Gendered youth mobilities in Sub-Saharan Africa: some reflections

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Gender, development & 'mainstreaming'

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality" *Report of The UN Economic And Social Council 1997*

Recognition that:
(1) Gender inequalities are pervasive but often 'invisible' and 'informal'
(2) New interventions/initiatives may affect gender relations and inequalities in unanticipated ways.
(3) Therefore any planning **must** involve specific consideration of potential/likely impacts on both women and men.

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Now an RCUK funding requirement

The gendered journey to school (and beyond)

Both girls and boys often have to walk long distances to school each day and face regular challenges, difficulties and dangers along the way…

The gendered journey to school (and beyond)

But girls experienced several additional challenges:

- Gender-specific risks – esp. harassment and rape
- Less likely to be able to mitigate risks/difficulties (bikes, swimming, etc.)
- Cultural assumptions re girls' independent mobility "walking around"
- Heavier domestic workloads: fetching water, fuelwood, etc.
- Greater risk of punishment for dirty uniform, etc.

Introducing the mobile phone…

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Phones and gendered mobilities

Relationship between physical and virtual mobilities.

Impacts on girls' (independent) mobility…?

- Reduced anxieties re girls' safety while moving about…?

- Increased opportunities to arrange meetings…

BUT

- Parental restrictions on girls' access to phones (concerns re links between phones and sexual promiscuity)

- Target for [violent] robbery

- Phone-facilitated surveillance

Key messages

➢ Gender can interact with poverty, age, geographical marginalisation, etc. in ways that may be subtle and 'invisible', often disadvantaging (particular groups of) women and girls.

➢ New initiatives may impact on gender relations in unanticipated ways.

➢ Gender inequalities may sometimes be re-entrenched and re-inscribed by new technologies, not simply erased by them.

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Taking gender seriously…

- ➤ Prioritising gender equality.
- ➤ Not assuming that technologies are gender neutral.
- ➤ Not assuming that community-level benefits and costs will be equally shared between women and men.
- ➤ Not assuming that all 'women' (or 'men') are homogeneous groups and will experience new technologies in the same way.
- ➤ Taking time to understand gender relations within their wider social, cultural and economic contexts.
- ➤ Trying to understand and anticipate ways that gender relations might shape the uptake/use/benefits of new technologies and vice versa.
- ➤ Including both women and men at all levels of decision-making.
- ➤ Ensuring careful monitoring of gender impacts.

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Websites:

www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility/

www.dur.ac.uk/child.phones/