



# FIG Working Week 2024

19-24 May

Accra, Ghana

Your World, Our World:  
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Presented at the FIG Working Week 2024,  
19-24 May 2024 in Accra, Ghana

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA AND NAMIBIA: COMPARISON OF PROBLEMS AND POLICY RESPONSES

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## PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Rural Transition In China: A Matter Of Population And Land Use Changes
3. Rural Transition In Namibia
4. Cross-country Comparison And Lessons
5. Conclusion



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Namibia and China have had a long-standing political relationship.

China is one of the countries that supported Namibia's liberation struggle.

Both countries are undergoing a rapid transformation in rural development at different scales.

Both countries have cooperated in rural development measures in the past and continue to collaborate in the present.

Namibia makes substantial exports to China. China's commodity exports from Namibia include. Slag and ash, dish and fish products, live animals, earth, and minerals.





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## 2. RURAL TRANSITION IN CHINA: A MATTER OF POPULATION AND LAND USE CHANGES

The rural population increased in China from 790.14 million in 1978 to 859.47 million in 1995, and then decreased to 491.04 million in 2022, and the percentage in the total population decreased from 82.08% in 1978 to 34.78% in 2022.

Rural depopulation has led to cropland abandonment in many rural areas, which affects food production.

The rural environment has changed significantly, as fewer people stay in the countryside as a result, China has initiated many policies to improve rural conditions.

The main issues in China's rural development are centered around the country's rural transition and transformation which has affected various aspects of rural life.

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## 2. RURAL TRANSITION IN CHINA: A MATTER OF POPULATION AND LAND USE CHANGES

- The diagram shows that China's rural challenges are a consequence of the challenges in the diagram, which shows that it has a four-way impact through **population change**, **rural lifestyle**, **migration** and **land use change**.

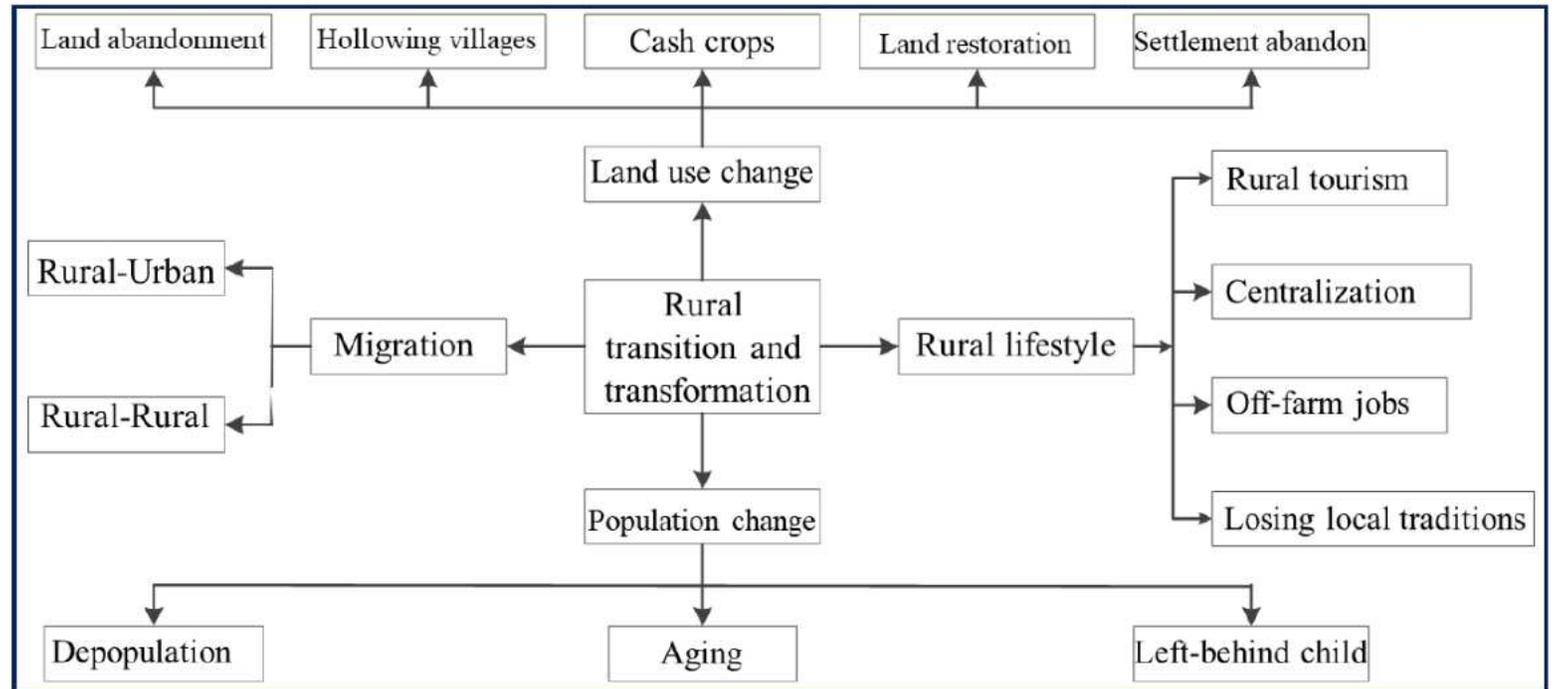


Figure 1: Rural transformation and changes of population, land use and rural lifestyle



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## 2.1 Rural population change

Since 1978, there has been a massive exodus of surplus rural labor to the cities because of the deregulation of mobility and the emergence of new economic opportunities.

The total rural population in China has continued to decrease, from 834 million in 1990 to 510 million in 2020, a decrease of about 38.85.

Factors such as the decline in rural fertility rates, changes in family structure, and agricultural modernization and mechanization have also contributed to varying degrees of population aging and rural hollowing out.

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## 2.2 Rural Land Use change

Rural land resources are the material foundation on which farmers rely for survival and livelihood.

China is both a populous and agricultural country, using 8.35% of the world's arable land to feed 18.82% of the world's population.

Since the reform and the open-door policy of China, the main development goal in rural areas of China has been economic construction.

On the one hand, there is a contradiction between macro scarcity and micro idleness in rural land use. On the other hand, there is a contradiction between transaction demand and transfer barriers in rural land use.

Resolving these contradictions in rural land use requires a series of comprehensive policy methods.

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## 2.3 The rural challenges in focus

Some notable consequences of the population and land use changes caused by the transition include:

- ✓ Rural land abandonment
- ✓ Hollowing villages
- ✓ Disaster risks
- ✓ Culture loss

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## 2.4 The rural revitalization policies as a means of intervention

Rural revitalization has become a focal point in China's policy agenda, reflecting the nation's commitment to addressing rural challenges, fostering sustainable development, and narrowing the urban-rural divide.

The Chinese government's Rural Revitalization Strategy was launched in 2018

The strategy outlines a multifaceted approach to rejuvenate rural areas, enhance agricultural productivity, and improve living standards.

Key components of rural revitalization policy include **agricultural modernization**, **rural industrialization**, **infrastructure development**, **ecological conservation** and **environmental protection**, **rural culture development** and **prosperity**, as well as **social welfare** and **poverty alleviation**.

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## 3. RURAL TRANSITION IN NAMIBIA

In Namibia, rural areas refer to the entire countryside other than the municipalities and townships established by the government.

In the colonial and apartheid periods in Namibia, strict regulations on people's movement were enforced, confining most black individuals to designated reserves in rural areas and specific sections of major cities, such as the black township in Katutura.

The abolition of the influx rule in 1977, coinciding with the end of apartheid legislation, led to rural-urban migration, rapid urbanization, and the expansion of informal settlements.

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## 3. RURAL TRANSITION IN NAMIBIA cont...

According to the 2011 national census, there has been a substantial increase in the urban population, rising from 33% to 43% over the last decade, while the rural population has decreased by approximately ten percentage points.

However, according to the 2023 national census, about 50.6% of the population now live in rural areas and 49.4% live in urban areas.

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## 3.1 Rural challenges in Namibia

Rural areas in Namibia are faced with various challenges such as

- ✓ Inadequate access to water
- ✓ Inadequate school infrastructure
- ✓ Inadequate healthcare facilities
- ✓ Lack of access to land
- ✓ Lack of employment opportunities
- ✓ Food insecurity and poverty
- ✓ Climate change and inadequate environmental management

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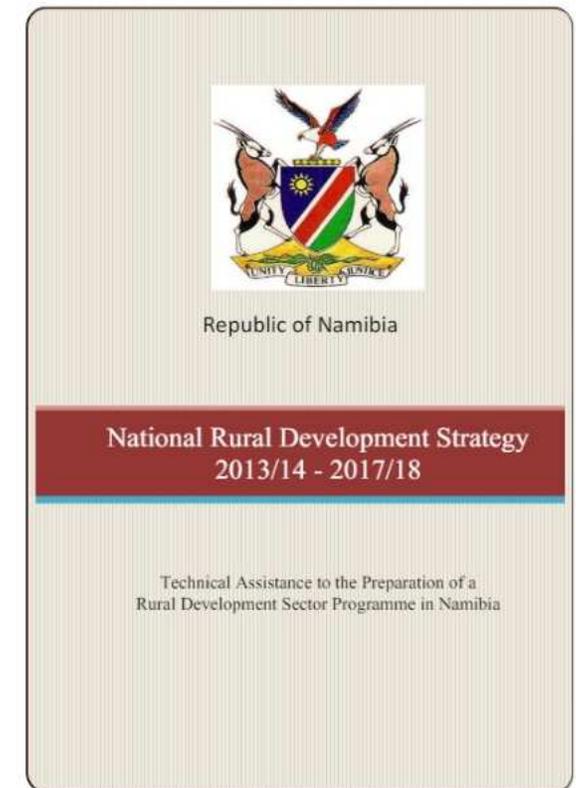
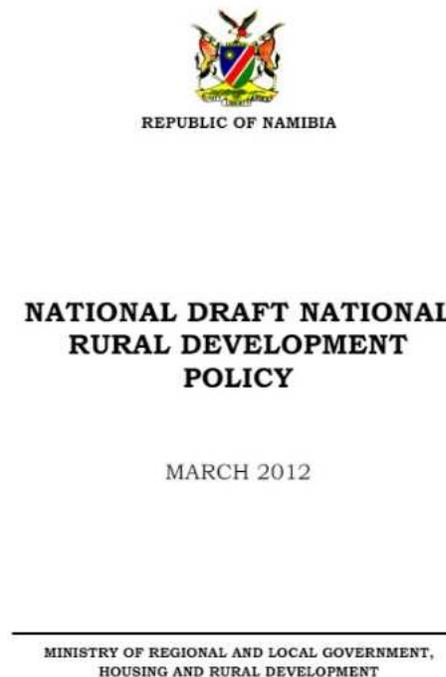
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## 3.1 Rural policies for addressing the challenges

The development of rural areas, particularly the solving of rural challenges, has been emphasized in various legal frameworks in Namibia.

In 2012, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) launched the National Rural Development Policy and Strategy.



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## 4. CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON AND LESSON

Table 1: Rural features comparison matrix for China and Namibia

Categories	Features	China	Namibia
Land	Total land area	9.60 million km <sup>2</sup>	825,615 km <sup>2</sup>
	Rural land	Over 65%	Over 40%
	Rural landholding	Collective ownership (collectivisation)	Collective use (communal tenure)
Population	Total population	1.4 billion	2.7 million
	Rural population	34.78%	46%
	Density	145/km <sup>2</sup>	3.2/km <sup>2</sup>
Health	Health care	5.4% of GDP	8.5% of GDP
	Obesity	6.2%	17.2%
	Life expectancy	76 years	66 years
Key rural challenges	Limited infrastructure		
	Sparse population		
	Subsistence agriculture		
	Traditional lifestyle		
	Aging population		
	Environmental vulnerabilities		
	Limited access to services		
	Farmland abandonment		
Economic	GDP Per capita	US \$16,400	US \$11,603
	People below poverty line	0.6%	17.4%
	Unemployment rate	3.6%	34%
Education	Education spending	3.5% of GDP	9.4% of GDP
	Adult literacy	97.15%	92.25%

ICT	Internet coverage	80%	52%
	Rural internet coverage	58.8%	-
Rural policy	Spatial development plan		
	Revitalisation		
	Industrialisation		
	Socioeconomic development plan		
	Rural planning		
	Information technology		
	Renewable energy		
	Health		
	Education		
	Land reform		
	Infrastructure		
	Ecological conservation		
	Protection against culture loss		
	Social welfare		
	Poverty alleviation		
Local knowledge system			
Agricultural modernisation			
Urban-rural linkages			



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### 4. CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON AND LESSON cont...

	Namibia	China
<b>Urbanization impact</b>	Has seen a decrease in rural population due to various challenges, including limited employment opportunities.	China's experience reflects a massive rural-to-urban migration, driven by economic opportunities and the deregulation of mobility.
<b>Aging population</b>	The aging population poses challenges for healthcare access, especially in rural areas where elderly individuals may struggle to access medical assistance.	The aging population has implications for labor supply, medical care, and social welfare.
<b>Land Use changes</b>	Faces challenges related to land access and tenure systems, with issues such as illegal fencing contributing to vulnerabilities and barriers to land ownership, particularly for marginalized groups.	Cropland abandonment due to rural depopulation, affecting food production and leading to changes in land use.
<b>Social and economic disparities</b>	Faces issues such as inadequate access to water, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities contribute to disparities between urban and rural areas.	Rural challenges include the impact of labor migration on family structures,
<b>Policy initiatives</b>	Has the National Rural Development Policy and Strategy, highlighting the importance of systematic, integrated, and coordinated planning for rural development.	Has initiated policies to address rural conditions and manage the consequences of rural depopulation.
<b>Environmental impact</b>	Climate change and inadequate environmental management contribute to challenges in rural areas, affecting agriculture and food security.	Land degradation and various environmental issues are highlighted as obstacles to sustainable rural development.



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## 4. CONCLUSION

- The comparison of rural population dynamics and challenges in China and Namibia provides valuable insights into the complexities and varied factors influencing rural development.
- In China, the profound shift from rural to urban areas, driven by economic opportunities and mobility deregulation, has triggered consequential changes in land use, family structures, and overall rural lifestyle.
- In Namibia, historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid have contributed to unique challenges, such as rural-urban migration and the expansion of informal settlements.
- The experiences of China and Namibia underscore the need for an in-depth understanding of rural challenges and the implementation of comprehensive policies that prioritize the well-being of rural communities.

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## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

International Federation of Surveyors supports the Sustainable Development Goals

# Commission #

Commission's name

Serving Society for the Benefit of People and Planet

