

Introduction

Project details

This document presents the findings from Project R7455, *Partnerships to improve access and quality of urban public transport for the urban poor*, carried out by the authors as part of the Knowledge and Research Programme, Infrastructure and Urban Development Department, Department for International Development (DFID) of the British Government.

Purpose of the project

The purpose of the project was to identify, explore, and document critical issues in the provision of transport services for and in low-income settlements in developing countries. The identified issues can be used at policy and operational levels to provide better transport services to low-income communities in urban areas. In the research methodology, a sustainable livelihoods framework was used to set the research framework.

The focus of the research was Karachi, Pakistan, which is a city of between 10 and 13 million people in southern Pakistan. It is a city with diverse economic activities and a wide mix of different social groups, including a substantial migrant community, drawn primarily from India and other areas in Pakistan (for more details see Hassan 1999).

Context of the project

Alleviation of poverty is the key objective of any international development policy. The strategy adopted by donors such as DFID can be summarized as:

- Policies and actions which promote sustainable livelihoods
- Better education, health, and opportunities for poor people
- Protection and better management of the natural and physical environment (DFID).

To translate policies into action on the ground, it is necessary to understand the realities on the ground, and the historical and socio-economic context.

A holistic and integrated approach will work better than a sectoral approach to identify the key policies and practices that will improve the livelihoods of the poor. One such approach is sustainable livelihoods (SL). This study reports briefly on the findings of resulting from the application of this approach on the issue of urban public transport.

The urban context

Most of the world's population are or soon will be urbanites. The growing proportion of urban people but also the rate at which this urbanization is taking place is creating an unprecedented demand on urban services. Good quality livelihoods, particularly for the poor, depend on urban services, including public transport. Urban public transport is particularly important for the urban poor, as this is the only mode available to them for long-distance travel.

The assumption of this research project is that transport services make a significant contribution to the livelihood of the urban poor. The contribution (both positive and negative) to livelihoods includes access to employment and income-generation opportunities, education, health, and social networks such as extended families which can help in securing incomes and necessary goods and services.

Practical sustainable livelihoods approach

‘A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base’ (DFID 1999).

The Sustainable Livelihoods(SL) Approach is a flexible framework that can be used to identify the key issues and methodologies to explore those issues. The following section provided a brief definition of livelihoods and some core principles of SL (Ashley and Carney 1999).

Livelihoods

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets, and activities required for means of living.

Core principles of SL

Following are some of the core principles of SL approach.

Poverty focused

This research focuses on low-income communities and on issues related to transport which influences their livelihoods.

Responsive and participatory

The research was conducted using a participatory approach and in response to the demand of the urban poor.

Multilevel: micro and macro

The research explores macro-level factors which have influenced the livelihoods of the urban poor. The issues were also explored at micro-level, which bear on macro-level policymaking and operations. The linkage between policy and practice was also explored. An historical perspective shows hows these linkages are at work both now and also in the past.

Conducted in partnership

Perspectives from the urban poor, regulators, and the operators were explored.

Sustainable

Special attention was paid to learning both from past and present policies and operations that worked and from those which did not produce sustainable development in Karachi.

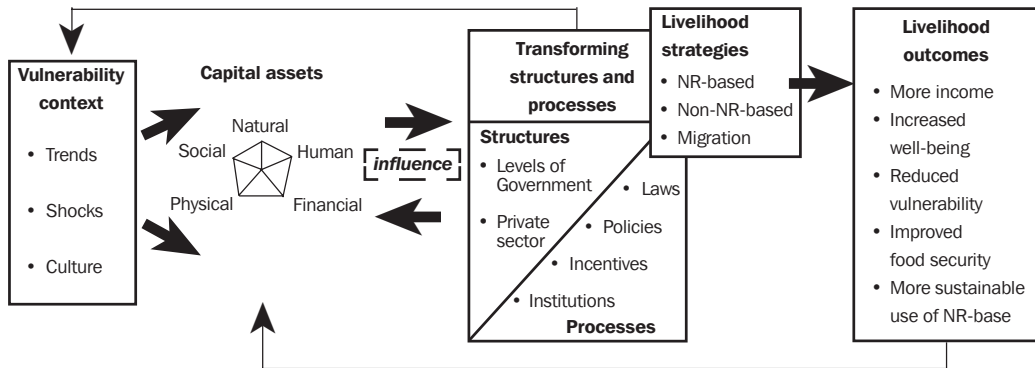
Dynamic

The socio-political dynamics of the past and present, linkages between changes at micro and macro levels, and the changing pattern of the city and changing political context were also explored to understand better what mechanisms might to improve the access to and quality of urban transport to the poor through partnerships.

Key components of the framework for analysing the livelihoods of individuals and the community are:

- capital assets;
- vulnerability context;
- transforming structures (layers of organizations both in the private and government sectors); and
- processes (laws, policies, incentives).

Figure 1: Sustainable rural livelihoods: Framework



Source: Carney, D. and Ashly, C. 1999

The framework for their interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

The capital assets are grouped as:

- **Natural capital:** The natural resource stocks from which resource flows useful for livelihoods are derived (including land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, and environmental resources).
- **Social capital:** The social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods (i.e. networks, membership of groups, relationships of trust, access to wider institutions of society).
- **Human capital:** The skills, knowledge, ability to labour, and good health important to the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies.
- **Physical capital:** The basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy and communications) and the production equipment and means which enable people to pursue their livelihoods.
- **Financial capital:** The financial resources which are available to people (whether savings, supplies of credit, or regular remittances or pensions) and which provide them with different livelihood options.

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Urban public transport contributes directly or indirectly to all the categories of capital assets of the urban poor. The transport sector is associated with improvements in physical capital, but access to transport and other services such as schools, health clinics, and markets is integral and contributes to the development of all capital assets; hence transport practitioners have a significant role to play in understanding and supporting sustainable livelihoods as part of a multi-sectoral analysis of community life.

Under the sustainable livelihoods approach integrated multisectoral analysis is essential.

It is important to understand the structures and processes which define people's livelihood options. These are critical in determining who gains access to the various assets, and in influencing the effective value of each asset. The vulnerability context is particularly important as it indicates the nature of trends, shocks, and culture, and the ability of the poor to withstand their impact. The combinations of activities which make up a livelihood strategy are known as a 'livelihood portfolio'. A portfolio will be diversified over time, and between households, communities, and generations, so the composition of livelihood strategies is a dynamic element of sustainable livelihoods, and as such requires a historical analytical approach (for more details see Carney, D. 1998).

Focus of the project

The main aim of the approach is to eliminate poverty, however, for research purposes the question was how to improve the access and quality of public transport for the urban the poor. The work focused on formal and informal relationships (contracts), and roles and responsibilities in the context of projects where transport services have been provided to the poor.

Policy problems

- The research explored the many ways in which transport provision (or the lack of it) impacts on the lives of the poor.
- The research will thus help in dealing with issues such as settlement planning, transport planning, and transport pricing.
- The research will help in the integration of multiple transport services to address better the needs of the urban poor for transport. In addition to other factors, it has looked at the interface between the private and public sectors.

- The research has contributed in developing a better understanding of the actual and potential roles of different actors, and thus has the potential to guide policy improvements.

Practical problems

The research planned to develop a better understanding of the urban poor's need for effective and efficient transport services in order to access their places of work, education, and leisure. It has also looked at the implications of transport costs for the livelihood strategies of the poor, in particular, the differential impact of existing transport services on women, children, and the elderly.

The research has identified the environmental and health-related problems experienced by the urban poor which are related to transport services.

The likely beneficiaries of the research are the urban poor. Private sector transport through improved services and the increased financial viability of transport services should be other likely benefits. Public sector benefits from a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of the poor users and the private sector. Indirect beneficiaries are likely to be higher income users and employers.

Research approach

The research used case studies compiled using interviews and a series of focus group discussion at settlement and city level. The perspectives of users, operators, and regulators were explored and documented. An initial platform for better communication among the stakeholders was created. The project has contributed to an understanding of some of the issues related to vulnerability of the roles of key public and private organizations. The project has also addressed the key issue of the contribution of partnerships in public transport to sustainable livelihoods for the urban poor. The research has developed and tested the methodology using literature review, historical analysis, case studies, focus group discussions, forums, and workshops. It is hoped that this work will be extended to other cities worldwide in a further phase of the project.

This research aims to translate into policy and practice through:

- the involvement of key stakeholders (drawn from the public, private, and civil society sectors) in determining the priority needs for information, and the meeting of these needs;

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- capacity building and involvement of the Urban Resource Centre, one of the important local civil society actors in transport provision;
- the direct involvement of both public and private actors in the research process through individual and joint stakeholder meetings and, through the latter, joint dialogue on agreed issues that need to be addressed; and
- community- and city-level cases were studied with the longer term view of scaling up the activities to improve sustainable livelihoods of the urban poor communities. It is hoped that the active involvement of community groups in the research process, together with appropriate and meaningful data collection and analysis, will lead to on-going pressure on public and private sector groups to address the transport needs of the poor.

