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Sustainable Economic Empowerment of *Khanabadosh* Community Through Skill Development

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Abstract

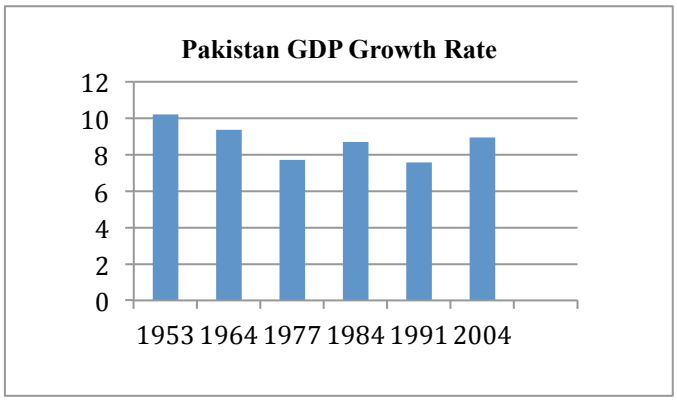
Nations are built through the integration of its individuals, which include the marginalized segments of society as well. Nation building is continuous process which includes the dynamic ideological factors such as common purpose, shared future and a joint idea of belongings. Pakistan is one of the developing countries and Lahore is its second largest transition cities. Gypsy communities locally known as *Khanabadosh* in Urdu exist in different parts of Lahore. Today in the era of post-industrialization, these people are still struggling to survive without any professional skill based or knowledge based means of sustenance. This research paper is a documentation of practical experimentation to impart a practical skill to one of the *Khanabadosh* families. It also includes the conversion of skill into a source of earning with the possibility of later transferring the skill. Hence it will become a sustainable process with the passage of time. This learning is not an exclusive process which includes not only men but also includes the female members of the family so that they could also play an important role in strengthening their community. Whereas there are number of other ways to fulfill such objectives, due to the researchers particular professional background the identification of sustainable skills and the capacity building of *Khanabadosh* for that skill has been selected as a solution.

Keywords: empowerment, *Khanabadosh*, post-industrialization, community development

Introduction

The overall economic condition of a country is stabilized when the poverty at the lower starta is both controlled and then reduced. Economic growth can produce a chain of continuous prosperity and opportunity. Pakistan is one of the developing countries which have faced various ups and downs since the independence from the British occupation on 14th August 1947. The irregular motion of Pakistan's political background has also affected the economic conditions al-together. Over the last sixty years, Pakistan has faced the paradoxical mixture of economic and social outcomes (Economic Profile Pakistan 1947-2013).

In report of Economic Profile Pakistan 1947-2013, Growth rate of Pakistan's economy was very prominent in first four decades. Whereas the growth rate of population was also increasing at that time. However neither it was affecting per capita income and not it was increasing the poverty ratio. In Southeast Asia, Pakistan is among the fastest growing countries with the participation of foreign investors in all fields of economy (Iqbal, Shaikh, & Shar, 2010).



Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan
Fig. 1 Transition in the economic conditions of Pakistan

The researcher intends to generate the source of income for *Khanabadosh* community in relation to the revival and growth of bamboo business in *Bansawala bazar.* There were number of aspects which need to be considered before bridging these two aspects together. It includes the selection of material that should be economical for *Khanabadosh* people. Material should be of eco-friendly properties so that it could not be harmful for end user and to the environment. Shop keepers and labor community of commercial market would also benefit from this process because it ultimately affects the economic condition of our country. The most important thing is to sell that product or accessory to its end user and to make its reachability towards its user sustainable and viable.

Research Methodology

Research methodology includes the demographic research for measuring the numbers of gypsies living in different parts of Lahore. Interviews of *Khanabadosh* families have also been recorded in order to understand their ways of living and earning. Studies on needs and wants of these families have been conducted. Idea of moving from one place to another and keeping the necessities during the journey has also become the part of investigation.

Whereas on the other hand, bamboo shopkeepers in *Bansawala bazar* in Lahore also became a part of interview recordings. Questionnaire survey was conducted for collecting the information regarding utilization of bamboo and its selling points. Different types of bamboo and its availability has also been explored during survey. Simplicity of tools used for bamboo products have been given an extra attention in order to understand the manufacturing complexity.

The source of income has been analyzed on the basis of job nature of different *Khanabadosh* family members. Females and children play important role income generation. They have been interviewed thoroughly to understand the basic nature of job and its concerns towards generating income for family.

Site visits to different blocks of Johar Town were carried out to accomplish this task. Scrutiny among the different residential blocks has been shortlisted on the basis of population distribution. To get the diverse insight, families living in areas near to commercial zones like Johar Town R1 block and families staying in blocks which are distant from commercial zone have been analyzed and compared.

For identifying and evaluating differentiate between source of income, an experiment was designed and conducted in relevance to the researcher's professional background. A range of hand crafted products for the consumption of local market have been designed by the researcher while considering the following points:

- Product design that can be easily understood by crafts people
- Easy to handle the manufacturing stages
- Availability and simplicity of tools required for the manufacturing of such products
- Material selection and its availability
- Product design and aesthetics appealing to the target market

- Identification of platform to sell the products
- Self-sustainable supply chain and production process through marketable products without any external support

The relationship between the economic condition of a *Khanabadosh* family and the impact of their immediate surroundings has been investigated through two opposite scenarios. The families living near commercial zones like R1, Johar Town and those living comparatively distant from commercial areas have been studied and compared.

Interviews of *Khanabdosh* families have been recorded who lives in different blocks of Johar Town like R1-block, F-block, N-block and P-block. Daily lifestyle of such people has been observed and the basic necessities of routine life have been documented in form of photographs. Occupations of males and females have been examined and their income sources have been studied to get better insight into sources of income.

Johar Town

Johar Town is a planned urban area developed by Lahore Development Authority LDA with various zones allocated for different activities. MA Johar Town is located in south west of Lahore and it was launched in 1986 (Gulzar, Asim, & Shirwani, 2015). The area has developed itself as a result of urban sprawl.



Source: www.googlemaps.com accessed 30/10/2017
Fig. 2 Different blocks located in Johar Town.

Data Analysis

The data on various variables such as the percentage of *Khanabadosh* families, the duration of settlement, income range etc. was collected and analyzed using Microsoft Excel to find dependencies between the parameters. All data collected from surveys of different blocks of Johar Town and respondent's interviews were analyzed and the conclusions and recommendations were established on the basis of results found.

Analysis shows that most of the *Khanabadosh* families moved to different blocks of Johar Town in between 12 months to 18 months and F1 block is the prominent one. The major reason behind is the availability of space for settlement and this block is near the auto spare part commercial market. Emporium Mall is one of the biggest shopping mall of Lahore and it has been built in recent years. Residential developments are also increasing in numbers along with commercial progress. Whereas, due to the bigger scale of this residential scheme, women of gypsy families have more chances to get a housemaid job. In addition to that, male members can be hired as daily wage labor (Javed, 2017).

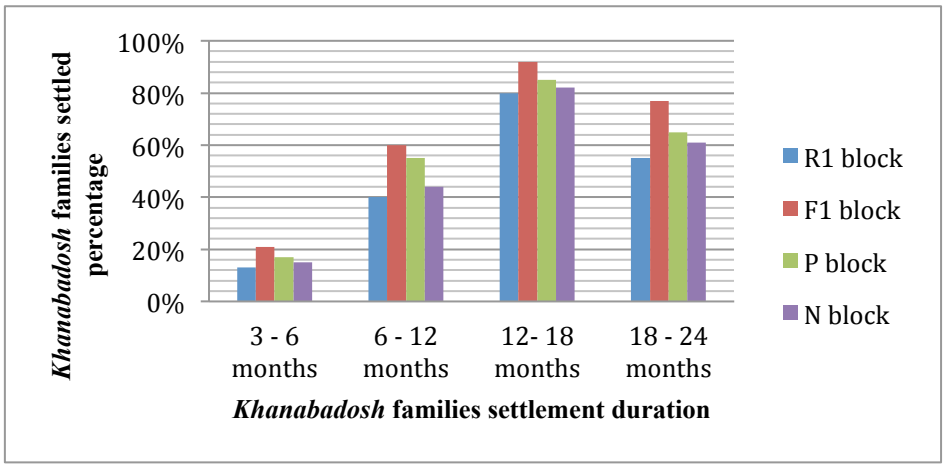


Fig. 3 Number of *Khanabadosh* families living in different blocks of Johar Town.

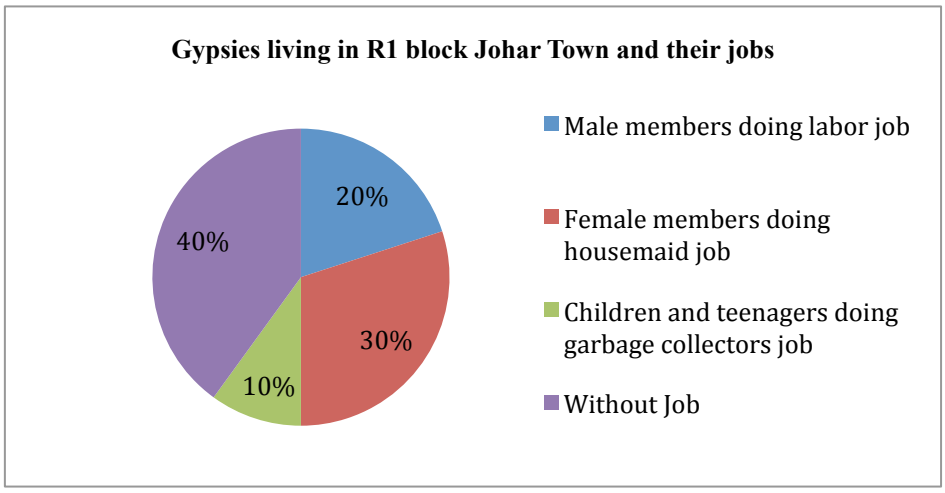


Fig. 4 Family members of *Khanabadosh* Community and their daily life job.

Income level

Male members of gypsy's families work as laborers on a daily wage of 450 PKR to 600 PKR depending upon the nature of job. This is not a regular job and sometimes male members spend whole day sitting idle and don't get any task. Whereas, the female members work as housemaids and they earn from 1200 PRs to 4000 PRs per month. Teenagers and children play their role in income as garbage collectors.

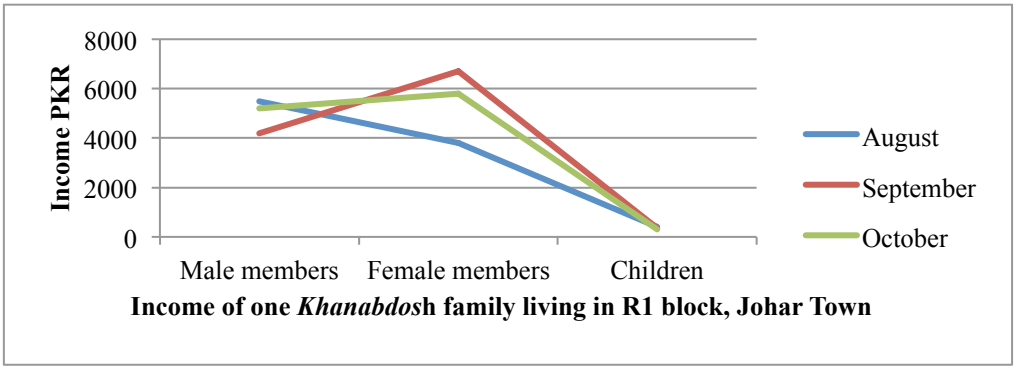


Fig. 5 Represents the income of one *Khanabadosh* family from August 2017 to October 2017 living in R1 block Johar Town, Lahore.

Material consideration for learning of craft

With the rapid growth in industrialized materials, people have come up to a stage where you get various options of materials to accomplish specific task. The selection and usage of material is not only dependent on a particular trade of profession but also on numbers other facts. Implementation of idea should cater the philosophy of sustainable development in order to get productive outcome (Iwaro & Mwasha, 2014). Primarily the characteristics of material should be sustainable. It contains the properties of environmental friendly, powerful ability of regeneration and should have a character of being used in diverse aspects (Yuming, Kanglin, Shengji, & Jiming, 2003). Moreover, it should be easy to use. On the basis of developing the sellable products and accessories, material should be user-friendly. Basic tools should be used in the manufacturing process and it should rely on the investment of specific amount of expenditure.

Bamboo excels as a material when it comes to contain all the above mentioned features. Traditionally bamboo has been used for versatile purposes due to its various properties. Being a vernacular material it also sets a mark on human lives by influencing our history and lifestyle. Fulfilling the role of an ecological material, bamboo also contains the properties making it efficient for construction, manufacturing and economical point of views (Ghavami, 2004).

The importance of bamboo containing its sustainable properties and environmental friendly behavior, the Indian review of world furniture, interiors and design IFJ acknowledges the usage of bamboo by architects and interior designers. Similarly, people in Pakistan should also be made aware of the properties of bamboo and they should start utilizing it in versatile manners (IFJ the Indian review of world furniture, interiors and design, 2017).

To utilize the properties of bamboo, number of architects and designers choose bamboo in various projects and pavilion designs. For the renovation purposes of warehouses into eye-catching pavilion in Vietnam pavilion at Expo 2010 by Vo Trong Nghia architects, bamboo as material was selected due to its friendliness, durability and sustainability aspects. Similarly, Bug dome, the design that is inspired from insects was constructed by Casagrande laboratory for SZHK Biennale in Shenzhen China also uses Shezhuan Bamboo.

Interior spaces designed by many of the prominent architects and designers also utilized bamboo as a material. Benjamin Garcia Saxe designed a small house in forest of Guanacaste, Costa Rica to reflect the feeling of forest within a forest. Bamboo stems have been used in such a way that it filters the light into interior space and give the feel of walking through trees. Physical, psychological and spiritual attributes are carved by men and it has been catered by using five elements of nature in mind while designing the house of five elements by Manasaram architects in Bangalore India. Bamboo has been used in the walls, columns, beams and roofs in a way that spaces inside the house becomes peaceful and flow into each other (Uffelen, 2014).

Bansawala Bazar (Bamboo Market)

Bansawala Bazar is a bamboo market located in Lahore near *Shah Alam* market. According to the shop keepers, the market took placed in 1938 before Pakistan-India partition. More than fifty shops are active in various sizes. People come from all over the country to purchase different types of bamboo. According to the shop keeper *Yousaf Ali*, six types of bamboos are available in market i-e., *kalum*, *chuhari*, *choti pori*, *makla* and *pun patti*. These bamboos are used in furniture, handicrafts, flute, ladders and bill boards.



Fig. 6 Shop in *Bansawala Bazar*, Lahore.

According to one of the shop keeper *Muhammad Ayaaz*, the market is very old and his grandfather started here as bamboo shop keeper and now he is running it. The bamboo is used for roofing *(shuttering)* purposes and also for tent poles. *Ijaz Shah* another shop owner mentioned that people consider bamboo as unsophisticated material that's why they only use it on needs base. He also mentioned that one of the main reasons of bamboo shops vanishing from *Bansawala Bazar* is the shift of business from Lahore to Kasur and Patoki, where bamboo actually grows.

Kasur, Patoki and some areas of Sargodha have become the whole sale market for bamboo. While entering into these cities, numbers of shops are located on both sides of the highway. Price of bamboo in these cities is 5Rs per feet less than the price in *Bansawala bazar*. Bamboo ladder of 15 feet height is of 1000Rs in Lahore and the daily wage of ladder maker is 5Rs to 6Rs per piece (*danda*).



Fig. 7 Ladder maker cutting bamboo on daily wages.

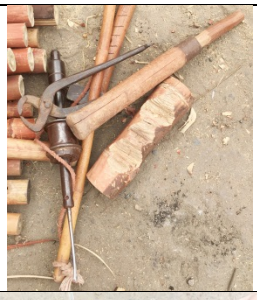


Fig. 8 Bamboo ladders collection in shop which is ready for sale.

Due to the use of more contemporary and industrially manufactured materials, people have neglected the importance of bamboo as a sustainable solution in many aspects. Shop keepers of *Bansawala Bazar* are also searching for new strategies to flourish their business once again. On asking about the revival of this market, one of the respondents answer that if the basant festival is revived, than we would be able to come out from this slump in form of making *guddi baans*, which was the main source of income for the people of *Bansawala Bazar*.

Table 1 Basic Tools Used for Bamboo Products

Sr.No.	Tool Name	Usage	Market Price (Pakistan)	Image
1	Hand Saw	Locally known as *Aari* use for cutting bamboo	150 Rs	
2	Adze	Locally called Tessa use for splitting bamboo pieces	750 Rs	

3	Hand Drill	Use for drilling holes in bamboo	800 Rs	
4	Nails	1.5 inches metal nails for joining purpose	150 Rs (1-pack)	
5	Pincers	Use for pulling out nails from bamboo	350 Rs	

Designing of bamboo cane Serving Tray

Bamboo has been used as a structural frame of serving tray. Bamboo comes in different diameters. The selected bamboo is of 1.25 inches in diameter and it length is 18 inches and width is 12 inches. On the other hand, Cane (Rattan) is used as wicker process for the covering of bamboo frame. The basic technical drawing of bamboo frame and cane wicker has been shared with *Khanabadosh* family members for their better understanding of product or accessory.

Manufacturing Process

Cutting

Bamboo had been cut according to the technical drawings. Bamboo shoot does not have even diameter near notes, so the most appropriate pieces have been sorted out depending upon the required length i-e 12 inches into 18 inches. Manual cutting has been done using hand saw.

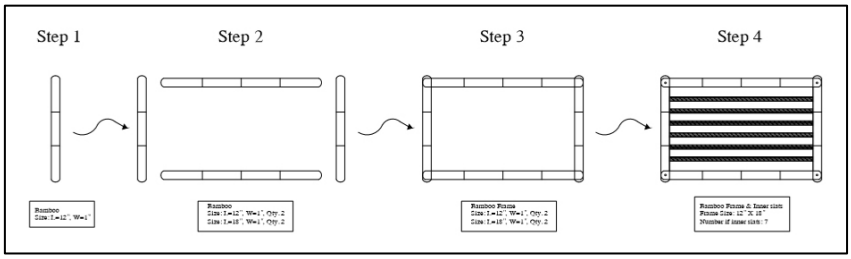


Fig. 9 Basic technical drawing that illustrates the manufacturing process



Fig. 10 Cutting of bamboo

Assembling of bamboo frame

After cutting the bamboo pieces according to the desired dimensions, joining them together to make a frame done by using nails. Hammer has been used for nailing and in case of wrong fitting of nails, nail puller has been used. Each side corner contains two nails for the stability purpose of frame.



Fig. 11 Assembling of bamboo frame.

Cane (Rattan) wicker

After the bamboo frame of tray has been completed, next step is the covering of its surface with cane wicker weaving technique. For this task, the researcher visited the cane market near *Data Darbar* Lahore. Qasim Ali known as *Ustaad Ji* in cane market is one of the senior expert working in cane wicker technique from past several years. Bilal is his apprentice who skipped the school from 8th grade and has been working under *Ustaad Ji* from past two years.



Fig. 12 Cane wicker shop at *Data Darbar* road, Lahore.

Cane is split into two parts, first type of strip is obtained as outer layer of cane which is of high quality, shiny brownish yellow in color and it cost around 600Rs for the bamboo frame of 18 inches into 12 inches. Second type of strip is the inside layer of cane, which is matt finish, slightly rough, pale yellow in color and it cost around 300Rs for the same bamboo frame.



Fig. 13 Cane strips after dipping in water about ten minutes and ready for wicker process.

For the weaving process, inside layer of cane has been used as it is economical and hence it will ultimately fetch better profit margins for the generating income. Whereas, aesthetics has been kept in mind as this product has to compete with already available cane baskets in market and create its own identity. Firstly, cane strips are dipped in water for 5 to 10 minutes. This helps in wickering the frame tightly as described by *Ustaad Ji*. Seven chopped slats of bamboo have been used as warp of cane wicker inside the bamboo frame. After adjusting these slats in bamboo frame, cane wicker technique was applied in order to obtain the complete surface.

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Fig. 14 Qasim Ali *Ustaad Ji* and Bilal doing wicker process on bamboo frame.



Fig. 15 Researcher practicing the cane wicker technique for making bamboo cane serving tray.

The researcher volunteered for learning the wicker technique, after practicing around 15 minutes the technique becomes spontaneous. It took around 20 minutes by researcher to complete one bamboo cane serving tray.



Fig. 16 Bamboo cane serving tray (size 12 inches by 18 inches).

Making Serving Tray with *Khanabadosh* family

After learning wicker technique from *Qasim Ali,* next step was to pass that skill knowledge to *Khanabadosh* community. Initially it was very difficult to guide the gypsy community members about this all process because they are very reluctant towards such tasks. One of the respondent explained that every year number of government officials visit their communities, give them hopes about better future, good job, reasonable shelter but nothing has been done. This may be one of the reasons that these people have adopted such behavior towards society.



Fig. 17 *Sakina's* hut in R1 block Johar Town.

One of the Khanabadosh families agreed to learn this technique after understanding all the initial difficulties and expected outcomes. *Sakina*, 45 year old divorced female living with 4 kids in a hut, located in empty plot of Johar Town R1 block agreed to learn these skills. She had been living in that hut since past two years because she is playing a role of care taker for that space and landlord allows temporary residence permission to such gypsy family.



Fig. 18 Inside view of hut.

Bamboo and cane strips were provided by the researcher within a limited budget constrain. After learning the technique from *Ustaad Ji*, now researcher is fulfilling the role of teaching and passing the technique of wicker weaving to *Khanabadosh* family members. Same process has been repeated as per mentioned in above manufacturing process. It took around 2 hours in making of first bamboo cane serving tray.



Fig. 19 *Sakina* making the bamboo cane Serving tray and her daughter watching it.

Selling of Bamboo Serving Tray

Once the bamboo cane serving tray had been manufactured, the next challenge was to sell it and recover cost with a markup. For this task, Johar town area was shortlisted due to *Khanabadosh* community located in this area and secondly Johar town comes under the category of modern settlement areas of Lahore. Expo Center and Emporium Mall are the most prominent buildings of Johar Town. Doctors Hospital and Shaukat Khanum Hospital also comes under its reachable zones.

Therefore, many social activities happen in this area and it has become one of the most approachable areas for social gatherings.

Basket Sellers

Number of basket sellers walking around the streets in order to sell baskets. The price ranges from 100 PKR to 150 PKR depending upon the sizes of baskets and finishes. Most of them belong to gypsy background and live in Johar Town. Sakina is already involved in this and went to sell bamboo cane serving trays on streets of Johar Town and Shaukat Khanum Hospital road. On her second day, she was able to sell one of the bamboo trays of 300 PKR.

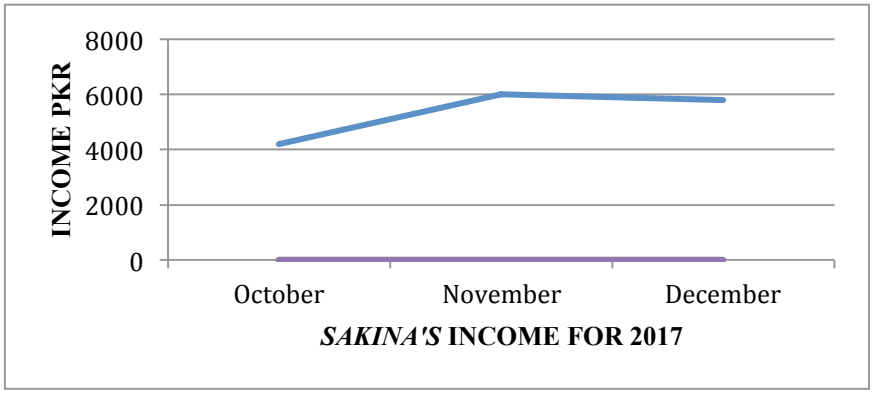


Fig. 20 Shows the variation in *Sakina's* income from October 2017 to December 2017. Based on Selling of Bamboo Cane Serving Trays.

The results show that the income level of *Sakina* significantly increased in November and December 2017 due to selling bamboo cane trays during these months. Whereas, this new income generation activity doesn't affect her daily schedule of job as a housemaid. She does her tasks related to cleaning homes, washing clothes and cooking from morning 9am to 3pm. Then she comes back to her hut where she spends some time with her kids. Around 5 she starts her activity of selling bamboo cane trays. This time is also very appropriate due to closing office hours and people come out with their families for dinner or shopping purposes.

When *Sakina* was asked to contact researcher to share her experience of selling bamboo trays, she started crying during telephonic conversation. She was expressing her gratitude to the researcher to be able to help her in finding a way of earning for herself without becoming a burden on anybody or begging for financial help from people. She also asked whether is it possible to develop further accessories and products by utilizing the same material and method? Her question opens another research to look in to.

Conclusion

Khanabadosh plays an important role in the development of society. Government should acknowledge their existence during urban planning and development. Meanwhile, to strengthen the economic condition of Khanabadosh, government and non-government organizations should introduce such strategies which involves and encourages this community to become a part of the mainstream society. The researcher introduced an idea of income growth and prototyped its affectivity through a practical experiment. The intention was to incorporate the sustainable development of income growth in a pragmatic manner that also brings a positive impact on environment. Being in experiment that is self-financed, the researcher had budget constraint. Results would be scaled up both quantitatively and qualitatively if it comes under the patronage of government or non-government organizations. On a more social level, this is time to let the *Khanabadosh* families realize that they are part of society and

equal rights should be given to them. Seminars, conferences and community talks should be encouraged within these communities to expand their existence message. A professional from any field of work like architects, engineers and investors can play their role in the acceptance and growth of *Khanabadosh* community. This will help them not only stabilizing their income condition but it will also help the country in building better economic figures and reducing the ratio of poverty.

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