



# CHILDREN, TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

SHARING EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS IN GHANA, MALAWI AND SOUTH AFRICA

- Child Mobility Project Young Researchers' Group in collaboration with the Project Research Team and IFRTD -





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# INTRODUCTION



## A FOREWORD FROM THE YOUNG RESEARCHERS:

In October 2008, young researchers from Ghana, Malawi and South Africa came together in Ghana to discuss our research findings about children's journeys to school and other places and to share our experiences of doing the research. During this workshop, we had the idea of writing a booklet, with two aims:

- ◆ To make other people aware of the problems of children.
- ◆ To share the work we have been doing with the wider community.

Unfortunately, not everyone was able to travel to Ghana, only 19 out of the 70 young researchers who worked on this study were present at the workshop. But in writing this booklet, we have used materials and information from all 70 of us.

The booklet will show our experiences of what it meant to us as young researchers. We do this by using four questions, each introducing a chapter:

- ◆ What do we know about children's transport and journeys? Our research findings.
- ◆ What did we learn from being a researcher? Our experiences.
- ◆ What do we want others to learn from our research? Our recommendations.
- ◆ How did we find out about transport and journeys of youth and children? Our research methods and the research process.

The booklet is meant for our local and national authorities, teachers at primary and secondary schools, church leaders, NGOs, libraries, parents and, above all, all of the children in our home areas. We hope you enjoy this booklet as much as we enjoyed being part of the project and that you will be able to help us raise awareness of children and mobility<sup>1</sup> issues.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Mobility' was defined by the young researchers as, 'Movement from one place to another by car, walking or other means.'

**Below:** Young researchers at the Ghana workshop, Mankessim, October 2008



## A FOREWORD FROM THE ADULT RESEARCHERS:

Children, Transport and Mobility in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa is a project which focuses on three issues:

1. The mobility constraints faced by girls and boys in accessing health, education, markets and other facilities.
2. How these constraints impact on children's current and future livelihood opportunities, and
3. The lack of guidelines on how to tackle them.



The principal project aim is to generate knowledge that can serve as evidence to help change transport policies and practices, especially where these have impact on the educational and health opportunities for children and young people. The project uses an innovative two-strand child-centred methodology, involving both adult and young researchers. In addition to a more conventional interview-based study with children, parents, teachers, health workers, community leaders and other key informants, conducted by the academic researchers and their adult research assistants, there is a complementary component of research conducted by young researchers (facilitated by adults). This booklet focuses on the latter by sharing the experiences of the 70 young researchers involved in the research. Of these, 33 are girls, 37 boys.



### HOW WERE CHILDREN SELECTED TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH?

The young researchers are all in-school children, many of whom have a good grasp of English. The country collaborators recruited young researchers by contacting local schools in two regions in each country (Cape Coast Metropolis/KEEA Municipality and Sunyani Municipality in Ghana, Blantyre and Lilongwe districts in Malawi, Eastern Cape and NorthWest Province in South Africa). Attempts were made to recruit young people of diverse ages between 10 and 18 from schools in a mix of settlement types: urban, peri-urban and rural. In urban areas we focused on poorer neighbourhoods where transport barriers were expected to be particularly great. 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 young people 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 young people were encouraged to conduct their research only in locations where they live or are at school, to minimise travel needs and to enable them to utilise their local understandings and social networks. Once they had indicated where they would conduct their research, country collaborators, teachers and/or the young researchers themselves visited the relevant community leaders to explain the studies and their potential value to the community and to obtain permissions.

### WHAT DID WE DO NEXT?

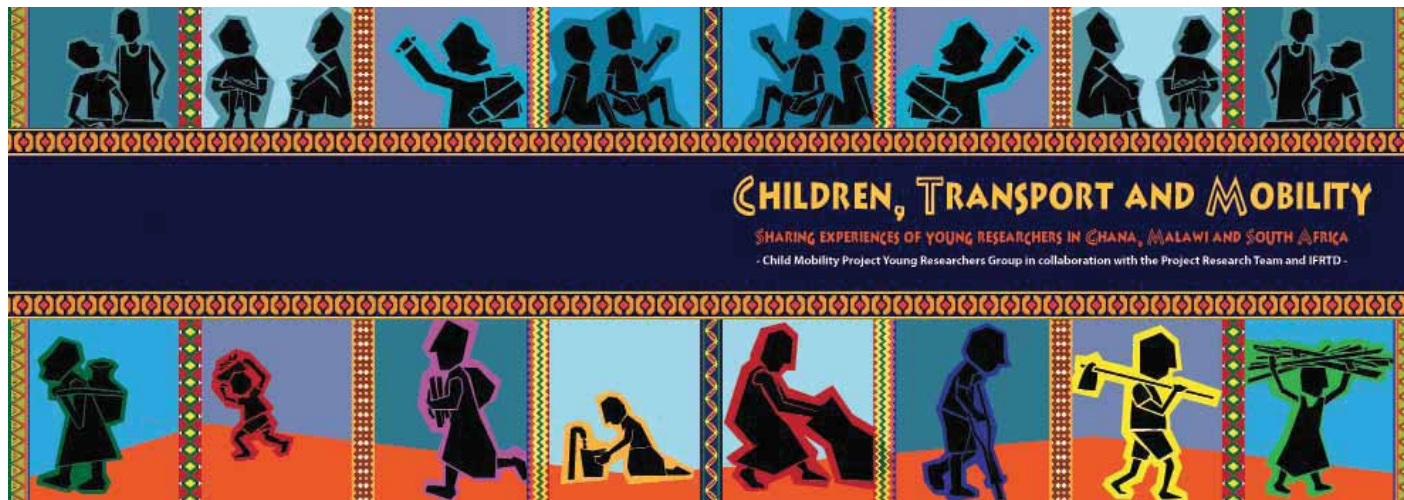
Although the overall project was designed by adults, the young researchers were involved at an early stage in refining the shape of their own strand. Eleven young researchers (three Ghanaian, four South African and four Malawian), joined adult researchers at the first project workshop in Blantyre, Malawi, to discuss research plans and draw up a first set of ethical guidelines. This was led by Professor Michael Bourdillon. Afterwards, six individual young researcher training workshops were held, two in each country, facilitated by the research collaborators and, in most cases, locally appointed research assistants. At these one-week workshops, 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 also 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 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), and weighing loads carried by children. All methods were focused on improving understanding of the places children of varying age, gender and schooling status go, how they travel there, and the transport problems they face.



## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet arose from a workshop in Ghana, held at the end of the research project, bringing together some of the young researchers from the three countries. The idea for the booklet came from the young researchers, who wanted a medium for sharing their experiences and research findings with a wider public. They worked hard to sift through all of the materials that they and the other young researchers had collected, picking out the key themes that had emerged from the research. They also reflected on the experiences of being a young researcher in the

different contexts in which they had worked. The result is very much the young researchers' work. Most of the booklet was written by the young researchers themselves, in their own words. Some sections were written collaboratively between the young researchers and adult facilitators, who helped them to bring their ideas together. The adult researchers have added occasional footnotes where they felt clarification was needed. We hope you enjoy the result and find it useful!





**CHAPTER 1:**  
**"WHAT WE FOUND OUT**  
**ABOUT CHILDREN'S TRANSPORT AND JOURNEYS"**  
**OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS**



Travel is often very difficult in our countries, especially for children. Getting to school, to market, to town and to the health centre, may take a long time, because in many places there is no local school or shop or medical care. Usually we have to walk because there isn't enough money to pay for us to go by bus or car. In some places, even if we had the money to pay our transport fare, the roads are very bad and commercial vehicles don't come because it's too difficult to reach the place. A few children – usually boys- may be lucky enough to have a bicycle they can use, but we met very few children who are so fortunate. At home we also have to cope with other transport problems – particularly fetching water and firewood for our families– because most houses don't have their own water supply or electric stove.

We have broken down this chapter into different kinds of journeys we have done our research on. We obtained this information mostly by talking to people individually and in groups and by walking with them on their journeys. If you want to know more about the methods we used, please go to Chapter 4 where you can find more information.

## 1.1. THE JOURNEY TO SCHOOL

We as young researchers found out that children in rural and peri-urban\*<sup>2</sup> areas in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa experience common challenges when walking to school. These are:

- ◆ Children often walk a very long distance to school.
- ◆ Children arrive at school late because of the distance and also because of the many household chores they have to do before going to school.
- ◆ They are being punished for their late comings by the teachers (lashing or whipping, and weeding duties).
- ◆ Children have to help with their younger brothers and/or sisters before going to school. Sometimes if they are lucky enough to have a taxi<sup>3</sup> to take them to school it leaves the child because he/she has not finished in time.
- ◆ Children walk through the bush and are sometimes frightened by snakes, fierce dogs and bandits.
- ◆ We also found out that children living in urban areas face fewer difficulties when travelling to school compared to children in peri-urban and rural areas.



<sup>2</sup> We use this symbol for words we learnt at the training workshops.

<sup>3</sup> **A note from adult researchers:** the word 'taxi' used here refers mostly to 'dropping taxis' which are cars that operate on fixed routes, similar to buses, rather than privately chartered taxis.

## 1.2. THE JOURNEY TO THE MARKET, SHOPS AND TOWN

- ♦ Most of the children from Ghana, Malawi and South Africa cover long distances when going to the market or shops.
- ♦ The main reason they are going to the market is to buy and sell there.
- ♦ Most of the children encounter problems when going to and from the market. This is because they often carry heavy loads: around 5 to 10 kilograms. As a result they experience body pain.
- ♦ In South Africa children going to town talked about problems with taxis and taxi-drivers, driving too fast and proposing love to girls.



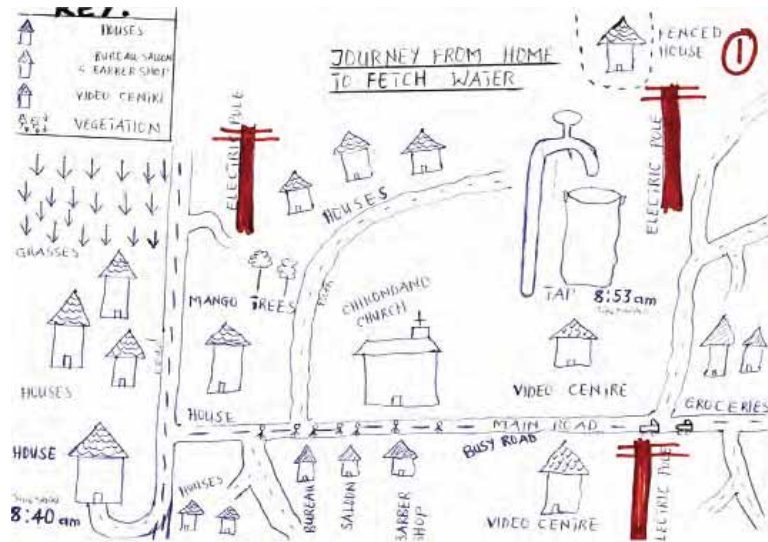
## 1.3. THE JOURNEY TO THE HEALTH CENTRE

- ♦ Most of the children we observed go to the health centre with their parents. Most of them walk.
- ♦ They only go to the hospital when they are very, very sick.
- ♦ Children get tired when walking from their homes to the hospital.
- ♦ Most of the children in the forest zone in Ghana and other rural areas use footpaths through the bush when walking to the health centre. We think this is dangerous.



## 1.4. THE JOURNEY TO FETCH WATER

- ♦ In Ghana, Malawi and South Africa children often have to walk a long distance to the water collection point, especially in rural areas.
- ♦ Because some communities only have one stand pipe\* or borehole in the area, the children wait for a long time before getting water.
- ♦ Children carry heavy loads of water and often have to collect water many times in one day, but especially in the morning before school when there are a lot of people wanting water. This makes them very tired before they even start their journey to school.





## 1.5. THE JOURNEY TO FETCH FIREWOOD

In Malawi, and in rural areas of Ghana and South Africa, we found that many children fetch firewood and face lots of difficulties:

- ◆ Thorns where the firewood is fetched.
- ◆ The children get tired because they walk long distances and may have to climb hills.
- ◆ They are afraid of being bitten by snakes and being kidnapped.
- ◆ Cutting firewood is difficult and carrying the heavy loads of wood is a problem for them.
- ◆ Roads and footpaths to the places with firewood are not good.
- ◆ Sometimes it is difficult to locate a place to get firewood.
- ◆ Children are chased if they try to get wood from the forest reserves.
- ◆ It is difficult walking on muddy and/or slippery roads during the rainy season.
- ◆ You may get bitten by ants.
- ◆ Children get very wet in the rainy season.
- ◆ Neck pains are common because the wood is heavy to carry.



## 1.6. THE JOURNEY TO THE FARM

In rural areas children often go to work on the family's farm, especially children who are not enrolled in school. School children go to the farm before or after school and at the weekend. Journeys to the farm can be difficult because of:

- ◆ Thick bush which makes it difficult to walk.
- ◆ Dangerous animals, especially snakes.
- ◆ Long walks to distant fields.

Here is the story of a walking interview with one boy about his journey to the fields:

*"To begin with, according to the information of my respondent, the last time he went to the farm was on the last Saturday. The respondent used one hour, thirty minutes to reach the farm. Again, the respondent used walking as his mode of transport. The respondent encountered many problems on his way to and from the farm. Examples are weeding or clearing the paths, before he could make headway to the farm. He met other extremely dangerous animals like cobra on his way to and from the farm."*



## 1.7. THE JOURNEY TO THE MAIZE MILL

In Malawi many children have to make long journeys to the maize mill to grind maize for their families<sup>4</sup>. The young researchers in Malawi found out the following about the journey to the maize mill:

- ◆ Bad roads make it difficult to use wheelbarrows vehicles and bicycles, so loads must be carried.
- ◆ Carrying heavy goods and covering long distances causes tiredness.
- ◆ Long waits at the mills because many people are waiting to grind their maize.
- ◆ Maize flour gets wet during rainy season when it starts raining before reaching home.



4 **A note from the adult researchers:** in South Africa many people buy processed maize meal in bags. In Ghana [and to a lesser extent, Eastern Cape, South Africa] there are mobile hand-operated maize grinding machines.



## 1.8. THE JOURNEY TO CHURCH

The young researchers observed the following about the journey to church:

Most of the children in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa use their feet as the mode of transport to church. In South Africa some children walk 1 hour and 30 minutes to church. They become tired along the way because they cover a long distance. Some use muddy roads when it rains and find it difficult to walk along the road.

An interesting ranking exercise on the journey to church was used in Malawi listing the 4 following problems children could encounter while going to church:

- ◆ Car accidents.
- ◆ Kidnapping of children.
- ◆ Tiredness.
- ◆ Being insulted and harassed on the way.

According to the ranking, the most serious problem was car accidents followed by kidnapping. The most common problem was being insulted and harassed on the way. One girl in South Africa described having been raped on her way to church.



## CHAPTER 2

# "WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM BEING A RESEARCHER?" OUR EXPERIENCES



Here we talk about the things we liked and disliked about being researchers on the child mobility project. We mention some of the activities we undertook to find information. Please go to chapter 4 for more information about taking photos, focus group, diary writing etc.

## 2.1. WHAT DID WE LIKE ABOUT THE PROJECT?

In **Malawi** we liked the following:

- ◆ We interacted with new and different people.
- ◆ We learnt how to do research (learnt research skills such as interviews and observation).
- ◆ We learnt how to express ourselves.
- ◆ We had a good accommodation during our training.
- ◆ We were paid<sup>5</sup>.
- ◆ We visited interesting places we had never visited before.
- ◆ We enjoyed games.
- ◆ We learned different things from different persons.

<sup>5</sup> **A note from the adult researchers:** the young researchers received a small financial compensation for their time and loss of other earnings. Payment of young researchers is a thorny ethical and legal issue: for more details, see Porter et al. 2010 Children as Research Collaborators: issues and reflections from a mobility study in sub-Saharan Africa. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

In **South Africa** we liked the following:

- ◆ We got to know how other people live and interact with their environment.
- ◆ Accompanying people to their homes was fun as we got to see new places.
- ◆ Focus group was quite interesting because we got to learn more about the problems that other people encounter that are different from ours.
- ◆ The diary we each wrote was the most interesting part and very easy because we had to express our feelings. It was quite a freedom to express ourselves on a daily basis by means of a diary.

In **Ghana** we liked the following:

- ◆ The project has improved our observational skills.
- ◆ Our academic work has also improved because we have had to learn hard as 'ambassadors' in our localities.
- ◆ It has provided a platform to learn from others and speak in public.
- ◆ Our findings will be of help in solving problems of children.
- ◆ It has assisted in discovering problems encountered in our communities.
- ◆ It has introduced us to the Department of Geography and Regional Planning [at Cape Coast University].
- ◆ We have become respectable among our mates and the society.
- ◆ It has made us know that people with different cultures share common destiny.
- ◆ We had experiences in farming activities.
- ◆ Socialisation – we interacted and enjoyed transfer of culture.
- ◆ We learned about the histories of some of the communities.
- ◆ Idleness was reduced.



## 2.2. WHAT DID WE FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT THE PROJECT?

In **Ghana** we found the following challenging:

- ◆ Research was time consuming. It took away some of our school and homework time.
- ◆ We faced challenges of ethnicity\* – some respondents\* did not speak our language so we used interpreters.\*
- ◆ Equipment problems - we did not get scales for weighing though we were taught how to use them.
- ◆ Bad reception from interviewees.\*
- ◆ Travelling distances.
- ◆ Scolding<sup>6</sup> on the way – misbehaviour on the way.
- ◆ We were being forced to tell what will happen after the research (we found it difficult to explain that convincingly).
- ◆ Walking on muddy roads during rainy season. The research was conducted during the rainy season.
- ◆ People asked for money after being interviewed.
- ◆ Misunderstanding between the interviewed people and us.
- ◆ It was expensive because some of us travelled and also had to buy toffees and biscuits to facilitate interviews. (We were however reimbursed.)

In **Malawi** we found the following challenging:

- ◆ Doing research during school days. It affected school work.
- ◆ It was time consuming.
- ◆ It was very tiring as well.
- ◆ Inadequate appropriate equipment.
- ◆ Misunderstanding of the research by parents and children.
- ◆ Scolding when conducting the research.
- ◆ People asking us about the outcomes before the interview.

In **South Africa** we found the following challenging:

- ◆ Learners were not fairly contributing because they were hyper-active.
- ◆ People were refusing to co-operate mostly in the picture taking.
- ◆ It was difficult for people to understand our project.
- ◆ Although the focus group was fun, we had other learners interrupting.

6 A note from adult researchers: 'scolding on the way' refers to verbal harassment by others in their communities as they went about the research.

## 2.3. WHAT SKILLS HAVE WE LEARNT AND WHAT HAS THE IMPACT BEEN?

In **South Africa** we learned skills such as:

- ♦ Communication skills,
- ♦ Learning skills,
- ♦ Time management,
- ♦ Respect for one another,
- ♦ Listening skills.

Learning these skills has helped our:

- ♦ **Communication skills:** learnt how to speak to others; not hurting other people's feelings.
- ♦ **Learning skills:** working as a team, dealing with arguments, working hard, coming up with solutions or different points of views, not losing interest.
- ♦ **Time Management:** We learnt to respect time because time wasted is never regained, do your task at a given time because time waits for no man. We are always on time at church
- ♦ **Respect:** respect other people's religion and views, respect other people's feelings (e.g. not hurting other people and making them feel comfortable), respect other people's properties and privacy.

In **Malawi** we learned about a lot, including:

- ♦ Interacting with young people.
- ♦ How to interview people.
- ♦ How to take a picture.
- ♦ How to come out with good reports.
- ♦ We have known different behaviours from different people we interviewed.
- ♦ We have known the challenges children face when going out to different places.
- ♦ Coping with tiredness during accompanied walks.
- ♦ We have learnt to comfort children when upset.





In **Ghana** the project has helped us a lot:

- ◊ It has helped us to develop good interpersonal relationships.
- ◊ It enabled us to identify problems we are not familiar with.
- ◊ It has exposed us to understand things in our environment which hitherto we did not know. For instance through observation mapping, certain features were identified.
- ◊ Diary writing about important events has been helpful.
- ◊ We have become good listeners.
- ◊ It has enabled us to address people in public.
- ◊ It has helped us to improve upon our observation skills.
- ◊ It has helped us to conduct interviews using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.
- ◊ We have learnt how to approach people and identify their problems and how to find solutions to problems.
- ◊ It has helped us to be able to socialise with people.
- ◊ We have developed good manners such as being tolerable with views of others.
- ◊ It introduced us to many places like Simiw, Bonkus, Abura.
- ◊ It has extended our friendly relations worldwide. We now have friends in South Africa, Malawi and UK.

## 2.4. PARTICULAR CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY GIRLS AS YOUNG RESEARCHERS

- ❖ Walking long distances more especially in the bush; we felt unsafe because something horrible might have happened to us, for example being raped, robbed or killed.
- ❖ Boys took advantage of us: for example some were scolding us.
- ❖ Some boys refused to be interviewed by girls for privacy purposes.
- ❖ We girls were feeling shy during the interviews with the boys.
- ❖ For girls it was particularly time consuming: the time scheduled for field work coincided with the household duties which eventually disrupt the normal scheme of doing things.
- ❖ Lack of money: in some typical rural areas, it is normally not easy to travel long distances by foot. Eventually as a young female researcher, we need to go by either bus, bicycle etc, which we cannot afford.



## 2.5. "SURPRISES" OR THINGS WE DIDN'T EXPECT DURING THE RESEARCH

Some of the things we found out about children's journeys and difficulties were things we knew from our own experiences. But we also found out some things that surprised us – that we didn't know before or expect. Here are some of our 'surprises':

"Something I did not expect to happen during my research programme in my area was when I conducted an interview concerning children going to health centres so I had an opportunity to interview an 11-year old girl. The girl told me she had been suffering for a month and she had been going to the hospital for a week but she went there with some difficulties since she was sick. Furthermore she was going there by foot for a distance of about 4.5 kilometres. What surprised me most was the girl was visiting the health centre for a week, but she didn't get any treatment. It was a pity for a young girl like her covering long distances and going there by foot but not receiving any treatment. Stories like this come as a surprise to me!"

(Malawi)

"To me it was surprising that:

- ♦ All the children in my study area were in school
- ♦ All the children were schooling in a particular government school
- ♦ Their parents work in two different places
- ♦ Farming is their major work

(Ghana)

"My surprise is that I realised that some pupils in the rural areas at the forest belt have to sell before going to school."

(Ghana)

"I met two girls ages 10 and 12 carrying big buckets on their heads. They were coming from the water point"

(anonymous)





## CHAPTER 3

**"WHAT DO WE WANT OTHERS  
TO LEARN FROM OUR RESEARCH?"  
OUR RECOMMENDATIONS**



### 3.1 GHANA (FOREST ZONE) YOUNG RESEARCHERS

- ♦ The media should always talk about the problems of children.
- ♦ The authorities should provide:
  - ♦ Potable water in all communities.
  - ♦ School bus to various schools.
  - ♦ Good roads.
- ♦ Local authorities should organise communal labour to clear bushy areas in various communities.
- ♦ Parents should limit the work load for the children.
- ♦ NGOs should provide the necessary inputs such as bicycles and buses to enable children to get to school.

### 3.2 GHANA (COASTAL ZONE) YOUNG RESEARCHERS

- ♦ Donors: should be willing to help in making children's transport and mobility easier because the findings are real.
- ♦ Opinion Leaders: should consider the children's transport problems and work towards these problems.
- ♦ Authority: should help in the programme of children transport and mobility to reveal hidden problems.
- ♦ Teachers/Parents: Parents and teachers should also help in making easily accessible roads from their communities to the school.
- ♦ NGOs: should be willing to provide pipe-borne water in the communities in order to stop children walking long distances to fetch water.

### 3.3 MALAWI YOUNG RESEARCHERS

- ♦ Donors must know the problems children face when going to different destinations so that they can raise funds to help.
- ♦ Parents must know that their children face a lot of problems whenever they travel to different places
- ♦ Parents must reduce the chores of the children.
- ♦ Children must know that some of the problems they face are common and they must try to withstand them by establishing youth clubs.
- ♦ Ministry of Education must know that in most areas schools are not enough so they need to construct more schools especially boarding schools to reduce problems associated with long distances and being tired. They must also introduce school buses to reduce the problem of lack of money for transport and more houses for teachers especially in government schools.
- ♦ Ministry of Transport & Public Works must construct good roads and repair the damaged roads and bridges and they must know that roads and bridges are in bad shape which gives difficulties to those who use them.

### 3.4 SOUTH AFRICA YOUNG RESEARCHERS

- ♦ Raise more funds so that we can go on with the research.
- ♦ Parents should try to give their children enough time to study; they must not overload them with household chores.
- ♦ Learners [i.e. school pupils] should be given a chance to express themselves and also to show their skills.
- ♦ The government should also be included in this research so as they could help to resolve the problems that other people and children encounter.
- ♦ Children should know that they are not going through their problems alone; there are people out there watching them.
- ♦ Life is not always about yourself; it includes other people who live around you.
- ♦ You learn to appreciate what you get because other people don't have that opportunity to get good things.
- ♦ Learn to help others more especially where help is needed.

# HOW WE FOUND OUT ABOUT TRANSPORT AND JOURNEYS OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> **Note from adult researchers:** Unlike the preceding chapters, this chapter was written jointly by the young researchers and adult facilitators. At the workshop, the young researchers discussed (in groups) each of the methods they had used, and each group produced a flipchart with the key points. These were collated by an adult facilitator, who drafted the paragraphs that follow, which were then amended and edited by the young researchers.



**All young researchers were trained in a variety of methods during one-week training workshops in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa respectively. Based on the training, the time and resources available, we selected those methods we felt were most appropriate for our own research. We provide a short description of all methods used in the research, illustrated by examples and/or pictures, where appropriate.**



## 4.1. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews are a process whereby you as the researcher ask questions one-on-one about the given topic and the other person has to respond to the questions. Depending on the number of questions, the interviews took about 30 to 45 minutes and we carried out 4 to 5 in one day. We took quick notes during the interview and upon completion would write it out fully. We designed our own lists of interview questions.

The process to select an interviewee was straightforward. Using our own connections we would ask people in our community whether they made particular journeys and if they did, would they mind being interviewed.

We all used individual interviews to find out detailed information about journeys to particular destinations. While we enjoyed this individual type of interview to find out problems and make new friends, we also acknowledged that the truth may not always be spoken. In addition the interviewees were not always on time and some interviewees were impatient and gave up part way through the interview.

## 4.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS OR GROUP INTERVIEWS

The objective of the focus group discussion is to get detailed information about children's mobility and transport problems. In the process we first visited a school and asked for permission from the headmaster. The permission was granted and when it was granted we selected 5-8 pupils from a class. After selecting them we took them out to a quiet place such as a shady tree where we sat. There one question was raised at a time for the children to talk about. The discussion took us about 45 minutes. Afterwards we sent them back to the class and thanked the headmaster and left.

The good thing about this method is to get more information and some of us were getting detailed information by probing. Also it is said that two heads are better than one so through the discussions we got to know the specific problems of the children.

The challenges about the method is that it involved a lot of time compared to, for example, taking pictures and also it delayed decision-making. Also it was difficult to control the children during the discussion as everyone wanted to talk and it is sometimes costly when children ask for gifts.



## 4.3. DIARIES

A diary is a book that keeps records of someone's specific events\*. To make a diary one needs a pen or pencil and a notebook. The records of the events can be on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. In writing the activities for a day, you state the date and time of every specific 'event', e.g. immediately after every transportation\* event you write what happened. Most of us just kept a diary for one week.

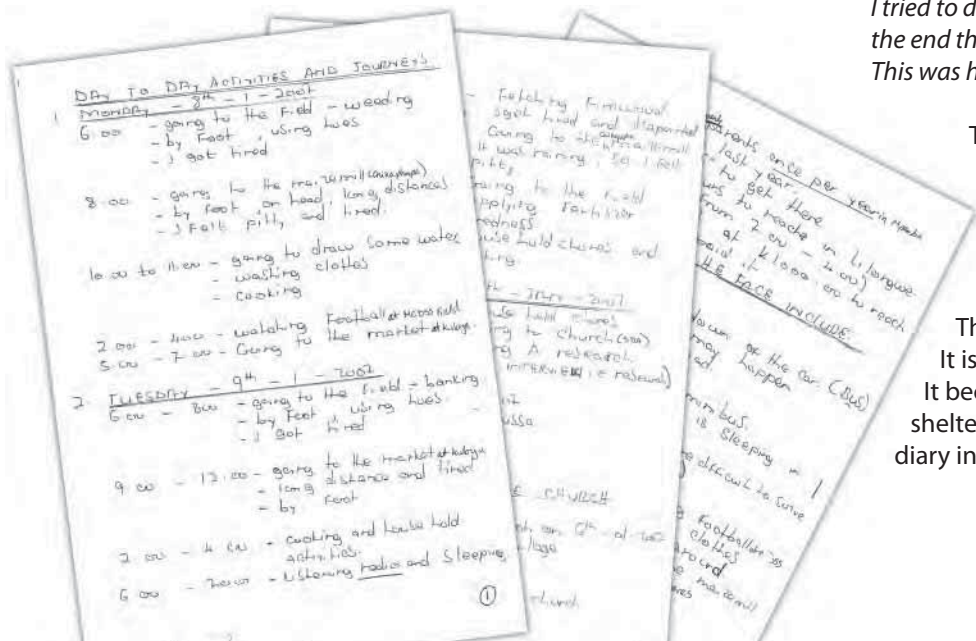
An example of a diary entry from a Malawian young researcher:

*'15th September, 2007. When I was passing along a road near the Nankwonga forest, I heard a voice from some men who were coming out of the forest. "You boy! Stop and give me your bicycle." Those words were spoken while they had already touched my bicycle by the carrier. I tried to do many things but everything did not help. At the end the bicycle was taken by these men "thieves". This was happening at 5.18pm.'*

The South African team found the diary to be the most interesting part and very easy because they were able to express their feelings. In their own words "It was quite a freedom of expression on a daily basis."

The challenges in keeping a diary are:  
It is time consuming.

It becomes wet when it rains and there is no shelter. [To solve this matter, one can keep the diary in a plastic file.]





#### 4.4. ACCOMPANIED WALKS

The overall objective of this methodology\* is for the interviewer to experience the same challenges that the person they are interviewing encounters on the way, because they move together from the start of the journey to the end. It also provides additional information about (for example) the distances that sick children face in accessing medical care, because the researcher can be more attentive than the interviewee.

The interviewer accompanies the interviewee to the latter's destination, for example the health centre. As they are walking the interviewer asks questions about the journey. The interviewer also asks about the problems the interviewee encounters on the way to the destination\*. Afterward the interviewer may put the journey into a map form.

The good thing about this methodology is that the interviewer can observe features by herself, such as a timber bridge where cars cannot pass. On the downside, the method can be tiresome because distances can be long and questions can be many.

## 4.5. OBSERVATION OR COUNTING

### BY LOOKING

Observation or counting by looking is done to find out how many people go to a particular destination, for example a hospital. In the case of the latter, we would categorise the people going in [boy or girl, child or adult]. The researcher stands 15 meters from the hospital door so as not to interfere with people who are going in and out of the health centre. The position is also chosen to not be observed while observing others. It was challenging however to find out who was the sick patient. For those who were sick it was hard to find out the kind of diseases which brought them to the hospital.

5

Counting by looking and watching  
Mansoor on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2001  
Mansoor A Kibwana

	Time	Time	Age	Age	How	How to	Observation
	Arrive	Leave			big	Carry	
1	9:00	9:00	a girl	17	25 kg's big	on her	she was dirty with hand crinize flour
2	9:15	9:58	a girl	3	5 ft	on her	she looks very thin than the hand first girl I observed
3	9:20	9:59	a woman		30 kg's	on her	she did not take any hand comparing to the little girl
4	9:30	10:00	a boy	7	about 4 kg's	in his hands	he still bore of the as little flour
5	9:31	10:02	a girl	18	A 25 ft	on her	she was scrubbing bucket with the scrubbing
6							woman
6	9:35	10:06	a girl	15	a big	on her	she was scrubbing with bucket hand scrub on who to go first
7	9:35	10:10	a girl	16	a 25 ft bucket	on her	she was scrubbing with bucket hand scrub on who to first
8	9:40	10:12	a girl	16	a big	on her	though she bucket was bucket hand big the black was to
9	9:50	10:13	a girl	10	a 25 ft	on her	she did not take any bucket hand as she was people
10	09:51	10:14	a woman		30 ft bucket	on her	she did not take any bucket hand as she was people
11	9:58	10:16	a girl	11	30 ft	on her	she was scrubbing bucket hand scrub on who to
25							same

## 4.6. PICTURES

During the training we learned not only how to take pictures but also about asking permission before taking pictures. Taking pictures is very useful for our research to illustrate the mobility and transport problems of children. It gives a visual impression of what people are doing and the possible effect on them. Pictures can also be used as evidence to show children at work.

Some children refused having their picture taken as they feared they would be used for juju purposes (especially in Ghana). Other children just feared to be taken in a picture form.



## 4.8. LIFE HISTORIES

A life history is to find out about a person's life not only limited to transport but also including health, education, ethnic background, age and the overall movements someone has made. Here is an excerpt from a life history done in Ghana:

*"My name is N.A. I was born on 21st July, 1995 to Mr. J.A and Mrs. G.A. a native of T. I am the second child of my parents I attend school at Ankafu D/A primary and I am in class 6. According to my mother when I was a child I fell from her back one day when she was rushing from the farm during a heavy rainfall. I was sent to the hospital, where I was admitted and treated for some days before being discharged."*

## 4.7 RANKING

We used the process of ranking to find the problems which children encounter, the seriousness of the problems, how often the problems occur and how many children are affected. In order to do this, one researcher used 45 bottle tops and distributed these equally among 5 children. The children were asked to list the problems they encounter on, for example, their journey to school. These problems were then jotted down one below the other. The children put their bottle tops down on the different problems. They gave more bottle tops to the most serious problems and fewer tops to the less serious problems. The researcher counts the bottle tops and records the number in a table. This way the children can express their thoughts and discuss why they thought certain problems were more or less serious.

The method is challenging and can get quite competitive because each child wants his/her point to be superior\*. In addition some of the children were not very serious about the whole process as they think they are playing a game. It also took very long explaining the exercise.



# EPILOGUE: THE STORY OF HOW THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED AND HOW IT CAME TO YOU<sup>8</sup>



As we said at the outset, 19 young researchers from Ghana, Malawi and South Africa came together at a small town called Mankessim in Ghana to share their research findings and experiences. During this one week workshop, the young researchers decided they would like to write a booklet.

They worked extremely hard during the week, with full support from Marinke van Riet from the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) and adult researchers on the project from the Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Cape Coast, and occasional assistance from the rest of the research team [who were reviewing their own research during the workshop]. The photographs of the workshop show you a little about how the work progressed.

Writing a booklet takes a great deal of time, however, and only a first draft could be completed in one week. Consequently, each country group of young researchers appointed a young people's representative to coordinate work on subsequent drafts. Many e-mails have passed between the three countries and UK as the final version was put together.

At the same time, the adult collaborators in UK had to find funds to support the printing and distribution of the booklet to schools and communities in the countries where the research took place. We all wanted it to reach as many people as possible. We are enormously grateful to AFCAP, the Africa Community Access Programme, for agreeing to fund this part of the work. Current funding covers printing of 2,000 copies and distribution to include the young researchers, schools, communities and associated local authorities in the study regions, relevant ministries (regional and national), NGOs, donors and national media in Ghana and Malawi. Electronic copies will also be available on the AFCAP website [www.afcap.org](http://www.afcap.org), the Durham University Child Mobility website [www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility](http://www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility) and the IFRTD website [www.ifrtd.org](http://www.ifrtd.org). Funds may subsequently become available to extend distribution to South Africa.

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<sup>8</sup> This is the story as recalled by the adult researchers, but it has been approved by the young researchers [who decided to rename themselves young researchers instead of children at the Mankessim workshop].

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Most importantly we would like to thank the children, their parents and our parents, our leaders and our communities in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa who made available their valuable time to be interviewed and to help us learn more about the mobility and accessibility challenges in our communities. Hopefully we have been able to reflect their views, ideas, experiences, and suggested solutions fully<sup>9</sup>.

The first draft of this booklet was prepared with help from Marinke van Riet of IFRTD during our Ghana workshop. We wish to thank her for her enthusiasm and hard work getting us started. The project on Children, Transport and Mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa has been the result of the efforts, commitment and passion of many people. They are too numerous to list them all but we would especially like to thank the following people:

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- ◆ Ms Marinke van Riet and Ms Kate Czuczman, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, UK .
- ◆ Professor Michael Bourdillon, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Netherlands.
- ◆ Dr Janet Townsend, Newcastle University, UK.

## Country Collaborators:

- ◆ Professor Albert Abane and Mr Augustine Tanle, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- ◆ Dr Alister Munthali and Dr. Elsbeth Robson, University of Malawi, Malawi.
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- ◆ Research assistants in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa.

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<sup>9</sup> **Note from the adult researchers:** However, the views expressed in this booklet are those of the young researchers and (footnoted) the adult researchers. They do not necessarily represent the views of the people we interviewed, nor those of the funding or facilitating partners. For reasons of privacy, we have omitted names from specific interviews and comments.

## ON BEHALF OF ALL THE YOUNG AUTHORS:

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All the photographs used were taken by the young researchers or the adult researchers during the project on children, transport and mobility in Africa.

# GLOSSARY



**Access:** in this booklet this means being able to get to schools, hospitals and other places important to people – access may be possible because the place is nearby or because there is good, easily available transport to get there.

**Accompanied walks:** these are walking interviews in which the researcher accompanies the person being interviewed to a place that person has to visit regularly, such as a borehole or school. As the two walk the researcher notes down things that happen as they move along and the interviewees' observations about the journey.

**Bush:** areas of scrubland that are, at most, only partly cultivated. There tend to be few people in these areas and children who have to travel through the bush may be frightened of meeting snakes, bandits or lions.

**Communal labour:** work parties organised by the community to do jobs such as clearing the bush or improving a footpath.

**Focus Group Discussions:** group discussions with a small number of individuals (perhaps five or six people) led by the researcher on a specific topic such as the journey to school. The researcher notes down the individual comments from the group but also the agreements and any disagreements among the group.

**Forest reserve:** area of land planted with trees by government or by the community and which can usually only be accessed with permission.

**Learners:** South African term for school pupils.

**Life histories:** interviews with individuals which aim to find out about the things that have affected their life so far [e.g. family background, educational history and experience, health experiences including illnesses and treatment, places they have lived, places they have visited etc.], including the good things that have happened and the problems they have faced.

**Methodology:** the set of methods used in the research.

**Mobility:** movement of people from one place to another by various means [on foot, by bus, car, etc.]

**Mobility constraints:** the barriers that stop people getting to places they need to reach: e.g. a dangerous river, a high mountain, harassment by people along the way, lack of money to pay fares.

**NGOs:** Non-government organisations.

**Peri-urban:** on the edge of a town or city.

**Ranking:** putting things in order of importance.

**Research:** finding out about and trying to understand issues that are important to the person doing the research, using appropriate methods.

**Stand pipe:** piped water point where water can be obtained.

**Taxi:** in this booklet this usually refers to 'dropping taxis' which are cars that operate on fixed routes similar to buses, rather than privately chartered taxis.



# FOR OUR READERS:

SOME QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT ..

IF YOU ARE A SCHOOL PUPIL, HOW DID YOU GET TO SCHOOL TODAY?

WHAT OTHER TRAVEL OPTIONS DID YOU HAVE FOR THIS JOURNEY?

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE PLACES YOU CAN TRAVEL TO AND HOW YOU GET THERE?

THINKING ABOUT THE JOURNEYS THAT YOU MADE LAST WEEK,  
WHAT WERE THE EASY JOURNEYS TO MAKE AND WHY AND WHAT WERE THE DIFFICULT JOURNEYS TO MAKE AND WHY?

