

**MODERNIZATION AND URBANIZATION TRENDS  
IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS  
ON DYNAMICS OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION**

**GARRY SALI\***  
**STARZA PAUL\*\***  
**JACK YARO\*\*\***

**Abstract.** This study investigates modernization and urbanization trends in Papua New Guinea, with a particular focus on dynamics of rural-urban migration. The objective is to present a qualitative analysis of the drivers and implications of migration patterns within the context of the country's modernization and urbanization processes. The study employs desktop and literature review methods, scrutinizing existing data, scholarly articles, media reports to gather wide-ranging insights into the objective and subjective factors influencing rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea. The major findings reveal a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural factors contributing to the observed rural-urban migration pattern in the country. As modernization and urbanization progress, people from the rural areas are increasingly drawn to urban centers in pursuit of better educational opportunities, health services, sporting opportunities and generally improved living standards in the major cities and towns in Papua New Guinea. The conclusion highlights the need for better policies to address the challenges and opportunities associated with rural-urban migration, fostering sustainable development in the rural districts and subdistricts in the country so that the potential migrants attracted to remain in the rural areas. The study stresses the importance of targeted interventions that balance urban development with the preservation of rural communities, ensuring inclusive benefits across the societal spectrum.

**Keywords:** *Modernization; Urbanization; Migration; Rural-Urban Migration*

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\* Dr., Deputy Vice Chancellor, Papua New Guinea University of Technology; email: [garry.sali@pnguot.ac.pg](mailto:garry.sali@pnguot.ac.pg).

\*\* Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Development Studies at Papua New Guinea University of Technology; email: [starza.paul@pnguot.ac.pg](mailto:starza.paul@pnguot.ac.pg).

\*\*\* Lecturer in the School of Communication and Development Studies at Papua New Guinea University of Technology; [jack.yaro@pnguot.ac.pg](mailto:jack.yaro@pnguot.ac.pg).

### *Introduction*

Papua New Guinea (PNG) was integrated into realm of the world capitalist system through colonization as part of the socio-economic and political processes of globalization. It was during the end of the scientific revolution and the beginning of the industrial revolution that white colonialists were first encountered in the waters surrounding Papua New Guinea (Waiko, 1993). Throughout the entire period of the industrial revolution in the 1700s, which witnessed the development of the steam engine as the single most transformative advancement that modernized Europe and the world (Rosen, 2009), European explorers were increasingly observed in the waters of what is now Papua New Guinea. In essence, the Spanish and Portuguese passed through, while the Dutch, Germans, and British settled on and formally colonized the island of New Guinea in 1884 (Waiko, 1993: 26).

Arbitrary boundaries were drawn to assert control over different parts of the island: the Dutch claimed the western portion, which became known as Dutch New Guinea (now part of Indonesia as Irian Jaya); the southern area was designated British New Guinea under British rule; and the northern region was termed German New Guinea after German colonization. Following the First World War in 1914, the Germans were ousted by British and Australian forces, leading to the establishment of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. This territory was renamed as Papua New Guinea in 1949 which later became an independent nation on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1975 (*Ibidem*).

Under British and Australian administration, Papua New Guinea experienced rapid development, leading to Self-Government in 1973 and eventual political independence. Prior to independence, major towns had already been developed by the Germans and Australians across various regions, including the southern, highlands, Momase, and New Islands. Since major cities and towns were primarily developed in central areas, residents of rural communities often relocated to these urban settings for various reasons. Many of them lacked the necessary qualifications and experiences to thrive in the urban environment (*Ibidem*).

After 49 years of political independence, Papua New Guinea has progressed steadily with modernization and urbanization. While rural areas of the country remain largely reliant on subsistence economies, urban cities and towns have experienced significant population influxes. The pace of development appears to have accelerated so rapidly that some individuals are struggling to cope with the swift transition, resulting in socio-economic disparities and leaving them marginalized.

In light of Papua New Guinea's ongoing modernization and urbanization processes since formal colonization in 1884, this study plays a crucial role in examining these trends. It specifically focuses on understanding rural-urban migration intricacies, aiming to analyze the drivers and implications of this demographic shift. By unraveling the dynamics of migration from rural to urban areas, the study provides valuable insights into the broader socioeconomic changes shaping the country's societal structure, economic landscape, and cultural dynamics.

This research employs a methodological framework that includes a desktop study and a literature review, drawing on media reports, scholarly articles, and official documents. It aims to provide detailed insights into modernization and urbanization, with a focus on the dynamics of rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea. The purpose is to present a qualitative analysis of the drivers and effects of migration patterns within the context of the country's modernization and urbanization processes.

### *Understanding Modernization*

In the context of modernization in Papua New Guinea, the nation has clearly gone through three distinct phases, which are presented in this section. The first view posits that "modernization" embodies a "process of social change, or a set of such changes, which are theoretically universal in time and space" (Smith, 1973: 61). Thus, modernization represents a developmental journey marked by growth, advancement, and drive, mirroring the evolutionary progress of humanity and its social structures. Wherever it started, it is a slow and gradual process of change transforming to one form and another. For example, in Papua New Guinea, prior to the arrival of white colonialists, there was a slow and gradual evolution in how people constructed their houses and gardens, developed tools for adaptation, and organized themselves socially and politically, including practices related to marriage, dispute resolution, and maintaining kinship.

In this sense, modernization entails a continual adaptation through the application of "new types of knowledge to practical affairs, and the range of technical possibilities which it opens up... Modernization is a pivotal structural process, now universally applicable, regardless of its historical origins" (*Ibidem*: 93 & 94). The rapid and monumental changes witnessed in the developed world, propelling societies into the space age in pursuit of idealized concepts of "a better living" or a "better future," characterize this dynamic process.

For developing countries, modernization typically signifies a transition from traditional agrarian social frameworks to advanced Western cultures. Hence, the second definition elucidates the infiltration of European capitalism and colonialism, marking a historical period. This transition from tradition to modernity becomes irreversible once initiated, as societal norms, conditions, and circumstances propel societies forward (*Ibidem*: 62). An example of this transition can be seen in the introduction of new systems of governance, like the Luluai and Tultul systems, to Papua New Guinea by the Germans, altering traditional dispute settlement mechanisms and illustrating the deep-rooted impact of modernization (Sali, 1996).

Thirdly, 'modernization' is perceived within the policy frameworks of leaders and elites in developing nations, conceptualized as an aspirational goal integrated into policies and programs. As Smith (1973: 62) asserts, "modernization is then a conscious set of plans and policies... steering a particular society towards contemporary societies perceived as more advanced in certain respects."

The objective of 'modernity' often entails emulating Western culture. 'Modernization theory' posits that the institutions and values of Western nations serve as an ideal and suitable model for emulation. Development, in this context, necessitates the abandonment of traditional ways in favor of the modern ideals propagated by advanced nations (Moore, 1963: 89). This paradigm shift from tradition to modernity is envisaged through the diffusion of capital, technology, values, and political beliefs from the West to traditional societies (Slater, 1986: 9).

The underlying rationale is that adherence to modernity is essential for the prosperity of Third World nations. Failure to embrace modernity would perpetuate economic stagnation, prompting developing countries to shun traditional approaches in favor of Western ideals, influenced by the colonial legacy (Slater, 1986). Consequently, colonized societies perceive the Western way as the sole path towards achieving a better standard of living.

As seen in the analysis above, modernization in Papua New Guinea is observed as a nation experiencing a gradual shift from traditional social structures to modern systems, influenced by Western culture and colonialism. This transformation, characterized by the adoption of new technologies, governance structures, and economic models, reflects a global process of change. Modernization in Papua New Guinea is both a historical progression and an aspirational goal, driven by policies that aim to emulate Western ideals in the pursuit of development and better living standards. Thus, modernization remains an ongoing phenomenon, evolving continuously from its origins.

### *Urbanization*

Modernization paves the way for urbanization by creating the necessary conditions for societal adaptation. Urbanization, in essence, refers to the "spatial relocation of people" (Blumer, 1990: 21). In this context, the focus is on the movement of individuals within urban environments, whether these are towns or cities. While there is no universally agreed-upon standard for defining urban areas, Davis (1965) proposed using demographic criteria, suggesting a population threshold of at least 20,000 for categorizing an area as 'urban' and 100,000 for designating it as a 'city'. (Even today, there is no single and standardized definition of cities and towns by its population figures). Davis (1965: 42) defined urbanization as: "the proportion of the total population concentrated in urban areas, or else to a rise in this proportion" (in Hardiman and Midgley, 1984: 126). Davis's definition presents two contrasting perspectives on urbanization: one focusing on the total urban population and the other on the rate of population growth. Alternatively, Clinard and Meier differentiate urbanization from the concepts of urbanism and city. They define 'urbanization' as the process of growing population concentration in cities, while 'urbanism' encompasses a cluster of social qualities that distinguish urban from rural areas. Urbanism, they argue, is not synonymous with 'city', as the latter primarily denotes population size, density, and heterogeneity, while urbanism encompasses a complex of social relationships embodied in a particular way of life or worldview (1992: 68).

Drawing on these definitions (Davis, 1965; Clinard and Meier, 1992), it becomes apparent that urbanization is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves various dimensions of human population dynamics within urban settings. Urbanization extends beyond mere population concentration to encompass factors such as population size, growth rate, and social characteristics. While this discussion does not look into a detailed examination of these aspects, it is essential to recognize their significance in urban planning. The interaction between population size, land area, and cultural diversity all contribute to shaping the dynamics of urbanization. The subsequent analysis shifts to an exploration of modernization and urbanization in the context of Papua New Guinea.

### *Modernization and Urbanization in Papua New Guinea Context*

Urban development in Papua New Guinea can be traced back to European contact and subsequent colonization, resulting in the creation of towns that initially served the needs of colonial powers. According to Levine and Levine (1979), these towns were primarily planned by and for white men, making them inherently alien to the indigenous population. As seen above, presently by Papua New Guinea standards, there are three major cities – Port Moresby, the nation’s capital, and Lae, an industrial center serving the Highlands and much of the New Guinea mainland coast, and Mount Hagen in the interior of the Highlands region. In addition, there are eighteen other provincial headquarters that cater to each province’s population.

The establishment of these towns was not uniform and occurred at different times due to various factors, including a lack of finance and staff, challenging terrain, the isolated nature of indigenous groups, absence of influential chiefs, diverse local languages, and a reluctance to retaliate after indigenous attacks (Levine & Levine, 1979). The slow and uneven development of urban centers can be attributed to administrative convenience, where colonial powers set up centers to facilitate the extraction of natural resources at minimal costs, primarily motivated by economic interests.

Scholarly literature, including works by Levine (1976), Oram (1976), Rew (1974), Ryan (1970), and Surmon (1971), supports the idea that urban growth in Papua New Guinea follows patterns observed in other colonized countries. Despite variations in the treatment of indigenous people, the overall approach and attitudes of colonial administrations were similar. Port Moresby serves as a representative example, with Levine and Levine noting its slow growth as a typical trend in the region (1979).

Port Moresby, named after the explorer Captain Moresby, shares similarities with other coastal towns established at deep-water anchorages. Abramson (1976) notes that colonial centers worldwide were often located on the coast, facilitating the gathering of raw materials for export and providing security and supervision for such activities, such as mining operations (1980: 129).

The purposeful design of towns in Papua New Guinea, evolving from colonial centers to provincial headquarters and districts, aimed to serve the needs of the colonial government. Port Moresby, chosen as the capital during various colonial periods, had Australians and British residents, a suitable harbor, and proximity to Australia as key factors influencing its selection. However, from 1884 to 1941, Port Moresby functioned primarily as a small colonial administrative center, with indigenous people facing restrictions, curfews, and fear of the colonial authorities.

The creation and development of urban towns in Papua New Guinea are deeply rooted in colonial history, driven by economic motives and shaped by administrative convenience. Understanding this historical context provides insights into the urban landscape of the region and its impact on the indigenous population.

### *Origin and Evolution of Urban Centers*

Urbanization in Papua New Guinea emerged as a consequence of European contact and the subsequent colonial period. Initially, these urban areas, shaped by and for the benefit of European settlers, were perceived as foreign entities within the indigenous landscape (Levine & Levine, 1979: 1). Presently, Papua New Guinea boasts three main cities: Port Moresby, which serves as the nation's capital; Lae, which functions as a pivotal industrial hub catering to the Highlands and much of the New Guinea mainland coast; and Mount Hagen, situated in the interior of the Highlands region. Additionally, there are eighteen provincial headquarters dispersed across the country, each serving its respective province. However, the establishment of these urban centers was not uniform, influenced by factors such as financial constraints, geographical challenges, cultural diversity, and resistance from indigenous groups (*Ibidem*: 13)

The process of urban development in Papua New Guinea mirrored patterns observed in other colonized territories, with economic interests often taking precedence over comprehensive urban planning (Levine, 1976; Oram, 1976). Port Moresby, for instance, epitomizes the gradual growth typical of colonial outposts, initially serving as small European enclaves with indigenous inhabitants residing in nearby villages or designated barracks (Levine & Levine, 1979: 15). Reflecting broader colonial strategies, these urban centers were strategically located to facilitate resource extraction and trade, often prioritizing coastal areas for accessibility and security (Abramson, 1976: 129).

The selection of Port Moresby as the colonial capital underscored its existing population of Australians and British settlers, coupled with its favorable harbor location and proximity to Australia. However, the early years of Port Moresby's development were characterized by colonial control and segregation, with indigenous populations restricted to specific areas and subject to curfews and punitive measures for non-compliance (Levine & Levine, 1979).

It is evident that the urban towns and cities in Papua New Guinea were established by the colonial administration in major centers, leaving rural

communities distant from government and bureaucratic services. As a result, there has been, and continues to be, a trend of migration from rural areas to major towns and cities, contributing to the issue of rural-urban migration. The next section of this paper will explore rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea.

### *Rural-Urban Migration*

In modern-day Papua New Guinea, rural-urban migration has become a pressing issue due to its connection with various urban social challenges. Rabbee Namaliu, addressing the 19<sup>th</sup> Waigani Seminar on Population, Family Health, and Development, highlighted the migration of individuals – particularly school leavers – from rural to urban areas as a significant concern, linking it to ongoing law and order issues (Sali, 1996). Many prominent leaders and scholars in the country share these concerns. However, it is essential to carefully analyze the factors driving people to move to urban towns and cities. Understanding the reasons for this migration will enable us to develop effective strategies to address this critical issue.

### *Factors of Rural Urban Migration*

Various intertwined personal, socio-economic, and familial factors contribute to this migration process. The questions are what are the key driving forces that drive people from rural communities to migrate to our urban cities and towns in Papua New Guinea? In Papua New Guinea, rural-urban migration is described as a “multi-faceted phenomenon“ by Levine and Levine (1979: 32). We have categorized these causal factors into objective and subjective factors, forming the basis of the analysis. Objective factors are factors that are physically present for the movement people to take place, while the subjective factors are based on personal feelings and perceptions (Sali, 1996). Both sets of factors play a significant role in shaping migration patterns and decisions.

### *Objective Factors*

There are number of objective factors that influence a person to move to urban areas. First, people in rural communities in Papua New Guinea are increasingly moving to urban areas primarily due to the promise of better economic opportunities. Urban centers often provide a wider range of job prospects compared to rural regions, where employment options can be limited. Many individuals seek higher wages that urban jobs typically offer, which can significantly improve their standard of living. The allure of financial stability and the potential for upward mobility motivate many rural residents to leave their communities in search of more lucrative employment. As they perceive urban areas as engines of economic growth, the desire for improved financial prospects drives this migration.

The infrastructure in urban areas plays a crucial role in attracting individuals from rural communities. Cities generally offer better access to essential services such as healthcare, education, sporting opportunities, and transportation. Improved healthcare facilities can provide better medical care and quicker access to treatments, which is often lacking in rural areas (Tambure, 2023). Access to quality education in urban settings also appeals to families who want their children to have better educational opportunities, which can lead to improved future prospects. Access to improved sporting facilities especially rugby league, a popular sport in Papua New Guinea, makes movement easy. Moreover, well-developed transportation networks facilitate easier movement within cities and to surrounding regions. As rural residents seek these advantages, the shift towards urban living becomes increasingly attractive (*Ibidem*).

The scarcity of land and the availability of arable land for cultivation. In many regions of Papua New Guinea, the challenging physical terrain, including rugged mountains and unsuitable land for cultivation, forces people to migrate. For instance, the lack of fertile land in areas like Gulf, Simbu, Western, West, and East Sepik provinces has led to outmigration, as highlighted by Ryan's study on the Toaripi people of the Gulf Province (1977: 147). Land scarcity is further exacerbated by the expansion of cash cropping, which has been identified as a significant factor promoting migration. Much of the fertile land has been overtaken by large plantations, leaving people with limited alternatives and prompting migration to either other rural locations or urban areas.

Traditional kinship obligations, known as "wantokism," continue to heavily influence Papua New Guinea's rural-urban migration patterns. These kinship ties ensure that migrants have support networks upon arrival in urban areas, providing them with food and shelter. This mutual aid system is deeply ingrained in Melanesian societies, where accommodating and showing respect to visitors is a social obligation (Ryan, 1977: 150).

### *Subjective Factors*

Subjective factors influencing migration stem from both economic needs and social constraints in the migrant's place of origin. Economic motivations, such as the desire to earn cash income, are cited by nearly all Papua New Guineans who leave their hometowns. The extensive data supporting this notion underscores the importance of economic opportunities in driving rural-urban migration (Kemelfeld, 1975; May and Skeldon, 1977). Individuals perceive their place of origin as lacking opportunities to pursue economic interests, while urban areas are seen as offering avenues to fulfill these aspirations.

Authors like Levine and Levine (1979) have emphasized the limited income opportunities in rural areas, where earning cash is often challenging despite not being essential for survival. However, modern forms of money are required for cultural ceremonies, purchasing consumer goods, paying fees, fines, and other necessities. Studies among the Ago people of the Central Province support this

view, highlighting the dearth of economic opportunities due to transport difficulties and underdevelopment in rural areas (Tilbury and Tilbury, 1993: 118).

An essential factor driving migration is the expected wage differential, comparing potential rural earnings with urban wages, combined with the likelihood of securing employment. For instance, the wage disparity between rural and urban areas motivates individuals to migrate to cities like Port Moresby, where average wages are significantly higher (*Ibidem*: 119). According to a research by Ero and Paul (2023) Porgera is the world-class mining operation in PNG and lots of internal migrants looking for greener pastures form squatter settlements close to the mine area because Porgera is not a big mining town where people can be scattered around yet they settle because of employment opportunities.

The need for cash prompts individuals to leave their hometowns, while urban areas attract migrants with promising economic opportunities. The findings of Tilbury and Tilbury (1993) exemplify the compelling economic need as a driving force behind migration in various rural Papua New Guinean societies.

Social constraints in the place of origin also play a significant role in encouraging rural-urban migration. Individuals perceive these constraints and make the decision to migrate, with unfavorable social structures often compelling them to move to urban areas. These constraints, referred to as “push factors,” include land pressure, sorcery, tribal conflict, personal disputes, customary obligations, and labor-intensive work. As Paul and Sali (2020) explained that minimizing and taking control of tribal warfare continues to be a challenge for the governments and the people where people can be forced to migrate as a result of tribal conflicts.

Rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea is driven by a combination of objective and subjective factors that influence individuals to leave rural communities in search of better opportunities. Objective factors include the allure of economic prospects, improved infrastructure, healthcare, education, and land scarcity. These tangible benefits make urban areas more attractive, particularly as rural areas suffer from limited employment, poor services, and agricultural challenges. Subjective factors, on the other hand, stem from personal perceptions of economic need and social constraints, such as wage differentials, land pressure, sorcery, and tribal conflict. Together, these factors create a complex interplay of motivations that push individuals toward urban centers. In conclusion, addressing both the physical and perceptual challenges in rural areas is essential to managing and potentially mitigating the ongoing rural-urban migration trends in Papua New Guinea.

### *Impact of Rural-Urban Migration*

Rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea has significant and multifaceted impacts on both rural and urban areas. The movement of people from rural communities to cities has led to the depletion of the labor force in rural areas, as many young and able-bodied individuals leave their hometowns in search of

better economic prospects (Kavan, 2022). This migration leaves behind an aging population, which can have a direct effect on agricultural productivity, particularly in areas where subsistence farming is the primary means of livelihood. The reduction in available labor and the decline in agricultural output affect food security and the overall economic health of rural communities. In turn, these regions may become more dependent on external support and remittances from family members in urban areas (*Ibidem*).

In urban areas, the influx of migrants contributes to the rapid growth of informal settlements or squatter areas, often on the periphery of cities. These settlements are characterized by poor living conditions, inadequate access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare, and a general lack of infrastructure (Tambure, 2023). As rural migrants flock to cities like Port Moresby in search of jobs, the demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply, leading to overcrowding and the expansion of slum areas. This unplanned urban growth puts a strain on city resources and governance, making it difficult for authorities to provide necessary public services, and often resulting in increased crime rates, as individuals struggle to meet their needs in the absence of formal employment.

Economically, while rural-urban migration can be seen as a positive factor for individuals seeking higher wages, it also creates an imbalance in the labor market. Urban centers, while offering more opportunities, may not have the capacity to absorb the growing number of migrants, leading to high rates of unemployment and underemployment (Kavan, 2022). Many migrants, unable to secure formal jobs, turn to the informal sector, where they engage in activities such as street vending, casual labor, or other low-paying, unstable work. Although the informal economy provides a livelihood for many, it is often characterized by low income, lack of job security, and limited access to social protections, further exacerbating the economic challenges faced by migrants (Sanz, 2018).

Socially, rural-urban migration disrupts traditional kinship and community structures. In Papua New Guinea, the “wantok” system plays a crucial role in providing social security, where individuals rely on extended family and clan networks for support (Sali, 2024). As rural residents migrate to urban areas, they may experience a sense of isolation or displacement, as these support systems are weakened. Although some migrants may establish new support networks in the city, the loss of strong communal ties can lead to a breakdown in social cohesion, both in rural and urban areas. Additionally, urban migrants may struggle to meet their traditional obligations, such as sending remittances home or contributing to customary ceremonies, further straining relationships with their rural communities (*Ibidem*).

Culturally, migration to urban areas often exposes individuals to different lifestyles, values, and social norms. Urban centers, influenced by globalization and modernity, tend to promote individualism and consumerism, which can clash with the collective and communal values that are central to life in rural Papua New Guinea. Over time, this cultural shift can lead to the erosion of

traditional practices, languages, and identities, as younger generations become more integrated into urban life and less connected to their rural heritage. The changing dynamics between rural and urban cultures have a profound impact on the preservation of Papua New Guinea's diverse cultural heritage (Tilbury and Tilbury, 1993).

The real impact of rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea is far-reaching, affecting economic, social, and cultural dimensions of both rural and urban communities. While migration offers individuals the opportunity to improve their economic standing and access better services, it also creates challenges in terms of urban overcrowding, strain on resources, unemployment, and the weakening of traditional support systems. To address these issues, policymakers must adopt a holistic approach that tackles the root causes of migration, such as the lack of opportunities and services in rural areas, while also improving urban planning and resource allocation to manage the growing urban population. Only by addressing both rural and urban challenges can Papua New Guinea achieve sustainable development that benefits all its citizens (Tambure, 2023).

### *Mitigating Strategies*

Mitigating rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea requires targeted interventions that address both the push factors from rural areas and the pull factors attracting people to urban centers. One key approach is to invest in rural development by improving access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. By enhancing the quality of life in rural areas, the need for individuals to migrate in search of better opportunities will diminish. For instance, establishing well-equipped health centers and schools in remote areas would ensure that rural communities have access to vital services without needing to relocate (*Ibidem*). This can also involve upgrading transportation networks to connect rural regions with markets and urban hubs, facilitating economic opportunities without necessitating permanent migration.

In addition to service provision, creating sustainable economic opportunities in rural areas is crucial for reducing migration pressures. Supporting agriculture and promoting agribusiness development can increase rural incomes and make farming a viable livelihood. Investments in agricultural technology, training, and access to credit can empower rural farmers to boost productivity and diversify their income streams (Kavan, 2022). Establishing local industries and small-scale enterprises tailored to rural settings can also create jobs and reduce reliance on urban employment. Furthermore, promoting rural tourism, eco-tourism, and sustainable resource management can attract investment and create local job opportunities that deter outmigration.

Addressing land scarcity, a key driver of migration, requires strategic land management policies. In many rural areas of Papua New Guinea, land pressures and the expansion of cash crops are reducing arable land availability, leading to outmigration. Introducing policies that support sustainable land use, promote

land tenure security, and offer incentives for conservation agriculture can help alleviate these pressures. Additionally, efforts to rehabilitate degraded lands and encourage community-based natural resource management can make rural environments more livable and productive. By reducing land conflicts and improving access to fertile land, people are less likely to feel compelled to migrate (*Ibidem*).

Social and cultural interventions also play a role in curbing rural-urban migration. Strengthening the traditional “wantok” system within rural communities can reinforce social cohesion and provide support networks that reduce the need for migration. Encouraging youth engagement and leadership within rural settings, along with cultural revitalization programs, can help individuals feel more connected to their communities. Highlighting the value of rural life through media, education, and leadership development can shift perceptions that economic and social success is only achievable in urban areas. By fostering a sense of pride and belonging in rural communities, migration can be reduced as individuals recognize the opportunities within their local environments (Tilbury and Tilbury, 1993).

On the urban side, better urban planning and resource management can help mitigate the challenges associated with rural-urban migration. Governments must ensure that cities like Port Moresby are equipped to handle population growth through the provision of affordable housing, effective transportation systems, and improved public services. Creating inclusive urban policies that focus on integrating migrants into formal economies and social systems can reduce the strain on urban infrastructure and minimize the growth of informal settlements (Tambure, 2023). Developing policies that regulate urban expansion while preserving green spaces and rural outskirts can also help manage urban sprawl and reduce the negative impact on both urban and rural areas.

Additionally, collaboration between rural and urban areas can provide solutions to migration challenges. Implementing rural-urban partnerships where cities invest in rural areas for their own sustainability, such as through food production, resource management, or tourism, can create interdependence that benefits both areas (World Population Review, 2024). For example, urban centers can create market opportunities for rural producers, reducing the need for migration while ensuring that urban populations have access to local, sustainable products. These partnerships can facilitate the transfer of skills, resources, and technology to rural areas, promoting rural development without necessitating large-scale migration.

In short, a multifaceted approach is necessary to mitigate rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea. By addressing the root causes in rural areas, such as limited economic opportunities and inadequate services, while also improving urban planning and fostering rural-urban cooperation, migration pressures can be reduced (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2010). This balanced strategy ensures that both rural and urban populations benefit from sustainable development, reducing the disparities that drive migration and promoting a more equitable and inclusive society (Tambure, 2023).

### *Key Discussion Points*

The following items present some key discussion points raised in this paper:

a) Globalization has led to significant socio-economic and political transformations worldwide, including in Papua New Guinea (PNG). While these changes have brought both positive and adverse effects, PNG's integration into the global system has made it susceptible to the impacts of events in distant parts of the world. This interconnectedness highlights the far-reaching consequences of globalization. So, Papua New Guinea (PNG) is connected to the global community, and what happens in a distant country does indeed affect the nation. It is something that PNG, as a nation, has learned to live with. In fact, experiences of colonization in PNG is considered as start of this globalization process (Kep, 2017).

b) Prior to colonization, PNG experienced gradual societal changes. However, the introduction of new ideas, technologies, and administrative structures during colonial rule revolutionized the pace of development. This period saw significant advancements in various fields such as humanities, business, science, and engineering, coupled with the adoption of modern technologies. Consequently, rapid development occurred, accompanied by physical transformations and shifts in societal attitudes (*Ibidem*).

c) The establishment of new administrative centers, particularly in major urban areas, led to the growth of towns and cities across the country. These urban centers became hubs for business, employment, education, and recreational opportunities, attracting young people seeking better prospects. Consequently, rural-urban migration increased as rural areas faced challenges such as ethnic conflicts and limited opportunities (Orere, 2022).

d) While rural-urban migration itself is not inherently problematic, the socio-economic conditions that migrants often encounter in urban areas pose significant challenges. Many migrants find themselves in precarious situations, residing in squatter settlements, engaging in informal street vending, or working low-paying jobs as security guards. The harsh realities of urban life, coupled with limited opportunities, create fertile ground for criminal activities, as individuals may resort to illegal means of survival (Sali, 1996).

e) Ultimately, the harsh urban environment can lead to a downward spiral for individuals who find themselves marginalized and excluded from mainstream socio-economic opportunities. Addressing the root causes of urban poverty and providing support mechanisms for marginalized populations are crucial steps in mitigating the adverse effects of rural-urban migration and fostering inclusive urban development in PNG.

f) While Papua New Guinea's constitution guarantees the freedom of movement for its citizens, it is essential to balance this right with the rights of others and the overall well-being of urban communities. The government must respect individuals' rights to relocate while ensuring that those moving to towns and cities do so with valid reasons and adequate preparation. Prospective migrants should possess the necessary knowledge and skill sets to adapt to the urban

environment, contributing positively rather than exacerbating challenges such as unemployment and overcrowding. By implementing policies that require migrants to demonstrate their readiness for urban living, the government can help manage urban growth more sustainably and ensure that both migrants and established urban residents benefit from development initiatives (Tambure, 2023).

g) Understanding the root causes of migration to urban towns and cities is crucial for addressing the challenges associated with urbanization in Papua New Guinea (PNG). This paper identifies that both objective and subjective factors drive migration, including economic opportunities, better access to services, and perceived quality of life improvements. Despite significant allocations of funds to all electorates under the District Development Grant, these funds are not always effectively utilized to create viable development projects in rural areas (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2010). To mitigate urban migration, it is essential to harness these grants to initiate sustainable development projects that can provide employment, improve infrastructure, and enhance living conditions in rural districts. Such initiatives would incentivize potential migrants to stay in their home districts, thereby promoting balanced regional development and reducing the pressure on urban centers (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2010).

h) It is crucial to recognize that rural development is the key to progress in Papua New Guinea (PNG). For the country to achieve sustainable growth, efforts must be concentrated on developing its rural districts, where the majority of the population resides. This focus is essential because the rural areas hold significant potential for agricultural, economic, and social advancements, which are foundational for the overall development of PNG. By improving infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities in these regions, the country can ensure a more equitable distribution of resources and benefits, fostering national growth from the grassroots level. Addressing the needs of rural communities not only helps in uplifting the living standards of a large portion of the population but also strengthens the nation's economic stability and social cohesion (Sembajwe, 2023). By this way, it will encourage the potential migrants to remain their local rural districts and communities in PNG.

### *Conclusion*

This paper has examined the trends of modernization and urbanization in Papua New Guinea (PNG), particularly focusing on rural-urban dynamics. Since PNG's integration into the global capitalist system during the late nineteenth century colonization, its modernization and urbanization have progressed steadily, albeit gradually. The establishment of colonial towns and cities in centralized locations has left rural areas distant from central government administration. This centralization has led to a disparity in the distribution of development activities. Major towns and cities attract almost all development projects, becoming hubs of economic activity and infrastructure growth. Meanwhile, rural districts are often neglected, lacking essential services such as education,

healthcare, sports facilities, and necessary infrastructure like good roads. This neglect exacerbates the divide between urban and rural areas, leading to uneven development and growth across the country (Kavan, 2022).

The dire need for basic services and employment opportunities in rural areas has triggered a noticeable shift in population from rural communities to urban environments. Urban areas offer better services and more opportunities, making them attractive destinations for those seeking a better quality of life (*Ibidem*). Rural villages and communities, isolated by poor infrastructure and limited services, leave their residents with few opportunities for advancement or economic improvement. This lack of resources and opportunities compels many to migrate to urban areas, creating a significant issue of rural-urban migration. This migration is driven by the hope of accessing better living conditions, but it also puts pressure on urban infrastructures and services, which can become overwhelmed by the influx of new residents.

The movement of people from rural to urban areas is not inherently problematic; it is a natural response to the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities (World Population Review, 2024). However, the real issue lies in the adverse socio-economic conditions these migrants often face upon arrival in urban areas. Urban environments are better suited for individuals with formal education and professional skills, who can navigate and benefit from the opportunities available. However, most migrants to PNG's towns and cities lack the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in such environments. This skills gap makes it difficult for them to find stable employment, pushing them into precarious living situations and informal economic activities, which often lack security and sustainability (Kavan, 2022).

PNG's media often highlights incidents involving migrants in law-and-order problems in urban areas. The challenges of survival in a new environment without sufficient resources or support systems often lead these migrants to resort to illegal means. This contributes to the country's law-and-order issues, as the lack of legitimate opportunities forces individuals into criminal activities. These issues are symptoms of broader systemic problems related to migration and urbanization. Therefore, the government must address these long-standing rural-urban migration issues in a smart and creative manner. Policies and interventions should focus on creating sustainable development in rural areas to reduce the push factors for migration and improving support systems in urban areas to better integrate migrants (World Population Review, 2024).

Before tackling the technical challenges of rural-urban migration, strong political leadership and willpower are essential. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and balanced approach to development. While urban development is important for national progress, it should not come at the expense of rural areas. A balanced approach ensures that both urban and rural areas develop in tandem, reducing disparities and promoting equitable growth (Kavan, 2022). This involves investing in rural infrastructure, improving access to basic services, and creating economic opportunities in rural areas. By maintaining a

balance between urban and rural development, PNG can ensure sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits all its citizens, fostering a more cohesive and resilient society (Tambure, 2023).

This qualitative study, based on a literature review, lacks quantitative data on population growth in urban areas. Our goal was to provide a descriptive analysis of modernization and urbanization, with a particular focus on rural-urban migration. For future research, a more comprehensive study incorporating quantitative data will be necessary to better explain the trends of rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea. Quantitative data will help identify specific population changes, employment patterns, and infrastructure demands in urban centers. This data can also reveal correlations between migration drivers and socio-economic conditions, allowing for more targeted policy recommendations. By combining qualitative insights with empirical data, future research can provide a more detailed understanding of the complex forces shaping rural-urban migration in Papua New Guinea.

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