GENDERED TIME-USE AND SCHOOLING FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AMONG THE URBAN POOR IN UGANDA

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Abstract - The social and economic contexts in which children grow shape how they negotiate their engagement in activities such as studying, household chores or income generating activities. This paper reports on time use among secondary school students in Kasubi and Nakulabyeslum areas. The data obtained from narratives of students and from diaries recording their time use indicate that their time is basically allocated to economic activities, domestic work, school related work and leisure. The pattern of time use has well-articulated gender differences, often guided by social and cultural norms. The findings revealed that girls are burdened more than boys.Generally, time spent on school related work increases when children are enrolled into school.However, time spent on livelihood activities remain valued, especially in a background of low household income. This study provides adequate evidence for strategies to challenge disabling norms around time use.It is argued that children should be afforded more time for education and school related activities in order to enhance their performance and realize long term benefits of education.

Key words - Girls education, gender, time use, livelihoods.

I. INTRODUCTION

While working towards the universalization of education beyond 2015, the importance of the connections between household, school and community environments can no longer be ignored because they constitute the learning context. "The learning context is an interwoven structure of circumstances and people that surround the child across systems at a given point in time and over time" (Christenson 2002:5). Time is an important aspect of the learning context as a resource for children's educational achievement. Time use by children in and out of school or at home, within the community and at school has been considered as one of the essential differentiating factors between high and low achievers in school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

Both males and females play multiple roles in the society (Moser 1989). Males however usually focus on productive roles in a sequential manner while females usually play many roles simultaneously and have to balance competing claims on time for each of them (Blackden and Wodon, 2006). The household and community gender division of labor as an aspect of the learning context determines the educational opportunities available for girls and boys as their capacity to allocate time for education-related activities is constrained by the time they allocate to economic and reproductive activities. Although gender differentiated time use patterns are affected by many factors including the level of household poverty, the socio-cultural norms play an important role in defining and sustaining the rigidity in the gender division of labour (Blackden and Wodon, 2006) This paper draws on interviewer administered time diaries data collected from secondary school age children in Kasubi and Nakulabye slums in Uganda to describe how school children spend time on multiple activity contexts including households, community and school environments.

II. THE CONTEXT AND RTF PROJECT

The Righting the Future (RTF) was a project that identified and mobilized out of school girls to return to school. It was implemented by the Nascent Research and Development Organisation (NRDO) in collaboration with the International Child Development Initiative (ICDI), MV Foundation and Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU). The RTF project drew on the successful experience of MV Foundation – a non-governmental organization in India on identifying and returning out of school children to school. The RTF project however targeted girls of secondary school going age and is also well known for its mobilisation slogan "ALL GIRLS IN SCHOOL".

Mobilisation of girls was done through community members, community mobilisers, youth volunteers, local leaders (including political and religious leaders), women's groups and local Child Protection Forums (CPF),household tracking and community dialogues. RTF project staff tracked all the 7.185 households in the study area and identified all girls out of school. After identification, the girls were invited to motivational camps. A motivational camp is a 2-5 days non-residential workshop conducted by NRDO-RFT project staff with the purpose of motivating the girls to accept and return to school. After the motivational camps, the girls who accept to return to school and had dropped out for a short time were mainstreamed directly, while those who spent long out of school were enrolled into Bridge centers. Bridge centers are non-formal schools for accelerated learning established by the RTF project specifically to help girls who have been out of school for a long time to catch up and fit in their age appropriate

classes before they can be mainstreamed to formal schools. The RTF project runa total of four bridge centers in Kasubi andNakulabye, where the enrolled girls were taken through an accelerated curriculum that helped them re-enter formal secondary schools. Girls stay at the Bridge school for a period ranging from one week to one year.

After going through the bridging program, NRDO-RTF project staff facilitates for places in formal schools within the project sites. Public secondary education is non-existentin Kasubi and Nakulabye and allthe 9 secondary schools available are private schools which implies that all students are required to pay school fees. This is a big challenge considering the poverty faced by people in slum communities. Fortunately, through the efforts of community mobilisers and leaders, some girls were lucky to get full scholarship and half bursaries to re-enroll into formal schools.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research relied on the use of interviewer administered time diaries to collect data from school children. This is a process in which the interviewer asks the respondent to describe the activities they do on each day in their own words from the beginning to the end of a day (Blackden and Wodon 2006).The respondents were asked about their time use the day before the interview. They were asked "what did you do yesterday at mid night?" The interviewer recoded the activity, time, location and with whom. Thereafter, the next question was "what did you do after that?" and this went on in the same fashion until the entire day was recorded. Data was collected from 20 girls who had been out of school but were able to return to school with the support of the RTF project intervention. These are girls aged 13 to 17 who were initially enrolled in the Bridge Centers and later mainstreamed to formal schools. Their time use diary data was collected at three consecutive times. The first round of data were collected when they had just been identified by the project staff and were thus still out of school. The second round of time use diary data were collected when the girls were attending Bridge centers, and the third round of data were collected when they had already joined formal schools. The RTF project does not handle boys but for comparison purposes, data were also collected from 6 boys aged 13 -17 years. The boys were interviewed during holiday time, weekends and school days. The study focused on children in secondary schools only.

IV. GENDERED TIME USE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SLUM STUDENTS

The research generated four major time use categories: economic activities, domestic work, school related work and leisure. Economic activities include time spent on economically productive work such as market vending work, or selling/hawking, work, domestic service work, working in shops and bars and any other income generating tasks. For girls, such productive activities include working in the market by either assisting parents/guardians or working for other people, hawking (especially fruits and vegetables), plaiting hair, working as house-help, and assisting in shops, bars and salons on a piecemeal contact. Girls revealed that the most stressful income generating work for them is working and/or assisting in bars and markets especially during late evening hours. They endure a lot of sexual harassment from drunken male customers from the community who pester them for sexual relationships, abuse them verbally, touch them by force and always threaten them with rape. Boys also work in the market, do hawking (especially electronic and other personal items), and work in video show rooms and in shops. They also assist in bar places not as bar tenders but in roasting meats and frying potato chips.There is one boy among theresearch participants who worked as a night security guard for a small supermarket in the community from 10.00 pm to 6.00 am.

The economic activities usually carried out by girls are for the benefit of the entire households while most of the boys engage in such activities for their own income earning apart from those who assist parents in the market. The findings show that girls' engagement in productive work was done when they were still out of school as well as during their attendance at the Bridge center, on all days of the week and reduced when they got mainstreamed to formal schools. Analysis of time use data shows that some girls reported at the Bridge Centre after doing work in the market up to as late as 10.00am. After such girls joined the formal schools, they began their day much earlier than before. For example, they helped their parents to carry stuff to the market, and there after rushed to school by 8.00 am. This is because, the formal schools have strict reporting time to which all children must comply. The boys' engagement in economic activities during the week days was mainly after school. Boys also worked in the market and in local especially during weekends and very rarely during week days. On average, out of school girls work 8 hours dailydoing economic activities, 7 hours daily on school days during their attendance at the Bridge School, and 3 hours daily on school days after being mainstreamed in formal schools. Boyson the other handwork 4 hours on average during in holidays and weekends and a maximum of 1 hour on days when they go to school.

The students who participated in the research were also involved in domestic work. This includes time spent on household chores including caring for other younger children, taking and picking children from school cooking, cleaning, washing, collecting water, and other household responsibilities. The findings show that while girls' involvement in productive

work reduced when they joined formal schools, their household chores increased as their parents had to work longer to compensate for the lost time. For example, before joining the Bridge centers, some girls woke up at or slightly before 7.00am in the morning to start their day. They undertook tasks such as preparing and taking their younger siblings to school, washing utensils and cleaning the house. After joining Bridge centers and formal schools, some girls started their household chores as early as 5.00 am in order to be able to complete their tasks in time. The interference of routine domestic chores with girls schooling was noted by Lyon et al. (2013).For most boys however, there were negligible changes in time for waking up since their engagement in domestic chores was limited whether it was holiday time, weekend or weekdays when they go to school. On average, out of school girls spend5 hours daily on domestic chores, bridge school girls spend4 hours and formal girls spend3 hours daily on domestic activities. On the other hand, the findings show that on average boys spend2 hours daily on domestic work during weekends and holidays and on average 1 hour on school days. Most of the time, boys do domestic work in the form of washing their uniforms and fetching water. Moreover, the water they fetch is mainly to help them wash their clothes and bathe and on rare occasions do they fetch water for the benefit of the entire household.

The time spent on schooling-related tasksundertaken by the respondents includes time spent going to and from school, attending classes, doing homework, and revising for tests and examinations. The findings show that girls spend less time on school-related tasks during their attendance at the Bridge center compared with their attendance at the formal schools. There are some girls who get too tired to do homework after completing their days' activities but due to their commitment to their studies, sometimes they decide to wake up at 2.00 am or 3.00am and invest about one hour in doing homework and studying for tests and examinations. Such girls exercisedagency by sacrificing their sleep time in order to compensate for extra time spent on various tasks required to secure their livelihoods. This was common among older girls because they worked more than younger ones. This is consistent with the findings of past research done by UBOS and ORC Macro (2001), Hsin (2005) and Okwany (forthcoming), who also found out that work responsibilities as well as gender differentials in children's time use increase with age. The findings of another study conducted by UTAMU on experiences of Bridge school teachers also shows that some girls coped with the heavy work load by deliberately refusing to do work in class claiming to be tired while others slept off during lessons.Such discontinuity between students' school and home environments affects school performance (Comer et al., 1996; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998). The time use analysis results show that boys spend more time than girls on schooling related work especially during the week days. The data collected shows that Bridge center girls use4 hours and formal school girls spend 7 hours on average daily on schooling related tasks whileboys used 10 hours doing school related work.

The time for leisure activitiesincludes the time spent on watching TV, watching video shows, disco, playing, and chatting with friends. It excludes sleeping, eating, resting and personal care tasks. The research revealed that girls' leisure before they joined Bridge centers included watching TV and chatting with or visiting friends. After joining the Bridge centers and formal schools, girls only spent leisure time on watching TV but this was only possible for a few girls aged 13 and 14 years whether it is during the weekends or weekdays. The findings show that girls in school spenda maximum of 30 minutes daily on leisure which was specifically allocated to watching TV. Girls out of school and those in Bridge centers spend a maximum of 1 hour daily on leisure. For boys, leisure time was spent playing and chatting with friends, watching TV and video shows in the community, and sometimes going to disco especially on Fridays and during holidays. On average, boys spend up to 4 hours daily on leisure activities during school time and 7 hours during holidays and weekends.The findings are consistent with those in the study by Okwany (forthcoming) which revealed that on weekdays, in addition to attending full time school, girls spent on average up to 6 hours working (in contrast with 0-2 hours for boys). On weekends they spent between 12 -14 hours (while boys spent an average of 5-6 hours). Similarly. UBOS and ORC Macro (2001) also found out that girls aged 6-17 years spent longer hours than boys carrying out various types of work in Uganda. While the study by Hsin (2005) shows that in Indonesia boys spend more time in market work and girls spend more time in nonmarket work, this research shows that girls in Kasubi and Nakulabye spend more time in both market and nonmarket work than boys.

CONCLUSION

The time use data collected shows that the RTF project has positively impacted on girls' time use patterns although more efforts are still required to achieve 100 percent success. The research findings show that girls in school spend more time on school-related activities (7 hours daily) than other activities – that is; 3 hours on productive work and 3 hours on domestic work. Before the implementation of the RTF project, the same girls spent 8 hours on economic activities, 5 hours on domestic work and zero time on school work. This is a fundamental achievement which deserves to be greatly underscored and possibly replicated in slums everywhere. The time use patterns reveal how the tasks undertaken by girls in such urban poor communities are crucial for family survival but are

largely invisible and therefore not considered in formulating policies and programs aimed at universalizing education. The existing private secondary schools in Kasubi and Nakulabye are obviously profit oriented and have uniform requirements and regulations for all students. Teachers may not be aware of how the entire learning context facilitates or impedes the way students adapt to the demands of schooling. The RTF project could have more dialogues with teachers and management of the partner schools and strategise on how to ensure that students benefit from schooling in light of the heavy workload outside the school.The structure and function of slum families are constrained in supporting education considering their survivalist livelihood activities. Parents are overwhelmed by financial demands amidst limited income and may not think beyond the fact that their children areenrolled in school.As it has been asserted that poor people's actions and behaviors are based more on past experiences rather than a vision of the future (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2003),their children's academic outcomes may not have a high priority among their urgent concerns.The findings show thatslum students have limited opportunities to benefit from their parents' support in terms of attending to personal matters. Additionally, the study sites are characterized by large numbers of single-parent female-headed households who hustle through each day to provide for their families and face extreme financial and time constraints. Based on the analysis of students' time use data, the only time parents and children are together is when they are working. There is limited time even for families to sit together and share meals due to the nature of livelihood demands in these communities. According to Coleman (1987) and Christenson (2002) shrinking student-adult interaction and time negatively affects school performance.It is therefore necessary to introduce discussions about parents' involvement in students' personal and academic life during NRDO-RTFcommunity and school dialogues and to sensitize parents further about the necessity of increasing their labour time in order to provide enough time for children to engage in school-related activities.

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