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POLICY BRIEF

URBAN TRANSPORT & SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

This document is a part of series of six policy briefs that identify interactions of the urban transport with six UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG1: No Poverty, SDG3: Good Health & Well-being, SDG5: Gender Equity, SDG8: Economic Growth, SDG11: Sustainable Cities & Communities, and SDG13: Climate Action.

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

About

This policy brief is part of the OPTIMISM (Opportunities for Climate Mitigation and Sustainable Development) project. OPTIMISM is an international multi-stakeholder partnership and research network funded by the UK Natural Environment Research Council as part of the research council's "Towards a Sustainable Earth" program. The international team consists of four partners: (i) Imperial College London, UK, (ii) Lund University, Sweden, (iii) Waseda University, Japan; and (iv) Ahmedabad University, India. Dr. Darshini Mahadevia (Principal Investigator-India) and Dr. Minal Pathak (Co-Principal Investigator) lead the project team placed in India that is supported and funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India. The project team in India consisted of Dr. Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, Saumya Lathia, Amitkumar Dubey, Kanika Gounder, Bandish Patel, and Saleem Yatoo.

Adopting a whole-systems perspective, the OPTIMISM project uses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework to analyze (i) the change in human development and the environment amidst rapid and extensive climate action and (ii) the role of insights from sectoral-SDG interaction in creating policies and practices that enable a transformational change. This document is a part of series of six policy briefs that identify interactions of the urban transport with six UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG1 - No Poverty, SDG3- Good Health & Well-being, SDG5 - Gender Equity, SDG8 - Economic Growth, SDG11- Sustainable Cities & Communities, and SDG13 - Climate Action. The document stems from a literature review of over 250 publications.

Authors: Darshini Mahadevia, Saumya Lathia, Shaurya Patel, Kanika Gounder, Minal Pathak, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay

Contributors: Bhavya Patodi, Isha Iyer and Kanika Bajaj.

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SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

What's the Goal & Why Does It Matter?

The Goal: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth can drive innovation, progress and decent job creation and higher quality of life for all. Yet, about 50% of world's population lives on the equivalent of US\$2 a day [i]. In most places across the world, having a job does not guarantee one's ability to escape poverty [ii]. COVID-19 pandemic created a global financial shock and affected the decent work opportunity for tens of millions of people especially for the most vulnerable population and enabling conditions that heightened the risks of increased poverty & inequality. It impacted global unemployment significantly; about 73 million youth are estimated to be unemployed in 2022, a six-million above the pre-pandemic level of 2019 [iii]. Sustainable economic growth is a product of successful integration of economic, social and environmental targets [iv] [v] [vi].

Despite isolated achievements across the world, progress towards SDG 8 is slowing down [iv]. An urgent acceleration with speed and scale is required to support SDG8's dimensions – sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth [vii] [viii] [ix]. SDG8 is inextricably linked to many of the other goals, and failure to advance SDG8 has the potential to derail the progress on related goals like SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG10 (Reducing Inequalities). A sustained growth requires structural transformation, diversification and innovation to support long-term growth in productivity, income levels and decent work opportunities [iv] [x] [xi].

What is its relationship with Transportation?

Transportation plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty by providing access to employment, education, basic goods and services. Improved transport also boosts a country's economy and creates more jobs and opportunities for everyone, including women [xii] [xiii] [xiv]. However, it's worth noting that the relationship between transportation and its significant potential benefits is not always straightforward and may sometimes be indirect or secondary.

Access to Economic Activities through Transport

The transport sector is an enabler for better productivity, job creation, and economic growth (SDG8.1) [xv] [xvi]. Urban transport opens employment opportunities, particularly for those with low mobility (like women, differently abled, socio-economically vulnerable, etc.) [xvii] [xviii] [xix]. Moreover, studies on linkage between rural-urban connectivity and economic productivity show that networks enabling faster and safer access to markets, jobs and other economic and social activities provide significant socio-economic benefits to rural communities. (8.2) [xx] [xxi] [xii]. It furthers income generation and improves farmer's livelihood activities.

Sustainable transport fosters green growth following a low-carbon development pathway (SDG8.3). Several cases of spatial and modal mismatch indicate that youth have a greater barrier in accessing employment, education or any other forms of training (SDG8.6). Hence, a reliable and well-connected transportation can forward progress on this target [xxiii] [xxiv] [xxv]; multilateral development banks have committed more than \$175 billion in loans and grants for transport in developing countries over the coming decade (2013–22) [xxvi]. In Malaysia's Iskandar region, where severe traffic congestion in business districts hampers economic growth, the city introduced public transport networks with bus-priority lanes, and reported improved economy and productivity [xxvii].

Employment generation through Transport

Transport is a major employment sector offering a diversity of jobs [xxviii] [xxix] [xxx] ; in Europe, for instance, the transport industry directly employs more than 10 million people, accounting for 4.5% of total employment [xxxi]; manufacturing of transport equipment provides an additional 1.5% employment [xxxii]; the Indian railways employ close to 1.5 million people [xxxiii], and is the largest government employer in the nation [xxxiv]; In addition it has committed to reaching 100% electrification by 2023-24 and reaching net-zero by 2030 potentially creating new additional jobs in the sector. Studies in African context illustrate that every direct job in the transport service sector usually results in 2 to 2.5 indirect jobs in other sectors [xxxv]; in the global South, high-income groups often employ drivers (that largely belong to low-income groups), expanding decent work opportunities [xxxvi] [xxxvii] [xxxviii].

Shared mobility also creates decent work opportunities for the low-income population within the transport sector [xxxix] [xli]. Access to finance increases access to e-rickshaws or tricycles for local employment activities (SDG8.10). Auto rickshaw industry is a major employer for low-skilled labour [xlii]; E-Rickshaws have lower entry barriers than regular rickshaws, are more convenient to drive and generate ample employment opportunities especially for the urban poor. In Bangladesh, Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) drivers are report substantial increase in the daily average income after they switched to IPT from other low-paying jobs [xliii]. Similarly, 89% of e-rickshaw drivers in Delhi witnessed an increase in income as compared to their previous employment; almost 40% drivers transitioned to E-rickshaws from either cycle-rickshaw or unemployment [xliv] [xlv]. Although automobile industry's transition to electric vehicles (EV) may result in a short-term decline in employment during the, with a large-scale worker's skill upgradation program, EV manufacturing has the potential to significantly increase employment and economic

outcomes for workers [xliv] [xlv].

Low-carbon transport modes like walking, cycling, Public Transport (PT) etc., fosters a synergy with tourism-based economy by enabling safe, affordable and comfortable access to tourists while promoting local employment and sustainability (SDG8.9). But many tourist cities in the global south often lack of non-motorized transport (NMT) and PT infrastructure, which translates into road safety issues, overcrowding and inconvenience of access, hampering tourists' mobility, and in turn affecting the city's tourist base [xlvii]. Insufficient and inadequate regional connectivity is also perceived as a major roadblock in expanding the tourist base of cities in the global south, leading to a curbed economic growth [xlviii].

Many transport interventions like road-widening and other transport infrastructure projects often adversely impact street vendors and other informal workers who earn their living on the streets, decreasing the percentage of urban poor engaged in decent work (SDG8.5). And hence transport infrastructure projects must be sensitive to the urban poor's[1] challenges and concerns [xlix].

Employment productivity through Transport

Efficient transport and logistics are fundamental for economic productivity (SDG8.2). Traffic congestion imposes a heavy burden on the economy as it affects workers' productivity by forcing them to lose more time and stress in commuting, loss of more fuel, more emissions and increasing workers' household expenditure on transport (up to 10 % in Lima, Peru) [li] [lii].

In urban areas, a large section of informal workers (have low skills and) migrate from rural areas in search of employment and take to earning livelihood on the streets/ public spaces when they can't find other means of livelihood [liii] [liv]. They often commute via NMT modes and travel with handcarts, animal driven carts or cycle rickshaws; making road safety crucial to their jobs. The lack of active transportation

infrastructure often affects their livelihood and their personal safety and security [lv] [lvi] [lvii]. Hence safe and robust active and public transport is an integral part of safe/ secure working environments (SDG8.8) [lviii] [lix]. Reliable and affordable transport also increases productivity of labor, especially for women as they can save time from unpaid labor and spend time on paid labor (SDG8.1) [lx] [lxi] [lxii].

How can transport empower and advance Decent Work & Economic Growth?

Low-carbon Transport has a two-way relationship with economic growth. Transport provides access to economic opportunities, leading to employment and economic growth. Once GDP increases, demand for transport increases, which must be met through low carbon transport.

What can states do?

States can empower and advance decent work & economic growth through the following:

- Promote public transportation investments in system expansion, infrastructure, service provision, etc.
- Develop partnerships with stakeholders to advance sustainable transport initiatives.
- Encourage private sector investment in sustainable transportation infrastructure.
- Promote alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, and creating a supportive environment for low-emission vehicles.
- Encourage innovation, research and development in sustainable transportation.
- Incentivize companies and individuals to adopt sustainable mobility solutions.
- Introduce training and education programs for workers in the transport sector to upgrade their skills and knowledge in sustainable transportation technologies and practices.
- Promote holistic planning in cities to ensure transport links between urban and rural areas.

- Integrating sustainable transport into statutory urban planning and land-use laws and regulations.
- Enable transport policy conditions to foster economic opportunities for most vulnerable and poor population.

What can cities do?

Transport can effectively empower and advance decent work and economic growth in the cities:

- Promote and encourage alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, and creating a supportive environment for low-emission vehicles. For example bike-sharing system.
- Invest in infrastructure and services to improve the quality and accessibility of public transportation, and reducing its costs to users.
- Promote research and development in sustainable transportation, and provide incentives for companies and individuals to adopt sustainable mobility solutions.
- Support training and education programs for workers in the transport sector to upgrade their skills and knowledge in sustainable transportation technologies and practices.
- Implement measures to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, such as road pricing, congestion charges, and promoting low-emission vehicles.
- Invest in transport infrastructure and services can create job opportunities in the sector, including in construction, maintenance, and operation.
- Improve transport links within cities, reducing transport costs and increasing access to markets, services and opportunities for all.
- Promote safe & secure urban transport option and spaces (Bus stops, Railway Stations, etc.) for working and non-working women.

What can business do?

Business can fast-track the achievement of SDG 8 by:

- Locate businesses and offices near transit oriented developments.
- Encourage sustainable practices in business

transportation operations, such as reducing emissions from company fleets.

- Provide additional incentives for employees to use sustainable transport modes, such as walking, cycling and public transport (ex. Fully or partially financed public transport passes/ cards).
- Provide financial support for bicycle purchase.
- Encourage active transport usage at office facility by providing for supporting infrastructure (ex. bike racks, showers, lockers, etc.).
- Add electric charging stations and other supporting EV infrastructure on office campuses.
- Encourage employees to car-pool by setting up in-house carpooling platforms.
- Promote work-from-home/ teleworking for employees for at least 2-3 days a week.
- Encourage employees and managers to be open to flexible schedules to ensure active transport users can travel safely in non-peak hour and have more flexibility to become work-ready.
- Foster enthusiasm towards active transport by introducing office competitions (ex. Pedometer competition) / rewards programs for walking and cycling miles.
- Partner with local communities, governments, and other stakeholders to provide adequate and safe non-motorized transport infrastructures within the office area.
- Incorporate sustainable transportation considerations into supply chain management practices.
- Provide fair and decent work conditions and benefits to employees in the transportation sector.
- Invest in and support local, sustainable and low-carbon transport infrastructure and services.

Footnotes

[1] For more information on how urban transport affects the urban poor, refer to the policy brief on SDG1 – No Poverty.

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Appendix

SDG 8 Targets

8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.

8.A Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.

8.B By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.

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**Ahmedabad
University**

Contact Us

School of Arts & Sciences, Ahmedabad University, Commerce Six Roads,
Navrangpura, Ahmedabad – 380009, Gujarat, India; Email:
artsandsciences@ahduni.edu.in; Phone: +91.79.61911502

OR

Global Centre for Environment and Energy, Ahmedabad University, GICT
Building, Central Campus, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380009, Gujarat
380009 Email: gcee@ahduni.edu.in; Phone+91.79.61911000