

Unit 2 - Rural-Urban Migration in LEDCs

2.1 Why do people move to urban areas in LEDCs?

Urban areas in LEDCs are growing very quickly. Many of the world's largest cities are in LEDCs - places such as Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, and Cairo.

This growth is due to 2 reasons:

- high birth rate - people who live there have children
- migration from rural areas - due to push and pull factors

Push and pull factors combine to make LEDC cities attractive places for people living in rural areas.

- Push Factor - reason to leave somewhere
- Pull Factor - attraction of somewhere

Typical push factors include: drought, flooding, war, loss of land or soil erosion (desertification), over-population, loss of jobs due to mechanisation of agriculture, poverty, land ownership disputes, small plots of land.

Pull factors include: work/employment/money, better healthcare, education for children, reliable food/water supplies, better quality of life - the city is seen as the solution to all their problems.

⇒ It's worth taking a look at Unit 7 (Food and Water supply) to see how these things link together.

2.2 What are the effects of rural-urban migration in LEDCs

Urban areas increase their population and rural areas decline.

Problems for LEDC cities	Problems for rural areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overcrowding and a lack of housing - so people live in self-built houses in shanty towns (or squatter settlements) • lack of clean water and sanitation - leading to disease • poor healthcare and education systems can't cope • rubbish - difficult to collect it • power supplies - poor, often illegal • pollution • traffic congestion • crime - particularly in shanty towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often the young and fit leave - leaving older people to try to cope with farming by themselves • this often leads to a "downward spiral" where things get worse and worse • families may rely on money sent by relatives who have moved to cities • commercial agriculture (cash crops) may force people away from their land

Shanty towns really important in LEDC cities with often more than 25% of the population living in them. They are areas of "self-built" housing (i.e. people build it themselves out of whatever materials they can find) and are usually found on land that no-one else wants - steep hillsides, next to rivers or polluted land. The housing starts off very poor quality but usually improves over time as people can add to it and improve it. Services like clean water, sanitation, schools and healthcare usually arrive eventually.

⇒ Not all people in LEDC cities live in poverty in shanty towns - some people are rich and enjoy a good quality of life.

2.3 How can the quality of life in LEDC cities be improved?

Governments can: build new roads, provide public transport and improve policing. They can provide better healthcare and education and reliable clean water and sanitation. But all of this costs money and takes time - there are often millions of people living in shanty towns spread out across the city. They can try and build houses for people, but this is often a mistake - few people can afford to rent housing and may prefer to live in their own housing with people they know anyway. Tower blocks have problems in the UK - think what they'd be like in an LEDC city. Knocking down shanty towns doesn't help - the people will just move somewhere else and start again.

Local People can: help themselves in small-scale ways by grouping together to build homes or run schools or clinics. They can set up their own businesses. But these things are hard to do with little money or equipment.

Self-help Schemes can: be set up by government to provide land, basic services, building supplies and equipment and training in order to help people build better houses and improve their quality of life. They are usually the best answer to housing problems in LEDC cities. The downsides are that they are expensive, take time and only work for small numbers of people at a time - and there are millions to deal with...

Rural areas can: be improved - the aim is to reduce the flow of people moving to the city to reduce its problems. Employment can be created and land reform can make sure people have enough land to farm to make a living. Help can be given to farmers to improve their crop yields. This is, yet again, expensive and the pull factors of the city may mean people leave anyway.