

Node: Suite Summary^{1,2}

PUI: Understanding Livelihoods for better policy

Context

Worldwide concerns over the effect of expanding urban areas on the natural resource (NR) base and the poor rural inhabitants of surrounding rural areas led to the initiation of studies on the 'peri-urban interface' (PUI), the mobile interface between urban and rural systems. The Natural Resources Systems Programme (NRSP) funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) was implementing projects in this growing area of research and development action from 1997 to 2006.

For those immersed in a rural economy, the growing proximity of a city or town can destroy old livelihoods and, at the same time, offer new ones. The negative effects can be a cause for new or increased poverty. Improved management of NRs can help to reduce poverty at the peri-urban interface (PUI) but its poverty impact may be constrained by the dynamic nature of urbanisation. People initially affected by the PUI may be able to take up new income generating opportunities offered by encroaching cities and towns, achieving household livelihood diversification into both NR and urban production systems. For these households, management of NR production systems may thus become only one component of a broadened livelihood portfolio.

If well informed about the effects of urbanisation and the possibilities for poor people to better manage changes in their livelihood activities, decision makers and their advisors – at levels from local to international – can choose interventions that reduce the shocks of rural to urban changes, or at least smooth the passage through these shocks. For those populations surrounding the growing urban areas of developing countries, assistance with the passage through the rural to urban transition may, ultimately, enable poor people to take up more prosperous urban activities without any further decline in their wealth.

As a result, NRSP research undertook to: i) identify how NR-based production activities are affected by a PUI, and ii) learn about the alternative livelihood options that are open to PU poor people and the entry points for pro-poor NRM.

Research Topics

- What are the NR-based and non-NR-based livelihoods of PU people, especially those who are poor?
- How does a PUI shape the livelihoods of these people?
- What alternative livelihoods can benefit the PU poor?
- What are the implications of this knowledge for the formulation of pro-poor policy affecting a PUI?

¹ This document summarises NRSP's work in one of its Uptake Promotion Node: suites. For further details and links to project and project documents see <http://www.nrsp.org.uk/6.aspx>

² This document presents research funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

Projects

Pioneering investigations of PUI production systems were begun in 1997 without any particular focus on livelihoods and poverty. Studies were limited to Hubli-Dharwad, India (R6825) and Kumasi, Ghana (R6799) (see project linkages below). Prompted by DFID's growing focus on poverty, PD070 informed NRSP that its research had paid little if any attention to whether or not poor people benefited from the impact of a PUI and from related NR management.

With a stronger mandate from DFID to concentrate on livelihoods and poverty, the previous studies were reviewed in order to take stock of what had been learned, especially about the livelihoods of poor people (R7549). At both locations, additional studies followed that aimed to fill key gaps in findings (R7854 and R7867). These findings in turn fed into an overarching synthesis of knowledge from across NRSP on livelihoods and how research for development can support poor people's livelihood opportunities (PD105).

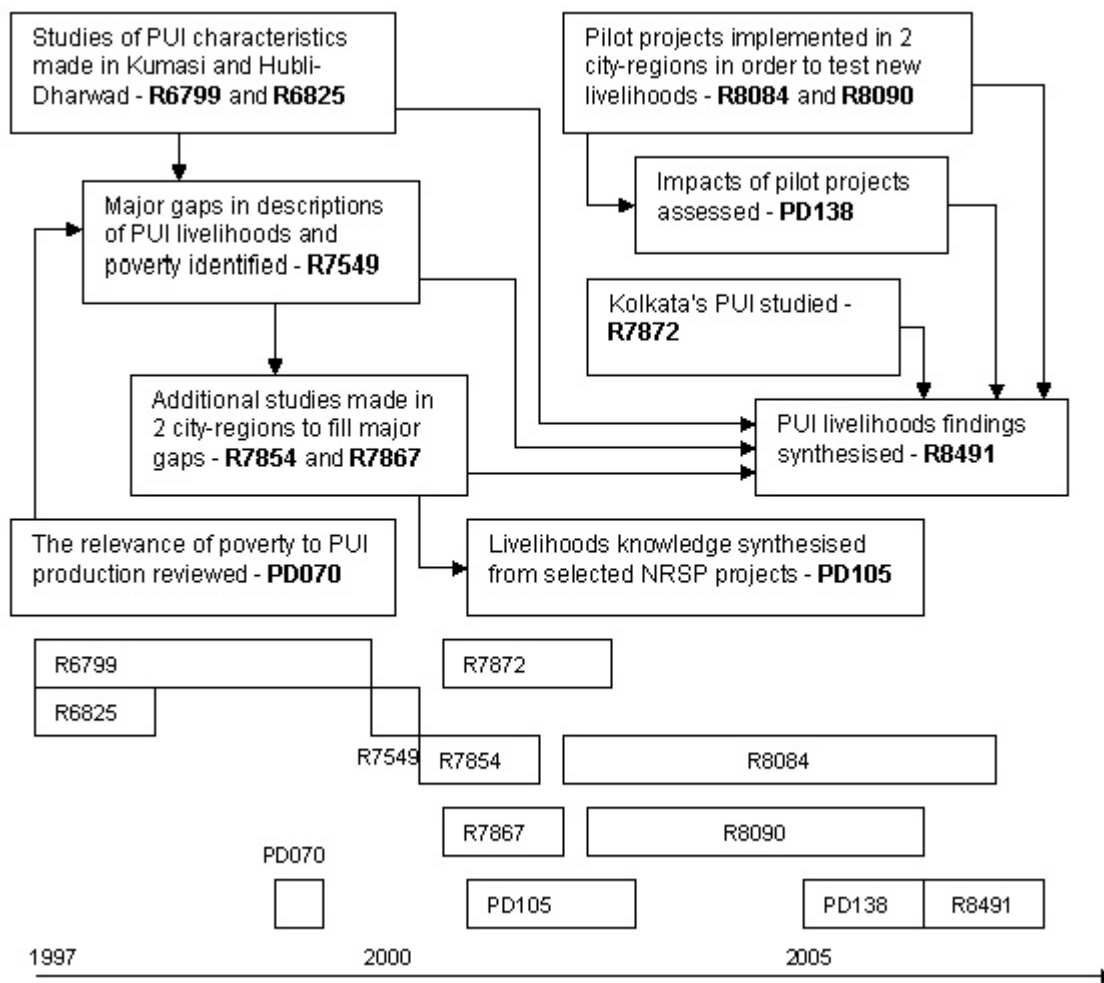
At this time, the circumstances of the East Kolkata Wetlands meant that it was chosen for a third study (R7872) that featured an urban area of a much greater size and some very different aspects of NR-based production, namely aquaculture and farming using urban wastes.

Research on the Hubli-Dharwad and Kumasi city-regions then tested the implementation of a selection of new or enhanced livelihoods that might be pro-poor (R8084 and R8090). The alternatives supported included both NR-based and non-NR-based productive activities. Trials in villages around Hubli-Dharwad featured dairy farming, agro-forestry, repair of dams and de-siltation of ponds, wood products crafting, vermiculture, and trading. Those near to Kumasi featured beekeeping, grasscutter (a rodent family) and rabbit rearing, snail farming, soap production, mushroom growing and trading. Although adequate time had not elapsed for full impacts to be visible, immediate consequences of these pilot projects were identified and evaluated (PD138), including their effects on the livelihoods of poor people.

In a final synthesis of the new knowledge of the PUI, that had been developed through NRSP research, findings about livelihoods and poverty were brought together in R8491. This synthesis profited from the insights, additional information and conclusions generated by the PD138 assessment of the pilot projects. It also generated more findings about the Kumasi PUI case in particular.

While the intended beneficiaries of this Node: suite investigation are poor people of a PUI, the target audiences for its new knowledge also include professionals from local to international levels who are engaged with interventions to improve productivity and reduce poverty at the PUI.

Project links within PUI Suite 2: 1997 - 2005



Outputs

Findings

The negative impacts of PUI processes fall disproportionately upon women and poor people. The poor had fewest of the livelihood assets needed to cope with these changes, easily becoming more vulnerable as a consequence of PUI change. A greater range of income generating opportunities were demonstrated for men than for women. People developed a range of livelihood activities to form a multi-stranded, risk-reducing livelihood portfolio that enabled them to cope. This was more marked for the poor than for non-poor or very poor groups. Cash based employment for PU people without education or skills was limited to poorly paid labouring in agriculture, factories, construction or quarrying. Traditional rural knowledge was insufficient to compete in a modern economy. Limited information sources reduced innovation and consequently the potential to move into new productive activities. Women had fewer information sources than men.

The voluntary or involuntary surrender of land rights to urban uses, poor maintenance of soil fertility, and the under-use of land because of shortages of labour for farming were all found to result from proximity to urban areas. These brought substantial changes in livelihoods, having a major negative impact on the livelihoods of the PU poor. Moreover, poor urban and PU waste disposal methods polluted the water and soil used by PU populations, while

changes in urban waste quality have compromised traditional livelihood systems that utilise urban waste as a productive resource.

The need for credit to enable people to develop alternative income generating activities was more acute in the PUI. This is because a loss of access to the NR that maintained traditional livelihood activities has forced people to move into a monetised economy but small profits, low farm prices and lack of savings, secure work and property rights all act to reduce access to formal credit sources.

Because impacts of urbanisation affect locations differently, appropriate livelihood opportunities and constraints also vary spatially, yet without clear patterns. Livelihood diversity and speed of change was greater in PU villages closest to the city, as was the trend away from NR-based activity. The expansion of non-farm employment was not uniform across the PUI but was concentrated in specific areas where large-scale economic activities, such as factories or saw mills generated employment.

Some of the more beneficial livelihood activities for PUI poor people – at least for a time – are NR-based. The enhanced or alternative NR-based livelihoods that were tested gave more positive outcomes. Traditional farming in particular formed a valuable bridging activity, especially for women, supporting people's moves into new productive income generating activities. Fast returns on new NR activities were important because of the scarcity of non-cash based alternative livelihood options available to sustain the PUI poor.

Interventions that lead to trying new productive activities can improve livelihoods of poor people affected by a PUI. Poor people can be helped to move to new livelihood activities by participatory action planning, access to credit, the actions of community facilitators, and the actions of NGOs. Planning and implementing new productive activities had a positive impact on basic livelihoods assets in the research sites: on financial capital, on skills (human capital) and on cooperation, empathy and unity (social capital). Where actions were initiated as part of research, there was more change to new or enhanced productive activity compared with those PU people or villages that did not participate in the research. Project participants became more confident in their ability to make livelihood changes and to approach wider institutions, either individually or collectively, to access the services and support they needed to improve their lives and incomes.

Among the livelihood activities tried, trading was the best for its ability to provide economic benefits to PU poor people. Processing of PU agricultural produce represented a significant area of value addition and trade. A major constraint was the lack of market linkages between PU producers and existing urban markets. The need for market analysis and market training at the research sites was often underestimated.

Research messages

- Taking up new livelihood activities can have a positive impact on the livelihoods of PU poor people. Interventions in this process of change can promote positive impact..
- Beneficial alternative livelihood activities for PU poor people, which include both NR and non-NR based activities, appear to have some features that can be generalised. Knowledge of these features can inform the choices of alternatives that are tried or promoted.

- Well-informed and collaborative land management by urban and rural actors is important, especially where a concern for poverty alleviation is paramount.
- The management of urban wastes in a way that links waste generation and PU demand for and usage of the waste can improve and/or sustain benefit to poor farmers.
- Policy makers can make use of NGOs, participatory action planning, community facilitators and access to credit in order to help PU poor people move to alternative livelihood activities that may benefit them.

Key research products

- Brook, R. and Dávila, J. (eds.), 2000. *The Peri-urban interface: a tale of two cities*. NRSP, Hemel Hempstead.
- Brook, R., Purushothaman, S., and Hunshal, C. (Eds), 2003. *Changing frontiers*. Books for Change, Bangalore, India.
- Final Technical Report for Project R7872. Institute of Aquaculture, University of Stirling, UK.
- King, R.S., Quashie-Sam, S.J., Kunfaa, E., Awudza, J.A.M., Simon, D., Fosu, A.B. and Ashong, K., 2005. Adoption and impact of livelihoods activities on PUI livelihoods. R8090 Research Report 4, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Kumasi. This also appears as Annex Bi4 in Final Technical Report, R8090, 2005, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Kumasi.
- Quashie-Sam, S.J., Kunfaa, E., Awudza, J.A.M., King R.S., Simon, D., Fosu, A.B. and Ashong, K., 2005. Monitoring, sustainability and risk management in PUI livelihoods. R8090 Research Report 5, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Kumasi. This also appears as Annex Bi5 in Final Technical Report, R8090, 2005, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Kumasi.
- Final Technical Report for Project R8084. 2005, School of Agricultural and Forest Sciences, University of Wales, Bangor.
- Aberra, E. and King, R., 2005. Additional knowledge of livelihoods in the Kumasi peri urban interface (KPUI). Development Planning Unit, University College London, London. Briefing document prepared as part of R8491. Final Technical Report for Project PD138. 2005, ITAD, Hove, UK.
- Mattingly, M. 2006. Synthesis of peri-urban interface knowledge on NRM and alternative livelihoods. Final Technical Report R8491. Development Planning Unit, University College London, London.
- Mattingly, M. and Gregory, P. 2006. *The peri-urban interface: intervening to improve livelihoods*. Hemel Hempstead, UK: DFID-NRSP. 6pp.

Impacts

- In both the project locations of Kumasi (12 villages) and Hubli-Dharwad (8 villages), beneficiaries who took part in the planning and subsequent trials of alternative livelihood activities, perceived an increase in their overall well-being and the number of households ranked as poor declined.
- Knowledge of the alternative livelihoods tested and demonstrated through the Node: suite projects has spread to residents of other PU villages.
- Awareness of PUI impacts and of alternative livelihoods has spread to NGOs and government organisations in the project locations.

- Within the organisations represented on the research teams, knowledge of the PUI and alternative livelihood options has substantially increased, changing their attitudes, practices, and institutional knowledge. Each of these has an operational scope that extends well beyond the sites of the research.
- When the Urban Rural Change Team of DFID (London) was made aware of the synthesis project (R8491), it requested and was given specific knowledge products. DFID intends these findings to be put into briefing documents destined for its country desks and advisers.
- Uptake by other local, country, and international users is not yet evident. Uptake occurring in these organisations is not likely to be discernable in the short term.

Further work

Little is still known about the livelihoods of the PU poor and what might be done to improve them. The progress of change in livelihoods brought about by a PUI has rarely been studied. There is much to be learned about the general characteristics of alternative livelihoods that are viable and those that are not. NRSP research only pilot tested a small number of alternative livelihood possibilities. Assessments of the advantages and disadvantages of those alternatives experimented with are far from complete, especially given that there may be many impacts that have not yet appeared. More research is needed to build knowledge of all of these issues.

There is also much more to be learned about how poor PU people can be helped to move to new livelihood activities. This knowledge is critical to inform policy level dialogue on entry points for enhancing both pro-poor NR management and non-NR based livelihood opportunities at the PUI.

Findings about PU poor people may provide lessons for policy makers dealing with rural to urban migration. A PUI has the effect of moving people into the urban economy without moving their place of residence. This shift may have some impacts on household livelihoods and wellbeing similar to urban migration, but others may be very different. An advantage of studying PU residents as opposed to rural-urban migrants is that the former are likely to be easier to track because PUI poor move from being rural to being urban without changing locations.