

Poverty Alleviation

Definitions

Poverty is the deprivation of common necessities that determine the quality of life.

Context and Policies

The urban poor in developing countries face enormous challenges in their daily lives. Many live in crowded slums within cities or in more remote peri-urban areas with limited access to jobs and social services. Problems of access are linked to failures of the economy, lack of equity in the provision of services, and poor or unaffordable transport links to enable mobility. This contributes to low living standards, social fragmentation and problems of social exclusion.

Relatively little is known about the transport behaviour of the urban poor in developing countries, their residential patterns, and how these are affected by transport policy. The research that exists characterizes the transport patterns of the poor as a complex tradeoff between residential location, travel distance and travel mode, in an attempt to minimize the social exclusion associated with low earnings potential (World Bank, 2002). In accessible parts of the city, the poor can often afford only precarious sites with insecure tenure. Conversely, affordable sites that may have more secure tenure are more likely to be located in the less accessible periphery of the city and involve higher commuting times and costs (UNHABITAT, 2003).

Empirical studies in individual cities show evidence of differences in the composition, number, and mode of trips between poor and non-poor, but the dynamics of these differences are not well-explored (Thompson, 1993; Godard and Olvera, 2000). The urban poor make fewer trips per capita than the non-poor, but the differences are not extreme. The travel purposes of the poor are more limited in scope, with journeys to work, education and shopping dominating. Transport mode differs substantially, with the urban poor relying heavily on walking, and the non-poor making many more motorized trips.

Issues

For the urban poor, lack of access to transport can lead to four types of social exclusion, which tend to reinforce each other: spatial, temporal, personal and economic¹.

Spatial exclusion usually occurs in low-density areas where public transport is not financially viable, or in urban peripheral areas where services are less frequent. In developed countries, this is mostly felt in rural areas, many of which have no link by public transport at all, making the car the only feasible mode of transport. However, spatial exclusion may also affect low-income urban populations as found in distressed inner-city areas in the US and run-down peripheral housing estates in European cities.

Temporal exclusion refers to the problems faced by travellers mainly late at night or very early in the morning and often at weekends when service is



Photo credits: "Waiting" (Delhi) by AP for the BBC

Resources

Documents

- **"A Lifetime of Walking" Poverty and Transportation in Wuhan**, 2003, Economic Research Institute, Wuhan University (China)
- **Activity Patterns, Transport and Policies for the Urban Poor: Urban Mobility Planning Guidelines**, 2003, Transport Research Laboratory (UK)
- **Impact of Transport Infrastructure & Services on Urban Poverty and Land Development: A Case Study- Colombo, Sri Lanka**, 2005, Professor Amal S. Kumarage, University of Moratuwa (Sri Lanka)
- **Mobility and the Urban Poor**, 2009, Alexandre Gomide, Urban Age, LSE (UK)
- **Poverty and Urban Mobility in Conakry**, 2004, Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program, World Bank (USA)
- **Poverty and Urban Mobility in Douala**, 2004, Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program, World Bank (USA)
- **The Urban Poor and Mobility Stress in Nigerian Cities**, 2007, O.B. Olufemi and MS. Oluseyi, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State (Nigeria)
- **Transportation Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Equity**, 2005, Debra Efrogmson and Maruf Rahman, WBB Trust (Bangladesh)
- **Urban Poverty and Transport: The Case of Mumbai**, 2005, Judy Baker, Rakhi Basu, Maureen Cropper, Somik Lall and Akie Takeuchi, World Bank (USA)
- **Urban Transport and Poverty in Developing Countries**, Manfred Breithaupt, Stefan Opitz and Dr. Jan A. Schwaab, GTZ, Eschborn (Germany)
- **Urban Transport and Poverty Reduction (Chapter 3 from "Cities on the Move: A World Bank Urban Transport Strategy Review"**, 2002, World Bank (USA)
- **Urban Transportation and the Millennium Development Goals**, 2006, Walter Hook, Global Urban Development Magazine (USA)

¹ "Cities in a Globalizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 2001, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), (Kenya)

The global Transport Knowledge Partnership provides access to the best available information, expertise and technical advice to reduce poverty in the developing world.

global Transport Knowledge Partnership,
chemin de Blandonnet 2,
1214 VernierIGeneva,
Switzerland

nonexistent or infrequent.

Personal exclusion is based on individual characteristics such as gender, age, ethnic background and religion, illness or disability that may constrain people's mobility and access to transport, whether private, public or non-motorized forms such as walking and cycling.

Economic exclusion refers to the inability of people to pay for transport costs.

In developed countries, spatial, temporal and personal exclusion may be more common among its citizens; in developing countries, the main source of exclusion lies in spatial segregation and the inability of individuals to pay for transport. These last two factors can combine to create a spiral of exclusion that will eventually include temporal and personal exclusion as well.

Actions

The World Bank suggests that moving towards a more poverty-focused transport policy would require the following:

- urban transport planning studies should take a more demand-oriented approach, recognizing the existence of distinct socio-economic communities already at the data collection, diagnostic and design stages;
- the importance of walking, other non-motorized transport activities and the special needs of the mobility impaired should be recognized both in infrastructure design and in traffic management;
- design of public transport fare policies has to be based on more than the commonly used criterion of affordability; a nominally a pro-poor policy of charging low fares without an assured deficit finance mechanism has proved to leak benefits and lead to service deterioration;
- there should be increased use of targeting, whether group-oriented or location-oriented, both in service design and fare policies;
- transport being only one of services essential for the welfare, fare policies in the transport sector have to be designed taking into consideration policies in other sectors;
- uncontested monopoly in the supply of public transport services should be replaced by regulated competition; this is likely to decrease costs and increase supply to poor people;
- policies for regulating the informal transport sector need to be framed with their impacts on poor people carefully taken into account, lest the poor be the losers in the anti-congestion drives;
- efforts to secure modal integration need to be carefully managed to ensure that they do not increase the number of times poor people have to pay per trip, and that fares on the services on which they are particularly dependent do not increase.

Presentations

- **Pro-Poor Spending in the Transport Sector**, 2006, Robin Carruthers, World Bank (USA)
- **The Socio-economic Impact of Non-motorised Transport in Africa**, 2006, Dr. Jürgen Heyen-Perschon, ITDP Europe (Germany)

Recommended Links

- **Transport and Urban Poverty in Asia: A Brief Introduction to the Key Issues** (Kenya)
- **Urban Transport and Poverty** (USA)

For further information

Contact Peter Midgley, gTKP Urban Mobility Theme Champion at peter.midgley@gtkp.com