



A Moving Issue: Children and young people's transport and mobility constraints in Africa

Children and young people are rarely at the forefront of transport studies, despite the fact that their ability to access health and educational facilities is crucial to the achievement of many of the Millennium Development Goals. To address this knowledge gap a pioneering collaborative research project led by the University of Durham has gathered evidence of the specific mobility constraints experienced by girl and boy children as they attempt to access the facilities and services that are important to their lives.

This innovative research, supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), was conducted across three Sub-Saharan countries: Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. The project explored the travel challenges faced by girl and boy children through their own eyes alongside traditional adult-led research methods. It looked at their access to health, education and other services, at the lack of direct information on how mobility constraints impact on children's current and future livelihood opportunities, and at the lack of available guidelines on how to tackle them. In this issue of *Forum News* we highlight the key findings of the project, share relevant resources and ask where do we go from here?

Over three years the research project aimed to gather an evidence base strong enough to substantially improve policy in the focus countries and to change thinking across Africa. The evidence base is built on three inter-connected research components:

Box 1: Vivian and Sipiwe's stories

'The journey to school is too far for us so by the time we reach school, lessons have already started. ... this makes us score very low marks. ... Irrespective of the long distance we trek to and from school... we are asked to go to the farm and plant as soon as we arrive home... On other occasions they ask us not to go to school so that we can help on the farm' Vivian, 14 years, rural settlement with services, Ghana forest zone

'During school days I make sure I do all my work prior to going to school otherwise I will be late. They punish us at school or they close the gate and we end up missing morning classes. [If] I didn't do most of these activities [fetching water and firewood, cooking, cleaning the house, laundering at the river] I would probably have time to do my school work and study my books but by the time I start doing my homework I'm already tired and I want to sleep' Sipiwe, 17 years, remote rural settlement without services, South Africa, Eastern Cape



Ezra Simon

A long and steep journey to school

- **Innovative preliminary research by young people themselves.** 70 young researchers (aged 11–21 years) conducted research among their peers. Their findings, valuable in themselves, also helped to shape research questions used in two adult academic research components.
- **Qualitative research** with children, parents, teachers, health and transport workers and other key informants through in-depth interviews, accompanied walks, focus groups and also life histories with people in their mid-20s.
- **A questionnaire survey** administered to approximately 1000 children aged 9–18 in each country. The academic researchers worked in 4 sites – urban, peri-urban, rural with services (a primary school, sometimes a health centre) and remote rural (no services) – in each of two contrasting agro-ecological zones per country. 24 sites in total, giving substantial opportunities for locational comparisons.

Research findings

The findings show that young people's access (ability and ease of reaching destinations) frequently depends not only on **transport availability and cost (vehicles and roads)** allowing children to travel but also, in particular, on:

- Demands for **children's work**, including their transport role as porters. In the context of Africa's transport gap it is a common requirement for children, especially girls, to help carry goods for family members [see Box 2].

Continued on page 2

In this issue:

1. A Moving Issue: Children and young people's transport and mobility constraints in Africa
2. A Moving Issue contd

3. Children as Researchers; In their own Words
4. Spotlight on Malawi; In Memoriam

5. Spotlight on Ghana; Spotlight on South Africa

6. Where do we go from here?; Further Reading; Supporters of the Children and Mobility Programme; About Us



Continued from page 1

- Actual and perceptual concerns regarding the **vulnerability of girl children**, in particular; to attack [see Box 3].

The journey to school is a concern for many children. This is because of physical hazards, notably wet season rivers in flood; delayed starts due to household work; fear of harassment from people and animals (especially snakes); traffic dangers; punishments for late arrival [see Box 1]; and particularly for secondary school children, the distances involved.

Despite these dangers and difficulties, remarkably few children, girls or boys, are accompanied by adults. Most children travel to and from school in groups with their siblings and friends – their parents are at work, on the farm or otherwise occupied. The vast majority of children at all sites walk daily to school. In Ghana over 97% and in Malawi over 99% of both girls and boys surveyed said they had walked to school the previous school day. In South Africa figures were a little lower at 86% for girls and for boys: here 10% of both girls and boys had travelled to school by bus. Bicycle use to school is remarkably rare [see box 4]. Unsurprisingly, the longest school journeys are in the remote rural project sites, where a majority of children, boys and girls, estimated that their most recent journey took over 45 minutes (57% Ghana, 74% Malawi, 77% South Africa).

Box 2: Africa's transport gap requires many children to work as load carriers

In urban coastal Ghana, Efua, a girl of 8 years (weighs 26 kg), interviewed while hawking 19 kg of iced water round town simply says, "it's my job".

In Malawi, David a boy of 15, in a peri-urban site goes to buy fertilizer; "I carry 50kg.... I had a critical health problem from carrying fertilizer this year... we went to the health centre where they established I had sprained one of my nerves and they sedated me with anaesthetic and straightened my neck back".

In South Africa, urban sites usually have intermittent piped water but in rural areas, especially in Eastern Cape, "it is a norm among almost every household that a girl child has the responsibility of collecting water and firewood before she comes to school... for girls it starts at the age of five. In winter when the nearby streams are dry they are compelled to travel some kilometres to the river to collect water which on top of that makes them ill" **Female school teacher, rural Eastern Cape**

Physical access presents a major barrier to **health service use for children**, with 26% of children citing travel difficulties and 13% citing travel costs as a reason for not having attended a health service when they were ill. Children's ability to travel to health services is typically more constrained than that of adults because they have less money for transport, often less free time, and greater physical difficulties in undertaking long journeys over hazardous terrain. Unsurprisingly, rural children bear the brunt of these difficulties, reflected by the fact that children from urban and peri-urban areas in Ghana and Malawi are twice as likely to have frequented a health facility in the preceding 12 months than those in rural areas. However, urban-dwelling children also reported fears of crossing busy roads and negotiating public transport, particularly when unwell. Children showed enormous resourcefulness in overcoming these barriers: travelling long distances alone, earning small amounts of cash to pay for transport and medicines, and helping other children to obtain healthcare. Of those children who had used a health facility within the preceding 12 months, 20% had made their own way there and a further 10% were accompanied by another child.

Key messages for policy and practice

A stronger focus on (gendered) transport, mobility and access issues in the development policy and practitioner community is essential. Failure to recognise the specific importance of mobility and transport and the ramifications of immobility in the Millennium Development Goals is clear testament to this omission. In the context of the goal for education, a firmer and more specific recognition of the role which distance, perceived and real travel hazards, transport availability and other mobility factors play in allowing or barring access to school is urgently required.

Box 3: Adult concerns about girls' vulnerabilities

Across all research sites, parents and carers expressed strong concerns about their daughters' vulnerability to attack, especially rape, on journeys. Sometimes they also referred to the potential promiscuity of teenage girls. Girls are encouraged to move together in groups and cautioned strongly against travel after dark or to distant places.

"In the nights my parents do not permit me to go out because according to them I can become a bad girl if I go out in the nights. Whenever I return home late in the daytime, my mother ... insults me"

Sandra, 13 years, rural Ghana

"You don't want your child taken advantage of by criminals and witches. Children are being abducted these days and the chance of a girl being taken away is more than that of a boy" **Father caring for two children, urban Eastern Cape, South Africa**

"We feel boys are more responsible and less susceptible to bad company... And also girls can get pregnant if not carefully monitored, boys don't get pregnant" **Mothers' focus group, remote rural Malawi**

There are some low-cost interventions which could have important impact on children's – especially girls' – mobility and access to education, health and sustainable livelihoods:

- Experiment with adaptation of the walking bus concept to help children to walk safely to school in regions where dangers of rape and harassment are high.
- Cycle hire centres based at schools to help overcome the shortage of cycles available (especially) to girl children for travelling between home and school.
- Provide training (especially for girls) in cycle riding, maintenance and repairs.
- Swimming lessons for girls, especially in rural areas where river crossings are sparse (they are much less likely than boys to know how to swim).
- Expand girls' boarding house provision and general boarding provision, (including at primary level in schools serving remote rural areas).
- Sensitise teachers and education authorities to transport/distance-related lateness and initiate an end to the harsh punishments imposed by many on children who arrive late for school.
- Road safety training for out-of-school children working round busy roads (they miss out on schools road safety training).
- Dedicated health counselling for young people. Our data shows that it is extremely difficult for young people to obtain counselling and treatment at health centres unless they attend with an adult.
- Interventions to reduce girls' time poverty (improved availability of water supplies, community woodlots, mobile grinding machines etc.) so that they have less load carrying work to do, especially before the

Box 4: Cycling could improve mobility, but cycles are mostly for boys

Bicycles figure very little in our respondents' mobility stories. Culturally, cycling is widely seen as a male activity and bicycles are rarely available for girls.

"Females, even if they learn they will not get the money to buy a bicycle... even if they ride they just ride it around, they do not send it on long distances... they do not have the strength" **Out-of-school boy, 18 years, rural Ghana, forest zone**

"Girls are afraid to learn [to cycle] because they feel shy if they fall down during cycling lessons... people laugh if they see a girl riding a bicycle" **Out-of-school boys group, rural Malawi**

This is supported by the survey data which shows girls have much less experience of cycling. In Ghana 58% girls and 87% boys say they know how to cycle; in Malawi 44% girls and 72% boys; in South Africa 48% girls and 82% boys. Reported bicycle use on school journeys is extremely rare.



Gina Porter

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 2

- journey to school, and so that overstretched parents will be less inclined to withdraw daughters from school.
- Explore the potential for mobile phones to substitute for or support young people's mobility. In all the research sites, young people's access to mobile phones is expanding rapidly.
- Explore innovations in the development and organisation of non-motorised transportation that will alleviate the transport burden of women and children in particular. For example hand carts and bicycle water carriers.

Much everyday transport work needed to sustain the family and household is delegated to young people, especially girls as load carrying

is usually culturally ascribed as a 'female' activity. Children's role as load carriers is substantial in almost all the research sites due to lack of piped water, electricity and cheap goods transport. This activity, largely invisible in studies of African economies (it is commonly subsumed under women's or family labour), has important implications for educational achievement and possibly for long-term health. In the survey, over 70% of girls and boys interviewed in Ghana, over 30% of boys and girls in Malawi and over 20% of girls and 17% boys in South Africa reported some pain or difficulty (e.g. headache, neck ache, waist pain, exhaustion) in the previous week which they attributed to load carrying.

Children as Researchers

Our project benefited greatly from the collaboration of children who were recruited to participate as researchers from local schools in the study regions. We worked with 70 young people aged between 11 and 21 years.

Where schools approved the project concept, the collaborators usually visited to present the project to the pupils, who were asked to volunteer to participate. An essay on transport/mobility was

sometimes set to help select children with a clear interest in the research issue. Parental and school approval for the training and subsequent research period was sought in all cases. The children were encouraged to conduct their research only in locations where they lived or were at school, to minimise travel needs and to enable them to utilise their local understandings and social networks.

Once the children had decided where they would conduct their research, country collaborators, teachers and/or the child researchers themselves visited the relevant



Gina Porter

Young researchers mapping journeys

community leaders to explain the studies and their potential value to the community and to obtain permissions. Nineteen young people (eleven Ghanaian, four South African and four Malawian), joined adult academic researchers at the project inception workshop in Blantyre, Malawi, to discuss research plans and draw up a preliminary set of ethical guidelines.

Six individual one-week training workshops were held, two in each country. Here the young researchers were introduced to the project in more detail and taught a range of research methods that could be used to explore transport and mobility patterns and needs. They reviewed

the project's ethical guidelines, and decided in groups on the research methods they would use and the timeframe within which they would work. The majority of groups chose the following research methods:

- One-week activity and travel diaries.
- Photographic journals of children's travel to school and at work using disposable cameras.
- In-depth one-to-one interviews with other children, and accompanied walks with mapping or narrative description.

Some young researchers also undertook:

- Focus group discussions.
- Ranking exercises.
- Counting loads along routes where heavy loads are commonly carried.
- Weighing loads carried by children.

All of these methods were focused at improving understanding of the places children of varying age, gender and schooling status go, how they travel there, and the transport problems they face.

The young researchers' findings drew attention to a number of issues which children seem to have thought too embarrassing or too unimportant to raise directly with adults, such as fear of biting dogs and unwanted advances made to girls by taxi drivers. Issues raised by the young researchers' work were incorporated as direct questions or probes in the adult qualitative and survey research. The young researchers have also produced their own booklet which describes their findings and their views of the research process (see page 6).

While we feel that the young researchers have made a very substantial contribution to our study, we would caution others interested in applying this approach. It took an enormous amount of time and dedication from both the children and the adult researchers involved, required considerable specialist support, and brought to the fore a range of very complex ethical issues. However, we will be happy to provide further information and advice to any organisations who want to explore this approach further.

For more information please contact:

Dr Gina Porter; Dr Kate Hampshire

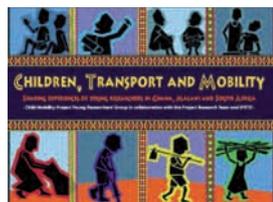
University of Durham

Email: r.e.porter@durham.ac.uk; k.r.hampshire@durham.ac.uk

In their own Words

A new publication is now online that shares the experiences of the young researchers from Ghana, Malawi and South Africa.

The idea for the booklet came from the young researchers themselves. They wanted a vehicle for sharing their experiences and research findings with a wider audience. They worked hard to sift through all of the materials that they had collected, picking out the key themes that had emerged from their research. They also reflected on their experiences as young researchers in the different contexts in which they had worked.



The result is very much their own work, indeed most of the booklet was written by the young researchers, in their own words. The Africa Community Access Programme (AFCAP) has funded the production of 4000 copies. These have been widely distributed to school, ministries and communities in Ghana and Malawi. It is hoped that the direct voices of the young people will speak to in-country policy makers and practitioners in an emotive and effective way that is different to the adult academic research.

Download:

www.ifrtd.org/files/uploads/children_mobility_book_webversion.pdf



Spotlight on Malawi

The Malawi research produced a large amount of data illustrating the mobility challenges faced by boys and girls across rural and urban areas of Malawi. Many issues came to light concerning challenges in getting to school, markets, health centres and other destinations; gender differences in roles as transporters; the limited range of transport options available to young people; and what needs to be done to address these problems.

Going to school

Long and arduous journeys to school, particularly those that involve crossing rivers or climbing steep hills, were identified as common problems that can lead to early drop out. Almost all of the school-going children in the survey of children aged 9–18 years walk to school.

Use of minibus taxis is only possible in town and is usually too expensive, besides which the conductors often cheat school children who are supposed to pay a reduced fare when travelling to/from school wearing their school uniform. For those who do have money from parents for the transport fare, the scramble to get onboard at the end of classes can be hazardous with students climbing in through the windows as well as pushing and shoving their classmates to get through the doors. The minibus taxis often breakdown and are held up by police because they are not roadworthy or lack the required insurance documents, making travel by this means both frustrating and dangerous. Many of the young people surveyed did however report being attracted to motorised transport due to its speed and other attractions such as the music often played on-board.

Bicycles are not used very often to get to school, except by teachers and a few boys. Even if children know how to ride a bike (which many, especially girls, do not), bicycles are not common in poor households (about 40% of Malawi's households are poor).

In some remote rural communities secondary schools are just too far away to make the journey each day on foot. So the few students who are really motivated to attend secondary school arrange to 'self-board' by renting a room near the school on a weekly or termly basis. There is a great need for more proper boarding hostels, especially for girls where safety and supervision can be ensured. The government of Malawi recognises this in its ongoing programme to build more girls' boarding hostels at secondary schools, but the need remains great.

Household and market demands

For communities with regular weekly markets children may abscond on market days to engage in carrying goods to market, trading, or working as casual head loaders. Children's role as carriers of water and firewood for their households as well as other daily domestic chores often make them late for school for which they are frequently harshly punished. Girls seem to be more responsible for carrying water, gathering firewood and taking maize to the grinding mill than boys. In some rural communities the journey to the maize mill is so far that girls miss school regularly, as well as suffering headaches and other pains from carrying heavy head loads in hot sun or torrential rain along steep and rocky paths. Other modes of intermediate transport such as bicycles, wheelbarrows and animal carts are not very widely used and rarely by girls and young women.

Multiple factors influence access to healthcare

Getting to and from health centres for medical treatment is not always straightforward for children. Stories were encountered of young pregnant women giving birth on the way if it is far, or being forced to wait for river waters to subside when there are no bridges.

Antenatal advice is offered to all mothers and many health facilities offer waiting areas for pregnant women to stay when they are close to delivery. Access is not just about distance to be covered and the means of transport used to get to a health centre. Many factors prevent children from going to seek treatment when they are ill including lack of someone to give permission for them to go or to accompany them. Among the poorest, lack of clothes to wear and lack of soap to bathe meant they were unwilling to present



Guina Porter

An accompanied walk on difficult terrain

themselves at the health centre as they would be ashamed of their appearance and afraid of ridicule.

Understanding specific community contexts

The research which took place in the central region of Malawi revealed some particular issues unique to the communities of the Chewa people among which the nyau cult is strong. Although given international recognition as a set of unique cultural practices to be conserved, the nyau cult members bring a lot of fear to young people (and adults too) who have not been initiated. They fear to go near graveyards which are sites associated with nyau activities including intimidating masked dancers believed to be spirits, or to journey at night as they are afraid of being abducted and forcibly initiated.

Moving forward in Malawi

We have already disseminated early findings of the study to local stakeholders, at conferences in Malawi and internationally and through international journals. It is our intention in 2010 to hold local community-level dissemination activities highlighting the work of the young researchers who took part in the study. The Malawi government, in conjunction with other stakeholders, needs to address the transport problems that boys and girls are experiencing if the goals of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which is aligned to the Millennium Development Goals, are to be achieved.

*For more information please contact:
Dr Elsbeth Robson, Dr Alister Munthali
Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi
Email: e.robson@africa-online.net; munthali65@yahoo.com*

In Memoriam

We wish to record and remember here the contributions of collaborating researchers who so very sadly died during this study: Matshidiso Motaung, young researcher from South Africa, Anthony Brebi, young researcher from Ghana, Ekow Afful-Wellington, Lecturer at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.



Spotlight on Ghana

In Ghana, boys and girls face a multiplicity of problems associated with transport and travel. The research in Ghana was carried out in four study sites in the forest zone (representing urban, peri-urban, rural areas with services and remote rural areas without services), and another four such sites in the coastal zone. In each zone, the number and quality of key social services such as schools, health, communication and transport varies. For example, there are very few services in the forest zone rural settlement and none in the remote rural settlement. The nearest clinic and secondary schools (including junior high school) are located about 23 kms away and transport services on the rural road connecting the remote rural settlement with the rural service settlement are very irregular except on market days when vehicular flow improves.

The journey to school

The vast majority of children in Ghana walk to school every day. In remoter rural areas the journey to school is usually particularly long because most hamlets do not even have a primary school. For instance, children from our remote rural study site in the forest zone walk about 7 kms to and from primary school. Consequently, almost all the children interviewed reported that they often arrive at school late and tired, and some had walked on an empty stomach. Teachers do not necessarily take account of the distances such children walk and punishments may include weeding the school compound or being caned. Some children prefer to play truant if they think they are likely to arrive late at school.

Even in urban and peri-urban areas, few children travel to school by public transport. Here they report a variety of pedestrian hazards such as

dangerous roads and drivers who rush by hooting, and may splash their uniforms as they pass. Some children say they are overcharged if they do use public transport and girls sometimes reported sexual harassment from taxi drivers or trotro (minibus) drivers' mates.

Accessing healthcare

In Ghana, the distribution of health facilities is strongly skewed in favour of urban areas. Physical distance to the nearest healthcare facility was identified as one of the major constraints to health-seeking in all the rural sites. Children who fall sick are often simply treated at home with medicines bought from the local grocery store or with herbal remedies (sometimes because of the distance to the nearest clinic, sometimes because this is the family preference).

Transport for livelihoods

Culturally, children are expected to assist their parents in livelihood activities which include agricultural and non-agricultural activities as well as domestic chores. Children were found to be involved in farming, carrying loads of all kinds (fuelwood, charcoal, foodstuffs, water) and trading either for domestic or commercial purposes. Some of the children in rural areas said they often combined schooling with load carrying either on their way to school or after school. In some cases (especially on market days) children have to miss school because of the family's need for assistance with loads in the absence of cheap, reliable transport. Children widely reported their experiences of load carrying in terms of the pains and minor injuries that they had sustained. Children in urban areas are less involved in farming but are often engaged in the sale of sachet water or various provisions after school and on weekends. In both urban and rural areas these work loads mean that many children have limited or no time at home to study and that they often arrive late and tired at school because of the need to complete work for the family first.

Travelling alone

Children occasionally run errands on behalf of their parents. This might involve children travelling alone over short distances to market or to deliver messages by public transport. According to some of the children, the most common challenge associated with such trips is drivers refusing to let them alight at the exact point of destination, even though they often inform the drivers in advance. When this happens, according to the children, some of them get lost, particularly if it is the first time of visiting a particular place. In a situation where they have luggage, it becomes very difficult carrying the load because he/she was not allowed to alight at the correct point of destination. Another problem children associated with travelling alone was their fear of being raped or kidnapped by bad people, particularly if they cannot find the way to their intended destination.

For more information please contact:
Professor Albert Abane; Mr Sammy Owusu
Department of Geography, University of Cape Coast
Email: am_abane@yahoo.com; kowuuus@yahoo.com



Young researchers at the Ghana Workshop, Mankessim, 2008

Spotlight on South Africa

In South Africa, while recognition of children's rights and their participation in issues affecting them is enshrined in the constitution and reaffirmed in the Children's Bill, this has not filtered through to policy implementation. The findings of the research in South Africa have clearly shown that some of the mobility and travel challenges encountered by children are markedly different from the problems that adults face. The South Africa study was undertaken in three provinces: the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and the North West. Children's perceptions and experiences were solicited from deep rural, rural sites with services, peri-urban and urban settings through research in eight study settlements.

The journey to school

The distance and nature of the journey to school has a bearing on the age at which children start school, their levels of concentration in and out of class, their consequent grades, and their attitude towards school attendance, particularly in view of the corporal punishment often given to late-comers. Parents are often reluctant to send their children to school until they reach an age where they have the mental and physical stamina required to cope with this journey. Key findings from the South Africa study showed that:

- The vast majority of learners walk to and from school. In many cases, there is no transport service available, particularly in deep rural areas, and where it exists, it is often unaffordable.
- Minibus taxis, buses and organised contract transport employing a variety of modes such as panelled vans and light delivery vehicles constitute the 'legal' public transport service options available for the few who can afford the fares.
- While the bicycle could be considered an ideal mode for the school journey, affordability considerations mean only a few children own and use them.
- Children often arrive late and tired or do not go to school at all, especially during heavy rains when they may be cut off completely.

Other mobility-related factors influencing school attendance include:

- Age, gender, birth order, physical disability and family socio-economic status may affect which children are able to travel long distances to school, particularly if travel is unaccompanied and involves unreliable public transport.
- Local agricultural conditions and associated economic production patterns affect the daily chores that a child is expected to perform, such as herding cattle and collecting water and firewood.

Continued on page 6



Continued from page 5

- Inadequate and/or costly transport for moving farm produce and other goods may cause families to use their children, especially girls, as porters, which delays or prevents their attendance.
- Where public transport is costly and/or irregular, boys may be able to use bicycles to reach distant schools; on the other hand, the time girls spend on domestic tasks and, in some cases, cultural conventions, tend to restrict their opportunities to cycle.
- Teachers are often reluctant to take up positions in more remote village schools because poor transport options will isolate them from regular interaction with colleagues and other people of similar social status. Such villages may be without adequate teachers for long periods and teachers posted to these locations quite often take regular unofficial absences.

Access to health

For children in the study areas when sickness befalls their household, they are woken early to get to the clinic, the journey is far, and once there they often wait long hours to be seen. This means missing school sometimes for minor ailments. Visits after school can be futile as often the facilities close early.

The non-existence of emergency transport services means that unsuitable modes such as donkey and ox carts are used to carry critical patients to healthcare facilities. For serious illnesses poor parents often borrow to travel and stay at a district hospital, which impoverishes them even further into a downward spiraling poverty trap.

Poor road infrastructure, including broken bridges, inhibits the movement of mobile clinics and emergency transport services, particularly in inclement weather; and therefore sick children in remote settlements are adversely affected.

Children as transporters

Children in the study area carry a variety of items of varying weights mostly on their heads, for example heavy items such as water, firewood, beer crates, maize meal, paraffin and groceries for household consumption or for resale at tuck shops to supplement meager family incomes. Where children have access to technology such as the wheelbarrow or the donkey-cart, they often use these to transport very heavy items such as bricks or bags of cement. Although the use of technology lightens their burden (vis-à-vis head-loading) and improves their productivity (potentially freeing up more time for school work and play), it often means that the household allocates more work to them.

Safety and security

Children and parents cited safety and security as a major concern associated with traveling to and from school. Girls report being harassed or assaulted on the way to and from school usually by boys and youths who do not attend school. Some of these truant boys (tsotsis) especially in the urban and peri-urban sites are said to carry knives, and occasionally guns, and are suspected of using drugs or being under the influence of alcohol. This is often exacerbated by gang rivalry which creates a sense of fear, anxiety and helplessness.

Both boys and girls describe being afraid to use certain routes to school because of risks associated with notorious sections along those routes, for example, young girls, fear being kidnapped or raped particularly those having to walk through wooded areas or notorious urban neighbourhoods to school. Particularly younger children are not always able to scale physical obstacles such as ditches or dongas, and there are fears of being washed away or drowned during flash floods or when rivers overflow. There is also the possibility of attack from wild animals, for example snakes, dogs, warthogs or monkeys.

For more information please contact:

Mac Mashiri; Siphon Dube; Goodhope Maponya

Email: macmashiri@telkomsa.net; sdube@csir.co.za; gmaponya@csir.co.za

Where do we go from here?

We now have a very substantial evidence base on children, mobility and transport which could improve policy in our three focus countries and help to change thinking across Africa. Funding from AFCAP has allowed us to disseminate the young researchers' booklet in Malawi and Ghana (see page 3) as a first step towards this.

We are now actively searching for additional funds to support further dissemination and to build on our engagement with policy makers and practitioners in the focus countries (developing links established through the project Country Consultative Groups) and beyond. We hope to organise a workshop to bring together policy makers and practitioners from across Africa to debate our evidence base, its implications for policy and practice and to explore potential interventions. We are also keen to pilot some of the low-cost interventions we suggest on page 2 and to extend dissemination of the young researchers' booklet across Africa.

We very much welcome feedback from readers, including about their work, where it relates to children's mobility, or just experiences they would like to share. Please contact Gina Porter re.porter@durham.ac.uk in the first instance.

Further Reading

Online:

Research project website: www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility
IFRTD focus: www.ifrtd.org/en/issue.php?id=019

In print:

Porter, G., K. Hampshire, M. Bourdillon, E. Robson, A. Munthali, A. Abane, M. Mashiri (in press), Children as research collaborators: issues and reflections from a mobility study in sub-Saharan Africa. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 2010.

Porter, G., K. Hampshire, A. Abane, A. Munthali, E. Robson, M. Mashiri, 2010 Where dogs, ghosts and lions roam: learning from mobile ethnographies on the journey from school. *Children's Geographies* 8,2: 91-105.

Porter, G. 2010 Transport planning in sub-Saharan Africa III. The challenges of meeting children and young people's mobility needs. *Progress in Development Studies* 10, 2: 169-80.

About Us:

The IFRTD is a global network of individuals and organisations working towards improved access and mobility for the rural poor. It provides a framework for collaboration, information sharing, debate and advocacy that bridges traditional geographic and institutional boundaries.

International Programmes and Communications, 113 Spitfire Studios, 63-71 Collier Street, London N1 9BE, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7713 6699
Fax: +44 (0)20 7713 8290

Email: info@ifrtd.org

Guy Augustin Kemsop (West and Central Africa)

Tel: +237 994 48 30 or +237 994 78 30

Email: guy.kemsop@ifrtd.org

Peter Njenga (East and Southern Africa)

Tel/fax: +254 2 883323

Email: peter.njenga@ifrtd.org

Ana Bravo (Latin America)

Tel/fax: +51 1 222 6863

Email: ana.bravo@ifrtd.org

Ranjith de Silva (Asia)

Tel: +94 (0)11 284 2972

Fax: +94 (0)11 285 6188

Email: ranjith@ifrtd.org

www.ifrtd.org

Edited by Kate Czuczman

Typeset by My Word!

International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), Company registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 6835743, Registered Address: 113 Spitfire Studios, 63-71 Collier Street, London, N1 9BE, UK

Supporters of the Children and Mobility Programme:

