions in the New Urban Agenda (NUA). These provisions call for urban and territorial planning solutions across the urban-rural continuum transcending administrative boundaries; linking government levels; sectors and actors including those most excluded. Transforming and strengthening the interconnection between urban and rural areas can unlock opportunities to move towards more inclusive and resilient societies and healthy ecosystems at local and eventually at national and global levels.

The objectives for the side event were to:

- Focus on improvement of urban-rural linkages (URL) as a key entry point for reducing spatial inequalities and alleviating both rural and urban poverty
- Present initiatives and concrete efforts to strengthen URL in relation to global normative agendas such as the SDGs and the NUA
- Showcase selected national and subnational experiences addressing inequality and poverty through integrated actions on sustainable food systems nutrition and other public services
- Highlight tools and solutions for supporting governments at all levels on sustainable food systems aiming at addressing food insecurity and malnutrition while protecting biodiversity and responding to challenges posed by climate change

Panel speakers and discussants addressed these issues from national, regional and local government, civil society, city networks, and UN agency perspectives. These are among the many actors collaborating in multi-sector, multi-level approaches to support innovation at subnational and national levels through new and more inclusive governance mechanisms that bring urban and rural together.

The UN-Habitat strategic plan 2020-25 aims to address the challenges in the urban-rural nexus through two domains of change/goals. The first domain of change is "Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum" and secondly "Enhanced shared prosperity for cities and regions".

Global tools that have been developed and whose application were discussed during the event include:

- Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding principles and Framework of Action (URL-GP) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Framework for the Urban Food Agenda
- City Regions Food System (CRFS) Assessment Toolkit
- Mainstreaming Food Systems and Nutrition and URL in National Urban Policies (NUP)
- Integrating Food Systems and Nutrition in Urban and Territorial Planning among others.

The two other strategic domains of change for conflict and environmental management, addressing the role of cities and territories with respect to climate change and biodiversity among other challenges, was also addressed in the URL-GP for action to integrate urban and territorial development.



## 2. OPENING REMARKS

The side event was inaugurated with remarks by Urban Planning and Design Branch coordinator Dr. **Shipra Narang Suri**. In her opening words, Ms. Narang Suri highlighted; “the importance of the global agendas on URL and food security has become more and more significant and they are attracting a strong attention from member states to take a territorial approach. This is especially so with the mandate of 2015 in the Agenda 2030 and the references to URL and IG-UTP (International Guideline on Urban and Territorial Planning) in the New Urban Agenda (NUA).”

She also stressed an important strategic moment for UN-Habitat with the start of the New Strategic Plan 2020-2025 that has also managed to mainstream the discussion on URL in different domains of change (e.g. reduced inequalities, shared cities and regions prosperities). She gladly introduced the Guiding Principles of URL, produced with the involvement of over 130

experts from different international organizations in three expert group meetings and several virtual engagements, as guidance for the future.

Her final remarks were about the resolution number HSP/HA/1/L.8/. “Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements” that was to be adopted by member states at the UN-Habitat Assembly, May 2019. The work on URL and the mandate on it received a fresh boost from an impetus through this resolution and now is necessary to craft a national framework on how to take the URL programme forward.

Thus, Ms. Narang Suri emphasized on the side event as an important moment to explore on how to take the discussion forward, together with colleagues at UN-Habitat, FAO who have a Framework for the Urban Food Agenda and a strategic framework and other organizations that have played a key role in developing the URL-GP. She encouraged participants to capitalize on



Participants during the event © UN-Habitat

opportunities for partnerships and to brainstorm on how to take them forward.

Mr. **Jorge Fonseca** began by stressing the collaboration and partnership since the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. From FAO’s work with the County governments of Nairobi and Kisumu, he stated; “governors becoming believers proved that this is the way to go: to strengthen URL, to enhance food systems, transportation and different sectors comprehensively.”

He underscored the URL-GP as answers to some questions such as: how do we invest? How do we diversify the investments that are almost exclusively for the big cities? In his experience, many examples in different countries show that investments at the territorial level have helped migration to be a choice and not an economic enforcement, and thus have helped economic development.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Fonseca strongly emphasized governance and collaboration not only with the global level and the national level,

but with the subnational and local level who are prioritizing this territorial agenda.

Dr. **Remy Sietchiping**, the leader of the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit of the urban planning and design unit, introduced the video on the Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development. He stressed that the principles and framework of action would set the tone for how URL would be operationalized. He described that the video outlined development process of URL-GP, relation of the URL-GP to the global agendas and UN-Habitat strategic plan 2020-2025, the ongoing pilot projects, events where URL-GP has been addressed, URL-GP tools being developed and the next steps for the URL-GP.

In conclusion, participants were informed that the URL-GP publication would be translated into 7 languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, French and English) and disseminated in due course, giving an opportunity for member states to learn and join in this revolutionary movement of URL.



Guiding principles for Urban-Rural Linkages © UN-Habitat

### 3. PANEL SESSION

#### Jorge Fonseca, FAO

FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda: Leveraging Sub-National and Local Government Action to ensure sustainable Food Systems and improved nutrition

As the First speaker opening the Panel Session, Mr. Fonseca stated; “leveraging sub-national and local government action to ensure sustainable food systems and improved nutrition is what makes the difference.” He noted that food insecurity in urban areas is a huge challenge; moreover, food systems now represent big expenses for municipalities. Hence, there is growing global momentum as shown in the NUA, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, as well as in the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur and a side event advocating for strengthening food systems in SDG 11, as well as an increasing focus on local projects such as the NaDhaLi project, which includes Nairobi and Kisumu counties.

Following his statement, Mr. Fonseca introduced the FAO’s newly launched Framework for the Urban Food Agenda, emphasizing the importance of “working with cities and not necessarily in cities.” According to FAO’s mandate, the framework is to promote rural-urban synergies and interconnect food systems with other sectors.

He then stressed that FAO’s approach is based on three ground rules: enabling, executing and expanding. First, FAO and UN-Habitat will work on NUP and specifically enabling how to mainstream food in NUP, including the launch of an advisory programme. The second approach, executing, has ongoing four programmes, active in different regions, regarding food procurement, agri-food innovation across small towns, food and green environments for healthy cities and lastly, an optimized supply chain and circular bio-economy. Finally, the expanding approach is related to all actors, from governments to the private sector to city networks, and aims to improve and scale integrated urban food governance.

Mr. Fonseca also presented an example of mainstreaming food policy in Lima, Peru. The case of Lima was highlighted with lessons including developing a food strategy, setting up and signing a food charter, and a soon-to-be launched ordinance related to the food system. Lima also, received the Milan Urban Food Pact Award in 2018. He explained, when it comes to executing, “the important rule is to engage more small cities and towns to promote prosperity in as many areas as possible, as proven in many counties.”



Mainstreaming food policy in Lima, Peru © FAO

In his closing remarks, he highlighted the publication by FAO and other partners on integrating food systems in urban planning engaging universities in the process, he emphasized an overarching goal to create an International Forum to reform the Global Urban Food Agenda.

## Nene Mariama Balde, National Government of Guinea

A national perspective on urban-rural linkages related to national sustainable and urban development policy and programmes

Ms. Balde stressed the importance of rural areas stating that rural areas have always been prioritized over the urban, in Guinea Conakry. she indicated that the country has adopted several documents on urban and territorial planning. The first urban plan in Guinea was formulated in 1962 and the second in 1987; the challenge however has been slow process of implementing these plans. She also explained how the government of Guinea has strived to start the NUP process in Guinea under the SANITA (Urban Development and Sanitation Program in Guinea) project which also includes the Master National Plan.

She raised a question on how to strengthen URL, and how the URL-GP would help Guinea? She then argued that strengthening URL would help to enhance the capacities in the SDGs awareness, territorial agenda, and the city-region approaches of our decision makers. Finally, Ms. Balde concluded her speech emphasizing the importance to increase capacities of planners, to incorporate into planning rules and documents urban-rural connections and to mobilize financial resources to carry out the program.

## Carme Gual, Catalan Cooperation Agency

Territorial approach to urban-rural linkages: Shifting point of view

Ms. Carme Gual, Director of the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation, who



Ms. Carme Gual presenting CCA work © UN-Habitat

has rural roots in Penedès, Catalonia, shared some personal rural experience and started her speech with the statement, “migration from rural to urban to be a choice and not an obligation.” She stressed that we are facing more and more problems and crises, such as climate change, air pollution, migration etc., and that urban and territorial boundaries are becoming less relevant to deal with these problems. Therefore, public policies should focus on happiness and welfare of the citizens. In her argument, to be successful, we need to change our mindset and rethink our approach to human challenges. SDGs are a clever way to cluster all of us together on how to boost our imagination and our capacities to start from new. She referenced Ms. Greta Thunberg “to create, to make, to push forward”.

In Catalonia, Spain, the department of Territory and Sustainability of the Generalitat de Catalunya is working on Catalan Urban Agenda following NUA principles. She stated that the URL is one of the 4 axes of Catalan Urban Agenda which puts people at the center of all its activities and counts among its priorities the territorial



Speakers and public during the presentations © UN-Habitat

dimension, improved quality of life, prosperity and general welfare. She then presented the work of Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation, in the context of the URL. During her presentation she noted that the Agency has been also working on enhancing cooperation on local public administration, work with NGOs, multi-stakeholder institutions and international bodies like UN-Habitat in order to spread the value of democracy, human rights and equity, as SDGs call for.

However, Ms. Gual led the discussion into “a question of policy coherence.”, arguing “How can we say that we have reached NUA goals or SDGs when our actions are destroying distant ecosystems, impoverishing farmers who are paid far below the fair price for their products.” She stressed that people working in local agriculture are the champions that protect territories, extensive farming, food security, and community rights. But She then noted how local farmers are being targeted and forced to leave their ancestral land by private corporations and the government who agrees to privatize land and

convert it into a commodity. She complained about the fact that no Human Rights Defender was present at the Assembly of UN-Habitat.

Her presentation also showed the work of the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation through different instruments: call for projects for NGOs, bilateral or multilateral agreements or programs to support rights defenders related to land rights, or with global movements like Via Campesina, the international peasants and farmers movement. In particular, she stressed the recent Declaration of United Nations in 2019 on the ‘rights of the peasants’ as a key document to be taken into account. The Catalan Government is also supporting actions to empower women in the political and economic context in rural areas in Senegal.

More projects and cases followed, such as a project in Nampula, Mozambique. In collaboration with UN-Habitat this project aims to strengthen urban and territorial development for effective implementation of the NUA and

to develop a spatial tool with capacity building for stakeholder involvement. It was also noted that Spanish Cooperation is also financing a similar project in Maputo, which will be a great opportunity to scale up. She shared more cases showing the holistic and territorial approaches in Nariño, Columbia, and Plan Trifinio in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

She then suggested few topics that would be good to discuss; First, as cities should understand the importance of rural areas without which cities will never survive, it is necessary to reverse the point of view and look at the city from a rural perspective. Second, we should challenge the economic, technological and resilience gap between rural and urban areas. Lastly, we should ask ourselves, how can we do this fast, how can we catalyze it, how can we connect territorial and municipal levels, how can we help people take pride in being in rural areas?

In her closing, Ms. Gual stressed several starting points finalizing her speech; participation and community-based planning; the importance of regional levels to go to national norms;

From the point of view of cooperation for development, we will make all efforts to improve the right to the city in this component of inclusive URL, that benefit poorer people in rural and urban areas, and ensures food sovereignty.

## **Xu Tiantian, Design and Architecture** Revitalization of rural areas in Songyang County

Ms. Tiantian opened her speech with images of the beautiful landscape of Songyang County, China, with over 400 villages. She stated, however, as the younger generation moves to cities for employment, villages are hollowed out, leaving low and elderly population. She then demonstrated how local government, communities, professional teams, architects and planners can work together to shed a new light to these villages.

She started with the beginning of the project. In January 2014, the Songyang County initiated a collaboration to adopt “architectural

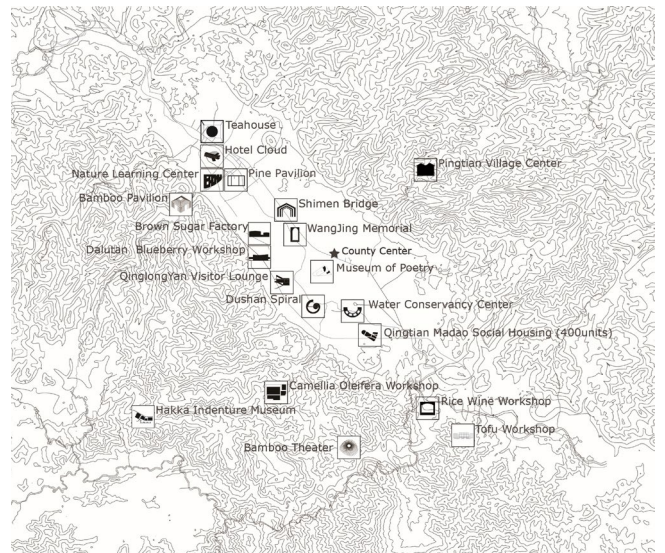
acupuncture” as healing treatment for rural regions to restore rural identity, open up to tourism, and stimulate economic development. She noted that unlike some villages in the country with massive investments in tourism, the Songyang acupuncture strategy works with a limited budget to motivate and engage the local community. This could provide a sustainable strategy for other rural areas, she explained, as acupuncture is not only on volume of buildings but also about scale and resources from new investment.

Ms. Tiantian highlighted that the acupuncture projects aimed to activate circulation between the villages and to promote interaction between rural and urban areas. For instance, facilitated by internet and modern infrastructure, rural areas can provide an alternative mode of living. Following the explanation, she introduced several villages where the project has been implemented successfully.

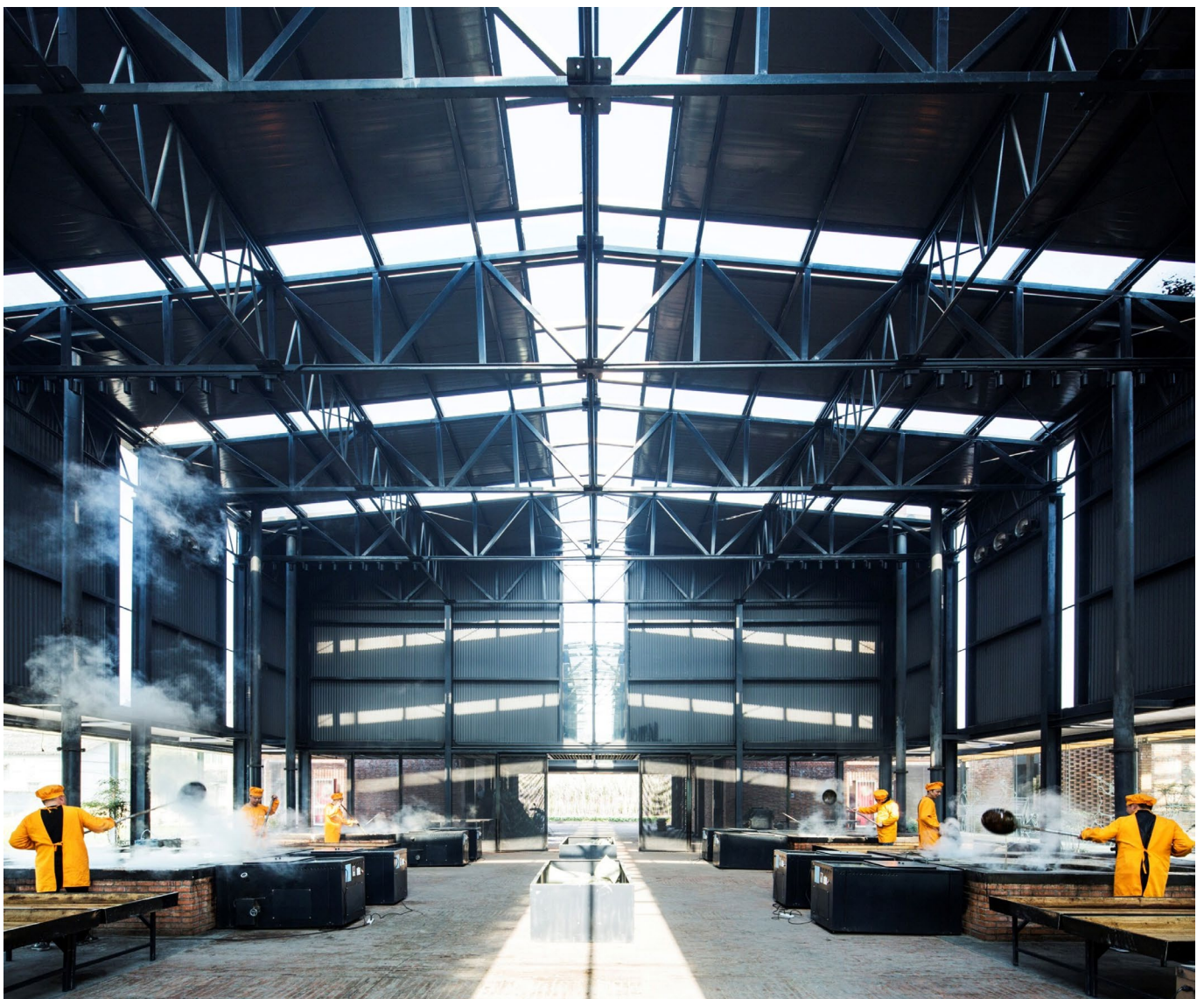
First, she shared an experience in one village to renovate a cluster of abandoned houses, using local building techniques and wooden construction in the village center for exhibitions, artists’ studios, home-based businesses. This attracts villagers to return home and the number of inhabitants has increased from less than 20 to over 100 in 3 years. Following this project, a new brown sugar factory was programmed to restore traditional cooking practices, increasing village economic revenues and attracting more visitors and tourists.

Amongst other inspiring projects she presented, a Tofu factory captivated the audience, showcasing traditional production practices as a living museum, increasing the income of villages and acting as a functional space for the communities. She elaborated that the factory is an extension of the village fabric and topography, and all the production compartments are equipped to upgrade traditional tofu products to fit the food safety certification requirements.

Concluding her speech, Ms. Tiantian stressed that all those projects used local materials and building techniques and the constructions are done by the villagers themselves, “It is the key



Acupuncture projects in Songyang County © Tiantian



Brown Sugar Factory, Xing Village © Tiantian

to restore life back to abandoned villages and allow villages themselves to take ownership.”

### **Diana Lee-Smith, Mazingira institute**

Civil Society perspective: Monitoring Food Policy at local level: the experience of piloting the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Indicators Framework.

Dr. Lee-Smith, opening her speech, described civil society as citizens taking action on the URL in different levels. At community level an examples is the Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum, a forum for mostly poor but increasingly prosperous urban farmers, including the rural environment surrounding the urban environment. She mentioned the RUAF Global Partnership (Global Partnership on sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food System) which is an international civil society group that works to improve city region food systems (CRFS). Finally, at the large scale, she underscored Habitat International Coalition (HIC), an assemblage of civil society organizations in a global coalition that influenced UN-Habitat policies, the Habitat III Agenda and the current institutionalization of the URL Agenda in the work of UN-Habitat.

She strongly highlighted the power of civil society related to URL, saying “there are no boundaries to people on the ground.” She gave an example of the Nairobi Urban Farmers, operating across the urban-rural divide and influencing public policies and actions in Nairobi. At the global scale, Dr. Lee-Smith emphasized the work of coalitions of civil society organizations that bring the power and influence to bear on international decision-making, and having the mandate to do so throughout the UN system. “We have that power! We have the fluidity and therefore the capacity to influence.”

The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), for

example, brought together over 100 Mayors to sign a document committing to address food system priorities in 2015, with RUAF as one of the technical advisors to the MUFPP.

Dr. Lee-Smith then released a press statement on a new collaboration to strengthen the resilience of urban food systems, namely the merger of RUAF with HIVOS, whose motto is “people unlimited”. The RUAF Global Partnership has 9 partners, including three cities, three international research organizations and three non-governmental organizations. She underscored the essence of civil society actions, their consultative action on the common good.

Moreover, she proudly announced as a citizen of Nairobi that in 2019, RUAF, FAO and the Milan Pact is running a pilot project to test a set of indicators and Nairobi City County was selected, along with Quito in Ecuador and Antananarivo in Madagascar. The indicators are related to the categories of the Milan Pact Framework for Action which are: governance, diet and nutrition, social and economic equity, food production, food supply and distribution, and food waste.

Although Dr. Lee-Smith addressed how civil society helps cities strengthen URL and urban food systems, she said the civil society works not only at the city region level but at all levels including national and international.





Ms. Xu Tiantian presenting the 'Songyang story' © UN-Habitat



Dr. Diana Lee Smith speech: experiences from the civil society in Kenya and new partnerships © UN-Habitat

## 4. INTERVENTIONS

Mr. **Oliver Hillel**, Programme Officer for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), joined the discussion with a video statement from CBD headquarters in Montreal, Canada. He opened by stating that “sustainable urbanization and rural transformation can no longer be addressed separately” and that this process must be “mutually reinforcing”. Since Habitat III Conference in 2016, the Convention has joined a multiagency team working on URL and actively participated to the formulation of the Guiding Principles for planning/taking actions in the urban-rural continuum.

Our dependency on ecosystem services and on nature as a model to emulate were two essential points made by Mr. Hillel. On one hand, as human dependency on natural services cannot be denied, it must be clearly said that the access, level of use and degree of dependency of people on nature is unequal and that “the poorer the country is, the more it depends on biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation”. The URL-GP is an innovative tool because of its holistic approach: not only does it include both ethical and scientific considerations, but it also harmoniously integrates social, environmental

and economic factors. On a practical level, it is a very useful tool for subnational and local governments aiming to reduce the environmental footprint of cities and metropolitan areas.

On the other hand, Mr. Hillel expresses the need for a stronger use of nature-based solutions as “nature is the best model to copy for solutions”. In fact, for more than 4 billion years, nature has been constantly learning and tinkering for solutions using “the most perfect algorithm: DNA”. Today, the use of technology can help to control the matrix and design nature-based solutions.

More work needs to be done, especially in the Framework for Action, on expanding the nexus with food, water, health, disaster prevention and other relevant sectors. Finally, the Convention hopes that the outcomes of this event will contribute to the discussion for the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework that will be presented in China next year.

Even though our friend and colleague from UN Environmental Programme, Ms. **Martina Otto**,



Video intervention of Mr. Oliver Hillel © UN-Habitat

could not participate to the event in person, she sent us her highlights. As previous speakers, she focused on the importance of ecosystem services to support our lives. In this context, the circular economy is part of the solution as it can contribute to reduce pressure on ecosystems and to create more local job opportunities. The URL-GP includes both elements in the guiding principle number 8, 'environmentally sensitive'.

Other points, strongly inter-related, are the strengthening of the Green and Blue infrastructures in cities; and the promotion of food production in cities and of short supply chains. Those changes in urban metabolisms are already occurring. For example, in Sorsogon, a province in the Philippines, this approach supported an improved local rice production, enhanced food security and solved water-related problems.

From UNECA perspective, this agenda is absolutely relevant, especially in Africa, a region which is predominantly rural and where URL are central to the top policy priority of the continent, structural transformation to shift economies from lower

productivity agriculture to higher productivity manufacturing and modern services. In her intervention, Ms. **Edlam Yemeru** focused on lost opportunities for job creation and economic diversification due to siloed between national economic, sector and spatial planning and investments. Industrialization policies in Africa provide a practical: while most African countries have or are designing industrialization strategies and policies, the spatial and urban linkages are weak. For instance, with increasing urbanization and changes in the type and levels of urban food consumption, there are opportunities for domestic manufacturing and agricultural value chains that could be factors in industrial policies and strategies. "But these issues are often disconnected", noted Ms. Yemeru, "which means lost opportunities for the manufacturing sector, for job creation, for economic growth". Linking the urban to the rural and other sectoral agendas in national development planning is essential.

**Daniel Günther** and his team at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany are well-aware



Ms. Edlam Yemeru addressing the need to linking urban to rural (and other sectoral agenda) at national level © UN-Habitat

of the limits of siloed thinking and are trying to overcome them by adopting cross-sectoral and inclusive approaches. In particular, instead of just focusing on megacities, BMZ targets secondary and tertiary cities to facilitate their access to finance for sustainable infrastructure investments. Integrated governance is also key as “national frameworks don’t necessary work at the local level. Finally, BMZ is promoting initiatives for urban cooperation which take into account all linkages, “not only rural-urban but also between different stakeholders, civil society and academia”.

C40 is a network of cities representing 94 of the world’s mega cities. It works with mayors to leverage on their political capital to address thematic areas linked to urban issues such as transportation and urban planning, air quality, energy and buildings, as well as food, waste and water systems. Its main aims are “to consolidate, replicate, and accelerate climate change action driven by scientific evidence. More importantly, C40 helps to contextualize those actions so that they are relevant to their respective cities”, as Mr. **Stephen Otieno** concisely illustrated.

He continued by providing a practical example of his work as City Advisor in the city of Nairobi. His team has been working with the local government of Nairobi on designing and actualizing a food systems strategy based on the existing situation. One concrete step was to review Nairobi’s governance structures so that food is now a component of the city departmental composition. This also initiated a regulation on urban agriculture, a dedicated food systems directorate and more integration across other sectors in the city. At the same time, C40 promotes city-city peer learning with the technical city officials on food systems and has helped to create new partnerships that address URL of the food system. The next step is to help the city to tap developing a resource-mobilization plan that will support implementation of the food system strategy.



Mr. Daniel Günther on the importance of secondary and tertiary cities © UN-Habitat

## 5. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

After the short presentations, the discussion continued with engaged members of the audience. Besides a specific question on how to create food systems partnerships between private sector and UN agencies, the interventions from the public included:

- Enthusiastic appreciation was voiced for the URL programme, as it is able to restore the original core values of the UN-Habitat Agenda and approach. After a philosophical shift, this approach, identified as cross-sectoral process on planning and governance coordination focusing on human settlements, “is again here in this initiative”;
- It is a necessity to integrate the rural dimension and undertaken actions to fill this gap in the global civil society;

- The suggestion was made to introduce compost strategies in the city of Nairobi in order to reduce poverty by turning food waste into real food and as way to strengthen the linkages between the capital and its rural surroundings.

As moderator of the session, Dr. Sietchiping welcomed all suggestions. In particular, he agreed with the first comment and stated “we are reclaiming that lost glory”.

Mr. Fonseca also took note of the suggestions expressed in the audience and while agreeing on the potential benefits of setting up a compost strategy to deal with the food waste in Nairobi, he recalled the waste hierarchy approach adopted by FAO where prevention is the preferred and number one action.



Participant from civil society ©UN-Habitat

## 6. CLOSING REMARKS AND WAY FORWARD

The session was closed by the remarks of Dr. Shipra Narang Suri and Dr. Sietchiping. As coordinator of the Urban Planning and Design branch at UN-Habitat, Dr. **Shipra Narang Suri** was very pleased about the large number and variety of participants, which included representatives from national, regional, and local governments, UN agencies and civil society. A multi-dimensional and multi-partnership approach is in fact fundamental to ensure vigorous URL. Moreover, URL and food systems are critical for climate resilience, especially now that “the secretary general has called for the need to shift to actions and monitoring of the Paris Agreement”. At the same time, the UN-Habitat New Strategy Plan has refocused on territorial development across the urban-rural continuum. The final word is to take this [URL programme] forward together in the future”.

Dr. **Remy Sietchiping** retraced some of the highlights of the discussion: the role of local authorities and of nature; best practices from Catalonia and Songyang; the CBD message not to miss the role of secondary cities; the available financial instruments; the importance of connecting across levels and sectors; and “putting people at the center” as an approach that focuses on people’s health and wellbeing in order to leave no one behind. He also reminded participants that “development can happen also through rural transformation” and not exclusively in the urban context. The session was closed with the invitation to join the first rural revitalisation forum, that will take place next October in Songyang and where rural development will be presented as a major driver for national development.



Dr. Shipra Narang Suri and Remy Sietchiping delivering their closing remarks © UN-Habitat



First rural revitalisation forum planned for October 2019 in Songyang county © Tiantian

# ANNEX 1 - PROGRAMME

## Opening remarks

Shipra Narang Suri, UN-Habitat

Jorge Fonseca, FAO

## Panel session moderated by Remy Sietchiping

Jorge Fonseca, FAO

Nene Mariama Balde, National Government of Guinea

Carme Gual, Catalanian Cooperation Agency

Xu Tiantian, DnA

Diana Lee Smith, Mazingira institute

## Interventions moderated by Tito Arunga

Oliver Hillel, CBD

Martina Otto, UN Environment

Edlam Yemeru, UNECA

Daniel Günther, BMZ

Stephen Otieno, C40

## Questions and answers

## Closing remarks

Shipra Narang Suri, UN-Habitat

Remy Sietchiping, UN-Habitat



## ANNEX 2 - BIOGRAPHIES

### Shipra Narang Suri

Coordinator, Urban Planning and Design Branch, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

Dr. Shipra Narang Suri is an urban planner with a Ph.D. in Post-War Recovery Studies from the University of York, UK. She currently heads the Urban Planning and Design Branch of UN-Habitat, which is the largest branch of the organisation in terms of portfolio as well as staff. Dr. Narang Suri has extensive experience in advising national and local governments, as well as private sector organisations and networks, on issues of urban planning and management, good urban governance and indicators, livability and sustainability of cities, urban safety, women and cities, and post-conflict/post-disaster recovery.



Dr. Narang Suri has worked with several UN agencies, as well as international NGOs and private sector organisations, for nearly two decades. She is a former Vice-President (2011-17) of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP). Between April 2015- September 2017, she also served as the elected Vice-President of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP). With over 1200 members connected to 58000 networks, GAP has now emerged as the leading vehicle for stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

She has worked across Asia, Africa, South Eastern Europe and the Middle-East on a variety of development, research and training projects and programmes, is a regular public speaker at high-level international fora, and has several publications to her credit.

### Remy Sietchiping

Leader, Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya

Remy Sietchiping leads the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit at UN-Habitat. He oversees the development of strategic programme of UN-Habitat including National Urban Policy, urban-rural linkages, metropolitan development and the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning.

He has over 20 years working experience in the UN systems, academia, private sector, public sector and NGOs in Australia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Jamaica and worldwide.



Dr. Sietchiping has over 40 publications including books, peer-reviewed articles, papers in proceedings and reports. He speaks French and English. He holds a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

## Tito Arunga

Team leader, Inclusive Value Chains Sub-programme, FAO, Kenya

Mr. Arunga is an agribusiness specialist with over 15 years of experience developing inclusive businesses that create opportunities for small scale farmers in Kenya, especially youth and women. He has worked in the dairy, apiculture, horticulture, and cereal sectors, stimulating access to local and regional markets, encouraging financial inclusion, and improving service provision. In the last three years, he has created market opportunities for small scale farmers in domestic and international markets for cereals and pulses in excess of \$50 million. He has also built strategic partnerships with local and international companies offering markets, mechanization and financial products.



## Jorge M. Fonseca

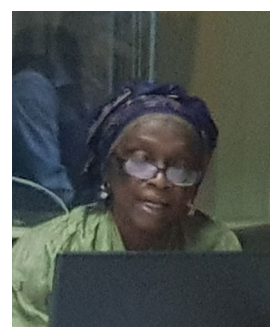
Programme Advisor, FAO, Rome, Italy

Jorge M. Fonseca currently serves as adviser for the food system management team in FAO. Under this capacity he leads program action of the global urban food agenda of the Organization. Prior to joining FAO he was an Associate Professor at The University of Arizona, USA, where he led the state's produce quality and safety research and extension program. Mr. Fonseca received a Ph.D. in food technology from Clemson University, South Carolina, USA and possesses master degrees in business administration, horticulture and international food governance. He is the author of over 200 scientific and technical publications pertaining to food systems and quality and safety of horticultural products, with one publication receiving a USA national press award. He has served as project leader for a number of international projects and programs sponsored by institutions such as United Nation Organizations, JIFSAN/FDA, IICA, US-Agency of International Development, the Korea National Institute of Science and Technology. He has consulted commercial enterprises in nine countries and co-founded two businesses that provide products and services for food safety and horticultural operations.



## Nene Mariama Balde

Deputy National Director of Urban and Territorial Planning, Guinea



## Carme Gual Via

Director, Catalan Agency of Cooperation for Development, Barcelona, Spain

Carme is a Lawyer. She was Coordinator of the International Relations for Ecology at the Barcelona City Council, before she worked in the elaboration and implementation of the Plan for Irregular Settlements (2011), she was Director of Communications and Participation at Foment de Ciutat Vella, SA., she worked for the Agència del Carmel and for the Barcelona's Urban Planning Department as Director of Urban Renewal Congress (2001) and Head of the Department of Communications and Participation.



## Xu Tiantian

Founder Architect, DnA\_Design and Architecture, Beijing, China

Xu Tiantian is the founding principal of DnA \_Design and Architecture. She has received numerous awards such as the WA China Architecture Award in 2006 and 2008, the Architectural League New York's Young Architects Award in 2008, the Design Vanguard Award in 2009 by Architecture Record and, most recently in 2019, the Moira Gemmill Prize for Emerging Architect. She has built a number of projects, such as Songzhuang Art Center and Ordos Art Museum. In the past years she has been engaged extensively in the rural revitalising process in Songyang and Zhejiang Province. She has used Architectural Acupuncture to work with different contexts and the heritage of villages and rural regions. She has also initiated the Field Work Station in Songyang, as an open platform for artists and designers to exchange with rural culture. Xu Tiantian received her masters in architecture and urban design from Harvard Graduate School of Design, and her baccalaureate in architecture from Tsinghua University in Beijing.



## Diana Lee-Smith

Associate, Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr Diana Lee-Smith is an architect and widely-published social scientist who has worked at international agencies including as UN-Habitat's Gender Coordinator, as well as being one of the founders of Mazingira Institute, now part of the RUAF global partnership. Mazingira studied Kenyan urban agriculture in 1985 and currently hosts the Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum (NEFSALF). The Institute also currently advises Nairobi City County on applying the Milan Pact indicators including rural-urban linkages. She was African Coordinator for Urban Harvest in the CGIAR 2002-2005 and has co-edited two books, Healthy City Harvests (2008) and African Urban Harvest (2010).



## Oliver Hillel

Programme Officer, CBD, Montreal, Canada

Oliver Hillel is Programme Officer at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity in Montreal, Canada. He is responsible for the engagement of States, Regions and cities in the work of the Convention, and for the mainstreaming of biodiversity and its services into economic sectors and development, including technological innovation. A biologist with a master's Degree in Environmental Education and MBAs on Managerial Accounting and Hotel Management, Oliver has over 25 years' experience on international cooperation and negotiations on sustainable tourism, event organization, and training and capacity building programs across many themes and issues related to sustainable development.

He worked as team leader for a tourism development project in the Philippines, as Tourism Programme Coordinator for UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics based in Paris, France, and as Conservation International's Ecotourism Program director. He also worked for SENAC, a professional training institution in his home country Brazil, where he created and managed training and consulting services for hotels, restaurants, and theme parks. He has edited and co-authored the Cities and Biodiversity Outlook and the Nature in the Urban Century Assessment, reference publications on the links between urbanization and biodiversity. He serves on the Board of several projects and research networks.



## Martina Otto

Leader, Cities Unit, UN Environment, Nairobi, Kenya

Martina has over 20 years of experience in Environmental Policy and Programme Management, with a particular focus on energy, buildings and transport. In the UN Environment Programme, she has served in different functions out of Paris and Nairobi, currently heading UN Environment Programme's work on Cities and leading the UN Environment Programme hosted Secretariat of the global Alliance for Buildings and Construction. Before joining UNEP, Martina worked on Trade and Environment and Economic Instruments in the Area of Environmental Protection with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the European Commission and the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development. She is a fully qualified lawyer, specialised in environmental law.



## Edlam Abera Yemeru

Chief, Urbanization Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Edlam Abera Yemeru is currently the Chief of the Urbanization Section at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). In this capacity, she leads the development of policy knowledge and tools to support African member States in leveraging the potential of urbanization for accelerated and inclusive growth and structural transformation. Previously, she held research, teaching and programmatic positions in the field of urban development including at the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and academic and research institutes including Addis Ababa University, the University College London, University of Sussex, and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, Addis Ababa. At UN-Habitat, she led a number of initiatives designed to assist member States in promoting social inclusive, economically productive and environmentally sustainable urbanization in Africa and beyond. She has also been a co-author of several editions of UN-Habitat's Global Report on Human Settlements covering issues such as urban safety, security, planning, mobility, climate change, in addition to other urban related publications. She has published on urban development in Africa, including most recently in the Oxford Handbook on the Ethiopian Economy. Edlam holds an MPhil in Development Studies from the University of Cambridge and a PhD in Human Geography from the University of London.



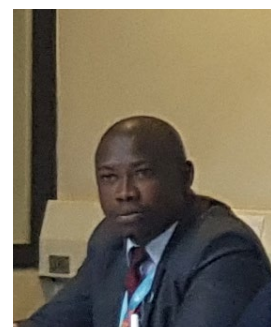
## Stephen Otieno

City Adviser, C40, Nairobi, Kenya

Stephen Otieno is the C40 City Adviser (Food Systems) for Nairobi. His role is to provide technical support and assist the City of Nairobi deliver a robust food system strategy. He also connects the City to resources across the C40 Food Systems Network, FAO, and other technical partners.

Prior to joining C40 Cities, he was a research fellow at the East African Institute of the Aga Khan University, where he coordinated the implementation of a donor-funded project on Urban Food Systems in East Africa. He has previously worked at UNEP's Department of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), the African Conservation Centre, and was a visiting research scholar at York University, Canada. He has also consulted for the Global Climate Adaptation Partnership (GCAP) – UK.

He holds a B.A in (Urban Planning) and an M.A in (Environmental Planning & Management) from the University of Nairobi. Stephen is an alumnus of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee scholarship; and is currently pursuing his PhD at the University of Nairobi, focusing on "Environmental performance of food systems with funding from the Swiss National Research Foundation, University of Bern and CETRAD, Kenya.



## Daniel Günther

Deputy Head, Division of Water, Urban Development and Mobility, BMZ, Germany

Daniel Guenther is Deputy Head of Division “Water, Urban Development, Mobility” at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since 2016, his responsibilities include providing sector policy guidance in the areas of urban development and transportation policy as well as active involvement in numerous global initiatives and programmes, including the C40 Cities Finance Facility, the Sustainable Mobility for All-initiative as well as the Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative (TUMI). Before joining BMZ in 2015, he worked for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as an adviser in the field of development economics and international financial institutions. Mr. Guenther studied economics at the University of Konstanz and the University of International Business and Economics (Beijing).



## ANNEX 3 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| Name                     | Organisation  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Martina Liebermann       | GIZ   |
| Petra Jacob              | GIZ   |
| Danilo Antonio           | UN-Habitat  |
| Leesam Murigu            | Government of Kenya   |
| Jorge Fonseca            | FAO   |
| Carme Gual               | Catalonian cooperation Agency-Spain                               |
| Gabriel Fenero           | MFA-Spain   |
| Wi A Kotume              | Mazingira Institute   |
| Carlos Abad Santos       | NEDA-Philippine   |
| John Omwamba             | UN-Habitat  |
| Rolf Wichman             | Mazingira Institute   |
| Davinder Lamba           | Mazingira Institute   |
| Samuel Ikva              | Mazingira Institute   |
| Stephen Otieno           | C4O Cities  |
| Remy Sietchiping         | UN-Habitat  |
| Shipra Narang Suri       | UN-Habitat  |
| Nene Mariama Balde       | Deputy National Director of Urban and Territorial Planning-Guinea |
| Xu Tiantian              | DnA / Songyang County-China                                       |
| Diana Lee Smith          | Mazingira Institute / RUAF  |
| Rebecca Wanjiru          | FAO-Kenya   |
| Lamina Almeida           | Angola  |
| Maria Helena Gomes       | Angola  |
| Marcus Ngberg            | Ericsson  |
| Joseph Schechia          | -   |
| Amed Mansour             | HIC HLRN  |
| Michael Kinyanjui        | UN-Habitat  |
| Wandia Seafoitto         | -   |
| Irina Wandera            | Global Dairy Platform   |
| Daniel Günther           | BMZ   |
| Ignacio Montero          | UNEP  |
| Eol Chae                 | UN-Habitat  |
| Alberica Domitilla Bozzi | UN-Habitat  |
| Grace Githiri            | UN-Habitat  |
| Frédéric Happi Mangoua   | UN-Habitat  |
| Martina Otto             | UN Environment  |
| Pamela Carbajal          | UN-Habitat  |
| Carmen Sanchez           | UN-Habitat  |
| Melissa Permezel         | UN-Habitat  |
| Ramsés Grande Fraile     | UN-Habitat  |

The side event “**Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages** to Reduce Spatial Inequalities and Poverty by Leveraging Sustainable Food Systems Actions” took place on May 30, 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, during the **inaugural UN-Habitat Assembly**. It was **co-organized by UN-Habitat and FAO** and supported by C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo (RIMISP), Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), UN Environment, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), French Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD), Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Mazingira institute, Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), RIKOLTO, UN Standing Committee on Nutrition.

For further information, please contact: UN-Habitat, Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit, Urban Planning and Design Branch, [unhabitat-updb-rmpu@un.org](mailto:unhabitat-updb-rmpu@un.org), [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

More information on the Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles at: [urbanrurallinkages.wordpress.com](http://urbanrurallinkages.wordpress.com)



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