

## Poorest Peri-Urban Inhabitants Require Assistance to Escape Poverty

**Inhabitants of the peri-urban interface (PUI) are aware of the emerging urban opportunities but the poorest need support to be able to understand and access them.**

As cities expand, the surrounding peri-urban areas also move outward, and the peri-urban interface is not a homogenous area but a fragmented mosaic of changes. The research confirms that people's livelihoods undergo a sustained transition as they move from a rural base to an urban one.

The level and rate of change is highly differentiated across the peri-urban interfaces studied and this heterogeneity is reflected in people's livelihood strategies. Poor and very poor people in particular, tend to adopt complex and sometimes contradictory strategies. Patterns based on gender and distance from the city also differ significantly from location to location.

The range of income-generating activities undertaken in the PUI is broad, including casual labour in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, artisanal activities, trading, non-cash agricultural production and resource extraction, amongst others. The diversity of this range indicates the extent of the potential, and many people are already successfully taking advantage of the increasing array of opportunity. However, for the poorest and those made newly vulnerable by resource degradation and alienation from long-standing land-use rights – a disproportionate number of whom are women – breaking out of the poverty cycle can actually become more difficult.

Because poor and very poor people have fewer of the livelihood assets needed to achieve the flexibility to respond successfully to urban opportunities and threats, they often require support in order to succeed. Traditional rural knowledge and skills may be insufficient to compete in a modern economy. Limited information sources contribute to lower levels of business innovation and consequently adversely impact on capacity to take advantage of new opportunities. In particular, the research shows that women have fewer

information sources than men, placing them at a further comparative disadvantage.

The cycle is familiar: lack of wage opportunities, limited access to investment funds, poor levels of education, and declining access to natural resources restrict the ability of the poorest in a community to accumulate savings and consequently to invest in improving productivity and in expanding the scale of urban-oriented, income-generating activities. Consequently, these people are liable to become trapped in a cycle of 'peri-urban subsistence' that they cannot escape solely through use of their own resources.

The problem lies not so much in a lack of awareness of the opportunities that exist, though a paucity of the practical skills needed to exploit those opportunities is often an issue; the primary blockage lies in a lack of access to more tangible assets. Breaking the cycle may require an external injection of resources through new or existing civil society institutions or state agencies.

### **Akosua's story**

Akosua is a 36 year old fruit seller living in the more urban village of Abrepo in Kumasi. Prior to joining Boafo Ye Na (BYN) project, she had a very low level of working capital, which limited the range and quantity of fruit she could buy, resulting in a very poor return on her activities. After accessing a loan from the project she added lines of fruit that she had not previously sold, as well as buying greater quantities for re-sale. She now sells oranges, bananas, pineapples, watermelons and apples and has increased the scale of her activity.

Prior to the project she considered herself poor but now she considers herself average as a result of improvements to her income-generating activity. Her relationship with others has improved, especially with her family, as she no longer has to request money to pay debts and is able to contribute to the household income and children's school fees. Her husband now consults her on family issues and she contributes to family decision-making.

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*This is a message from new research into lives affected by the meeting of rural and urban; of country and town: the meeting called the **peri-urban interface**. It is a product of ten years of study, focusing on livelihoods, systems of production and poverty in Kumasi (Ghana), Hubli-Dharwad and Kolkata (both India). It was funded by the Natural Resources Systems Programme of the Department for International Development of the UK Government (DFID), for the benefit of developing countries. The view expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.*

**The source of this brief is "A Synthesis of Peri-Urban Research of Kumasi, Hubli-Dharwad and Kolkata PUIs" at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/research/previous/synthesis/index.html>, which is also Annex B of the Final Technical Report of NRSP Project R8491**

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## **Policy Implications**

*Helping the poorest amongst those at a city's peri-urban edge to take advantage of dynamic*

*opportunities primarily requires an improvement in their access to resources such as financial capital, skills, and information (especially regarding market activity).*



**DFID Natural Resources Systems Programme**



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