<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of contents</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About eLibrary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eLibrary topics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eLibrary collections</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular annuals and flagships</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular titles</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery &amp; Access</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home page</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick &amp; advanced search</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse options</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse by region</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse by Collections: books</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract page</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTML for latest releases</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Browse by Collections: journals                       | 18|
| Journal issue                                        | 19|
| Journal landing page                                 | 20|
| Tools for users                                       | 21|
| Why create a user account?                           | 22|
| Register for a user account                          | 23|
| Manage your user account                             | 24|
| Favorites & saved searches                            | 25|
| Favorites                                             | 26|
| Saved searches                                        | 27|
| Tools for librarians and administrators               | 28|
| Library services                                      | 29|
| Manage your administrator account                     | 30|
| Discovery services                                    | 31|
| Contact us                                            | 32|
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Abstract

Although a high rate of urbanization and a high incidence of rural poverty are two distinct features of many developing countries, there is little knowledge of the effects of the former on the latter. Using a large sample of Indian districts from the 1983-1999 period, we find that urbanization has a substantial and systematic poverty-reducing effect in the surrounding rural areas. The results obtained through an instrumental variable estimation suggest that this effect is causal in nature and is largely attributable to the positive spillovers of urbanization on the rural economy rather than to the movement of the rural poor to urban areas. This poverty-reducing effect of urbanization is primarily explained by increased demand for local agricultural products and, to a lesser extent, by urban-rural remittances, the rural land/population ratio, and rural nonfarm employment.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication type</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of Financial Transfers</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>20 Nov 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrating Solar Power in Developing Countries</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>28 Jun 2012</td>
</tr>
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<td>World Bank Engagement at the State Level</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>21 Apr 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Financial Crises</td>
<td>Development Outreach, Volume 11, Issue 3, pp. 8-12</td>
<td>26 Nov 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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