

Node: Suite Summary^{1,2}

PUI: Piloting NR management strategies

Context

Worldwide concerns over the effect of expanding urban areas on the natural resource (NR) base and on the poor rural inhabitants of the surrounding rural areas led to the initiation of studies on the 'peri-urban interface' (PUI), the mobile interface between urban and rural systems. NRSP 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 an urban area can offer new livelihoods and, at the same time, destroy old ones: it can be a cause for new or increased poverty. Improved management of NRs can help to reduce poverty at the PUI but its anti-poverty impact may be constrained by the dynamic nature of urbanisation.

Initially, rural people affected by the PUI may be able to take up new income generating opportunities offered by the encroaching urban areas, often achieving household livelihood diversification into urban production systems in addition to their NR-based livelihoods. For these households, management of NR production systems may thus become only one component of a broadened livelihood portfolio. As urbanisation proceeds further, NR-based livelihoods are likely to dwindle and in some areas disappear entirely as access to resources is privatised or prevented and land is taken out of production and built upon. Nevertheless, many poor people at the PUI are engaged in farming and other NR-based livelihoods while they try to capture emerging urban opportunities. Supporting the NR livelihoods of the PUI rural poor over the shorter to medium term can be an anti-poverty strategy.

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 can choose interventions that reduce the shocks of rural to urban changes, or at least smooth the passage through these shocks. 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.

NRSP research explored the largely unstudied area of the alternative livelihood options that are open to peri-urban poor people and how they can be helped to take these up. Support was given to villagers to enable them to plan and implement alternative livelihoods activities, thus providing experiences from which new knowledge could be derived.

The projects in this Node: suite focused on the following research topics.

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.

Research Topics

- Can poor people in peri-urban circumstances benefit from trying alternative livelihoods?
- What alternative livelihoods can benefit the peri-urban poor?
- Are there viable alternative livelihood strategies that are not based on natural resource use?
- Can poor people be helped to move to alternative livelihoods?

Projects

Participatory action planning, including social mobilisation, awareness creation and plan formulation, was initiated in Hubli-Dharwad (R7959) and Kumasi (R7995) as parallel but unconnected activities (see project links below). This produced proposals for alternative livelihood activities, including NR activities that require only small areas of land, traditional farm-based livelihoods and processing of NR products. Participants were the residents of villages studied by previous NRSP PUI research.

Pilot projects to test some of these plans followed directly in R8084 (Hubli-Dharwad) and R8090 (Kumasi). Over three years, villagers in groups and as individuals engaged in activities new to them, usually after receiving training or other information. In both locations, some non-NR livelihood activities were tried. Activities tested included dairy farming, agro-forestry, wood products crafting, beekeeping, rabbit rearing, soap production, mushroom growing, and trading.

Villagers willingly took lead roles in planning and implementing the alternative livelihood trials. Although they will continue to be the direct beneficiaries of any economic returns from their own trials - and of the new knowledge that circulates locally of what does or does not work - the project participants were not the intended main beneficiaries. The research sought knowledge, of both success and failure, that could inform a world-wide audience of policy makers and actors, including other poor people passing through the transition of a peri-urban interface.

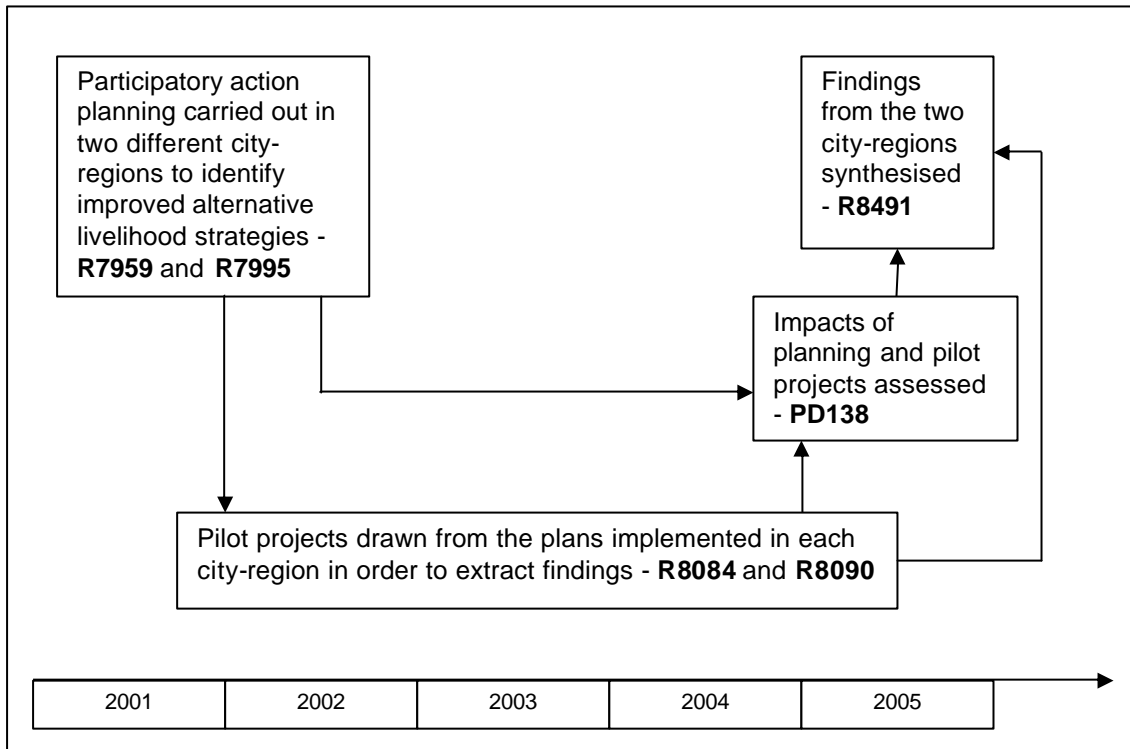
An assessment of the impact of the trials (PD138) was carried out very near the end of the projects. Using a sustainable livelihoods approach, PD138 assessed the current and potential development impacts of planning and pilot project implementation in the city-regions of Hubli-Dharwad and Kumasi. However, the impact assessment was severely constrained because much of the needed evidence had not yet emerged from the trials.

At the end of the pilot projects, findings regarding NR management and impacts on livelihoods of PUI poor people were compared and contrasted as part of an overall synthesis of NRSP PUI studies (R8491). Because of exceptional challenges encountered by the studies near to Kumasi, this synthesis project also revisited information produced by R8090 in order to extract additional findings regarding livelihood alternatives that might be compared or contrasted with those of other projects.

With the exception of PD138, all of the PUI projects engaged from the start with possible users of their outputs. Key users in the cases of Hubli-Dharwad and Kumasi were the local NGOs and universities on the project teams. Government agencies were regularly informed of activities and findings, and efforts were made to actively engage them in pilot projects, with mixed success. In the case of Hubli-Dharwad, interest in participatory planning and

pilot projects was strongly promoted well beyond the project site to other NGOs, to state and national governments, and to international agencies.

Project links within PUI Suite 1: 2001 - 2006



Outputs

Findings

The research indicated that, before they are totally urbanised, peri-urban poor people can move to alternative productive activities that benefit them. Some of the more beneficial livelihood activities – at least for a time – are NR-based. For example, some farming activities can continue to be effective even as available land is reduced by urbanisation. However, trading was the best among the livelihood activities tested for its ability to provide economic benefits to peri-urban poor people.

Planning and implementing new productive activities in the project villages resulted in beneficial changes in basic livelihoods assets. There was a positive impact on skills (human capital) and on financial capital, and there were positive changes in cooperation, empathy and unity (social capital).

Where urbanisation quickly converted land use, the common need of poor people for alternatives with quick returns was particularly important. This was probably because many of the PUI poor had previously based their livelihoods on use of NRs. Loss of access to these NRs left the poor with little to fall back on while they sought to adopt alternative strategies. The new livelihoods with a short gestation period (e.g. soap making and petty trading) that were tested also offered less risk and more possibility for being sustained.

The re-use of urban waste has offered special opportunities for NR-based production activities, but the waste is becoming an unreliable source for peri-urban farming. Peri-urban use of the waste has not been supported or incorporated into formal waste management systems; the quality of the waste is declining; and there is increasing competition from urban consumers who can pay more for it.

Research messages

- Identifying the poorest and most excluded people in PUI areas is difficult and engaging them requires sensitive and long-term work by a community facilitator.
- Taking up new livelihoods (e.g. trading) can have a positive impact on the poverty status of peri-urban poor people. Interventions to support PUI poor to experiment with alternative livelihoods can facilitate poverty reduction.
- Peri-urban women – who are often among the poorest people – show a greater ability than men to make use of help to start new productive activities.
- Beneficial alternative livelihoods for peri-urban poor people include both NR and non-NR based activities. These alternative livelihoods appear to have some features that can be generalised. Knowledge of these features can inform the choices of alternatives that are tried or promoted.
- The management of urban wastes is missing links between waste generation and peri-urban demand for and usage of urban waste that might improve and/or sustain benefits to poor farmers.
- Development agencies and policy makers can use participatory action planning to help peri-urban poor people take up alternative livelihood activities that bring enhanced benefits.

Key research products

- 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 livelihood activities on community members in the Kumasi peri-urban interface. 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., E., 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. Livelihoods in the Kumasi Peri-Urban Interface (KPUI). Briefing document prepared as part of R8491.
- Aberra, E. and King, R., 2005. Additional knowledge of the Kumasi PUI. Development Planning Unit, University College London, London prepared as part of R8491.
- Wellard, K., Barnett, C., Sakyi-Dawson, O. and Sultana, P. 2005. NRSP Impact assessment case studies: The peri-urban interface in Kumasi, Ghana and Hubli-Dharwad, India. Final Technical Report. 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

- Hundreds of people, most of them poor, in 12 villages near to Kumasi and 8 villages around the twin cities of Hubli-Dharwad, took part in the planning and trials of alternative livelihoods. The overall outcomes of their participation has been positive (e.g. in both locations, beneficiaries perceived an increase in their overall well-being).
- The demonstration of new livelihood activities by the project has caused a spread of knowledge of alternative livelihood options to other peri-urban village residents.
- Project teams have been approached for the lessons of the participatory action planning experience and, in the Hubli-Dharwad case, for the innovative training in trading it initiated.
- Within the organisations participating in the research teams, the research activity substantially increased knowledge of peri-urban poor people, their livelihoods, and the possibilities for them to plan and carry out changes in these livelihoods. This changed the organisations' attitudes, practices, and institutional knowledge, even during the course of the studies. These are all organisations with development facilitation intentions and capacities that extend well beyond the sites of the research.
- Awareness that a peri-urban interface creates unusual conditions for poor people and that there are alternative livelihoods that are beneficial to them has spread to organisations of government and to NGOs in the project locations. In the case of Hubli-Dharwad, this awareness has spread to state government institutions in the capital city.
- Following the promotion of the Node: suite findings in Ghana, several NGOs there requested, and were given, information about PU livelihoods and alternatives.
- The Urban Rural Change Team of DFID (London) was provided specific knowledge products that it requested when it was made aware of the synthesis project (R8491). DFID asked for these findings to be included in briefing documents destined for its country desks and advisers.
- Despite many promotion activities, uptake by international and national governments and development agencies, as well as by other local organisations, as a consequence of the many promotion activities, is not yet evident. This would be expected as any uptake that is taking place is likely to require a considerable period before it is discernable through changed practices.

Further work

This research has only scratched the surface of what is not known about the livelihoods of the peri-urban poor and what might be done to improve them. NRSP research was able to pilot test only 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. There is much more to be learned about the characteristics of the alternative livelihoods that work in the PUI and those that do not. More knowledge is also needed about how poor peri-urban people can be helped to move to new livelihoods.

Findings about peri-urban poor people may provide lessons for dealing with rural to urban migration. A peri-urban interface 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 well-being similar to urban migration, even though other impacts may well be very different. An advantage of studying peri-urban 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.