

CHAPTER 15 HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- define settlement.
- distinguish between urban and rural settlement.
- describe terms such as; site, situation and location.
- describe settlement pattern and factors influencing the development of each pattern.
- enumerate functions of rural and urban settlement.

15.1 Definitions and Types

A settlement can be defined as a group of buildings occupied by people which form distinctive features on the earth's surface. They range in size from small villages to very large cities. It can also be defined as a place where people live or an organized unit of occupation of human beings. It includes the buildings in which people live, footpaths, roads and streets which facilitate human movements. Two important terms are related to settlement, namely;

- i. **Site-** This describes the physical characteristics of the actual point at which a settlement is located and is of major importance in the initial establishment and growth of a settlement. For example, the site of a settlement could be a hill top, on a slope, in a valley, by a swamp, shallow or deep water.
- ii. **Situation-** This describes the location of a settlement relative to its surroundings (neighbouring settlement, rivers, forests, hills etc.).

The situation of a town is very important in terms of accessibility to and from it. For example, towns that are located far away from major roads may lose their economic importance.

15.2 Characteristics of urban and rural settlements

Urban Settlement

An urban settlement is a large settlement of which the population ranges from a few thousands to several million people and whose economy is mainly dominated by secondary and tertiary activities. The United Nations minimum standard for a settlement to be regarded as an urban settlement is 20,000 persons.



Fig. 15.1: CMS area, Lagos city

Characteristics of Urban Settlement

- i. The population of an urban settlement is large.
- ii. The standard of living is high compared to what obtains in rural settlements.
- iii. Family size is small. Usually, the nuclear family is more common.
- iv. Urban society is heterogeneous, that is, it consists of people from different socio-cultural background.
- v. Marriage is by ordinance and church/registry/islamic wedding.
- vi. Means of information is through modern mass media and latest form of entertainment.
- vii. Usually there is problem of indiscipline such as social disorder, vices and unrest.
- viii. Presence of good basic amenities that make life comfortable.
- ix. They have urban supermarkets, shopping malls and daily markets.
 - x. Entertainment is modern usually through television, cinema houses, theatres, etc.



Figure 15.2: Marina, Lagos City

Rural Settlement

Rural settlements are of different types, they are settlements which are characterized by small or dispersed populations, primarily engaged in agriculture and related activities and whose inhabitants are largely conservative in outlook. They consist of few family dwellings.

Characteristics of Rural Settlement

- i. The population of rural settlement is few.
- ii. They usually have large expanse of land mostly devoted to agriculture, lumbering and fruit gathering.
- iii. There is low standard of living among the inhabitants.
- iv. Family size is large. Usually the extended family type is common.
- v. Marriage is customary
- vi. Rural society is homogenous.
- vii. Most rural settlements are dispersed or isolated.
- viii. They have periodic markets.
- ix. There are limited infrastructural facilities and where available are poorly managed.
- x. Population density is low.
- xi. Entertainment is traditional, usually through storytelling, traditional dancing and drumming.



Fig 15.3: A typical rural settlement in Nigeria.



Fig. 15.4: Rural settlement in Rwanda

15.3 Factors influencing the location of Settlement

Important factors influencing the location of settlement include:

- i. Water supply.
- ii. Availability of building materials e.g. sand, stones, wood, clay etc.

- iii. Food supply.
- iv. Good relief.
- v. Defense.
- vi. Availability of fuel supply.
- vii Abundant supply of natural resources e.g gold, iron ore, petroleum, copper, etc.
- viii Transportation facilities e.g presence of roads , rail line, harbor.
- ix. Presence of confluence point that is, the meeting point of rivers in an area.
- x. Presence of nodal point that is, the meeting point of roads in an area.

15.4 Settlement Pattern

Settlement pattern describes the relationship between dwellings. Five types of settlement patterns can be identified, namely:

i. Dispersed or Isolated type

Rural settlement is considered to be dispersed if it consists of houses or buildings that are scattered or separated from each other. In dispersed rural settlement, individual farms or houses are scattered across an area and the settlement consist of one or few families forming a hamlet. Each hamlet may be separated from the next by 2 or 3 kilometres of open space or farmland. Such settlements are common in rural Britain, Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the south eastern part of Nigeria and Northern German plain.

Causes of dispersion of settlement

- a. Limited natural resources.
- b. Physical difficulties hindering good transportation networks such as rugged landscape, swampy areas, etc.
- c. Land tenure system that favour growth of large estates of farmland.

- d. Extensive farming in hilly areas.

ii. Nucleated Settlement

Nucleated settlement results from the groupings of several family residences for economic, social or defensive purposes. They are usually big villages.

Causes of nucleation

- a. Availability of abundant natural resources e.g water.
- b. The need for defense and protection.

iii. Linear or Ribbon type

This is a settlement pattern where buildings are found along main lines of communication or along a confined river valley.

iv. Ring Pattern

These are found in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Amazon forest. Houses are built to surround a green field which is preserved or a pond, market place, or church. It may also develop around a hill. For example in Kenya, Maasai people build their houses around an area into which their cattle were driven for protection during most nights.

v. Loose-knit

This is similar to nucleation pattern except that the buildings are more spread out, possibly due to space taken up by individual farms which are still found within the village itself.

15.5 Settlement Interaction

Functions of Urban to Rural settlements

- i. It stimulates and specializes in the production of essential goods and products needed in rural areas.
- ii. It stimulates agricultural production in rural areas and serves as a market for food products coming from rural areas.
- iii. It provides secondary and tertiary education services for the rural populace.
- iv. Helps in the provision of infrastructural facilities such as roads, electricity and health care etc. for rural areas.
- v. They provide employment opportunities for rural migrants.
- vi. They provide financial services for rural farmers.
- vii. They provide transportation services for rural dwellers.
- viii. They provide post and telecommunication services for rural dwellers.
- ix. Remittances are sent to rural areas by urban dwellers to facilitate rural development.
- x. They are centres of innovation for new ideas and technologies that are useful for rural productivity.

Functions of Rural to Urban Settlements

- i. They provide labour for production in urban industry.
- ii. They produce and export raw materials to cities.
- iii. Produce food to feed the teeming urban population.
- iv. They serve as market for urban goods.
 - i. Provide retreat and resort functions through their beautiful native services to meet financial needs.
 - ii. Inter-marriage is encouraged whereby urban residents go to rural areas to marry.
 - iii. Provide security services for one another.

- iv. Help one another in village development e.g in clearing of paths for vehicles, building of village hall, houses, etc.

Functions of Urban to Urban Settlements

- i. They serve as market for each others's products.
- ii. They exchange staff through transfer.
- iii. They help in the provision of amenities for each other especially when they are not far from each other.
- iv. They assist each other in policing their environments for peace and security.

Summary

- A settlement is a group of buildings occupied by varying numbers of people which form distinctive features on the earth's surface.
- Urban settlements are bigger in size than rural areas and have more facilities.
- Types of settlement pattern on the earth surface include: (i) dispersed or isolated type (ii) nucleated type (iii) linear or ribbon type (iv) ring pattern and (v) loose-knit pattern.
- Important functions that urban settlements have in rural settlements is to stimulate agricultural productivity in rural areas.
- Rural settlements produce food crops to feed urban population.

Revision Questions

1. Lagos city in Nigeria is an example of
A. Urban settlement B. Rural settlement C. Urban-Rural resettlement D. None of the above

2. Which of these describe the physical characteristics of the actual point at which a settlement is located?
A. situation B. site C. direction D. bearing
3. Which of these is not a characteristic of rural settlements?
A. few population B. homogenous society C. heterogeneous society D. periodic markets
4. A settlement in which individual families or houses are separated from each other is called
A. Nucleated settlement B. Linear settlement C. Dispersed settlement D. Circular settlement
5. Which of these factors can cause nucleation of settlement?
A. Defence B. Land tenure system C. Marriage D. Hilly terrain
6. One important function of rural settlement is
A. production of finished goods from urban market
B. production of raw materials for urban industries
C. provision of women for urban men
D. None of the above
7. The United Nations minimum standard for a settlement to be classified as urban an settlement is
A. 2,000,000 persons B. 2,000persons C. 20,000persons D. 22,000persons
8. The term that describes the location of a settlement relative to its surrounding is known as
A. Situation B. Site C. Latitude D. Direction
9. Which of these amenities will you likely find in a rural settlement?
A. Supermarket B. Theatre C. Resort centre D. Highway
10. Which of these factors will influence the location of a rural market centre?

A. Presence of nodal point B. Good relief C. Presence of several women D. Availability of building material

Essay Questions

1. Explain the importance of site and situation in the location of a settlement.
2. Account for reasons influencing nucleation of a settlement.
3. Compare and contrast urban and rural settlement. What benefit does the urban settlement derive from the rural settlement?
4. Describe rural – rural interactions and benefits associated with this kind of interaction.
5. In what ways does urban settlements contribute to the growth of rural settlements?