



**FIRST INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES**

Songyang County LISHUI CITY, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE,
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA | **10th -14th November, 2019**

**First International Forum On
Urban-Rural Linkages**

A REPORT

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION



The First International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages took place in Songyang County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China, between 10 to 14 November 2019.

The Forum was attended by over 200 participants from 17 countries and 18 international organizations with 32 guest speakers in various sessions. The event was co-hosted and co-organized by UN-Habitat, Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People's Government and Songyang County People's Government. It is a product of the Songyang Innovative Rural Development Programme and the collaboration between UN-Habitat and the Songyang People's Government.

The objectives of the Forum were to thoroughly analyse and capture the unconventional and inspiring practices implemented in Songyang County across the urban-rural continuum, and to better understand how such innovative interventions have contributed to revitalizing rural areas through the empowerment of local people **by offering financial and technical support based on Songyang agricultural, cultural and architectural traditions.**

The general aim of the Forum was to harness the successful story of Songyang's rural development in the context of urbanization and to provide valuable lessons and inspirations to other rural areas worldwide.

Good practices from urban-rural innovation in other parts of the world are expected to stimulate further innovations in Songyang and elsewhere in China. The hoped-for outcomes are that innovative and sustainable development initiatives will significantly strengthen rural areas and their linkages to cities, relieve the demographic pressure in urban areas, and extensively contribute to the overall prosperity of human settlements. In recent years, Songyang has actively explored a path of rural revitalization built from peoples' participation and local culture with favourable results. The Songyang Innovative Rural Development Programme is also comprised with a new and lively socioeconomic structure developed and implemented by Songyang Government in recent years, including a wide range of architectural interventions on a micro-level in cooperation with the respective village communities, and local craftspeople, namely "Architectural Acupuncture".

32

Guest speakers

18

International Organisations

17

Countries

200

Participants

This Forum was a partial fulfilment of activities agreed upon in the letter of intent between UN-Habitat and Songyang People's government signed during the first UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2019.



This first IFURL was also the first forum to promote the role of rural development within the continuum of human settlements since the launch of the “Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles (URL-GP) and Framework for Action”. The Forum was designed to help the implement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda to ensure that No One and No Place is left behind. A broad base of stakeholders was convened for the Forum including Government authorities, selected international organization representatives, academia, and other stakeholders with many years of experience working in different capacities across the urban-rural continuum. Domestic guests included leaders of State Ministries, provincial, municipal and county leaders, academic experts and media and the private sector. The theme of the Forum “Rural Revitalization through Innovations and Valorisation” focused on sharing experiences of innovative approaches to rural revitalization and urban-rural linkages through sharing plans, strategies and policies in Songyang County, China at large, and other parts of the world.

The Forum was organized around a variety of sessions including keynote speeches, field visits with roundtables and parallel work sessions. Conference participants undertook various field visits to the Songyang ancient streets, the renovated ancient Shimenyu Bridge, Tofu factory, Pingtian village, Hengkeng village, Damushan Tea Garden and Brown Sugar Factory. During these visits, the participants were exposed to creative efforts to integrate culture, technology and architecture towards rural revitalization in Songyang County and several of the sites served as venues for the parallel work sessions and roundtables.

During keynote speeches and roundtable sessions, the participants contrasted the case of Songyang County with perspectives both of China and of other countries, sharing their experiences, strategies and new ideas for rural revitalization. The parallel side events with field trips provided a chance to broaden understanding of topics derived from the Forum theme. It also provided an opportunity to share experiences from different regions.

The Forum provided an opportunity for global challenges and national or local strategies for integrated urban and rural development to be informed by discussions and experiences of rural revitalization from many perspectives, to share reflections on urban and rural sustainable development, and within a broader scope, to call for the strengthening of sustainable innovation and development in rural areas of all countries.

The conference recognized a common aspiration and pursuit of “shared cities and regions for all” and “equal rights and opportunities for all residents in cities and all other settlements in the continuum of human settlements”. These and other sentiments were captured in a “**2019 Songyang Consensus**” drafted by the co-organizers, providing a brief summary. The Songyang Consensus is available in both Chinese and English. This report accompanies the Songyang Consensus with summaries of presentations and outcomes of the first International Forum on Urban-Rural Linkages.





First day, registration and visiting ancient street

DAY ONE: RURAL REVITALIZATION THROUGH VALORISATION AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

FIELD TRIP 1

At the beginning of the first day, the hosting partner, Songyang County People's Government organized the first field trip and introduced all the participants to some of the signature rural architecture acupuncture sites in Songyang.

- ✓ **Shimenyu Bridge** was once dilapidated and deserted and has recently been transformed into a local market and leisure destination for residents on either side of the bridge after redefining its social functions. It also leads people to peripheral villages on the banks of Songyin River.



From Left: Shimenyu Bridge Right: local market and leisure destination

- ✓ The **Brown Sugar Factory** is a living rural museum and working factory that serves many functions. Primarily, it is a traditional brown sugar processing and production factory, but it also now serves as the workplace for the village committee, holds cultural activities and is also used for leisure, sightseeing and business demonstration.



Brown Sugar Factory

- ✓ **Damushan Tea Garden** is one of the top tourist attractions, given the first 4A grade from People's Government of China, that integrates sightseeing, sports, leisure, and cultural activities. Besides being a tea "garden" of more than 200 hectares in the central area, it vigorously promotes agro-industrial integration and has become the first demonstration park for the integration and development of primary, secondary and tertiary agro-food green and organic industries nationwide.



Damushan Tean Garden

TREE PLANTING EVENT

The organizers and participants then held a Tree Planting Event in the International Friendship Garden, celebrating the collaboration between UN-Habitat, Songyang County and other URL-GP partners. All participants co-planted a tree, signed on the label of each tree and took a group photo.



Tree planting event

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was inaugurated by high-level officials from the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Lishui Municipal People's Government, Songyang County People's Government and UN-Habitat.



Opening remarks by the UN-Habitat ED Ms. Mahmoud Maimunah Sharif

- In her video remarks, UN-Habitat Executive Director **Ms. Mahmoud Maimunah Sharif** highlighted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), recognizing that urban and rural communities do not live in isolation from one another. She also stressed that in the Strategic Plan 2020-2023, UN-Habitat has proposed “enhanced prosperity of city and regions” as one of its four focus areas, and improved spatial connectivity and productivity as a key outcome. She concluded by highlighting the tools that UN-Habitat has developed to support Member States and other stakeholders in ensuring “no one and no space is left behind”.



Mr Wang Jun, CPC Songyang County Committee

- The secretary of the CPC Songyang County Committee **Mr. Wang Jun** introduced the history of rural development in Songyang, recognized the role of UN-Habitat in organizing the Forum, and also extended his gratitude to UN-Habitat for inviting Songyang to participate in the UN-Habitat Assembly in May 2019, where a Letter of Intent between UN-Habitat and Songyang People's Government was signed. He stated that the Forum will be the stage for gathering wisdom and providing more insights to contribute to solving the problems of sustainable development across the urban-rural continuum.
- **Mr. Remy Sietchiping** from UN-Habitat acknowledged the Forum as a historical moment and a major achievement for mainstreaming urban-rural linkages, in alignment with and supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). He said this Forum will not only broaden the horizon of all participants, it will also revisit urban and rural agendas in all aspects to achieve the continuity of policies, planning, best practices and strategies. He also stressed that the Forum, as might be expected, will consolidate

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