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Potential role of urban public transport in assets and employment creation for the poor

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Background
Alleviation of poverty is the key objective of any international development policy. The strategy adopted by donors such as the Department for International Development (DFID), can be summarised as (DFID white paper on international development):

- 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

To translate policies into actions on ground, understanding the ground realities, historical and socio-economic context is necessary. A holistic and integrated approach is proposed to be more beneficial as compared to the purely sectoral approach to identify the key policies and practices to improve the livelihoods of the poor. One such approach is sustainable livelihoods (SL). This study briefly reports on the findings of applications of such approach on the issue of urban public transport.

Introduction
Agriculture and construction industries have been the main source of employment for the majority of unskilled workforce in many middle and low-income countries. For urban poor, the first jobs come from construction and transport sector. The focus of many studies on impact of infrastructure and urban service provisions has been on the direct impacts. It is argued in this article that the sustainable livelihoods approach can provide a better tool to capture some indirect and wider socio-economic impacts. The case material, for demonstration purposes, is taken for urban public transport in Karachi (Sohail, M., 2000)

The urban context
Most of the world population will soon be urbanites. It is not just the growing proportion of urban people but also the rate at which the urbanization is taking place, which is creating an unprecedented demand on the access and quality of urban services. A good quality livelihoods of all and particularly poor is
dependent on the urban services including public transport. Urban public transport is particularly important for the urban poor, as this is the only mode available to them to travel longer distance. Equally the transport sector both formally and informally provides jobs to many 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.

**Karahci, a city in Pakistan**

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

Indeed, as inherent for any urban system, the well-being of Karachi and the transport activity in this city are densely interwoven in an inseparable relationship of cause and effect. This exercise has confirmed that the life blood of this city is essentially the port activity and the resulting gradual proliferation of industry, which has attracted and continues to sustain a total estimated population of almost 10 million people (unofficially believed to be close to 13 million. The port and industrial activity cannot survive without the directly transport-dependent ‘availability’, of a huge blue-collar labour force. This labor pool is housed in the low-income squatter-settlements, colloquially called ‘katchi-abadis’ (estimated to contain more than 50% of the population of the city), which are located at such a distance from the major job-markets, that there is virtually no other way to link them other than a ‘system’ of mass-transit. Public transport activity therefore clearly occupies a center-stage position, literally functioning as a two-way life-line between the fundamental employment and residential activities which sustain Karachi.

**Methodology**

The research use case study method utilizing interviews and a series of focus group discussion at settlement and city level. The perspective from users, operators and regulators were explored and documented. 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.

- 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 later, joint dialogue on agreed issues that need to be addressed.

- Community and city level cases will be 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.

**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)

Sustainable livelihoods(SL) Approach has be taken as a flexible framework to identifying the key issues and methodology to explore those issues. Following section provided a brief definition of livelihoods and some core principles of SL.(Ashley, C & Carney, D. 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 focussed**

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

**Responsive and participatory**

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

**Multilevel-Micro-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 have the bearing on macro-level policy making and operations. The linkage between policy and practice was also explored. An historical perspective is also taken to see these
linkages at work only currently but also how they were in action in the past. **Conducted in partnership**

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

Special attention was given to learn from past and present policies and operations that worked or those which did not produce sustainable development in the context of the case city. **Dynamic**

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

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

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

The framework for their interaction is illustrated in Figure 1. The transport sector is apparently associated with improvements in physical capital. However, access to transport and other services such as schools, health clinics and markets is integral and contributory to the development of all the 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 sustainable livelihoods approach integrated multisectoral approach is essential.

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**Figure 1: Sustainable rural livelihoods: Framework**

![Figure 1](image-url)
It is important to understand the structures and processes which define people’s livelihood options. These structures and processes 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; hence the composition of livelihood strategies is a dynamic element of sustainable livelihoods, and as such requires a historical analytical approach.[See for more details Crney, D.,1998]

Urban public transport contributes directly or indirectly to all the categories of capital assets of the urban poor. 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, 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.

**Observations**
Following is based on the case study conducted in Karachi

**Employment creation in the context of asset creation**
One perspective that can be gained from the sustainable livelihood approach is to see the employment creation in the context of the assets creation. The assets creation can be seen at household level, community level, city and national level.

**Asset creation is multi-sectoral.**
It is noteworthy that the approach also enables one to see beyond sectors, which helps in exploring the linkages of transport with other sectors. Effective and efficient transport helps not only the provision of urban services but also the social services like health, education. The advances in information technology affect the transport. Construction activities also depend on transport facilities such as supply of goods and material.
Direct and indirect impact of the transport on livelihoods assets creation

‘Access’ and ‘quality’ of public transport were key consideration from the perspective of the users. The operator and financier depend on the operating business for their livelihoods. The business creates opportunities for employees and the suppliers. The benefits may not be undervalued in the conventional evaluation exercises, as those may be a part of informal economy. The transport sector not only provided jobs directly to the worker such as driver and helper but also provided opportunities for automobile mechanics, small enterprises such as wheel repairs, changing of oil and people selling water to the passengers.

Informal mechanisms to mobilize finances

Transport and construction in many countries have not been given the status of an industry hence they are excluded from availing facilities such as credits and insurance. In a violent city like Karachi, the role of insurance is crucial for many small entrepreneurs. Due lack of any formal facilities, the innovation has come from informal sector. Bus owners association is running an informal insurance system, where bus operators pays an amount as premiums and in case of any accident the collected money is used to pay for the damages. Informal sector also provided credit lines to the entrepreneurs who are excluded from the formal money market. There are many lessons, which the formal sector can learn from the on-going activities to expand their coverage and market. The informal sector does not get any support or help from the conventional sector, and the processes are on going for many decades. Effectively the city transport is run private sector.

Lobbies, platforms and transport

Operator of transport such as bus owners, taxi drivers, truck owner has, in the absence of effective and efficient platform to influence the policies has a strong lobby. The role of such lobby on many occasions becomes confrontational to the policy maker but these associations represent a very useful social capital for the transporters. They also encourage consumers, as a reaction, to make a lobby when the fares rise. The confrontations on many occasions also appear in the form of burning city or nation wide strike as well as burning of the buses. It can be argued that the current forms and power relations are not conducive to a real exchange of views among the stakeholder, however, it cannot be denied that there exists an opportunity to streamline and improve such social capital into a more productive consultative environment. The city forums used during the research shows encouraging signs the stakeholders can sit on the table and talk business.

Partnerships

Partnerships can take different forms: formal or informal, legally or socially enforced, between two sector or within a sector, between the public and private. Partnerships are an alternative to supplying transport services either via a state run
organization or freely by the private sector. Some of the partnerships can be at community level or between small-scale operators.

Government participation
It is important to maintain a perspective of why rural transport is required and what role the local community can play in defining the service provision. The main needs for transport outside of the village area are agricultural marketing and production, health and education, visiting friends and relatives, access to employment opportunities and contact with a wide variety of other public services. The local community should be involved in identifying transport priorities; particularly they should help define when and to where the transport services should run.

Inter-sectoral inter-linkages
Public transport is the key urban service to contribute to the livelihoods of the urban poor. Any improvement in urban transport will improve the livelihoods of the urban poor. Currently, the focus is at best at inter-services linkages within the same sector or similar sector. The livelihoods approach provides a better opportunity to think wider than any sector while focussing on the livelihoods of the poor. Why and how people travel and how that contribute in the livelihoods or how transport help in undertaking the activities required for sustainable livelihoods are some of the question which are frequently addressed in adoption of the approach. Transport not only creates employment within the sector but create and maintains opportunities in other sector. Many jobs for the poor living at the outskirts of the city is possible due to some form of effective transport.

Policies and practice
Many policies trying to encourage the employment creation and transport overlook the realities on the ground. In many instances the policy making becomes an end in itself. Polices and practices are not have found no many occasions incompatible. The assumption of many policy-making processes is that once the policy is made, things will happen on the ground. In many developing countries context, the level of implementation of very even the criminal laws is not effective. More stringent regulatory mechanisms can increase the cost of implementation. The lack of policy implementation can be traced back to the lack of participation of the real stakeholders during the policy formulation. If the policy making is not own by the people who will be effected by it, enforce will become very expensive. To aim for policy congruence is important. In some cases the improvement by a policy interventions can be negated by policies dealing with the other sectors.

Linking micro and macro consideration
The work force in many cities depends on public transport to reach the work place. Women, children and elderly from the low-income settlements rely on public transport for their daily work. There is a negative impact on the livelihoods of the urban poor; women had to lose jobs, as they cannot travel to the work place due to the lack of reliable and quality transport services. Harassment at the bus stops and in the bus is not uncommon. There are many initiatives taken from the private sector to solve some of the problems, in Karachi the urban transport is run by the private sector. However, there is a lack of appropriate regulations and links among different modes of transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of interventions is proposed after consultation with the operators, regulators and the poor users group. The hierarchy consists of:

- Long-term policy-level recommendations;
- Grass-roots level partnerships between stakeholders.

Policy-level Recommendations

A number of specific policy decisions may eventually become unavoidable, delay in these decisions will only increase the volume/extent of harm caused to the city and its inhabitants:

1. The interaction of the transport and employment creation needs to be further explored, particularly the role of transport in supporting the micro-enterprise.
2. The establishment of a platform with executive power to represent the three main perspectives: users, regulators and operators. A single, all-encompassing official/legal body for dealing with overall ‘transport’ may be created at city or regional level. The authority should adopt a more holistic approach. Sustainable livelihood consideration should be a guiding principle.
3. The relationship of transport activities and employment creation needs to be explored further. The initiation of a participatory and continuous process of data-collection/monitoring, interaction with all the stakeholders, and localized planning and policy-making needs to be taken-up by the above-proposed body. The process can be based on "strategic action planning approach" which should aim to reduce the gap between the policy and practice to encourage employment creation and micro enterprise development.

Grass-roots level ‘Partnership’s between Stake-holders

A potential exists for developing solutions through partnerships, in order to overcome the constraints of limited resources and lack of effective governance. Some small projects can be taken-up easily and rapidly by all the stakeholders together. The willingness/awareness towards contribution in these type of
initiatives has already been expressed by the ‘Users’ in the discussion ‘forums’ and interviews:

1. The building, repair and maintenance of bus-stops to further create employment and enterprise.
2. The cleanliness of bus stops and the interior of the vehicles can be made a service for the private sector to encourage further the role of small enterprise.
3. The use of ergonomically sound standards for interiors of the vehicles to improve the satisfaction level of the users.
4. The working conditions of the driver and helpers as well as the conditions of their employment should be improved.
5. The better use of the informal economy to meet the development targets and objectives.
6. Creation of platform where the complaints from the users can be acted upon including those of women, children, disabled and the elderly.
7. Monitoring systems should be in place to capture the wider impact of the transport on the employment and enterprise development.

The research programme at Loughborough will be conducting similar studies in other cities in future.

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References


Bibliography


Photographs

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