

## **Rural-Urban Interlink and Sustainability of Urban Centres in Kenya; A case of Malaba Town**

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### **Overview**

This paper disseminates research findings on rural urban interlink and sustainability of urban centres in Kenya as based on a study undertaken in Malaba a border town to the western part of Kenya. The significance of the paper lies in the fact that it articulates key aspects that influence rural urban interlink on the one hand, and sustainability of urban areas on the other. The study aimed to identify and examine the interlink that exists between rural and urban centres, assess the effects of the linkage on the sustainability of urban centres, examine the challenges in enhancing rural-urban interlink for sustainability of urban centres, and suggest the appropriate ways of sustaining rural –urban interlink.

Arising from the synthesis of the findings, it emerged clearly that both rural and urban areas equally play an instrumental role in the sustainability of each other. It was established that the functions played by each locality is what determines the nature of interlink and reliability. For instance rural areas as engines of agricultural development; produce and are the main suppliers of food and other agro based raw materials used in industrial and commercial functions in the urban areas. Equally, urban areas are instrumental in the provision of basic necessities including economic, social, and political amenities relied upon by the rural areas. In strengthening the relationship between the two areas, the significance of infrastructural base cannot be underestimated.

The paper concludes by noting that sustainability of urban centres in Kenya as based on rural urban interlink is only realistic if both entities (Rural and urban areas) are strengthened especially in the aspects of infrastructure (roads, electricity, and communication), Planning and political institutional frameworks. Finally as we strengthen the positive attributes arising from the interlink, we need also to appreciate the negative elements that to some extent jeopardizes the linkage. The paper therefore calls for harmonious planning that integrates both the needs of the urban and rural areas so as to address the aspects that arise out of isolated planning favouring either of the localities.

### **1.1. Global Contemporary Rural Urban Policy Approaches**

#### ***1.1.1. Historical overview***

Since decolonization, beginning after world war II, and earlier in much of Latin America, development policy has been concerned with the role of rural versus urban places in promoting national economic growth and the transition to the urban-industrial type of modern economy that emerged with the industrial revolution in northern countries (Lewis, 1954). Even though the contexts have changed considerably in the past five decades, national policies have consistently been based on the premise that increasing the linkages between rural and urban economies will lead to the development of rural areas. Hence, policies have actively promoted the conversion of rural subsistence production and lifestyles into production for regional and international markets and a greater reliance on market interactions to meet rural household needs.

Despite the accelerated attempts to promote rural development, by the 1970s it was apparent that the trickle down of economic benefits to rural areas was still not occurring. Rural to urban migration continued at a rapid pace and capital, labour and resources, became increasingly concentrated in only one or two large cities (Douglass, 1998, Tacoli, 1998). 'Rural poverty' increasingly became 'urban poverty' as more of the rural poor joined the erratically expanding urban squatter settlements where levels of unemployment and under-employment were extremely high and environmental conditions were increasingly deteriorating (Tacoli, 1998). Despite degraded urban conditions, migrants widely claim that living in the city was better than remaining in the countryside. Rural migration may even turn out to be a boon in monetary terms as it has for rural areas where they earned almost nothing.

To try to retain population within the rural regions, national policies became focused around addressing the unbalanced growth pattern that was developing. As mentioned before, this led to a number of widely supported policies to promote balanced rural and urban growth namely growth pole and service centres, which were intended to diffuse urbanization and spur rural development, rural industrialization schemes, and movement of people from one to another area (UNDP, 1991). At the same time, three decades of borrowing to finance national development left many countries heavily indebted to international banks and lending institutions. As national budgets became plagued by high deficits, governments became faced not only with the challenge of addressing the growing social, economic and environmental deterioration accompanying unbalanced rural and urban development, but also servicing the massive debt that had been accumulating to international banks. Therefore, many of these development policies were deployed at a time when macroeconomic planners began to implement a series of measures to adjust the national balance of payments and service the growing debt to international banks. The policies then oriented toward export to earn as much of foreign exchange as possible (test box 6). With the possible exception of green revolution programs, government removed agricultural subsidies, which made it harder for small-scale producers to produce economically thus encouraging rural migration.

Various sets of policies addressing rural and urban development have been broadly disseminated and funded by development agencies in the past decades to promote balanced development as illustration below.

### **1.1.2. Growth poles and service centers**

Regional development policies have been significantly influenced by concerns about rapid rates of rural to urban migration and have focused on promoting 'balanced' rural and urban development and reducing the growth of large mega-cities (UNHCS, 1996, UNDP, 1991). The most widely implemented policies have to do with attempts to redistribute population and to manage urbanization through growth pole and service centres policies. Although most growth pole approaches are geared toward decentralizing manufacturing and large scale assembly operations, two variations of growth pole and service centres policies included the urban functions in rural development approach to promoting rural development and efforts to promote secondary cities. Both of these strategies aimed at deflecting migration from rural to urban areas by achieving selective decentralization of investments to create a more balanced distribution urban settlements that would more effectively serve their rural hinterlands as market, consumer and production centres. Ultimately, these approaches were based on the same premise as 'urban bias' models, namely that rural areas would be developed by increasing access to urban services and by

promoting urban characteristics- to be developed with an urban perspective rather than a rural perspective (UNDP 1998b)

#### **1.1.2.1 Urban functions in rural development**

Urban Functions in Rural Development (UFRD) is based on the concept that rural towns could mediate between the big 'parasitic' cities and agricultural areas and facilitate the commercialization of agriculture (Johnson, 1970). The UFRD approach promoted a more balanced spatial urban hierarchy of towns in developing countries in order to achieve selective decentralization of productive investments to foster rural development (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978; Rondinelli, 1979; Rondinelli, 1985; Belsky and Karaska, 1990). The towns in this network have been expected to serve as centres of information and knowledge, infrastructure, and as central places for marketing production and purchasing supplies, and non-agricultural employment for rural labour.

This approach was applied in selected number of developing countries but has shown limited success in promoting rural development and stemming rural to urban migration (Douglass, 1998). Empirical studies have highlighted three very instructional conceptual and practical limitations with this approach:

- (i) The economic activities and needs of rural areas are not prescribed by the nature of rural town. Rather it is the other way around- the characteristics and functions of rural towns vary with the types of economic activities in a rural area. Therefore, attempts to promote desirable rural benefits by establishing a hierarchy of towns with predetermined functions generally fail. It is necessary to carefully determine the existing systems of production functions of rural towns and specific rural and urban linkages, and not assume that the benefits of the network strategy will always be relevant and beneficial. Consumption by rural people is not limited by lack of access to goods. It is limited to incomes (Improved access to infrastructure and greater efficiency of product and inputs and products, in the absence of viable capital injections, many towns in developing countries have not become dynamic 'service centres').
- (ii) Interaction in rural towns and diffused urban centres does not usually include the poorest of the poor. They often lack the necessary resource to move extensively over space and to access the advantages, such as non-farm employment of towns. Therefore, even if the UFRD approach were fully successful in all other respect, it would not address rural poverty without more specific attention to the rural economy and needs of the poor.

#### **1.1.2.2. Promoting secondary cities**

Many governments tried to avoid the development of mega-slums by diffusing the growth of large cities through providing incentives to companies to locate in smaller cities (UNDP, 1990). These strategies have shown mixed success. For example, the Thai government was not very successful in influencing the pattern of industrialization in order to take migrant pressure off the Bangkok's extended metropolitan region (Tacoli, 1998). Despite government attempts to bolster infrastructure in secondary cities, they found that the flow of capital, often vested in transnational firms allied with local industry, was more powerful in dictating population flows and the pattern of urban settlements. If cities could not attract this investment they were unable to attract migrants.

However, in Brazil, secondary cities with improved transportation and communications infrastructure were successful in attracting corporations and deflecting migrants away from Sao Paulo (UNCHS, 1996a). Free trade zones have also succeeded in attracting new investments and people away from big cities (Tacoli, 1998). The successful experiences reveal that corporations rely on a suite of services, administrative capacity, and infrastructure of towns. If these needs are not met in secondary cities, corporations will not respond to governments incentives to locate away from major cities (UNDP, 1990), further, the linkages of this type of branch manufacturing plant decentralization with rural development has been weak. In economies experiencing rapid structural change, such as those in East and Southeast Asia, the regional life-span for branch plant production has been short, with raising land and other costs seeing it move to other, low-income countries (Douglass, 1999).

The overall limited success of growth pole and service centres approach to promoting balanced spatial development and stemming the flow of migrants from rural to urban areas is strongly related to the divorce between macroeconomic growth policies and objectives of regional planning and the poor financial support for regional development policies. Regional planning in many developing countries tended to focus on technical parameters such as infrastructure in isolation of broader market forces operating in developing countries. It tended to be defeated from the outset, as it could not counteract the structural and spatial inequalities that sectoral policies produced. In addition, several key issues such as social as land tenure patterns were not incorporated into growth pole and service centre policies (UNDP, 1998b). Regional planning also suffered because there were no significant financial allocations or authority to cover cost and coordinate the implementation of policies. Indeed very little effort was made to incorporate these policies into the national budget process (UNCHS, 1999).

### **1.1.3. Rural Industrialization Programmes**

Some countries have tried to curb rural out-migration by encouraging rural industrialization. This has shown mixed results. For example, Taiwan is noted to have had considerable success in preventing rural out-migration with these programs (Tacoli, 1998). In China, the rural enterprise sector has shown that it can compete strongly with state and urban enterprises for both product markets and as markets for raw materials. Moreover, most successful cases are those near rapidly growing coastal cities rather than dispersed throughout China's vast rural regions.

Rural industrialization was not very successful at curbing migration in many countries. For example, in Korea rural industrialization was attractive mainly to small and medium sized industries that wanted to exploit cheap labour. These businesses found it difficult to hire young, inexpensive labour because the young population in rural areas was not satisfied with the wages. Since wages did not match those in urban centres, migrants who tend to be young people, continued to leave rural areas (Kim 1998). The Korean Rural industrialization programs that are geared to reduce migration need to be based on a thorough understanding of migrants and the factors that govern their decisions to migrate. Rural industrialization programs are likely to provide an additional source of income in rural areas, but they will not be successful at curbing migration if they are unable to match the added economic advantage that attracts migrants to urban centres.

While properly planned rural industrialization schemes could derive environmental benefits from reduced rural to urban migration, rural industrialization can present a

contradiction in rural-urban environmental problem solving. Rural industries can be very polluting and can consume high-grade agricultural land if they are not carefully planned. Governments need to carefully balance rural industrialization with other environment and development priorities to achieve the desired benefits, often this requires national rural urban agenda which incorporates rural-urban environmental as well as development linkages.

#### ***1.1.4. Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRD)***

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) programs tended to err in the opposite manner as 'urban bias' programs. During the 1960's and early 1970's the idea of IRD was put forth as a strategy to generate a series of qualitative and quantitative changes within rural population through improved living conditions, creation of social infrastructure necessary to increase production. The central idea of IRD was that rural development required a host of coordinated and integrated complementary actions cutting across many sectors. Programmes and activities included provision of electricity; clean potable water, decent housing, marketing and storage facilities for farm products, improvement of networks of feeder and access roads, and the organization and reorganization of human settlements. Many of these programs were widely adopted through donor agencies working in Africa. (UNDP 1998a)

While IRD helped to promote some non-agriculture activities in rural areas, their focus was primarily on planning in the rural agriculture sector, and projects usually did not consider potential linkages with urban policy (Douglass, 1998; Escobar, 1995). In the end, these programs were not very successful in promoting rural development. At the International Workshop on Rural-Urban Linkages in Curitiba 1998, several reasons were identified for their limited success:

- Many of these programs were typically implemented by central government or foreign donor agencies that were unable to overcome severe problems of inter-agency co-ordination.
- Programs were unable to draw on local knowledge and participation in assessing rural conditions.
- There was a lack of sustained central knowledge and participation in assessing rural conditions.
- Planners tended to assume that technical solutions could address deeply entrenched socio-economic sources of poverty associated with land tenure issues, hierarchies of status and power, and racial, gender and ethnic discrimination.

#### ***1.1.5. Modernization through Industrialization and Urbanization***

In the early 1950s, development was conceptualized in terms of national economies taking off through the increase in the size of domestic markets and the creation of inducements to invest. In this way, the modern sector would progressively encroach upon the traditional sector, and the money economy upon subsistence or near subsistence. This dualistic construction based essentially upon Nurske's (1953) and Lewis' (1954) models have pervaded economists' and donors' views for several decades. Part and parcel of the modernization process were industrialization and urbanization. Lewis (1954) assumed that in densely populated rural settlements in the Third World, marginal productivity would be minimal. Therefore, the transfer of labour from rural agriculture to urban industry could occur without declines in agricultural productivity. Indeed, until the mid-1960s, rural to urban migration was perceived as a positive process and several studies focused on the implications of permanent settlement of workers and their families in urban areas. However, it became clear that job creation in the manufacturing sector was much lower than

expected and could not absorb the fast-growing urban populations. Concern with over-urbanization translated into policies attempting to curtail labour migration to the cities.

#### **1.1.6. Structural Adjustment, Globalization and Decentralization**

Neo-classical economics, underpinning IMF and World Bank reform of Third World economies, advocates rolled-back governments and public sectors and competitive free markets determining human capital formation, resource allocation and growth. Development strategies are export oriented and this, for many Third World countries, means export of primary commodities, including food stuffs. The hard currencies then earned can be used to buy-in foreign grains or increase the private capital pools available to farmers. In both cases, it is expected that, once the distorted price systems associated with import substitution industrialization and other urban biased state policies have been removed, "...local agricultural production will blossom and expand" (Corbridge, 1989).

However, for many small farmers, and especially in Africa, structural adjustment has resulted in a price squeeze with the cost of agricultural inputs and consumer goods rising faster than the prices of agricultural produce. Government cutbacks in subsidies often means that only large-scale farmers can buy inputs in bulk and sell in bulk to overcome high transport costs, or can afford to wait and sell their produce some time after harvesting, benefiting from seasonal price fluctuations. Hence, despite the goal of SAPs to reduce the rural-urban income gap (and, as a consequence, to lower the rates of rural to urban migration), access to international markets has proved not to be equal for all producers and deepening social differentiation in both towns and countryside is part and parcel of economic reform. Migration as a survival strategy has, therefore continued, together with income diversification and what Jamal and Weeks (1988) have typified as the "trade-cum-wage earner-cum-*shamba* class", for whom straddling the rural-urban divide is an essential element of either survival or accumulation strategies.

Another central aspect of rural-urban relations in the 1990s is the decentralization of administrative functions, at least in part due to the increasing pressure from the international financial institutions and the donor community for political democratization and state reform. However, in many countries, this process is not immune from contradictions between the theory and practice. In policy terms, decentralization has renewed interest in regional development planning as well as in the role of small and intermediate urban centres in Third World development.

### **1.2. Planning Policies experimented in Kenya**

The Government of Kenya over space and time has demonstrated a number of strategies. These include; rural-urban balance, growth with distribution, linkages of physical and sectoral sectors and efficient manpower policy. All these policies fall within the concepts of planning from below (Bottom-up paradigm).

#### **1.2.1. Rural-urban balance**

Rural-urban balance strategy has been a central tenet of regime planning in Kenya since independence. The 1970-1974, National Development Plan observed that "Rural life cannot be complete without towns, any more than towns can be complete without access to the countryside (Kenya, 1970: 15). The 1979-1983 National Development Plan also observed that "*rural areas must be linked closely to urban centres*" ... because if ... rural development lags behind, people will migrate to the

*urban areas in search of better opportunities in such numbers that the urban areas will not be able to accommodate them. If urban development proceeds too slowly, the rural areas will suffer from lack of access to supplies and weak demand for their products. Hence, the interdependence of rural-urban development suggests that the two must proceed together and that, a careful balance be maintained between them*" (Kenya, 1979: 45). Sessional paper Number 1 of 1986, on economic management for Renewed Growth, further emphasized an urban system that supports growth of agriculture (Kenya, 1986). This, in turn, would generate productive employment opportunities for the rural population close to where they live (Obudho and Aduwo, 1989: 65-68 and 1990: 51-68).

### **1.2.2. Growth with distribution**

The policy of 'Growth with distribution' was meant to ensure an equitable standard of life and regional growth across the country. The 1970-1974 National Development Plan argued that the growth of urban population should be... "distributed over a relatively large number of centres and not mainly concentrated on the two largest urban centres of Nairobi and Mombasa" and that '... even more important than the need to avoid the negative consequences of concentrating the growth of the urban population in one place is the positive need to provide a number of focal points in different parts of the country "Kenya, 1970:15). The subsequent plans embraced growth with distribution policy. The 1979-1983 National Development Plan identified several small urban centres for special attention under the growth and service centres strategy. Thus small urban centres like Garissa, Isiolo, Kapenguria and Narok were singled out as "Gateway towns... linking the arid and semi-arid areas of the country to the better developed markets in the nation", (Kenya, 1970:50). This policy was also stressed in the 1989-1993 National Development Plan, whose twin objective were to increase "... the rate of Urbanization generally while ensuring that such increases occur in the smaller urban centres rather than in the big ones" (Kenya, 1989: 15). This policy was specifically emphasized in Sessional Paper number 1 of 1986 (Kenya, 1986).

### **1.2.3. Physical and sectoral linkages**

This was first mentioned in the third National Development Plan of 1974 – 1978 and has since recurred in most government policy documents. In this plan, the government pledged to continue to "... develop a network of communications, so as to link centres of economic and social development" (Kenya, 1974). This policy was also elucidated in Sessional Paper number 1 of 1986, in which it refers to physical linkages as the development and improvement of a network of inter-sectoral activities. The informal sector in the small urban centres must be limited to the agriculture sector in the rural areas. Such a network was important in that it results in the development of both forward and backward linkages which are indeed integral to the growth of the economy.

#### **1.2.4. Efficient manpower policy**

The government policy has been to ensure a high level of administrative efficacy in the planning machinery and its subsidiaries, especially in areas of decision making, financing and implementing of certain services. The improvement of institutions concerned with urban development is crucial in attaining efficient management of urban growth. This policy has proved elusive to implement.

### **1.3. Rural-Urban interactions and spatial planning**

In surveying development strategies which affect rural-urban interactions, it is difficult to know what to exclude since virtually all policies have some effect on the form and the spatial distribution of national development. Macro-economic or pricing policies, or sectoral priorities which make no explicit reference to spatial dimensions, are often the most powerful influences affecting linkages between urban centres and the countryside. Neglecting the impact of these policies is often a major factor in the failure of spatial development strategies (Hamer, 1984; Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1986a). Nevertheless, despite widespread criticism of spatial planning, its popularity with governments does not seem to have diminished.

#### **1.3.1. The Role of Small Towns in Rural Development**

In the 1950s and 1960s, small towns were generally seen as playing a positive role in development as the centres from which innovation and modernization would trickle down to the rural populations. A more recent and highly influential contribution to this positive view was the development of the concept of “urban functions in rural development”(Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978; for which the most effective and rational spatial strategy for promoting rural development was to develop a well articulated, integrated and balanced urban hierarchy. This network of small, medium sized and larger urban centres was described as “...locationally efficient - it allowed clusters of services, facilities and infrastructure that cannot be economically located in small villages and hamlets to serve a widely dispersed population from an accessible central place” (Rondinelli, 1985). The location of more service supply points supplying a variety of services, agricultural inputs and consumer goods to the rural areas was seen as playing a crucial role in rural development. While this approach has been widely used by large international donors such as USAID, and still influences more recent regional planning models, Hardoy and Satterthwaite, (1986b), and Morris, (1997), however, criticized the strategy on the grounds that low rural consumption was caused by social inequality and low incomes rather than by difficult access to supply. The main argument, echoing the “urban bias” debate, was that small towns contributed to rural impoverishment as they were “vanguards of exploitation” of the rural poor by external forces which, according to the case, may be colonial powers, multinational enterprises, central national government, local administrators and elites and, in some cases, international donors. Southall, (1988:5), argues that, when there is relative egalitarian class structure and free access to land, and “...where the stimulus to urban growth results in activity primarily by the people and for themselves, small scale urbanization could be beneficial locally”. However, Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986a, 1986c, and 1988) contest that universal generalizations and prescriptions, which formed the basis of most spatial planning models, were not valid.

Therefore, centralized policies may not be efficient since they can not take into account the peculiarities and specifics of small towns and their regions. What is needed instead is real decentralization of decision-making, with investment and resource-raising at the local level which will allow the articulation of local needs and



priorities and which will stimulate both rural and urban development. Moreover, wider socio-economic issues are also likely to affect small towns and, by extension, migration to larger cities. According to Harriss and Harriss, (1988), an inequitable land-owning structure in South India was one of the reasons why rapid growth in agricultural production has not stimulated development in many small urban centres. Government crop purchasing policies and taxation can also influence the levels of rural and urban prosperity and deprivation. For example, government's promotion of citrus production in Brazil has paradoxically resulted in increased out-migration due to land ownership concentration (Saint and Goldsmith, 1980). Finally, Hardoy and Satterthwaite, (1986c), point out that, attention must be given to the social dimensions of small towns and to the complexity of social networks, kinship and family ties which often blur the social distinctions between what is rural and what is urban.

### **1.3.2. Urban Bias**

According to Lipton (1977), the rural poor are dominated and exploited by powerful urban interests. The most important class conflict in the Third World is that between the rural classes and the urban classes, since "...the rural sector contains most of the poverty and most of the low cost sources of potential advance, but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organization and power". Although Lipton provided a useful account of the relative flows of surpluses between rural and urban areas on descriptive and empirical level, it was also criticized mainly on the grounds of his conceptualization of undifferentiated urban and rural societies which does not take into account the existence of urban poor and rural rich.

However, the conflation of people with places makes it difficult to explain why these flows occur Unwin, (1989). Bates (1981) extended the criticism of urban elites in his analysis of the role of African bureaucracies which, in the name of industrialization, were seen as over controlling their economies, skewing incentives and infrastructural investment towards urban areas and, generally, undermining the real material base of African economies, that is, agricultural production. More recently, the attack on rent-seeking, urban based bureaucratic elites has been taken over by neo-classical economics and implemented through structural adjustment packages aiming to drastically reduce the role of the state.

## **1.4. Rural- Urban Interlink and Sustainability of Malaba town**

### **1.4.1. Brief history of the MalabaTown**

Malaba town is a commercial town located in Kenya at its border to Uganda. The town has population of approximately 44,049 persons as per 1999 census (Republic of Kenya, 2002). The town has over the years registered tremendous transformation in various fronts socio-economic, political and in infrastructural development based on its prime location and the continued conducive interaction with its hinterlands.

Malaba town has an altitude that rises at 1200m above sea level to the North. The annual rainfall in the area varies from 1250 mm to 1800mm. The mean annual temperature in the division varies from 21C to 25C to different levels of altitudes. The soils in the area show considerable variation in fertility and drainage properties. The good soils coupled with gently sloping terrain in most parts of Malaba make the area arable. The main food crops produced around Malaba are; maize, beans, sorghum, bananas, sweet potatoes, while sugarcane, coffee, tobacco which are the main cash crops.

The population is more or less evenly distributed and does not seem to follow a particular pattern. The estimated number of the poor persons in the area is about 56%, who cannot afford a decent meal daily. It is a paradox that town is strategically located on the Kenyan- Uganda border which has immense capacity for economic prosperity, but has a high prevalence of poverty. (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

The town is within the jurisdiction of the Town Council of Malaba (Local Authority). Its immediate neighbouring hinterlands mainly including Angurai and Amukura divisions which are mainly rural areas but a lot of influence on the town.

## **1.5. Methodology of the Area of Focus**

### **1.5.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

#### ***1.5.1.1. Theoretical framework***

The study was based on The government of Kenya since the early 1950s to has date formulated and experimented a number of policies and strategies in development planning. However, the development trends so far being experienced show that these strategies failed to produce desired results. These models remained noticeably rigid and extremely imposed with complete disregard of the dynamics that were unique with many regions in the country. The earlier approaches also laid more emphasis on returning populations back to the rural areas – a toll order indeed to achieve because ‘urbanization’ is a global phenomenon. Because of the dynamics of development and different potentials of regions, it is evident that no one urban or rural centre can grow in this study, since urban and rural centres are managed by local Authorities, which are independent of the Ministry of Planning and National Development, the area within Malaba town shall constitute an urban area while the surrounding neighborhood will constitute the rural areas.

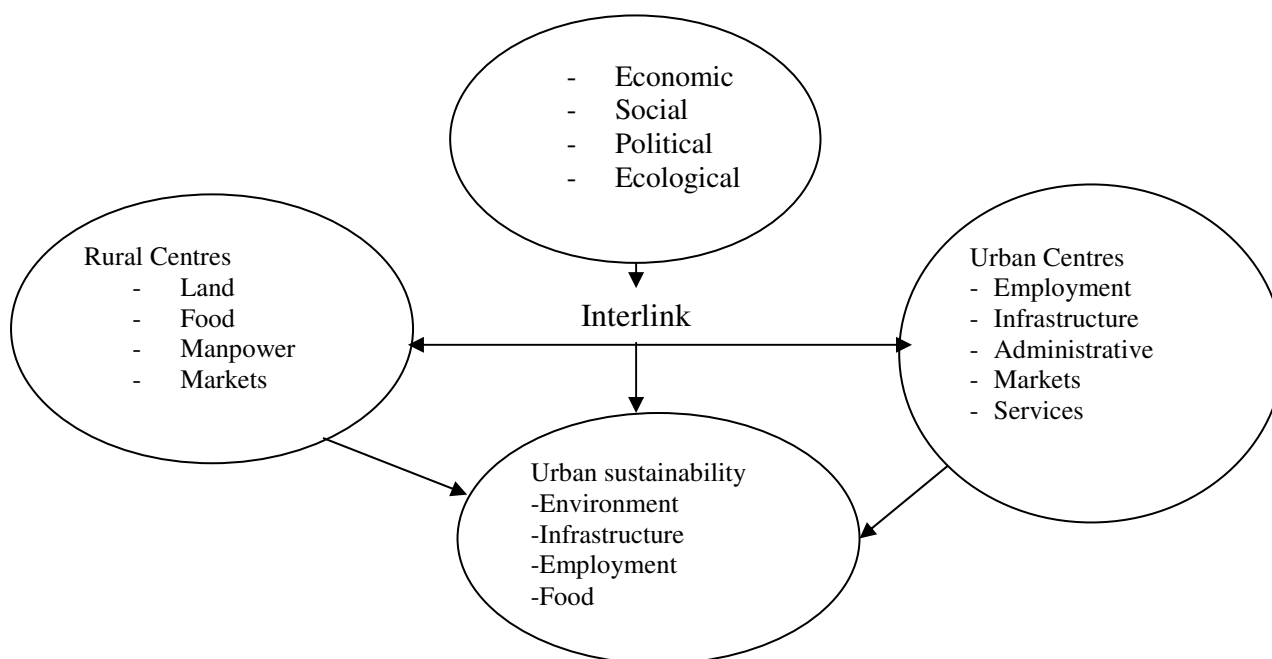
#### ***1.5.1.2. Conceptual framework***

The study was based on the researchers conceptualization of rural-urban interlink, and how balanced development can be attained to make our urban centres sustainable. As illustrated in the model, rural areas are endowed with large parcels of land for production and establishment of industries, produce plenty of food for urban dwellers, sufficient manpower and lager market for manufactured goods. Equally, the urban centres offer employment opportunities, established infrastructure, administrative functions, markets and services like postal, health and schools.

However to achieve the desired urban sustainability, the two areas must strike some balance with regard to the functions and the services each offers. As shown in figure one below, the urban and rural areas are connected to each other by economic, social, political and ecological factors. Once these factors operate in tandem with each other, then the desired urban sustainability would have been achieved as indicated by the direction of the arrows.

The arrows also indicate how planning should be carried out. Policies should aim at developing rural and urban areas simultaneously especially in relation to the potential of each area. These areas should be treated as one and not separate competing entities, because of the complimentary roles each area plays.

**Figure 1: Conceptual model of rural- urban interlink**



Source: Authors, 2010

### **1.5.2. Research Methodology**

The study on Rural – Urban Interlink and Sustainability of Urban Centres in Kenya ; Malaba town was based on a case study research design undertaken between the between October 2009and January 2010. The target population constituted all residents of Malaba town approximated at 44,049 persons as per 1999 census (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

However, the researchers found it necessary to expand the study area to include Kakapel and Katakwa locations of Angurai Division and Kotur and Aremit locations of Amukura Division to give a broader picture of the rural interlink with the urban environment. The total target population for the study was thus approximately 71,301 people.

A representative sample for the study was obtained from the residents of Malaba Town and the neighbouring locations of Amukura and Angurai Divisions. The targeted sample size for this study was 300 respondents who were purposively and randomly selected from the target population. The researchers developed a sample frame to guide in the identification of the respondents.

The researchers stratified the study area into strata's that comprised of; Urban, Peri-Urban and Rural centres. Then, random samples were taken from each stratum. The chief officers of the Town council of Malaba and Teso county Council, Heads of Departments were purposively selected because of their perceived knowledge and information that was vital for the study.

The fact finding instruments used in the study included questionnaires, interview schedules, direct observations.

The researchers pre-tested the questionnaire in Busia town to establish the reliability of the instrument in the month of September 2009, before actual administration in the Malaba town; the area of study.

The researchers collected primary and secondary data using structured and open – ended questionnaires, interview schedules, direct observation and review of relevant literature.

The questionnaires were randomly administered and distributed to respondents. Interview schedules were conducted to those purposively selected because of their perceived knowledge in the area of study.

The data once collected was coded and analyzed with assistance software-Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) that helped derive descriptive statistics and facilitated interpretation of the findings.

## **1.6. Emerging Issues from the study of Malaba town**

### ***1.6.1. Rural-urban interlink***

The link that exists between rural and urban areas is purely socio-economic. A case of Malaba town illustrates that, rural people depend upon small towns in rural regions for agricultural productivity, rural goods and services, and distribution centres for commodities. The prosperity of rural towns depends on a wide sharing among the rural population of income generated by agricultural and rural production. Neither low rural productivity nor a few rich rural consumers can sustain local urban growth.

### ***1.6.2. Linkages and the sustainability of urban centres***

Rural areas that are poorly connected to urban areas lack the capacity to compete in the regional, national, and international markets especially as a case of Malaba that is serving as a border town. They lack proper information and signals to produce, invest, raise productivity, diversify production, and engage in new activities. From the experience gained from Malaba town, there is a significant rural-urban interlink although still concealed, can be identified to promote production and marketing of goods. However, as much as there is this interlink, there is little information on how it can be properly exploited to uncover the hidden potentials so as to make development more sustainable.

### ***1.6.3. The challenges in enhancing rural-urban interlink***

Various challenges exist in enhancing rural-urban interlink. The challenges a rise from failure to sustain the resultant pressures as a result of one way development approach i.e. pro-rural or pro-urban which later led to; unemployment, inadequate social amenities, poor infrastructural facilities, population increase and environmental pollution. However, these challenges can be managed by embracing a two way development approach and laying more emphasis on strengthening interlinks in rural and urban areas

### ***1.6.4. Sustainability of rural- urban interlink***

Sustainability of rural-urban interlink is possible as evidenced from the results obtained from the test of the hypotheses. Urban areas can perform many functions that address the needs of their rural hinterland. Although policies, practices and servicing tend to neglect rural producers and households, and instead offering standardized functions for all, small towns also suffer from weak financial base for physical, economic and social development. Without specific industrial linkages to agriculture, as seen in the case of Malaba, they tend to have limited production and

manufacturing activities, which constrain employment and income generation options.

### **1.7. Conclusion**

Today, no region can exist on its own without relying on the other and the influence being created by either side cannot be underestimated. For the interlink to be sustained, it will always be a function of how various components of the interlink are strengthened. This can be through socio-economic, political and environmental functions these regions play. But modalities need to be identified so as not to give one way direction.

### **1.8. Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made by the researcher as a way of enhancing rural-urban interlink in order to make urban centres sustainable in Kenya.

1. Based on the nature of facilities available, there is need to develop public infrastructure and services in the rural and urban areas since this will impact on the movements of goods, people and people. For instance, when villages are linked with one another through local feeder roads and bridges with more than one urban centre, helps widen market potential and overcome the monopolistic market practices.
2. Strengthening institutional framework and capacities of local governments while appreciating the fact that the county councils (rural areas) and urban councils (urban areas) provide the interlink within these regions. Improving financial and information flow will make these areas mutually interdependent rather than existing alone within the administrative boundary.

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