

## **African Contributions to Global Health**

### **Video Transcript**

#### **Rural exodus and urban activities in Africa**

AKUTO KONOU: In Africa, many people migrate from rural to urban locations. The steady flow of people is called rural exodus or rural migration. This form of migration has occurred throughout human history in various ways and intensities. As people migrate to urban areas, they bring with them activities that originated in the rural environment. These activities do not only shape African cities. The ties to a rural environment also impact urban health.

People migrating from rural to urban locations contributes to the urban sprawl in Africa. Their migration is responsible for over half of the population growth in African cities. The migration changes the socio-cultural and economic environments of a city. It changes the lives of city dwellers in terms of knowledge, lifestyles, and income-generating activities.

One transfer that results from the migration is urban agriculture. Rural immigrants need it as a means of subsistence. This also impacts the health conditions of city dwellers.

To understand how, we need to look at different contexts. Urban agriculture supports food security or income generation. It may also threaten health due to pesticides, irrigation water, and the lack of drainage setups. Food consumption increasingly challenges urban resilience. Some believe the most effective way to reduce supply chains is to produce food locally or regionally. Urban agriculture can therefore ensure food security. However, the longer its production chains are, the more the food system is at risk, and the less food security goals are achieved.

In urban agriculture, people also keep livestock. Close quarters enhance the risk of zoonosis. These are infectious diseases caused by pathogens that jump from animal to human. Urban agriculture thus can provoke foodborne diseases.

So urban agriculture includes health hazards as well as benefits. Research indicates that advantages prevail and that urban agriculture impacts positively on the overall health of city dwellers. However, these findings are also debated. Let us hear what people say who are directly affected. I've asked urban farmers in Lomé, Togo, if they were rural migrants and what they thought were the benefits and health outcomes of agricultural activity in the city.



KPONSIHOIN K. MARTIN: When you make your field in the village, sometimes it doesn't rain and sometimes it rains. Therefore, we decided to [leave the village for the city] and learn other ways of doing things.

PAKOUYOU PIYALO: We came to Lomé in 2007. We cultivate because there is no work in Lomé. It is in agriculture that we find our vocation. We cultivate to feed ourselves.

KPONSIHOIN K. MARTIN: We use pesticides that can kill parasites on the seeds as well as fertilisers, NPK, ureas and others, so that the plants can develop and be well. We use them. So that when we bring them for sale, people will be attracted to buy them.

LAKOUSSA ABLAVI: Herbicides capable of killing weeds and pesticides capable of killing caterpillars or parasites that can destroy the seeds, we use them all. It was explained to us that there is a difference [between the types of fertiliser]. When we use [chemical fertiliser] it is bad [for our health]; when we use [organic fertiliser], it is good [for our health]. But because of the price, the one we were advised, we don't use it because it's expensive. Given our capacities, we use the other one.

BAKA BANISSA: I don't use herbicides. There are several kinds of fertilisers. There is chemical fertiliser and [chicken droppings], which I [spread on the surface]. I don't use [chemical] fertiliser. If it rains, that's all we use.

LAKOUSSA ABLAVI: We dig boreholes, wells and put a machine in them. When we [start] the machine, it sucks the water and distributes it through the pipes to water the seeds.

AKUTO KONOU: Rural exodus displaces people from rural to urban areas. This displacement also affects their activities such as agriculture. The increase of agriculture in cities can have advantages as well as disadvantages, especially when it comes to urban health.