

Patok, Padyak, Pila-pila: **Urban Poor Women Speak Out on** **Transportation Issues**

Roselle Leah K. Rivera

*I*n Philippine cities, the unprecedented pace of motorization (proliferation of private cars, unregulated increase of tricycles, etc) has led to impacts which are at the core of discussion and debate on vital elements of sustainable development: quality of life, environmental integrity, economic viability and social justice. Related to the nightmares of motorization are equally alarming issues: the death toll in road accidents, the damaging effects of noise, and the loss of valuable cultural and historical symbols in the urban landscape. Urban air pollution and traffic congestion are also world-wide plagues. At the top of the totem pole of issues is the nightmare that oil dependence certainly increases the economic vulnerability of many countries.

In the developing countries, private motor cars serve only a small elite. Less than one percent of the people in the Third World can afford a car (Mellouli, 2000). However, the elite in many developing countries have chosen the private car as a rational calculation based on considerations of convenience. The car-owning elite seem to have imported a mind-set along with their vehicles. Western-trained engineers have oriented transport decisions toward the motorized sector. Bad transport policy is one major factor which contributes to the fact that billions are left on foot, or queuing for disorganized and inefficient mass transportation. This in turn has affected their access to jobs, schools, markets, and vital services. One of the most tragic ironies of the 21st century is that in the developing world, vast amounts of valuable things have been relinquished on behalf of motorized transportation. Land and clean air have become lower priority despite the fact that over 99% of people do not own a car, and most of them will probably never do so. (Mellouli, 2000)

What is happening in the Philippines is parallel to the escalating social and environmental impacts of transportation in most countries in the

Asia-Pacific region. In urban areas such as Metro Manila, current transport priorities are such that most investments have been to keep private motor vehicles moving (MMURTRIP, 2001). These impacts fall most heavily on the vulnerable groups in communities—those living in poverty, people with disabilities, the fragile elderly, young children and women.

Related literature from other countries mention that transport is not located in discussions on "settlement issues." While the people affected (by the lack of access to transportation vital for their day to day livelihood) certainly realize the meaning of transport vis-a-vis settlements, it becomes obvious that most politicians and policy makers who throw people out to remote areas are oblivious of the transportation-settlements connection. To begin with, transport is not tightly woven into discussions on the location of credit, housing, water and basic services in communities. According to a study done in the City of Nairobi, 27% of female-headed households depended on walking as their primary form of mobility, compared to only 15% of the male-headed households (Barwell, 1993 in Hook and Peters, 1998). Contrary to common perception, even women in urban areas are more likely than men to be dependent on walking. Walking, for many women, is their only modal choice. Other modes are often not available to them, either because they are too expensive, or located too inconveniently and far away (Hook and Peters, 1998).

A review of available literature points out the need to take into account women's modal preferences in transport infrastructure planning. As one World Bank study in Dhaka, Bangladesh showed, 35% of female commuters relied on cycle rickshaws as their sole mode of transport, with a few more using them in combination with bus services and scooters. One fourth of all women also relied on rickshaws for accessing educational facilities. When the government of Bangladesh recently proposed to ban rickshaws from the streets of Dhaka, they were in fact singling out not only the most environmental friendly mode available, but the one transport choice most essential and accessible to women, thereby gravely affecting their mobility (Hook and Peters, 1998).

The above transport-related concerns must be woven into discussions of the ideals of sustainable human development, which are increasingly being embraced by the international development community. Yet the above negative impacts and concerns should not be seen as inevitable (Sustran, 1998). Community groups, concerned academics and politicians in the country are now actively searching for solutions. A few NGOs,

specifically environment and urban issue-oriented organizations, are beginning to take interest in the issue and crave for progressive information to address the situation.

Available literature from other countries also point out how community-based groups, non-profit agencies and people's organizations are not visible in evolving community strategies for many issues, including transport issues (SSP, 1998; STF, 1997).

In any planning process for transport concerns, it is best to consult and involve the community which will be affected. However, traditional engineering approaches usually distrust community involvement and insist that transport planning is a technical matter that must be left to the experts. The danger in this pervasive belief is that interests only of big businesses, such as oil companies, vehicle manufacturers, construction contractors, large property owners and developers will be heard.

It is a very sad situation that today, many countries, including the Philippines, have left crucial decisions on transport priorities to politicians, transport planners and engineers. In 2002, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the widest read broadsheet in the country, published a news article about infrastructure projects in the Philippines closely scrutinized by urban-issue non-profit groups, emphasizing the social costs on thousands of Filipino families of such "development" projects: the upgrading of the Batangas pier and the Cebu ports affected 91,000 families, the Rehabilitation of the Pasig River and the Sucol and Tullahan River in Malabon, is expected to displace 98,000 people; the Manila North Rail Transit, would raze approximately 215,000 houses in Paco, Manila; Calamba, Laguna and Mabalacat, Pampanga are also documented to be affected by parallel infrastructure initiatives.

1. Gender Responsive Transport Planning

Development planning, while becoming more open to greater participation by different sectors of society, still remains blind to the differential gender impact of transport policies and programs. The participation of women especially in local communities is also not seen as a key element in program implementation. This is largely a product of the dominant thinking that transport is part of the "hard core" sectors dominated by international agencies and top down state-led planning.

Women are the backbone of the economic life in the developing world (World Bank, 1995/1996) yet women are absent in the transport policymaking process. Not only are they absent in the design and management of the transport system but they are also excluded from making inputs as user groups. There are few opportunities for exchanges of ideas between transport planners and researchers on perspectives of women that are emerging from work with women leaders in local communities, non-profit organizations and community organizations.

A historical review of the development of settlements traces the dynamics of many intervening variables that lead to the current situation. In the past, less mobility was needed because services were located in or near communities. As services went further away, more mobility was needed and this was most conveniently made possible by private motor vehicles. (Sustran, 1998)

In light of the above, gender analysis is part of a general reorientation of transport planning away from a focus on facilitating the movement of motorized vehicles to one that starts with an analysis of basic household mobility needs.

Major differences in the basic mobility needs of women vis-à-vis men are grounded on the gender-based division of labor within the family and community. Men are conventionally recognized as those who belong to the "public sphere" — as taking on the role of bringing income to the household as "breadwinner." Women, in turn, are tasked with the multiple burdens of doing the litany of reproductive/caring and nurturing work based in the "private" sphere— in the confines of the home and community. More often than not, this caring work, which majority of women do, has no equivalent monetary income. Nevertheless, progressive writers have been pushing for recognition of the strategic value of all the nurturing work of women.

It is very noticeable that efforts to mainstream gender concerns are "well entrenched" in the sectors of health, social services, agriculture and education. In the Philippines, gender concerns in the transport sector are still to be integrated. Available data from other countries (Peters, 2000) show transport is at the center of women's daily multiple chores. It affects her access to various facilities, utilities and services—the school, the market, the health clinic, the church, the barangay center, and the factories, among others.

National and local government officials need to be made aware of the particular needs of women and other vulnerable groups in society. Even advocates and planners need to be "educated." They need to be able to reconcile textbook principles and standards with the actual situation on the ground. They also need to develop a systematic ear to women's common perceptions and misperceptions. Questions need to be asked, such as, what are the gender specific needs for infrastructure improvements? Beyond conventional considerations of efficiency, information on these needs would sensitize planning for sustainable investments of time and resources.

Thus, transport, as an issue must be viewed as part of sustainable human development. Sustainable human development demands that women's transport and mobility needs be considered very carefully. The impact of current transport systems on their multiple roles must likewise be given a closer look.

In the Philippines, there has been no systematic attempt by any development agency to incorporate women's experiences and knowledge of the transport system. There has been no appropriate gender representation nor feedback on women's transport needs.

There is also an urgent need to begin to build capacity among women in communities, leaders in community organizations as well as those in NGOs working alongside communities. Such a perspective would mean that women and other groups in communities would learn how to assert their rights to have a say in transport issues and to know where to turn for advice, more information or for contacts on specific issues (STF, 1998).

In light of the above, this exploratory research proposes to look into the issues of transport and mobility—issues that have vital implications for the social development and well being of women. This research seeks to initiate a process, which shall at the onset, proceed from a gender-biased viewpoint. This would mean taking on the perspective of women and the particular needs that they bring to fore.

2. Research Methodology

The methodology of the study included (1) review of literature on transport specifically on how they impact on women; (2) key informant

interviews with two representatives each of two community organizations; and (3) focus group discussions (FGD) with women from the two identified organizations.

The two areas selected were chosen based on the following criteria:

- (1) presence of an urban community-based organization with existing programs and projects
- (2) active participation of women in their programs
- (3) at least two years presence of the organization in the community, and
- (4) willingness of the organization to participate in the research.

A transport criteria of access was also considered in the choice of the two areas. One area had access to a main road where public transportation passed regularly. The other area was not located along a main road.

A total of 14 women participated in the focus group discussion at the first urban poor community, Bonanza, located in Parang, Marikina City, 15 kilometers from the Philippine capital of Quezon City. In Bonanza, two women were below 30 years old while the other 11 participants were above 30 years old. Seven women were between 31–40 years old; two were 41–50 years and the last two participants were more than 51 years old. One woman did not state her age.

Twelve reached high school while one went to college. The other one did not give her answer. Three of the participants were recognized leaders in the community organization while the rest were members. Nine of the women in the FGD had work outside the home with paid income while five worked as mothers at home. Thirteen were with intimate partners/married.

In terms of length of residence in the community, nine women have been living in the Bonanza community for more than ten years while the remaining five have lived in Bonanza for less than ten years.

In the second community, Victory Hills, Parang Marikina City, a total of 11 women were participants of the FGD. Of this total, ten were with intimate partners. Two participants were in the 20-30 years age range; six women were 31-40 years old while three were above 40 years old.

On the women in Victory Hills, five reached college, five attended high school while one attended up to primary school. All women were

members of the community organization. More than half of the eleven participants worked at home while five women had paid work outside the home. Nine of the participants have been residents of the community for less than a decade while two of the women have been in Victory Hills for more than a decade.

Data gathered from two communities of Bonanza and Victory Hills shall be discussed with the following themes integrated in the presentation:

- a) How women travel
- b) Women's access to modes of transport
- c) Travel needs of women
- d) Walking and women, non-motorized transport and women, public transport and women

The discussion will weave into the voices of women in the communities on:

- a) disempowering effects of the transport situation on women's overall access and mobility
- b) highlights on women's needs and preference of modes of transport especially as passengers
- c) the need to consider women's transportation experiences in urban planning

3. Transport Glossary

especial This term refers to the special fares charged by tricycle drivers from the usual rate allowed by the local regulatory agency. This special fare is charged because the tricycle would already leave for a lone passenger's destination and not wait for the public transport vehicle to be filled up with five or more passengers. More often than not, drivers also charge this special fare arbitrarily, thus it is usually a source of irritation and complaints by public transport commuters.

Fx (Literally, a five-door model of a utility vehicle manufactured by a particular company) This term is used to refer generally to a taxi or a form of public transport which accommodates ten passengers in an air conditioned vehicle. Unlike the jeepney which has only one exit for majority of the passengers, the FX has four doors where passengers can enter or alight.

langgaman (Literal meaning is a queue of ants) In transport language, areas where one can see organized queues of commuters to be able to ride public transport such as jeepneys.

padyak (Literal meaning is "to kick.") Bicycle with a sidecar used as public transport. Usually found in corners of main roads of urban poor communities.

patok (Literal meaning is "a hit.") A term which refers to speeding jeepneys with reckless drivers. These jeepneys are usually very colorful and can accommodate more than 20 passengers. *Patoks* have stereos blaring loud music during their trips. *Patoks* are usually manned by younger (20-30-year-old) drivers.

pila-pila means several queues of commuters.

sabit (Literal meaning is "to hang.") Passengers of jeepneys, tricycles or buses are unable to sit inside the jeepney because all seats are taken yet drivers allow commuters, from one to as much as five people, usually male, to stand/hang on to the *estribo* (the entrance of the vehicle), holding on to any part of the jeepney or tricycle or bus. This practice is especially dangerous as children (sometimes as many as five youngsters) are commonly seen doing this on tricycles which ferry them to public schools.

4. Bonanza Community

4.1 Women and transport: An overview of the situation

On ordinary days in the lives of women in Bonanza, transportation emerges as an element that allows them to accomplish a string of necessary tasks daily. The unpaid yet important tasks include responsibilities related to nurturing the children and the family, taking the children to and from school, various house chores, marketing food, buying, bringing and selling wares of a small family business, taking a relative to the province and many other reproductive tasks. Walking to the public transport terminal, taking public transport or walking straight to destinations (market, school, etc) is how women are able to fulfill their daily responsibilities.

Short of complaining, the women shared the fact about the narrow range of options for a mode of transport that would guarantee women and their children's safety. One woman said that for short distances, walking was preferable. If the distance was too far to walk, she rode on a jeep but avoided the *patok* because she only got very nervous and anxious. Never mind if the jeepney was not colorful or if the driver was old, as long as being a passenger on a trip meant being out of harm's way.

Another woman respondent owned a bicycle that was used as a *padyak* that she hires out. This is her source of income. For all other respondents, motorized public transport such as the tricycle and jeepney was utilized.

4.2 Problems experienced by women

The women spoke about their experiences, specifically the problems they faced related to transportation. For all the women, traveling is difficult. What transportation mode can help unburden the load of women to get to places they need to be, to allow the multi-tasks of reproductive work slide into their lives more easily?

Problems of transportation were not seen as a concern connected to their being women. The changes in the modes of transportation in the community are seen as a normal fact of life in general and it is a matter of automatically adapting to whatever changes that come their way. There is no such thing as an option that women can choose from, which is the very reason why women do precisely that—accept and adjust. The predominant belief is that there is no choice in the realm of transportation in the everyday lives of people in the community – both men and women. They are not in a position to make choices in the first place and they simply make do with what is available to them in the community. The ultimate objective, as shared by the women participants, is how to be able to lighten the weight of one's traveling situation.

Women have to make adjustments in their lives given the variable times in the day they have to catch a ride to accomplish what they have to do. One woman wakes up in the wee hours of the morning (2:00 a.m.) just so she would not have to get entangled in the traffic. By waking up unusually early, she would be able to reach Divisoria, where she buys goods for her small buy-and-sell business in shorter time and also allows her to get home early.

Women respondents shared that drivers cram their jeepneys with more passengers than the vehicle can accommodate. The ride is very uncomfortable. Because of the need to be home early to attend to the reproductive work awaiting them, women with their children bear the discomfort and heat of the crowded jeepney. Evidently, crowded jeepney rides are a factor in exhausted, worn out bodies women complain about at the end of the day.

Crowding is also a factor for sexual harassment. Speeding and sudden, jerky stops by jeepney drivers also become an excuse of male sexual harassers. Unwanted physical contact because of being so physically close, maliciously touching sensitive body parts of the women commuters are experiences cited in the FGD.

Crowded jeepneys also give rise not only to sexual harassment but also to accidents. There is also shoving and pushing among passengers. According to the women respondents, the shortage of public transport has also resulted in heated arguments between passengers and drivers. To illustrate, one woman related that she was accused of shoving an old woman. She should, according to the commuters, instead ride an FX, or an air conditioned public transport so she would not have to endure the crowded situation of the jeepney.

In the daily struggle of public commuters, women have less chances of getting a seat in public transport, such as the jeepney. "*Pag puno ang jeep, di puwedeng sumabit ang babae, dahil kapag sumasabit ang babae sa jeep pinupulaan ito kaagad ng 'kababae mong tao.'*" (If the jeep is full, women cannot hang on it as she is castigated by the passengers who tell her "it is not suitable for women to hang on at the doorway of jeepneys.") The act of *sabit* is dangerous for everyone and anyone, male or female.

In their regular route, women complain that the public transport has no clear system of charging fares. If there is a system, women respondents said, they are not aware of it. Commuters are being charged "special fares" equivalent to the cost of the whole stretch of the ride from the point of origin to the end as the destination. Women feel this is unfair since they did not ride the public transport vehicle for the entire distance but they are charged for the whole length. If women have a load of bags, they are forced to pay the "special fares" just so the goods they carry would be secure. However, paying special fares does not give any commuter with heavy loads or baggage enough assurance. In one woman's experience in

a journey to her home province, she encountered a situation wherein she was asked to transfer, along with her baggage, from one bus to another and was charged a much higher fare.

While drivers of *patoks* and tricycles are infamous for their reckless driving and maddening speed, women respondents said they have no choice but to ride on these unsafe vehicles to get to their destinations in the shortest possible time. Women respondents observed that it is the young drivers of the *patoks* who are also the adventurous ones. In their words, "*dahil sa adbentura ang mga ito parang nagiging biyaheng langit, umEEKIS ang takbo lalo na yung biyaheng Cubao. Na walang magawa ang mga pasahero dahil sa nagmamadali, na kapag umangal ay pababain ka na lamang.*" (Because they are adventurous and as if they were rushing to heaven, they drive like mad, especially the jeeps heading for Cubao. Passengers are helpless, complainants have been forced to get off the jeep.)

Many women in the discussion raised queries about why fares of public transport remain high despite announcements on reduction of oil prices.

When asked about walking, many shared that it is next to impossible to walk to their places of destination. They shared that it is not safe to walk. Almost all the areas for walking are occupied by motor vehicles speeding by. People who are walking could easily get sideswiped. One woman said "*Tulad dito sa Marikina, may mga bike lane nga, ginagamit naman ito ng mga motorsiklo at jeep.*" (Just like here in Marikina, there are bike lanes alright but the motorcycles and jeeps use the lanes.) The group said that walking is not safe due to the absence of sidewalks.

Many participants in the FGD stated that motor vehicles create so much noise and add to the pollution. *Patoks*, according to the women participants, are another source of noise pollution as the loud volume of the stereo boom continuously throughout the long ride.

Women shared that tricycles are certainly a useful form of transport but they believe there is much that can be done to improve it as a form of transport. Many statements about tricycles surfaced during the discussion. One was that tricycles bring with them so many attendant problems. One woman said that she has experienced riding on tricycles that run dangerously. From her experience, drivers are usually totally inconsiderate of the safety of their passengers. According to her, tricycles run on the opposite lane in the highway, against the flow of traffic to avoid the queue of

vehicles in the other lane. This practice makes women passengers vulnerable to accidents.

Moreover, the ubiquitous tricycles move about unregulated—from abusive charging of fares, to reckless driving and the undisciplined behavior of the drivers. It is important to note that tricycles are being used as a service vehicle for public school children. Women respondents were horrified by how children cram into the small vehicle and hang on (*sabit*, a Filipino term used) the sides and top of the tricycle.

The women participants in the FGD said that there are areas where one can see organized queues of commuters taking the jeepneys. These are known as *langgaman o pila-pila*. However, during rush hour when people are out from their work places or schools, there is a shortage of public transportation. More often than not, these orderly lines of disciplined commuters disappear and the old system of pushing and shoving can again be observed.

4.3 Ownership of modes of transportation

None of the participants own any form of motorized transport. There are a few who own non-motorized transport that are used by male members of the family to run short distance errands or to buy necessities in the nearby market.

4.4 Changes experienced

Women recalled the past when walking was the only way to get to where one needed to go, especially for what they considered to be short distances. Ever since, women always chose the transport mode that saved them time and allowed them to fulfill all the necessary daily tasks.

According to them, there have been no changes in transport for women. They said that they do not want to waste their time traveling.

Women participants said that they feel less safe today because of the problems outlined above. Moreover, the women also noticed that their children are more sickly now, which they attribute to the noticeable pollution emanating from public transport.

4.5 Differences between men and women in transport

Women are marginalized in motorized public transport, particularly jeepneys, since they, especially those carrying young children and heavy plastic bags, cannot compete for limited space on these rides.

Women do almost all of the reproductive work, specifically marketing and taking and bringing children to and from school. Women do several tasks in a day therefore the time they travel is more variable than their husbands.

According to the women participants, males in their family own and use bicycles and non-motorized transport. Women in the community, according to the respondents, are rarely seen on a bicycle. They shared that it is rare that young girls are taught how to cycle. One teacher in the group was very strong in her belief, claiming "*Nakakasira ng virginity at masagwa.*" (She will lose her virginity and it is not fit for women to bicycle.) Members of the community frown upon a girl or woman riding on a bicycle.

4.6 Views on the use of non-motorized transport (NMT)

The groups' discussions allowed women to rethink their ideas about transport. First, the women looked deeply into their situation and realized a connection between transport and their lives. While not seeing the direct impact on their lives the changes in the transportation system, the women expressed that their everyday lives are affected because time on transit eats up a large portion of their day.

Secondly, the women realize that a large portion of their limited family income is eaten up by transport. As one woman said, "*Bumababa ang gasoline ngunit and pasahe ay ganoon pa rin.*" (The prices of gasoline go down but fares are still the same)

Women in Bonanza raised that non-motorized transport might not be practical especially in situations where their loads are heavy, bulky and many. Time is crucial and thus NMT, they believe, may not be appropriate most of the time. The concern was raised that schedules in fulfilling their daily tasks might be delayed if NMT was used.

The women also pointed out that the roads are not safe.

Other women disagreed with the earlier idea presented that NMT was not appropriate and emphasized that many wrong beliefs still dominate the thinking of many members of the community, including women. Members of the group also said that it is a matter of changing these negative beliefs to make the bicycle acceptable.

When asked to choose what to purchase, many in the group chose a sewing machine over a mattress or a bicycle. They believed that a sewing machine will give them income-generating opportunity. Yet, the women were all in agreement that if there were safe roads, they would buy a bicycle instead of a sewing machine. A bicycle, they believed, would mean savings in terms of transport costs especially for short distances. All the women were excited and expressed interest to learn how to ride a bicycle.

4.7 Potentials for women

Walking is still the most popular means of getting to where women have to go. The women prefer to walk the short distances to be able to complete their daily reproductive tasks. However, the situation at present makes women wary of either walking to their planned destination or allowing their children to walk in the streets. Many believe that, unlike before, the streets are not safe anymore.

If the streets were safe, the women participants believe riding a bicycle would not be impossible or difficult. For short distances, using a bicycle would help lessen the burden of the costs of transportation for their families. It must be noted that during the discussion, the participants persistently brought up the situation of pollution brought about by tricycles plying the route in their communities.

Many of the women grew up not learning how to use the bicycle and almost all the participants in the discussion have never had the experience of using a bicycle. One woman, a former public school teacher, insisted that the bicycle is not fit for a teacher to use. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that almost all the other participants expressed enthusiasm to learn how to ride and use the bicycle. The women raised ideas on how the design of the bicycle should be made more women-friendly since they noted that the bicycle is obviously designed predominantly for the use of males. Some suggestions included making the bikes easier to mount as well as other women-friendly ideas like putting a mirror so they could see vehicles coming or other accessories that could load some things on the bicycle.

4.8 Women's Voices on Transport:

Herstories from Bonanza Community

.....
"Transportation fare should be lower for poor families, even free of charge."

Adora Gonzales

"I need twenty five hours or more," Nanay Adora Gonzales, also known as Doy, said of her time. It's a miracle if she can finish all the housework that needs to be done.

She wakes up at 4:00 in the morning each day and prepares the food for her two children who attend school in the morning. At the same time, she fetches water for their bath. By 5:00 a.m., she rouses her children to eat, to take a bath and to get ready for school. By 6:00 a.m., she brings the children to school, which is approximately five kilometers away from their home. There are times when she is kept to stay in school because the teacher talks to her about her children. When she gets back home by 8:00 a.m., she cleans the household. There are times when her husband wakes up at 9:00 a.m. especially when he worked overtime the day before. She would then prepare food for her husband and two other children who go to school in the afternoon.

Whenever laundry work is not "heavy," Doy would do this until 9:30 a.m. Afterwards, she leaves for the market. Sometimes she would buy food for the whole week if cash were available but most of the time she could only buy food for the day. The jeepney ride to and from the market takes approximately 30 minutes. As she reaches home, she would prepare her other two children for school as well as take care of her husband's needs.

In the afternoon, Doy repeats her "morning ritual" for her children who attend the afternoon school session. She then fetches her children who attended the morning session and feed them lunch upon arriving home.

At 3:00 p.m., she goes to the nearby water source to get a place in the queue and leaves her water containers. Then she rushes back home to continue her pile of laundry. By 4:00 p.m., she runs back to the water source just in time for her turn in the queue. She carries the filled containers to her home and finishes the laundry at 6:00 p.m. Then she would try to grab some minutes of rest before starting to prepare the evening meal. By 7:30 p.m., her family eats dinner and leisurely watches television.

By 10 p.m., her husband arrives from work and his food is already laid out on the table. Then Doy washes the dishes. It is only at 11:00 p.m. that Doy finally goes to sleep.

There are days when Doy would peddle dry goods in the Bonanza community or in nearby areas. According to Doy, this takes around five hours. Vending these goods would commence after fetching her children from school at 1:30 p.m. Vending is an irregular activity as it is dependent on the capital she is able to save. Her husband's income is not enough for the family's subsistence.

"Sa mga araw na marami akong tinda, yung gawain ko sa araw tulad ng paglalaba at paglilinis ng bahay ay ginagawa ko sa gabi habang tulog ang asawa't anak ko. Yung gabi ko, nagiging araw." (Whenever I have some goods to sell, I transform night into day. The things that have to be done in the day such as washing clothes and cleaning the house—I do these at night when my husband and my children are asleep. My day activities become my night activities.)

The most common form of transport Doy uses is the jeep and the pedicab or *padyak*.

Doy relates that she usually gets into heated arguments with the driver of the *patok* jeep. Her small children, according to Doy, would almost get thrown off the vehicle. However dangerous, Doy has no choice but to ride this mode because her children are running late for school.

The other mode of transport for Doy is the pedicab, human powered non-motorized transport. According to her, the driver of the pedicab complains of her being overweight and usually demands more than the normal fare. According to the driver of the pedicab, they get tired and pedal more than usual if Doy is their passenger.

Doy has no specific ideas on how to improve the transportation system. According to her, this is not the focus of her attention with regard to the welfare of her children. Her priority is for her children to regularly attend school. "I want my children to be stable, safe and secure schoolchildren," Doy adds. She suggests and hopes that transportation fare should be lower for poor families, even free of charge to reduce the burden of poor parents.

.....

"All the jeepneys with reckless drivers should be taken off the streets."

Susan Jong

Susan Jong has three children. All of them attend classes at the public school. Susan normally wakes up at 4:00 a.m. since she is the water tender in the community water facility. This early, she leaves her household's pails at the water queue. By 5:30 a.m., her water containers are already full and she or her husband would carry the filled containers back to her house.

She would wake her children, cook their breakfast and prepare their bath. Her husband would then go back to sleep.

Susan would bring the two children to school at 6:00 a.m., usually on foot. By 6:30 a.m. she would be back in the house and her *dalaga* (young adult daughter) and her husband would be awake.

Susan and her husband have a small "buy and sell" business. They sell their goods to workers in different factories and communities.

They make a three-hour trek to Quiapo and Divisoria, both located in the city of Manila, three times a week. They leave their house at 9:00 a.m. and shop for their wares for approximately three hours. The trip home to Marikina takes another three hours due to the rush hour traffic. They arrive home at approximately 7:00 p.m.

When the couple needs to go to Manila, Susan requests her neighbor, who has children in the same school, to likewise pick up her children. Otherwise, Susan herself fetches her children.

Susan relates that the teacher of one of her children constantly requests that they talk about her child's behavior in school which needs to be addressed. Thus, Susan has to spend three to four hours waiting and talking to the child's teacher on matters related to the child's welfare.

On "normal" days when Susan is not meeting with her children's teachers, she and her husband are busy earning for their family. As most of their potential buyers are the factory workers who come out from their shifts in the late afternoon or early evening, the best time to sell their wares is from 6:00 p.m. to past 7:00 p.m. They would be home by 8:00 p.m. Selling in the urban poor communities instead of in the factories, however, allowed Susan and her husband to come home earlier by an hour, at 7:00 p.m.

Susan's teenage daughter goes to school in Sta. Mesa in the afternoon. She is given the responsibility to clean the house in the morning. During her free time from school, she would help with the family's laundry as well as in the family's small business. Their other young son also occasionally helps in the "buy and sell" business.

There are times when Susan is left alone to do all the house chores. After 10:00 a.m., when the children are in school, she would do the laundry. While the clothes are in the washing machine, she would clean the house and attend to their small *sari-sari* store. The laundry chores are usually finished by midday. In instances when she has no more time to cook, Susan would just buy cooked food for lunch.

In the mornings, Susan's husband would go around to sell goods in the communities. When sales opportunities are few, he would stop to play chess with men in the community. Once a week, after picking up the children from school in the afternoon, Susan would host a bible study session at their home. Whatever chores left unfinished during the day are done after the bible study session.

Susan is an active member of the community organization. She attends meetings at night after their regular round of selling goods. She actively participates in the activities of her organization such as *Oplan door to door polio vaccinations* and drainage cleaning.

Most often, Susan commutes via jeepney or Fx. She would pay additional jeepney fare to load goods she bought in Manila. While drivers would not demand extra fare for her bulky load, Susan would offer to pay.

Susan mentions her observations on the local government's publicity on the Marikina Bikeways Program. She believes in bicycles. Bicycles, according to her, would be good for children to use in going to school or for women in going to the market. Susan even mentions that it would be good if her own children would use bicycles to school since this would mean less transportation expenses for their family. But to transport heavy loads such as the wares she sells, a motorized vehicle would be needed.

Susan shows excitement when asked on possible recommendations to improve the present transportation system. An articulate woman, she makes a rundown of specific recommendations in a forceful tone:

"Ang daming tricycles. Kahit saan lamang sila, walang disiplina sa kalye. Dapat iregulate ang dami ng tricycle." (There are so many tricycles. They are everywhere and undisciplined. The number of tricycles should be regulated, she suggests.)

"Tanggalin ang lahat ng patok dahil madalas makadisgrasya ito. May insidente na muntik na ako mahulog sa pagkakaupo dahil sa paekis ekis na takbo. Kailangan ng biyaheng direcho ngunit di naman kagaya ng patok." (All the jeepneys with reckless drivers or *patoks* should be taken off the streets because they are the source of accidents. There was an incident when I almost fell off my seat because the jeepney kept on swerving. I believe there should be a direct ride to my destination but not like these reckless jeepneys.)

Susan also complains of the costs of transportation and hopes that public transport fares would be lowered.

"Pabilisin ang paggawa ng MRT mula Marikina hanggang Divisoria para mabawasan ang dami ng sakay papunta dito at menos pa sa oras ng biyahe at trapik." (Hasten the construction of the MRT from Marikina to Divisoria to lessen the inconvenience, saving on our precious time as well as addressing the traffic problem.)

"Gumawa ng paraan para maiwasan ang mga holdapan sa loob ng sasakyan." (Something serious should be done about the hold-ups inside public transportation.)

.....

5. Victory Hills Community

5.1 Situationer: Women and transport

In the early 90s when there were no jeeps entering the community, people just walked from their homes to the jeepney stop or the tricycle terminal along Champaca Street, located at the exit point of the community. Tricycles were the main mode of transport for most people even if the fare was expensive. People took the tricycles since these brought passengers beyond the public roads, sometimes even, until their doorsteps. People did not hesitate to ride tricycles even though it was obvious tricycles were a nuisance, giving off large amounts of noise and air pollution.

The roads until the early 90s, according to the respondents, were very muddy and full of potholes. One had to walk barefoot as the path was very slippery. There were no canals nor drainage systems even though houses were already being built as part of a subdivision. The residents were still the ones who attended to the road to make it passable.

In the past, one could not expect the local government to deliver the needed services. Residents did their share by fixing the area in front of their homes. They built footpaths. During rainy days, water accumulated at the lower parts of inclined roads. The canals built by the residents allowed the water to flow smoothly. These paths, where water flowed, became slippery. Even on ordinary days when women did the laundry, footpaths became very slippery and dangerous. Laundry water was disposed of on these footpaths which brought flooding, with water flowing even into people's houses.

Washing clothes, going to the market and taking children to school are among the activities considered as time-consuming work of women. The women during the discussion shared that traveling also eats up so much of their time.

For instance, a woman sales agent who works outside the community related she is often late, as the jeepney has to weave through three hours of traffic before it reaches her workplace. It again takes another three hours of travel time to get back home. Another woman spends at least four hours taking her children to and from school.

When going to the market, tricycles are often the mode of transport. Passengers, with heavy load of bags, are usually taken nearer to their homes, unlike jeeps where the passengers still have to walk a distance to their doorstep.

The common complaint is the expensive tricycle fare and disrespectful and uncouth drivers. Tricycle drivers also have an unjust system where passengers are forced to alight from the tricycle because the driver refuses to take the passenger to her home.

While the jeepney fare is much lower than the cost of riding a tricycle, much travel time is wasted. Jeepneys only proceed on their trip if it is already full of passengers. Drivers also have the tendency to force passengers to get off the jeepney if they verbalize their complaints about reckless driving.

Most of the time jeepney drivers "drive like drug addicts." They drive "like an insane person, as if their driving is a trip to heaven." Even if passengers have not fully alighted, the drivers are already starting to move. Many jeepneys plying the route from Victory Hills to Cubao have their stereos turned on at high volumes.

The jeepney drivers also demand double payment of fare whenever passengers carry heavy bags. Occasionally, drivers do not stop for passengers with many pieces of baggage. Since jeepneys do not travel into the communities, passengers are charged another Php20 "special" fare to take an additional tricycle ride.

Victory Hills, as its name reveals, is a hilly community with homes lining steep and hilly areas. There are no *padyaks* because of the many difficult-to-pedal uphill areas.

Some community members own bicycles. According to participants, bicycles are primarily used for buying food in the market or for doing errands within the vicinity. The women participants also shared that the reason why women do not like to ride bicycles is because they believe that the design of bicycles is often unsuitable for women. Some participants expressed that it is difficult for women to ride the bicycles. Others even expressed a notion that a woman can lose her virginity if she rides a bicycle. The saddle is too high and it is difficult for a woman to ride a bicycle, one woman said. Another stated that "*kung meron*

mang gumagamit ng bike, nagiging tampulan ng tingin ng mga lalake na lalo na kung naka shorts ang babae." (Women who ride bicycles wear short pants and this usually attracts undue attention and stares from men.)

5.2 *Problems experienced by women*

What are the transport problems women face?

Long hours of travel time is a reality women face everyday. There are women who spend more than four hours a day on the road due to the traffic.

Members of the community have no access to affordable transport modes. There are no public transport modes regularly available to take people into and out of the community. During emergencies, it is very difficult to get a ride outside the community.

Available modes are very expensive for the ordinary commuter. The only mode that brings commuters into their community charge Php20 for a special trip.

Potholed roads are a big problem. Due to unpaved roads, traveling, especially on a *patok* jeepney, is very uncomfortable and dangerous.

Rainy season automatically means slippery and muddy roads in Victory Hills. This brings additional hardships and the possibility of accidents.

The community does not have a proper drainage system, which causes continuous flooding in the area. Water used in laundering clothes as well as rainwater flows into the homes of the residents due to the absence of canals and drainage system.

For the women, the distance one has to walk from within the community to the public transport terminal is far, with the roads unlit. More often than not, women are forced to pay the expensive fare of a tricycle because they do not feel safe walking in these roads especially at night.

Even on the public transport vehicle such as the jeep or the tricycle, there has already been a series of hold ups. There was one case in Bonanza where the woman was stripped naked when she was held up.

Passengers are at the mercy of tricycle drivers in terms of fares charged and the route where it would pass. Even the drop off location of the passenger is solely the tricycle driver's choice.

The cost of the jeepney fare is also arbitrary when it comes to passengers with bags and heavy loads.

Residents of the communities often complain of the noise generated by the tricycles. They also complain that the smoke from the exhaust is very polluting.

5.3 Ownership of modes of transportation

Of the 11 who attended the FGD, six owned bicycles. According to them, their husbands use these bicycles when they buy goods from the market. Only two of the women know how to ride a bike because others were never taught how to ride one. They also said that the roads are too steep and hilly for them to use a bicycle.

5.4 Changes experienced

The respondents expressed that there has been very little positive changes since they built their homes at Victory Hills. One of the few changes is the improvement of the main road which resulted to a smooth ride in going to the community. People are also able to walk on a pathway without getting mud on their feet. The improvement of the water drainage, which also gave a positive effect to the transport system, was likewise an effort of the individual residents.

Much of the time in the discussion was spent sharing negative experiences on the public transport modes and the problems experienced by the women in the community. An important note is that the women see these as facts of life, which are so ordinary and do not need to be addressed. This is despite the fact that one woman spends four hours on travel alone in taking her children to and from the school.

The women expressed helplessness about the situation. For them there has been no positive change and instead, things have only gotten worst. The tricycle and *patok* jeepney drivers are like drug addicts, the epitome of recklessness, who overcharge women trudging along bags and little children. More often than not there is no choice

but to walk very long distances because no public transport is available. Tricycles refuse to go into the community because no one will ride on the way out. The women do not see these problems as connected to the everyday burden of their chores of washing piles of laundry, going to market, going to work outside the community.

5.5 Differences between men and women in transport

Women believe that females are forced to use a greater variety of transport modes compared to men because of their reproductive work. The disadvantages of this situation were outlined by the women participants. Women usually carry the loads from the marketplace in one hand and little children on the other. The need to take a tricycle is obvious yet having to pay expensive fare is certainly a burden for the family who is already on a very tight budget. Furthermore, riding a speeding jeepney like a *patok* is certainly very dangerous. Women also admit that they are less confident and skilled than men in riding a bicycle.

5.6 Views on the use of non-motorized transport(NMT)

Non-motorized transport is viewed as not appropriate for those hurrying to go to work or to bring children to school. It would be difficult for a non-motorized vehicle, specifically a bicycle with a sidecar full of passengers, to trek the hilly community of Victory Hills .

5.7 Potentials for women

The behavior of public transport drivers should be given serious attention by concerned authorities. The women in Victory Hills community believe that the safety and interests of the passengers, especially young children, are not at all in the minds of many drivers. They suggest that women leaders in the community participate in discussions concerning transport so that their views, experiences and the real transportation situation can be articulated to the authorities.

One specific recommendation is a strict regulation of tricycles because the present system of this mode of transport is so unclear. This breeds overcharging and dishonesty on the part of the drivers and exasperation and annoyance on the public commuters.

5.8 Women's voices on transport:

Herstories from Victory Hills Community

"There is a pressing need for public transportation."

Sonia Macabale

Sonia Macabale, 57 years old, teaches at Tondo High School. She travels to Tondo, Manila (approximately 40 kms away) from Monterey, Marikina everyday. Her children are all grown up and on their own so Sonia concentrates on her teaching and the activities of her community organization.

She leaves Victory Hills at 4:00 a.m. because she does not want to be late for the flag ceremonies at her school and more importantly, she said she does not want to get caught in the traffic. Travel time during Mondays, the day of flag raising, is two hours but on other days, travel time is usually at least three hours because of the heavy traffic. She stays in school the whole day until 5:00 pm and she reaches home between 8:00 and 9:00 at night. Almost half of Sonia's day is spent on the road traveling and she feels powerless because according to her, the situation has always been like this and she has gotten used to the way things are.

Patoks draw the ire of Sonia yet ironically, she prefers to ride this kind of jeepney. According to her, she has no choice but ride the *patok* as she is able to save time because of its speed. However, she tries hard to take all the precautions to prevent accidents everytime she rides the *patok*. Sonia thinks tricycles are okay except that they charge an exorbitant amount of Php 20, also known as "*especial*", which, for her, is not okay.

On weekends, Sonia allots her time for the community organization through her involvement in the community day care. She is also active in the community cooperative, which gives out tricycle loans. She shared that the cooperative is seriously thinking about providing loans for jeepneys because the "regular boundary" (or rental for the use of the jeepney) could mean additional income for the members of the cooperative.

In Victory Hills she has to walk almost a kilometer to the jeepney terminal outside the community. The hilly area where Sonia lives is a stretch of uphill hike which she finds difficult especially during rainy weather.

Her suggestions to improve the transportation situation are the following:

1. Units of public transportation should be increased since there is a pressing need for public transportation
2. Review the present jeepney routes and alter these routes from Victory Hills to Bayan (towncenter), Marikina or Cubao
3. Open more alternative routes to ease traffic congestion in present routes

“ The canals and drainage system within the community should be fixed. “

Lita Atabang

Lita's day begins at 5:00 a.m. as she prepares the needed water for the bath of her two children. By quarter to six, she takes her children to school. She waits until 8:00 a.m. to make sure that they really attend classes. From the school, she proceeds to the market to buy food for the whole day. It takes fifteen minutes to reach the market and another fifteen to get home. By the time she reaches their home, her husband is awake and leaves for work in Quezon City at around 10:00 am. Lita shares that the travel time of her husband is approximately four hours one way.

As soon as her husband leaves, Lita does the day's chores such as cleaning the house and washing the clothes. By 1:00 p.m. she picks up her two children from school. Sometimes she stays at the school until 2:00 p.m., as she has to talk to the teacher about how her children are doing in school. She sighs, "It's fortunate that my children are both in the morning section or else I would be spending my whole day bringing them to and from school everyday!"

As soon as Lita and her children get home from school, she prepares their meals and they eat lunch together. She puts them to sleep and

sometimes Lita also rests with them. There are times when she washes clothes in the afternoon, as water is available during this time. According to Lita, since the water supply in the community is rationed, the residents have to adjust their household chores on the availability of water.

In the afternoon Lita attends meetings of the community organization to discuss issues concerning land tenure of the residents of Victory Hills. The meetings usually last for three to four hours. She then goes back home to continue with her unfinished chores, particularly preparing the supper for her family.

At around 7:00 p.m., her children eat supper, while Lita awaits the arrival of her husband till around 10 p.m. While waiting, Lita spends the time tutoring her children on their school assignments or sometimes, watches television with them. She eats supper with her husband at around 10:30 p.m. She washes the dishes at around 11:30 p.m. and goes to bed by midnight.

The tricycle and jeepney are Lita's modes of transport. She complains that the tricycle charges exorbitant rates and there are times when her day's chores are delayed because she refuses to pay for a tricycle ride. According to Lita, "*Dagdag pa ito sa gastusin namin.*" (It is additional burden to our daily expenses.) To save on expenses, Lita usually walks from her home to the jeepney terminal even if it is considerably hilly and difficult to climb. During rainy and stormy weather, Lita has no choice but shell out extra money to ride a tricycle or make a "*especial trip*" meaning extra fare from the usual cost of a tricycle trip to bring her to her doorstep.

Lita has three recommendations regarding the system of transportation:

1. The fare, especially that of the tricycle, should be lowered;
2. Direct route of the jeepney into the community should be considered;
3. The canals and drainage system within the community should be fixed.

6. Concluding Notes

" In summary, one manifestation of poverty is that the poor travel less, have to spend more of their time traveling, and cover less distance, than the wealthy. As the time and money spent traveling cannot be spent on income-generating activities, poor mobility is not only an effect, but also a cause of poverty." (Hook and Peters, 1998)

Transport is known to be one of the most significant investment sectors for many developing countries. Despite its recognized role in development, scant attention has been accorded to the social and gender impacts of transport investments. Conventional planning methods assume that transport programs are "gender neutral". Available literature from various countries of the developing world (Fernando & Porter, 2002) document the pervasive myth that impacts on men and women of transport are the same. Yet trailblazing case studies have begun to document how women comprise a large proportion of people who are economically and socially disadvantaged and who are harmed by transport policies that focus on economic efficiency (narrowly defined) and by automobile-focused transport priorities that do nothing to meet their travel needs. Women also tend to suffer a disproportionate share of external costs, since they can afford less protection against traffic impacts. Increased dependence on private motor vehicles tends to displace non-motorized transport and reduce the variety of public transport available to the poor. (Peters, 2002)

The preceding presentation and discussion sought to give a preliminary picture of Filipino women's travel needs at the community level as the initial step to bring to fore their voices in the discourse on transport, an arena rarely delved into by existing research on women in the Philippines. Among the data presented and discussed was the travel patterns of women in two communities which are diffused in terms of time (4.2,4.8, 5.2,5.8) and location (4.1,4.5,5.1,5.5). Their travel patterns include a variety of trips to educational facilities, various marketplaces, health care and social services, and administrative areas. Their trips are also notably burdensome in that they involve traveling either with many or small children, with large bags and bulky loads (4.2, 5.1, 5.4,5.5) or all these three together. In the two sites of research, it is notable that women make several short trips or necessary trips which they "chain" together. Their travel patterns are not linear, as they include several necessary tasks in one day.

The roads in the two low income communities are unpaved and are not equipped with proper drainage (4.8,5.1) At the surface, this appears to be a main mobility problem. However, if we look closer, access to clean drinking water would come closer to a priority. An irony is that as many poor households do not have piped water, the tendency is to look in terms of building better roads for water collection than cutting the cost of labor of water vendors or water trucks by instead putting in piped water to the households. Looking into the relationship between drinking water, sewerage and drainage is therefore crucial to future research.

Women in the two urban poor communities are dependent on walking (4.4,5.2,5.4) and riding in public transport, specifically, jeepneys, tricycles and non-motorized pedicabs. While most of the women participants in the research were not regular 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. employees who travel on specified times of the day, many of the women were dependent on public transport for their multiple trips. As their communities are not in the regular routes of public transport jeepneys, women are burdened with having to pay expensive fares for tricycles who charge erratic amounts for trips to and from the homes of the women.

As regards public transport, women in both communities (4.2,4.8,5.2,5.8) raised several serious safety issues. Even if these concerns have become commonplace in the lives of public commuters in the Philippines, this research has been able to document them in detail from the eyes of the ordinary public commuter clamoring for action to change this plight. It is in this light that community organizations may present these issues in a forum so that local authorities would be pressed to seriously address these concerns in their governance and regulatory agenda.

In order to ascertain the conditions in communities, municipalities as well as in cities, the call of this exploratory research is to push for a more systematic research agenda — using a gender analysis framework which can elaborate and delve into the gender dimensions of transport. Specifically, more systematic research should carefully document, at the community, local municipality and city levels — (1) the dynamics of diverse activities of women and men; (2) the access to and control of resources and benefits of men vis-à-vis women; and (3) the transport needs and modes used by men vis-a-vis women. The database which will arise from this research agenda must likewise see the connections of these three factors within the larger social, economic, political and environmental context in how opportunities and constraints unfold due to these link-

ages. Issues and concerns on how these linkages can ensure equitable opportunities and treatment for women would be expected from this initial research agenda.

This exploratory research raises the following questions: How can a reasonably participatory process of transportation planning be developed to review and compare various modes of transport? How can user groups from the marginalized sector, especially women in communities, be included in the planning process? How can a space be opened to articulate public interest and the mobility needs of the poor and women who are more often not represented in political processes? Thus, it would also be important to support pilot on-the-ground or community-based initiatives to integrate gender analysis into the transport sector. This would mean support should be given to develop the institutional capacity of community organizations as well as local governments to address the above concerns and issues regarding transport.

Planning and implementing transport programs and projects which can contribute to quality of life for men and women is a formidable task. A reasonable starting point is to build a political base for more sustainable, gender sensitive and equitable plans. This would mean involving the representatives of women's organizations, public transport commuters, and including the voices of pedestrians in the planning process and debates about transport policy. A widely accepted axiom in the vibrant Filipino people's movement, as well as the international development community, is that if plans are developed with the support of key elements in society, then the constituency of such plans will be broadened and the likelihood of their implementation is not only enhanced, but made more meaningful.

References

- Gopalan, Prema. Circumscribed Existence: Women's mobility and Settlements Development. Swayam Shikshan Prayog SSP Mumbai, India (unpublished document). 1998.
- Fernando, Priyanthi and Porter, Gina. **Balancing the Load**. London & New York: Zed Books. 2002.
- Gender and Transport website www.worldbank.org/gender/transport
- Hook, Walter and Peters, Deike. *Transport and Sustainable Human Settlements: A UNDP Policy Review*. New York: Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 1998.
- Mellouli, Khadouia. Position Paper on Air Pollution Control & Prevention & Sustainable Transportation. Tunisian Institute For Sustainable Development. **Velo Mondial 2000: The Versatile Approach**, The Netherlands. June 2000.
- Peters, Deike. Gender and Transport in Less Developed Countries. Background Paper for the Expert Workshop. "Gender Perspectives for Earth Summit 2002: Energy Transport, Information for Decision Making" (www.unedforum.org and www.earthsummit2002.org)
- Sustainable Transport Forum. **Greening Urban Transport Conference Report**, December 11-12 1997 ISO, Ateneo de Manila University. (unpublished report)
- Sustainable Transport Action Network for Asia and the Pacific. 1998. (unpublished document)