

# Urbanization and rural migrants

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## Definitions

Urbanisation: The process in which an increasing proportion of the population live in cities/urban areas. Urban growth: Increase in population size and/or physical size of the towns, cities and other larger urban settlements in a country or a region. Process whereby settlements grow in terms of population number and/or physical size Megacity: A giant metropolis with a population of at least 10 million Slums: A residential area that is physically and socially deteriorated and in which satisfactory family life is impossible. Squatters: Shelters with poor structural quality and developed without legal claims to the land and/or permission from the concerned authorities

## Trends in urbanisation

### General trends:

In 1950, there were two megacities with 10 million or more inhabitants. By 2005, this number has increased to 20 and it is projected that there will be 22 megacities by 2015. Developing countries will have 18 of the 22 megacities in 2015.

### LEDCs vs MEDCs:

Since 1950, the most rapid growth in urbanisation has occurred in LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) in South America, Africa and Asia. Between 1950 and 1990, the urban population in LEDCs has doubled. In China, the urban population grew from 192 million to 375 million in 16 years. However, this is not the case in MEDCs, which instead face the phenomenon

of counter-urbanisation where people choose to move away from the bustling city to the quieter rural environment.

Positive impacts (Reasons for urbanisation)

Wage and employment differentials

Economic advancements are better in the city for migrants due to higher wages and increased number of working days. For example, In Dehli, rural migrants' income increase by 150% compared to those in villages. Job opportunities in the city can also be found in the form of employment in informal sectors such as hawkers selling food by the sidewalks. This requires limited capital as money does not have to be spent on renting a workplace or a stall.

The cities provide a greater opportunity for rural migrants to climb the income ladder. The increased wealth will enhance the lives of the migrants and their families as money can be spent on proper food, water, healthcare and even education. If the money is invested well in their children, their families can be brought out of the cycle of poverty, increasing their standard of living in the long run.

Access to Amenities and Services

Due to the close proximity of people in the highly populated cities, it is easier and cheaper to provide amenities that are accessible and affordable to everyone. This is referred to as the economies of scale, hence allowing city dwellers to have better and cheaper access to water and electrical supply. This results in an improvement in their living standards and decreases one's chance of contracting diseases related to the lack of proper water supply.

For example, water pipes and sewers can be constructed within densely populated areas more efficiently than laying long pipelines connecting houses in more dispersed rural settlements. The poor access to basic infrastructure has a disproportionate effect on rural women as they perform most of the domestic chores and often walk long distances to fetch water. The energy spent on getting water can be better channeled to economic activities in urban areas.

### Future Prospects

People are willing to endure short-term difficulties in the hopes of better prospects of economic gain and improved welfare in the longer term, even if only for their children.

### Economic growth

Cities are engines of economic growth as they are places where money, services, wealth and manpower are centralized. Cheap labour will attract foreign investors as production cost is low. Through trade and tourism, foreign money will flow into the country, boosting the economy. Urban-based economic activities account for more than 50% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in all countries. For example, Mumbai, the richest city in India, has the highest GDP of any city in South, West and Central Asia.

### Negative impacts (Challenges)

#### Urban unemployment and urban poverty

There is a huge economic income disparity, leaving a huge gap between the rich and the poor in the cities. This is because the rural migrants lack education and the skills required to get a good job. Hence, the inhabitants of <https://assignbuster.com/urbanization-and-rural-migrants/>

the urban areas have better access to the various industries due to the higher levels of education they received, while rural migrants only earn a meager income. This is made worse by the lack of jobs due to the sudden increase in population and workforce in the city. Many rural migrants turn to the 'informal sector' as their source of income, where there is no need for them to pay taxes.

However, this results in a decrease in the government's income, which can be used to build and improve infrastructure and provide better amenities and services to the people. For example, in Morocco, street vendors are a common sight as these mobile traders do not have to pay rent or municipal tax. However, these informal traders cause small retailers to lose out in the competition and has forced many small businesses in the area to close down.

#### Traffic congestion

The increased income means an increase in private ownership of cars as a form of luxury instead of taking public transportation. However, this leads to traffic congestions during peak hours due to insufficient roads in the transport network, leading to delays and frustrations. It is estimated that in Bangkok, a car spends an average of 44 days per year stuck in traffic. Apart from being a waste of time, it also causes environmental and noise pollution. This affects the quality of life for urban dwellers.

#### Environmental degradation

The increase in private car ownership and other human activities result in air pollution and other forms of environmental degradation such as dumping of

chemical waste in waterways. More than 80% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated, polluting rivers, lakes and coastal areas. This makes water unfit for drinking and also upsets the ecosystem. Fumes from exhaust pipes cause the air to be filled with harmful particles that negatively affect the health of urban dwellers, especially those with respiratory difficulties such as asthma.

This is a prominent problem in Beijing, where the smog in the air is so thick that it is a cause of worry for the citizens. Smoking causes lead pollution in the air, which has adverse effects on other's health. The air in New Mexico causes lead levels in babies to be so high that it impairs their brain development. This affects the social wellbeing of the citizens.

## Housing

Rapid urbanisation has led to the development of squatter settlements and an informal sector to the economy. By 2050, it is estimated that the world's population will be 9 billion, of which 3.5 billion will be living in slums and squatter settlements. There is a huge demand for housing due to the great increase in urban population. This pushes up the price of housing. Poor rural migrants who are unable to afford proper housing are forced to live in slums or squatters.

1. These settlements lack proper sanitation, drainage and disposal systems (dumping ground). The houses are closely packed in a disorderly fashion, and often overcrowded with people. This makes the spread of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis quick and easy, giving rise to a high likelihood of health problems, especially given the unsanitary conditions. 2. There is an

inadequate access to clean water and lack of a proper sewage system, allowing water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid to be spread easily. (2 million children are killed yearly by water contaminated by sewage.)

3. There might be a high incidence of fire breakouts as the close proximity of the houses make it easy for the fire to spread. Furthermore, the disorderly arrangement of houses makes it difficult for slum residents to escape easily from the fire. 4. Lack of basic amenities and services such as electricity means the need to use oil lamps and kerosene for lighting. This also increases the chance of a fire. 5. Makeshift shelters are built using low quality building materials such as cardboards, planks, etc. that might be flammable. This encourages a fire breakout, and also means that a fire can cause the residents to lose all their possessions. 6. The lack of a proper drainage system might lead to flooding, especially for slum settlements build on water-retention areas.

## Solutions

### HOUSING:

1. (Overcrowding) Curb the flow of rural-urban migration to ensure that the government can cope with the pace and provide the necessary infrastructure required a. Improve living conditions in rural areas such that there will not be a need for rural dwellers to move to the city. b. Indonesian migrants to Jakarta are required to obtain residence cards to prove that they have a job and accommodation in the city before permission is granted to them to leave the rural areas. 2. (Slums) Improving living conditions of squatter

settlements a. “ For a Better Calcutta” in India: The Central Metropolitan Development Authority (CDMA) launched this £250 million programme to make slums more bearable and the city liveable by installing sanitation and sewers, drinking water and streetlights, health care and education. a. i. 150 000 street lighting points provided

a. ii. Provision of 90 litres of water per capita per day. More than 20 000 water tap points and connections have been provided a. iii. Revamp and Renovation of drainage and sewage systems: 45 000 permanent sanitary latrines (1 per 35 people) a. iv. Construction of 600m of paved roads and pathways

a. v. Gardens, parks and playgrounds on 60 sites are under construction.

Provision of subsidized housing and relocation

a. Cingapura project, Sao Paulo, Brazil

a. i. Brazil aims to replace slums with low-rise blocks of flats. They aim to resettle 92 000 families from 243 slum sites a. ii. Residents pay for the house over a p of 20 years at a low interest rate. 4. Self-Help Schemes

a. In Nairobi, Kenya Africa, the World bank gives financial support to the squatters. Building lots are provided and laid out with water, drains, roads lighting and occasionally clinics and schools. Squatters are given modest loans for building materials and are expected to build their own homes on prepared sites. 5. With these interventions, slum and squatter dwellers of urban areas are experiencing an improvement in the living environment.

## TRAFFIC:

### 1. Restrictions

a. Curbing vehicle growth by increasing the cost of private car to discourage car ownership. a. i. For example, in SG, potential car owners must pay to bid for a Certificate of Entitlement (COE) b. Reducing congestion by limiting the number of cars on the road. b. i. In Singapore, ERP gantries are set up on frequently congested roads to collect additional road tax during peak hours. b. ii. Beijing restricts certain cars with certain numbers from going on the roads on weekdays

2. Encourage the use of public transport by improving and subsidizing public transport to make it accessible and affordable.

## Macroconcepts

Urbanisation is an inevitable process for a country on its way to development. No country has achieved high-income status without first urbanizing, and nearly all countries become at least 50% urbanized before fully reaching middle-income status. Urbanization plays an important role in economic, political and cultural development, and also provides better access to education, employment and healthcare, hence improving the social wellbeing of the people.

Even though urbanisation brings about both advantages and disadvantages, many of the urban problems are results of poor management and planning and the absence of coherent urban policies. For example, in Africa, urban areas are economically stagnant or in recession, hence local authorities do not have the money or expertise to provide services such as access to water, housing, education and healthcare. This results in the formation of slums.

(70% of Africa's urban population live in slums) Hence, urbanisation itself is not a problem, and should be encouraged. However, it has to be accompanied with proper planning and regulation.