

# Status of Farmers and Fishers Turned Pedicab Drivers of Catbalogan City, Philippines

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**Abstract:** Our fishers and farmers are leaving their workplaces to look for a greener pasture in the city, but most of the time their living conditions barely improve. This study assessed the status of the farmers and fishers who left farming and fishing and work as tricycle rickshaw (pedicab) drivers in the city. A sample of 220 pedicab drivers who were farmers and fishers before they became full-time or part-time pedicab drivers were involved in the study. Employing mixed method design, results revealed that 55% of the respondents now live in the city proper while the other 45% still live in the farm or village near the sea. The average daily income of Php250 (about 5 dollars) for an average family of four children was perceived to be not enough for their daily needs, but still, majority viewed Pedicab driving as the easiest way to earn. The majority of fishers consider fishing as more profitable when one is lucky to catch bigger fish but farmers, on the other hand, have to contend to wait for harvest before they can get the earnings they desire. Moreover, the respondents believed pedicab driving is not a lasting occupation, but they have to do it as there are no other means to earn money because of their limited skills which are focused mainly on farming, fishing, and construction work. Major constraints among fishers are when the sea is rough and diminishing fish catch while farmers suffer the effects of typhoons to their farm products in which case they depend on the city and local government units for subsidy and medical aids. This study can provide insight to intervention programs for farmers and fisherfolks in the countryside. capacity.

**Keywords:** countryside, rickshaw driver, poverty, displaced farmers and fishers, impact of agriculture decline

## 1. Introduction

Poverty incidence is high among farmers and fisherfolks in the Philippines. Compared to its neighboring countries, almost half of Filipino fisherfolks live below the poverty line (Ranada, 2014). Fisherfolks adjust to the dwindling resources due to overfishing, illegal and destructive fishing, loss of nursery habitats (Añabieza, 2010) while farmers have to bear the effects of climate change such as damage on crops due to extreme and frequent occurrences of

typhoons (Dercon, 2014). These are aggravating reasons why farmers and fishers are leaving their workplaces and turn to pedicab driving in the city to earn money to feed their families.

Agriculture is the primary and often the only source of income among Filipino farmers and fisherfolks. The average income of Filipino farmers is only less than Php2,000 (about 40 dollars) a month which is difficult to make both ends meet for his

family of six people. There are times that he has to suspend schooling of his children in the upper-grade levels in town because of the dearth of financial capabilities. Some of them are leaving the farm to look for greener pasture in the city (Estudillo & Otsuka, 1999; Alave, 2011). They end up employed in blue collar jobs because of their low skills and educational qualifications. If this trend continuous, time will come when our nation will face a shortage of food because there will be no more farmers and fisherfolks in the countryside. Hence, need to boost this dying sector is indispensable.

In the study of Cabrales et.al. (2013), most child labourers in Catbalogan City, Philippines have parents who are fishermen (35.6%), farming (24.3%) and tricycle driving (10.2%). Street children in Catbalogan as revealed in the study of Labid (2016) shows that their parents occupation are tricycle drivers (50%), porter (18.75%), fishermen (18.75%) and farmers (12.5%). Clearly shown, that children of the fishermen, farmers and tricycle fathers risks to become child labourer or street kids. Farmers and Fisherfolks continue to be one of the poorest in the country because of declining fish stocks and the recent typhoons that damage most agricultural products. To achieve economic growth and stability, the government agenda must prioritize to improve the condition of the so-called workers of the backbone of our economy. One of the measures to increase productivity is to lure the young generation to take agricultural courses and to consider agribusiness and engage in alternative livelihoods (Cinner, 2014; Sievanen, et.al., 2005). Another is to include the fish catch contributed by female fishers (Kleiber, Harris & Vincent, 2014). However, despite the local government efforts to help these farmers and fisherfolks in the countryside, migration to the city is still prevalent. One

common observation is that it is easier to earn money in the city than in the farm (Irene, et.al, 2015; Gu & Ryan, 2008).

Pedicab driving is an alternative occupation of farmers and fishers because there are fewer job opportunities present in the area, especially for undergraduate employees. However, these fisherfolks and farmers are too old for this kind of job which requires stamina and endurance (Guillen, 2000). In the country, the average age of Filipino farmers and fishermen is 57 years old (Alave, 2011).

Catbalogan City was a first class municipality before it was converted into a city. This Western Samar Capital is strategically located for commercial, trading, educational, political and financial activities. It has a population of 94,317 (2010 Census) and a total land area of 274.22 square kilometers. Samar also boasts of its marine resources generating about 26,121 MT of fish products in 2004 in which some were exported to other provinces. Samar province is a major supplier of fish products to Metro Manila ([samar.lgu-phil.com](http://samar.lgu-phil.com)). Despite the financial opportunities in the city, the face of poverty is still prevalent in the area. Poverty incidence is high and has not changed much from 37.4 in 2009 to 36.0 in 2012 (NSCB, 2013). In spite of rich natural resources, the island of Samar has the ten poorest municipalities of the Philippines and the region is one with a high incidence of poverty. Region VIII's worst poverty incidence of families rose from 35.3 percent in 2003 to 40.7 percent in 2006 (NEDA, 2010).

In his 16-point government agenda, former President Aquino aimed to increase productivity in agriculture and fisheries from 4.6% to 5.7% output and 7%-8% growth increase in the GDP by 2016

(NEDA, 2011). To achieve this goal, investments in agriculture infrastructure took place, and fishery budget increased from Php4.92 B in 2014 to Php6.02 B in 2015. With this development, there is a bright future in the farming and fishery sector. However, the data shows a dismal result. It is speculated that poor farmers and fisherfolks did not directly benefit from these programs for their conditions continue to languish. Fishers are leaving the farm and shifting work (Turgo, 2014) while farmers still have limited access to information and technology to improve their lot (Koffa & Garrity, 2016). Hence, the current Duterte administration in his 10-point socioeconomic agenda ensures that projects and programs of the government should cater to the needs and interests of the worker and make its benefits felt by all Filipinos (DOH, 2016).

## 2. Objectives

This project aimed to qualitatively assess the situation of farmers/fisherfolks who turned to pedicab driving in Catbalogan City. It sought to find out possible intervention for our farmers and fishers to go back to their previous work in farming and fishing. Specifically, it sought to answer the following objectives:

1. Determine the profile of the Pedicab drivers of Catbalogan City;
2. Determine the profile of farmers-fishers turned Pedicab drivers/operators in Catbalogan City;
3. Assess the living condition, daily routines, work schedules of the respondents; and
4. Assess the problems, job difficulties, as well as needs and aspirations of the respondents as input to formulate intervention program among farmers and fisherfolks, turned Pedicab

drivers.

## 3. Methodology

The researcher conducted a mixed method design to assess the status of the pedicab operations in Catbalogan City. Specifically, it employed an interview schedule, focus group discussions and Key informant interviews to triangulate the responses of the participants. Simple frequency count and percentage analysis were used to analyze the quantitative data. Further, documentary analysis of the secondary data was also done.

Research locale is the city of Catbalogan, home to about 103,000 Catbaloganons (2015 Population Census, PSA, 2016), as what the locals are called, spread out in its 57 barangays (villages) of which 22 is located in the city proper while others are rural, upland and coastal and island barangays. Since the concentration of pedicab operations is in the city proper, only pedicab drivers and operators operating in the city proper were involved in the study.

In the first phase of the study, about 220 respondents were purposively selected after they qualified to the inclusion criteria of the study. From this number, about five participants were identified as participants in the case studies.

## 4. Results and Discussion

There were about 220 pedicab drivers who were involved in the study and were selected, interviewed and monitored during the period from June 2014 – October 2014.

### 4.1 Profile of Pedicab Drivers

Findings of the study disclosed that

Table 1. Residence of Pedicab Drivers of Catbalogan City

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
City Proper (Poblacion)	121	55
Upland barangay	29	13
Coastal barangay	52	24
Outside Catbalogan	18	8
Total	220	100

Table 2 Profile of Pedicab Drivers of Catbalogan City.

Demographics	Pedicab Drivers of Catbalogan		Farmers-Pedicab Drivers Only		Fishers-Pedicab Drivers Only	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>						
Below 15 years old	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
16-20 years old	13	5.91	0	0.00	0	0.00
21-30 years old	84	38.18	25	53.19	20	38.46
31-40 years old	59	26.82	18	38.30	30	57.69
41-50 years old	37	16.82	4	8.51	2	3.85
More than 50 years old	27	12.27	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Single	30	13.64	5	10.64	3	5.77
Married	176	80.00	40	85.11	45	86.54
Widow/widower	9	4.09	1	2.13	2	3.85
Separated	5	2.27	1	2.13	2	3.85
<b>Educational Attainment</b>						
No schooling	3	1.36	1	2.13	2	3.85
Elementary Level	54	24.55	3	6.38	13	25.00
Elementary Graduate	78	35.45	20	42.55	16	30.77
High school level	50	22.73	17	36.17	11	21.15
High school graduate	29	13.18	6	12.77	10	19.23
College level	3	1.36	0	0.00	0	0.00
College graduate	3	1.36	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Number of dependents</b>						
No dependent	7	3.18	1	2.13	0	0.00
1 – 2 dependents	65	29.55	2	4.26	15	28.85
3 – 4 dependents	110	50.00	37	72.34	30	57.69
5 – 6 dependents	26	11.82	6	12.77	5	9.62
7 – 9 dependents	12	5.45	4	8.51	2	3.85

most of the pedicab drivers in Catbalogan live in the city proper of Catbalogan while others were from the upland and coastal barangays and nearby towns of Catbalogan. It is notable in the table that about 45% of the participants came from upland and coastal areas who were farmers/fishers when

they are at their residences.

The ages of the participants range from 18-65 years old, predominantly male, married and have two to six dependents. Most of them are elementary and high School levels only but surprisingly, about

Table 3. Comparison of Farmers/Fishers and Non-farmer/fishers Pedicab Drivers

Variables	Non-Farmer/Fisher Pedicab Drivers		Farmers-Pedicab Drivers		Fishers-Pedicab Drivers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Hours Spent in Pedicab driving per day</b>						
1-2 hours	2	1.65	0	0.00	0	0.00
3-4 hours	12	9.92	0	0.00	0	0.00
5-8 hours	38	31.40	13	27.66	9	17.31
9-10 hours	59	48.76	32	68.09	40	76.92
More than 10 hours	10	8.26	2	4.236	3	5.77
<b>Daily Income</b>						
Less than 100	1	0.83	0	0.00	0	0.00
101 – 200	56	46.28	2	4.26	2	3.85
201 – 300	45	37.19	10	21.28	30	57.69
301 – 400	12	9.92	26	55.32	12	23.08
401 – 500	2	1.65	6	12.77	6	11.54
More than 500	5	4.13	3	6.38	2	3.85
<b>Years of pedicab driving</b>						
Less than one year	30	24.79	8	17.02	10	19.23
1 – 2 years	38	31.40	10	21.28	14	26.92
3 – 4 years	19	15.70	10	21.28	15	28.85
5 – 10 years	16	13.22	14	29.79	10	19.23
More than ten years	18	14.88	5	10.64	3	5.77

23% are college level, and 21% have finished college degrees. However, none of the fisherfolks and farmers have finished college degrees. In the interview with them, these farmer/fisher-Pedicab drivers were occupied in their fishing/farming activities and the good income back then that they have become disinterested in finishing college degrees. Some of them engaged in an early marriage that they have to quit their studies and resorted to pedicab driving to finance their daily family expenses.

It can be averred from the data that only a few are young drivers and majority are in their early adulthood which is at their early marriage stage. This observation runs congruent with the literature that those married males tend to resort to pedicab driving as their fastest means to earn income to feed their families. They cannot wait for a good job, or they have just taken the Pedicab driving as the only easy way available to earn money needed to survive a

Table 4 Income and support derived from other sources aside from Pedicab driving

Respondents' other sources of income	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	32	15
Fishing	40	18
Construction Work	18	8
Government support (4Ps, etc.)	40	18
LGU support (Rice, canned goods, etc.)	25	11
None	65	30
Total	220	100

day. This kind of job ensures only food on their table for a day, and they have to work again for tomorrow. Young people have plenty of opportunities aside from Pedicab driving. Hence, they venture into other jobs, and when there is no other job left, they went to Pedicab driving (Irene, Laurilla & Bajado, 2015).

Farmers are shifting work and derive income from non-farm activities (Estudillo & Otsuka, 1999; Leones & Feldman, 1998). Climate change and other natural calamities are major culprits for low income in the farm (Dawson, 2014; Kurukulasuriya & Rosenthal, 2013).

The majority of the pedicab drivers of Catbalogan City spent five to eight hours of driving a day, usually starting off at six AM, taking breaks during breakfast at nine AM, lunch time and take a nap until two PM, and resume pedicab driving until six – seven p.m.. Regarding years of pedicab driving, most of them have spent more than five years in pedicab driving, followed by one to two years, while some of them have just started in one to two years ago. The mean of their daily net income is about Php150.00 which is mostly derived from pedicab work. For farmers/fishers – pedicab drivers, they have to work longer to compensate their days' worth and fare in going to Catbalogan from their respective

barangay and back. Thus, they have bigger daily income than other pedicab drivers.

During planting and harvest time, the farmer-pedicab drivers would usually ask for leave of absence to attend to their farm. Fishers-Pedicab drivers, on the other hand, split 50/50 of their week in pedicab driving and fishing which they can also earn. Sometimes they go with bigger boats as helpers. Some of the coastal residents who do not own a boat would rent or borrow from their neighbors, but they have to split their income into three. One part goes to the owner of the boat, one-third goes to the operational expenses, and one-third goes to them. They do not go to the sea when it is rough and during a full moon. During this period, they have to go on Pedicab driving to sustain and meet their daily needs.

The skills learned by the participants is inherent to the environment they got used to. Since Catbalogan is a coastal and agricultural land, the majority of the participants learn how to fish or till a land. When they left their farm and went to the city, some of them entered construction work where they derived most of their income aside from Pedicab earnings. They were fortunate that the government had included them in the 4 Ps beneficiary (a conditional cash transfer program). They also use the money to buy food and schooling for their children. About 11 % of

Table 5. Ailments, Problems and Training needs of Pedicab drivers

Ailments, Problems and Training Needs		Frequency	%
Ailments	Coughs and Colds	100	46.08
	EENT	67	30.88
	Arthritis and Rheumatism	106	48.85
	Kidney	9	4.15
	High blood pressure	6	2.76
	Diabetes	0	0.00
	Others	40	18.43
Problems encountered	Work-related	77	35.48
	Family problems	54	24.88
	Schooling and living condition	59	18.43
Training Needs	Livelihood skills	27	12.44
	Traffic Laws	138	63.59
	Pedicab Driving related	88	40.55
	Tourism related	130	59.91

Table 6. Recreation, Benefits, and Aspirations of Pedicab drivers

Recreation, Benefits, and Aspirations		Frequency	%
Recreation activities	Strolling around	42	19.35
	Drinking	65	29.95
	Gambling	4	1.84
	Going to farm/sea	24	11.06
	Watching TV	116	53.46
	Repairing tricycle	63	29.03
	Others	142	65.44
Benefits Derived from work	Incentive	1	0.48
	Christmas Bonus	12	5.71
	SSS	36	17.14
	None	141	67.14
Aspirations	Own a tricycle	79	36.41
	Send children to college	64	29.49
	Own a house	151	69.59
	Put up own business	50	23.04

the participants revealed they have also received food packs from the City Hall, but about 30% of them did not receive any at all.

#### 4.2 Problems, Needs, and Ailments of Pedicab drivers

The majority of them had acquired ailments due to their strenuous kind of work.

Although others opined that those ailments could be hereditary, yet they are one in agreement that if they could find another stable job, they are going to leave Pedicab driving. They claimed that they are in good health; otherwise, they encounter slight ailments such as coughs and colds. Others stated that they just drink one bottle of alcoholic beverages to relieve muscle

cramps and minor illnesses such as fever and colds.

Most of the job-related problems they encountered were the increasing competitors in the job, the small fares, and the commotion among them as a result of the competition of getting a customer. They have indicated awareness of traffic rules because most of them have attended a seminar as it is required for registration, still, however, they opined it would be beneficial if all pedicab drivers would follow traffic rules and regulations because not all are following it. They would usually mock their fellow drivers when they are caught by traffic enforcers. They clamor to be given government aids such as Philhealth and free insurance. Training needs are on livelihood skills, traffic laws, pedicab driving and tourism related so that they can boost their daily income.

Most pedicab drivers view tourism as one of the means to boost their income. About 60% of the respondents requested that they be given seminars and trainings related to how they can restructure tourist-friendly pedicab units and how they can handle jobs such as tourism agents to attract more tourists just like in other cities in Macau and New York where pedicabs are used as tourists vehicle (McIntosh, Goeldner & Ritchie, 1995; Irene, Laurilla & Bajado, 2015).

Leisurely, the respondents spent their free time watching television and most of them aspire to own a house, have their pedicab and be able to send their children to college. For bonus and other incentives, it was revealed that pedicab operators do not have a fixed salary and regular drivers for their units. Thus, pedicab drivers do not receive bonuses and other incentives required by law from their operator-employers. There are operators who give

gifts in the form of cash or grocery items during Christmas, but a majority do not give any benefits at all. Those who have SSS acquire it through a self-employed status.

### 4.3 Case Studies

Case 1: Mr. V is 47 years old, a fisherman with a wife and four kids. He has stopped Pedicab driving six years ago. During those difficult times, he was still struggling to catch fishes through the use of the improvised spear. He stopped Pedicab driving when he learned the skill of spearfishing. Now he can catch big fish and sell it for a big amount of money. On the average, he can earn as high as 500 pesos (about 10 dollars) a day. His net earnings in Pedicab driving before is only 250 pesos per day (about 5 dollars).

Quotes from Mr. X:

*“During those days that I do not know the techniques of spearfishing, I have no choice but to drive a pedicab. I have to work to feed my family. Pedicab driving is the easiest job available”.*

Case 2: Mr. W is 54 years old, lives in Brgy. I guide, with a wife and six children and two grand children. He has been a fisherman since he was 12 years old. He did not drive a Pedicab ever since though he consider it a decent occupation and an easy way to earn money. He said he did not find any reason to go Pedicab driving because he can earn money as high as 700 pesos (about 15 dollars) in half a day when he is lucky. His method of fishing is spearfishing and use of nets.

Quotes from Mr. Y: *"I do not stop looking for any job to feed my family. I like fishing because you are the boss, unlike in Pedicab driving that your employer will scold you when your unit gets damage".*

Case 3: Mr. X is 74 years old, with wife and four children, and grandchildren. He is a fisherman and used to have a bigger boat in fishing before. Now he does not go to the sea anymore because of his illness. He helps his wife in selling fish products in the market. He said he was able to send all his four children to school during those glory days of fishing. He can earn as high as 40,000 pesos in one trip to the sea. Nowadays fishermen in their area can hardly get a net income of 2,000 pesos per trip. He blamed the trawl fishing using small nets and dragging the sea floor using their nets. It destroys the corals and breeding grounds of the sea. He hopes the authorities would prohibit this kind of practice.

Case 4: Mr. Y is 45 years old, with a wife and five children live in upland barangay. He used to own a one-hectare land in their barangay, but now he just lets his brothers take care of the land. He just gets his share of their harvest. He said that Pedicab driving is more profitable because the income is daily unlike when you are still a farmer that you have to wait for harvest time before you can earn. Sometimes he can also avail of food packs and medicine from the city hall. He does not want to go back to their barangay anymore for as long that he can still pedal his unit.

Case 5: Mr. Z is a pedicab driver for four years now. He came from Brgy. Pupua, a coastal barangay of Catbalogan. He has a

wife and four children. He said he sometimes go to the sea with his relatives or friends but since he does not have his boat he has to share their earnings to all of them including the owner of the boat. He said it is difficult to earn enough money in the sea than to do pedicab driving. When asked if he has other income aside from pedicab driving or fishing, he said he also has a farm with coconut trees, and he knows how to farm. But he cannot earn from it yet because of the typhoon Yolanda and Ruby that damaged his coconut trees.

The subjects in the case studies who are farmers and fishers are shifting their work from the farm or sea to Pedicab driving in the city. Most of them are already in their late adulthood and yet they bear the hardships of Pedicab driving. The majority came from the outskirts of the city which they leave early, ride a bus to the city and work until night and go back home with one kilo of rice and fish as viand for another day. This cycle continues to most of the subjects. Leaving their workplaces is not an option to most of them, but when it is difficult to earn in the farm, they would always resort to Pedicab driving. They should be assured of a steady income in their workplace otherwise they would leave their areas and find greener pasture somewhere else. To boost the income of these farmers and fishers, sustainable farming or fishing must be implemented by the authorities to save the depleting marine resources.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Pedicab drivers are an important sector of the working force in the community, but it has to be regulated and controlled. Stiff competition among motorized and Pedicab drivers result to lower income among Pedicab drivers plus the commotion in the street. Thus, there is a need to review the policy regarding the

provision of the number of registration of pedicab and motor cab units. However, if pedicabs will be removed from the streets of Catbalogan to be replaced with motor cabs, then where will these petty farmers and fishers will go? Government agencies should prioritize farming and fishing interventions so that our farmers and fishers will not leave their work on the farm.

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