

RurbanAfrica Project Tanzania
1st Meeting on Policy Dialogue
Hotel New Africa, 3 June 2013

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SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Land as the overarching issue

Land remains a critical issue in Tanzania. Sectoral policies including planned agricultural development corridors such as Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) tend to overestimate the proportion of fertile land and at the same time underestimate the proportion of land that is not suitable for agriculture. The impact of environmental change on land degradation is also likely to be underestimated. Access to fertile land is an important factor behind the growing movement of population from central regions with high rates of land degradation to eastern coastal regions, although some of this movement is linked to land speculation. Land speculation also affects small-scale farmers in peri-urban areas who are bought out of their farms but have difficulties in finding alternative livelihoods; this is especially the case around Dar es Salaam and other rapidly expanding urban centres.

Participants agreed that there is an urgent need for cross-sectoral collaboration on land use and for better information on available land. This should include a detailed inventory to avoid double-counting of land needed for various sectoral projects (one participant estimated that summing up all proposed projects, land needed may be double the total available). The inventory should include productivity levels: in many cases, productivity declines rapidly when land use changes to intensive agriculture, and this can have considerable repercussions on large-scale projects such as the agricultural development projects. Such analyses should also more clearly address the relationship between environmental degradation (also linked to climate change), migration, and changing land uses.

Uneven rates of urbanisation

There are substantial differences in the location of urban growth, and Dar es Salaam continues to play a crucial role in the urban system of Tanzania. In contrast, other urban centres are stagnating. There are no easy generalisations that can be made: socio-cultural as well as economic and environmental factors all play a role. Overall, however, there seems to be an uneven distribution of infrastructure provision and services, especially higher-level ones (hospitals, universities, etc). Smaller urban centres in regions where road and transport infrastructure and electricity provision have been greatly improved in recent years are developing as metropolitan regions (a more diffused urban form based on a network of small towns and large villages and higher levels of commuting).

Participants agreed that strengthening the role of small and intermediate urban centres becomes increasingly central in order to provide non-farm employment opportunities to the growing numbers of rural youth. To do so, a better understanding of the specific regional/rural context and of the nature and role of each smaller urban centre is necessary. Effectively, this implies decentralised planning which in turn requires stronger capacity and resources by local governments. It also implies more explicit plans for employment, not least of the youth of cities and towns.

Infrastructure and urban poverty: planning and local government capacity

At the national level, rural development remains the priority; as a consequence, urban poverty is largely ignored, as is the need for better urban planning. In many cases, urban water provision is worse than in rural areas. There are now ninety-seven 'minor towns' in Tanzania that have been newly created. However, there are no specific policies for their development. Indeed, since the 1970s there has been no planning for cities, and the last master plan for DSM was in 1979. At the national level, a growing acknowledgement that cities are potential engines of development has not resulted in national plans for urbanization. Nevertheless, economic opportunities are concentrated in the cities, and this attracts migrants. The result is haphazard growth; moreover, local governments lack the capacity to ensure that building and planning regulations are respected. After several years, land rangers have been reinstated this financial year in DSM by local authorities; however, their ability to help control urban expansion will be determined by the political will to do so. Failure to implement urban masterplans has a number of consequences. As mentioned earlier, unplanned areas in Tanzania are not only slums but also middle and higher income neighbourhoods; however, poor migrants tend to settle in environmentally risky areas that are close to casual labour opportunities.

Agricultural models: the potential impacts of development corridors

Agricultural development corridors such as SAGCOT are based on the assumption that there is abundant land – but statistics show it is not true, and also that soil productivity can vary substantially between locations in the same corridor, and over time. More information is also needed to provide evidence on whether agriculture really is the backbone of the Tanzanian economy. Current statistics indicate that 80 percent of the population relies on agriculture; however, these data do not provide information on the proportion of household incomes derived from agriculture, and that derived from other sources, including non-farm employment, remittances and other transfers. Participants agreed that such information is urgently needed to inform planning of the development corridors, especially with regards to the need in plans to provide for a balanced mix of agricultural and non-farm income-generating opportunities. These would have an impact on existing local towns and on patterns of urbanisation within the corridors, and thus need to involve local authorities. Participants also noted that agricultural development corridors tend to focus on large-scale farms and although the planned development corridors are major modality for agricultural transformation, they only encompass 15 % of the current farming population. It is important to strengthen the capacity of small-scale farmers to negotiate with larger operators – especially with regards to land – in order to avoid their marginalisation from the project. It was also mentioned that Tanzania has failed to make agriculture attractive. There is a particular need for considering how youth can stay interested in/integrated into agricultural value chains in diverse ways. The socio-economic exclusion of the poorer rural groups would have important if unintended consequences on migration patterns and urban poverty.

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