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# Changing Children's Lives

Risks and Opportunities

Kirrily Pells and Martin Woodhead





# Changing Children's Lives: Risks and Opportunities

Kirrily Pells and Martin Woodhead

February 2014

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## Changing Children's Lives: Risks and Opportunities

Kirriily Pells and Martin Woodhead

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## Photo credits

The children and their families who are participating in the Young Lives study willingly share with us a great deal of detailed personal information about their daily lives, and we have a responsibility to protect their confidentiality and ensure their identities remain protected. For this reason the names of children and communities have been changed. The photos are of children living in similar situations to the children within our study sample.

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## About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty tracking 12,000 children's lives over 15 years in 4 developing countries – Ethiopia, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam. The pro-poor sample is drawn from 20 sites in each country, and includes two age cohorts (2,000 children who were born in 2001-02, and 1,000 children who were born in 1994-95 in each country). Three major survey rounds have been completed to date, in 2002 2006-07 and 2009, with further rounds due in 2013 and 2016.

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# Summary

Children's development and well-being are significantly influenced by their family and community environment, with poor and marginalised children facing a heavier burden of risk. This paper summarises emerging findings from the Young Lives longitudinal study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, Peru and Vietnam. It examines how children's development is shaped by different environmental influences, highlighting the changes in children's daily lives during the first decade of the twenty-first century, including the changing nature of risks and opportunities.

We offer six key research messages, focusing on:

1. how the poorest children continue to be left behind despite rising living standards overall, illustrated by the increased concentration of stunting.
2. the vulnerability of children in poor households to repeated environmental and economic shocks and the potential of social protection schemes to alleviate these problems.
3. how rapid changes in people's living environment, such as the expansion of basic services, roads and communications, bring new opportunities but also risk reinforcing the social exclusion of poor and marginalised children.
4. the current shortfalls in school quality, effectiveness and relevance that limit the potentially transformative power of education.
5. how children continue to face competing pressures on their time through combining schooling with traditional work roles and contributions to the household.
6. how rapid social change is creating new dilemmas within households and communities about how best to protect children and prepare them for the future.

We conclude that poverty reduction and improved access to services and schooling have reduced some risks and created new opportunities for many children. However, the poorest children are being left behind against the backdrop of generally rising living standards. For example, although school enrolment rates have increased, the poorest children most often experience poorer quality education, and while malnutrition and stunting



are declining, the reductions are far greater among less poor children. Creating a supportive environment for children's development requires tackling the structural causes of disadvantage, with a particular focus on poor communities where children experience multiple disadvantages. We anticipate that later phases of Young Lives research will provide further evidence on these issues, as children become young adults and make the transition into work, marriage and parenthood.

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# Introduction

Children's development and well-being are significantly influenced by their family and community environment, with children living in poverty typically facing a heavier burden of risk (Bornstein et al. 2012; Gordon et al. 2003; Rogoff 2003). An earlier paper in this series, entitled *What Inequality Means for Children*, demonstrated how inequalities in children's circumstances feed through into systematic inequalities in children's development, education and well-being (Woodhead et al. 2013a). This second paper focuses on the ways children's lives are changing in Young Lives study countries, with a specific focus on the impact of economic growth, social change and policy reform in opening up opportunities for children, as well altering their experience of risks, shocks and social exclusion during the first decades of the twenty-first century.

Since the turn of the century, rapid economic, social and technological change at the macro level has transformed many of these children's circumstances, creating new opportunities but also new constraints and new risks. This trend is set to continue. The report of the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda (United Nations 2013) anticipates further changes by 2030, including ongoing economic growth, demographic change and growth in the world's labour force, migration and the expansion of technology. This paper synthesises Young Lives evidence on how changes in the macro-environment, including economic growth, the incidence of shocks and adverse events (such as food price inflation and drought), the expansion of education and other services, and associated changes in social attitudes and aspirations for children are in significant ways altering the experience of growing up for children in diverse circumstances. Understanding these processes is critical for designing better policies for children.

We offer six messages emerging from Young Lives research, focussing on the ways childhood is changing for children in the early twenty-first century, especially the risks and opportunities in their lived environment. Each message is supported by a brief summary of evidence, and illustrated by a short profile of one of the Young Lives research sites with particular emphasis on the extent and impact of change.

**Message 1** is about the extent to which rising living standards have delivered improvements for children, and the ways progress varies between communities, with specific findings that the poorest children continue to be left behind.

**Message 2** reports on the particular vulnerability of children in poor families to environmental and economic shocks, but also evidence that they benefit from social protection schemes and self-help groups.

**Message 3** gives an overview of the rapid expansion of basic services in many Young Lives communities, as well as reviewing the ways improved roads and communications increase opportunities for many children and families, but shows how patterns of change also risk reinforcing pre-existing social exclusion.

**Message 4** looks at the ways children's lives are being shaped by the rapid expansion of formal education systems during recent decades, the high aspirations for education, but also the challenges for children and families where school quality is low and aspirations are not fulfilled.

**Message 5** offers evidence that many children face competing pressures on their time through combining household responsibilities and paid work with going to school.

**Message 6** explores how the nature of some risks facing children may be changing, with an increase in some social risks arising from tensions between 'traditional' and 'modern' childhoods, including the ways parents and young people in Ethiopia respond to advocacy campaigns around early female marriage and female circumcision.

We conclude with implications for how policy can better harness processes of economic and social change to improve poor children's environments and future life chances.

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# Research context

## ***Why children's living environments matters for their development***

Children's development is shaped both by their direct experience of their immediate physical, social, cultural and institutional environment, as well as by the more indirect influences of the macro-level economic, social and policy environment (Bronfenbrenner 1989; Harkness et al. 2013; Super and Harkness 1986). Living environments comprise the different settings in which children grow up, which typically include the home, school and community. Within different aspects of these environments are embedded a variety of potential risks, including physical risks (for example, poor-quality housing and lack of sanitation); social risks (the illness or death of caregivers); cultural risks (values and practices which may discriminate against particular groups of children) and institutional risks (such as poor-quality schooling or healthcare) (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2007; Wachs and Rahman 2013). Experience of these multiple risks can have a cumulative or compounded effect on poor children's development (Behrman et al. 2010; Daniels and Adair 2004; Stevens 2006).

However, children are rarely passive in the face of risk (Masten 1994, 2001). They engage with their environment both individually and together with their caregivers, siblings and peers. Even during early childhood, they are trying to make sense of what is happening to them, and to their families (Dunn 1988). As they gain skills and competencies, children are increasingly active contributors, whether through helping within the home, or taking paid or unpaid work, or accepting responsibility for trying to improve their family's situation by studying hard and passing school exams. To a greater or lesser degree, they play a role in shaping their environment and are social actors in processes of change, as well as on occasions resisting change (Percy-Smith and Thomas 2009).

*“Where children live and how their communities are changing are important factors in shaping the opportunities open to them and the risks they face.”*

## ***How changes in their living environment create new opportunities and new risks for children***

Children's development, well-being and living environments are profoundly shaped by macro-economic, social and environmental processes, including economic growth or crisis, changes in social values, expansion of social policies, and environmental shocks, such as drought. Some social and economic changes affect children directly, for example, when a flood destroys their home, or an early education programme opens up in their neighbourhood, but the extent and ways these changes affect children are strongly moderated by the coping strategies and actions of caregivers (Schaffer 1996). The impact of many changes is less direct, for example, when a social protection scheme creates employment opportunities, resulting in improved livelihoods and better nutrition for children. Finally, social change affects children differently according to their age, gender, and resilience to shocks, as first demonstrated through a study of the impact of the 1930s depression in the USA (Elder 1974).

Where children live and how their communities are changing are important factors in shaping the opportunities open to children and the risks they face. This paper observes two trends. Firstly, children living in the poorest communities are likely to experience multiple disadvantages, including remote location in rural areas, weak infrastructure and services, poor-quality education and less access to modern technology, which are typically compounded by social stratification, for example, belonging to a low caste or ethnic minority group (Boyden and Dercon 2012). Disadvantage becomes concentrated, with children living in these areas having poorer indicators of well-being in multiple domains.

Secondly, poverty reduction and improved access to services and schooling have reduced many risks facing children and have brought significant improvements in children's survival, health and well-being. Globally under-5 child mortality has halved since 1990 (UNICEF et al. 2013). In sub-Saharan Africa there were no changes in net primary school enrolment between 1980 and 1996, but in the period 1999–2010 net enrolment increased by 20 percentage points (UNICEF 2000; UNESCO 2012). However, positive reforms can also be associated with new potential risks for disadvantaged children. There are new concerns around the quality and effectiveness of institutions, policies and services, with evidence of inequality increasing in some contexts (UNESCO 2012; UNICEF and UN Women 2013).

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## ***Creating a supportive living environment for children's development***

Recognition of the detrimental effect of hazardous environments on children's development has been signalled by the high priority given to children's survival and development through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), along with global commitments towards Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO 2012) and more recently, Learning for All (World Bank 2012a). Global policies for children are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989), with its emphasis on protecting and promoting the rights and best interests of all children, including via children's own participation in the development process. At the same time, persuasive economic arguments for investing in children highlight the importance of early intervention and fostering human capital in order to enhance the productiveness of economies in the future (Commission on Growth and Development 2008; Heckman et al. 2006).

Global attention has also been focused on finding ways to monitor the extent and effectiveness of child-focused policies by identifying and tracking key indicators (ACPF 2010; Centre for Global Learning 2013; De Neubourg et al. forthcoming; Thukral and Thukral 2011). While global and regional trends are important indicators of progress, the extent and impact of change is experienced very differently according to where children live and who they are.

## **Policy context**

Recent decades have seen a growth in the influence of international standards and commitments on the development of national policies and programmes, (notably via the UNCRC, the MDGs and EFA). At the same time economic growth has increased the scope for infrastructure and investment. This section provides a brief overview of the key policies and programmes for children in each Young Lives country, which serve as a backdrop to the messages that follow.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The information given in these four overviews is taken from the Young Lives reports for Round 3 of the survey (Ethiopia – Woldehanna et al. 2011; India – Galab et al. 2011; Peru – Cueto et al. 2011; and Vietnam – Le et al. 2011).

## ***Ethiopia***

Ethiopia is a low-income country but has reported economic growth averaging around 11 per cent annually since 2003/4, with the proportion of the population living in poverty falling to around 30 per cent from around 45 per cent ten years previously. Following the global economic crisis Ethiopia also experienced high inflation, which peaked at 64 per cent in July 2008. This has compounded food insecurity, prevalent because of repeated environmental shocks such as drought. Since 2005 Ethiopia has been implementing the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), which helps chronically poor people to withstand shocks by addressing their short-term consumption needs and protecting their assets from further depletion.

Ethiopia has integrated the MDGs into national development policies, strategies and sectoral programmes through two Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes and the current Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) which commenced in 2010. Considerable progress has been made towards achieving the MDGs, with Goal 4 on reduced child mortality already achieved. The GTP aims to expand the coverage of infrastructure and social services and emphasises improvement in the quality of services.

Ethiopia has a National Plan of Action for Children accompanied by a series of nutrition, health and education strategies. A Health Extension Programme has been rolled out throughout the country, starting in 2002, with the aim of achieving universal primary healthcare. Ethiopia has also made great strides in increasing primary enrolment through successive Education Sector Development Programmes, although secondary enrolment lags behind and there are significant challenges regarding the quality of education. Corporal punishment in schools is prohibited by the Constitution.

## ***Andhra Pradesh***

Andhra Pradesh is the fifth-largest state in India, a country which has experienced rapid economic growth and is now classified as lower-middle-income. Similarly Andhra Pradesh has grown economically, on average at 8.3 per cent over the period 2002–7. However, this growth is not evenly distributed across socio-economic groups, geographical regions, and locations (rural and urban). An estimated one in three people in the state live below the poverty line and have been badly hit by inflation and rising food prices, following the global economic crisis.

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The Government has sought to address these challenges through a series of five-year plans. These anti-poverty programmes focus mainly on employment creation, infrastructure development, housing, and social protection schemes in rural areas. In 2005 the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), a social protection scheme, was introduced and provides a guarantee of 100 days of waged employment in a financial year to rural households. In addition, a series of programmes aimed at improving children's development and tackling high levels of malnutrition has been introduced. For example, the Integrated Child Development Scheme provides pre-school education, healthcare and supplementary nutrition for children under 6, through local *anganwadi* centres.

The Right to Education Act was implemented in 2010 and provides free and compulsory education to all children aged 6–14. It is accompanied by the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* programme ('Education For All'). Its key objectives are to ensure all children attend school and complete eight years of education; to monitor and improve the quality of elementary education; and to reduce gaps between social groups and by gender. Corporal punishment is outlawed in Andhra Pradesh.

## **Peru**

Peru is an upper-middle-income country, which has experienced consistent economic growth over the last two decades. Despite a slowdown in GDP growth in 2009 linked with the international economic crisis, the economy has returned to its previous growth rate. However, about a third of the population still lives in poverty and levels of inequality remain almost unchanged. This would suggest that although the overall rate of poverty is declining, economic growth is not reducing the gaps between socio-economic groups.

The Government has implemented a programme of decentralisation. However, while the regional governments have their own budget, assigned by the central Government and raised through taxes and other incomes locally, social expenditure is uneven across regions and investment per capita is higher in regions with higher human development indicators. Health services, education and access to electricity and sanitation are better for regions along the coast, which are better connected, more urban, and contain a higher proportion of Spanish speakers, than the Andean and Amazon areas. Whereas enrolment in primary education is almost 100 per cent, enrolment in



secondary school lags behind at 85 per cent in urban areas and 68 per cent in rural areas.

A national strategy to combat poverty and childhood malnutrition, called *Crecer* ('to grow'), was implemented in 2007. One of its key programmes is *Juntos* ('together'), a conditional cash transfer programme aimed at poor families in impoverished, rural areas. *Juntos* currently reaches around half a million people in the country. Another is the *Wawa Wasi* programme which aims to provide day care, and nutrition and health services for poor children aged 6 to 48 months, as well as parenting education. Protection of children's rights, especially against violence and abuse, is the focus of another programme, called DEMUNA (*Defensoría Municipal del Niño y del Adolescente*). This is a network of drop-in centres that offer services to help protect the rights of children and young people. Corporal punishment in schools is forbidden by a Supreme Decree but there is no explicit prohibition in law.

## **Vietnam**

Vietnam has instigated a series of economic reforms, transitioning to a market-orientated economy, and is currently a lower-middle-income country. Significant progress has been made in poverty reduction, with only one in ten people now living below the poverty line. However, the country was badly hit by the global economic crisis since 2008, with inflation reaching 19.9 per cent.

The poverty rate among Vietnam's ethnic minorities is as high as 50 per cent. In response, the Government's flagship poverty reduction scheme, Programme 135, is targeted towards poor and mountainous communes in the 50 provinces that are home to ethnic minorities. The second phase of the programme (2006–10) focused on the construction of basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity supplies, schools and medical centres, as well as on improving livelihoods.

Policies aimed at children in Vietnam are made in strategies (such as the National Educational Strategy), five-year plans (such as the National Child Protection Programme), the Government's Decrees, and the Prime Minister's Decisions and have focused on disadvantaged children, in particular children from ethnic minorities. In addition, a National Plan of Action for Children based on four basic rights – survival, development, participation and protection – was implemented over the period 2001–10 and has since been revised for 2011–20. Corporal punishment is prohibited in schools.



# Message 1. The poorest children are at risk of being left behind despite rapid economic growth

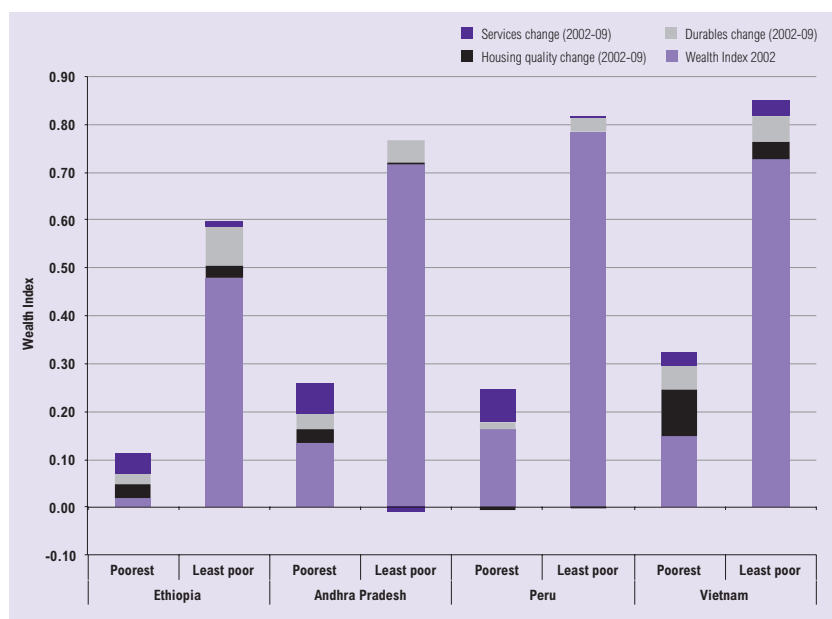
Young Lives study countries witnessed strong economic growth and reductions in absolute poverty during the first decade of the twenty-first century, reflecting trends typical of other low- and middle-income countries. Using the MDG definition of absolute poverty as living on less than US\$1.25 a day, national data show that poverty fell in Ethiopia, India and Vietnam. However, economic growth does not necessarily achieve poverty reduction for all. The recent observation that most poor people now live in countries that have transitioned to middle-income status, such as India, demonstrates that growth does not automatically eradicate absolute poverty (Sumner 2010). For example, Ethiopia had reduced poverty rates to a similar level to India by 2011, even though India has around 3.5 times the gross national income (GNI) of Ethiopia. By 2012, despite having a GNI per capita only one-third that of Peru, Vietnam had a level of poverty that was over 30 per cent lower than Peru. Other country differences are also striking. Economic growth may reduce a household's exposure to risk, for example, by helping it increase assets or by fostering improvements in housing quality or expansion of basic services. However, we see that not all households are experiencing the same extent of improvements in living conditions and this results in indicators such as stunting being increasingly concentrated among the poorest children.

## ***Average levels of wealth and consumption have increased but this has not narrowed large gaps between households***

Evidence for Young Lives households is consistent with national trends. Figure 1 shows growth in household wealth over a seven-year period (between 2002 and 2009). The wealth index draws on a range of indicators, reflecting not only consumer durables but also housing quality and access to

basic services, and is scaled from 0 to 1.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 highlights the disparities between the poorest 20 per cent and least poor 20 per cent of households in our sample, and also draws attention to the different factors contributing to improvements for each.<sup>3</sup> For the poorest households, improved wealth levels by 2009 were mainly due to increasing access to services, whereas the least poor households typically already had better services in 2002, and more often reported more consumer durables by 2009. In Vietnam there had also been improvements in housing quality for the poorest children.

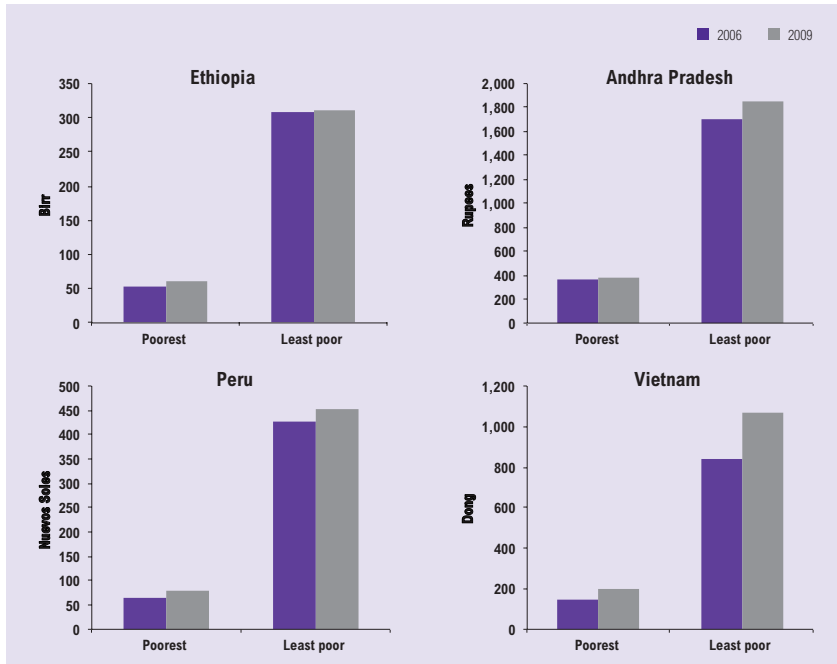
**Figure 1. Changes in household wealth for the poorest and least poor households, 2002–9**



- The wealth index is composed of three equally weighted components: housing quality, service quality and consumer durables. It therefore captures not only the household situation but also factors in the immediate environment, such as sanitation, which have important implications for children's development. The index is constructed slightly differently for each country, so it can only be used to examine changes within, not between, countries.
- Throughout this paper we offer analysis that divides the sample into five quintiles and shows indicators for the 'poorest' and the 'least poor' quintile. The Young Lives sampling design is pro-poor (i.e. it over-samples poor communities) and so it would be misleading to refer to the top quintile as 'well-off' or 'wealthy'.

Figure 1 appears to suggest that progress between 2002 and 2009 is greatest for the poorest groups, but caution is needed in drawing that conclusion. Figure 1 is based on an absolute measure of household wealth. Since wealthier groups have less potential to gain, being already nearer the top of the scale, measured change appears to be greater for poorer families.

**Figure 2. Changes in household consumption per month among the poorest and least poor households, 2006–9**



In order to address this issue, Figure 2 offers a detailed picture of increases in household consumption for the poorest and least poor groups in the Young Lives sample during the three years 2006–9. Household consumption per capita captures short-term spending and food produced for household consumption.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the wealth index in Figure 1, there is no upper limit with this measure and there is less evidence of gains being greater for the poorest groups. Consumption rose among Young Lives households in each country, despite the food, fuel and financial crisis that began in 2008. However,

<sup>4</sup> Consumption expenditure is in 2006 prices.

typically the gap between the poorest and least poor quintiles of households remained large and did not narrow. Indeed, it was the least poor households that often gained the most, and these groups already had higher levels of consumption. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh the least poor households experienced an increase in consumption levels 4.4 times the size of gains experienced by the poorest households. Note that this finding very likely underestimates the scale of the gap between rich and poor, since Young Lives is a pro-poor sample which does not include the wealthiest households in each site.

*“Consumption rose despite the food, fuel and financial crisis in 2008. But the gap between the poorest and least poor households remained large and did not narrow.”*

### **Stunting is increasingly concentrated among the poorest children**

Poverty cannot be measured by wealth or consumption alone as both the causes and the consequences are multidimensional (Alkire and Foster 2011; Gordon et al. 2003). Different aspects of deprivation are interconnected, strongly illustrated by evidence on malnutrition and stunting.<sup>5</sup> Young Lives research adds to the weight of evidence that children who experience malnutrition in their early years typically have stunted physical growth, which can result also in impaired cognitive and psychosocial development, reducing human capital and amplifying the intergenerational transmission of inequalities (Le 2009; Dercon and Sanchez 2011; Woodhead et al. 2013a).

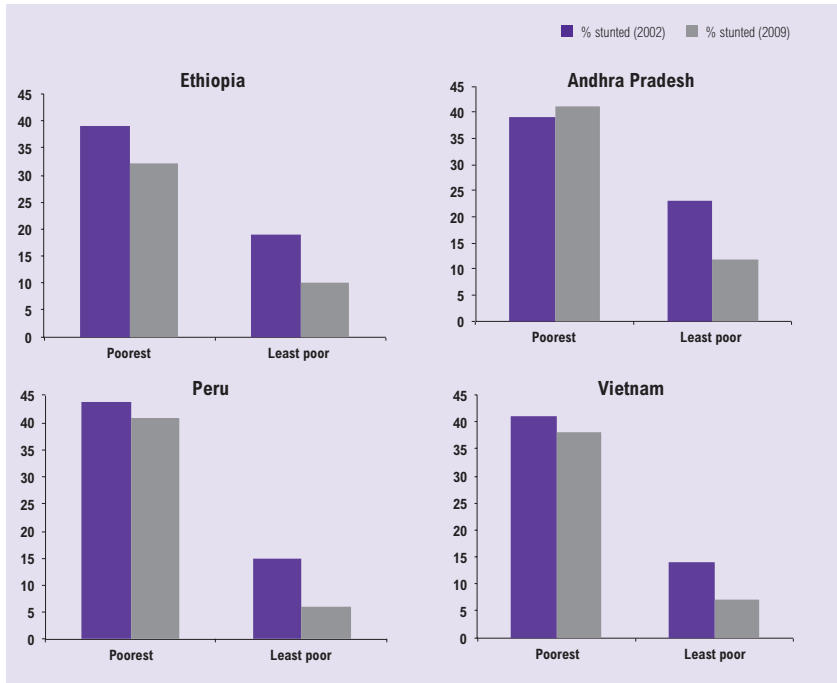
Figure 3 summarises the prevalence of stunting among Young Lives Older Cohort children, who were 8 years old in 2002, and offers equivalent data for the Younger Cohort, who were 8 years old in 2009. Although overall levels of stunting fell, the reductions were statistically significant where stunting was initially lowest (i.e. among the least poor children), a trend that was found across all four countries. Reductions in stunting among the poorest children were not statistically significant in any of the four countries. Evidence for

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<sup>5</sup> Stunting is calculated by converting a child's height into a standardised score that takes account of age and gender. This produces both a continuous measure (height-for-age) and a binary measure (stunted/not stunted) defined by children having very low height-for-age scores (i.e. below two standard deviations of the expected norm according to World Health Organization standards).

Andhra Pradesh appears to suggest stunting has actually increased among the poorest children, and while this trend is not statistically significant it does draw attention to the very serious challenges facing India.<sup>6</sup> At the national level GDP doubled between 2002 and 2009, yet the average stunting rate among Young Lives 8-year-olds in Andhra Pradesh fell by only 4 percentage points, from 29 per cent in 2002 to 26 per cent in 2009 (Galab et al. 2011).

**Figure 3. Changes in stunting levels among 8-year-olds, 2002–9**

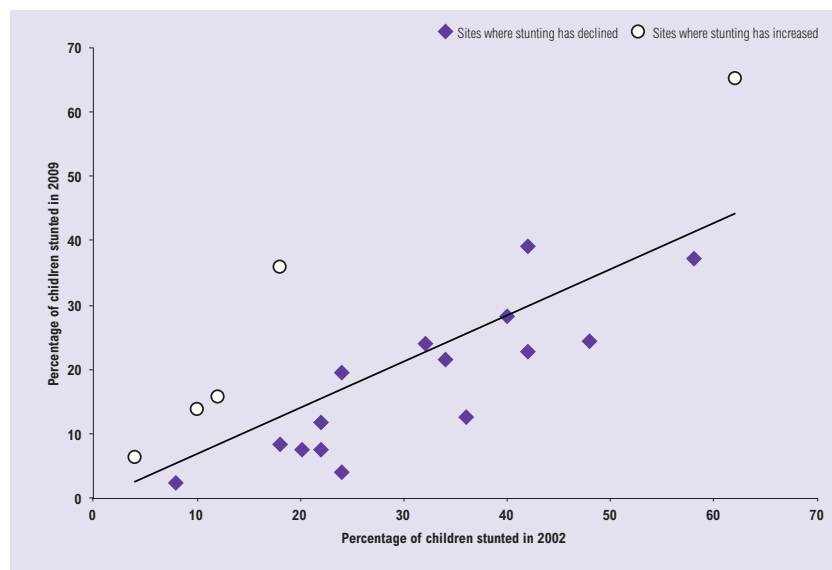


Figures 1 to 3 focus on levels of household poverty but other analysis draws attention to the importance of where children live for the way economic change has affected their nutrition. For example, Figure 4 summarises stunting levels for 8-year-olds in Vietnam across diverse sites. The circles indicate sites where stunting increased, whereas the diamonds represent sites where stunting decreased. In general there has been a greater reduction

6 For example, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, referred to the level of stunting in the country as 'India's national shame' and set up a National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges. See [http://pmindia.gov.in/committeesouncils\\_details.php?nodeid=14](http://pmindia.gov.in/committeesouncils_details.php?nodeid=14).

in the sites with the highest levels of stunting in 2002. However, these sites still have a high level of stunting in comparison with other sites and the change might be driven by improvements among the least poor households within sites (Dornan 2011). Children living in rural areas are not necessarily worse off than children living in urban areas; four rural sites have lower levels of stunting in 2009 than the urban site Truong Son, a poor suburb of Da Nang.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 4. Changes in stunting of children aged 8, by site, Vietnam, 2002–9**



Striking variations between communities are also found within other Young Lives countries. For example, in Ethiopia, one urban area (Shenkurt, a densely populated town in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region) had a stunting rate five times higher than another urban area (Menderin, a slum area in Addis Ababa). The stunting rate in urban Shenkurt is also higher than in two rural communities: Dinich, a less poor area on the outskirts of a town in Oromia, and Beles, a rural area in Tigray with soil and water conservation schemes. These contrasts do not link in any straightforward way to urban/rural location, nor to wealth indicators, which highlights the importance of developing policy responses that are tailored to local circumstances.

<sup>7</sup> Names of sites and children are pseudonyms.



## Summary

- Average household wealth and consumption levels increased in all four countries between 2002 and 2009 but large gaps persist between the poorest and least poor households.
- Improvements in living standards do not ensure improvements in children's circumstances and the gains are not evenly distributed.
- Across all four countries, stunting levels declined between 2002 and 2009 for children living in the least poor households, but reductions for the poorest children were not statistically significant, with no evidence of improvements among the poorest children in Andhra Pradesh.
- Although in general rural areas are more disadvantaged than urban areas, this is not always the case. Variations between communities in stunting levels do not link straightforwardly with wealth indicators or urban/rural location as children in some urban communities are worse off than children living in some rural areas.
- The lack of connection between growth and substantial or equitable benefits underlines the importance of ensuring growth is pro-poor and supported by the extension of high-quality services, such as education and healthcare, as well as by social protection and greater availability of jobs.

*“The lack of connection between growth and equitable benefits underlines the importance of ensuring growth is pro-poor and supported by the extension of high-quality services such as education and healthcare.”*

## **Community case study: Impacts of economic change and community relocation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Bertukan is located in the heart of urban Addis Ababa, and has a population of roughly 14,000, which is mixed in terms of ethnicity and religion and has a large number of female-headed households. The area is located close to a major vegetable and fruit market and within walking distance of the city's main general market. Most households rely on informal sector activities, including street vending, petty trade, daily labour carrying goods, and selling vegetables, fruit, and cooked food and beverages in the market or from their homes. Community members report that three major changes have affected households and children in Bertukan during the past five years: increased food prices, plans to re-locate the market, and a major building programme as the area is due to be demolished and re-developed.<sup>8</sup>

Inflation and particularly sharp increases in food prices have affected poorer households particularly badly. Fifty-six per cent of households in Bertukan said that they had been affected 'very much' and only 3 per cent said they had not been affected at all. A mother said: "Even the price of a needle has increased from 5 cents to 50 cents, and one kilo of coffee has increased from 12 to 150 birr." The main coping strategies employed by households which experienced shocks were reduced food consumption (37 per cent), taking on additional work (20 per cent) and reducing food quality (18 per cent). The brother of one of the study children said: "Earlier we would eat meat twice or three times a week but now we eat it once in a week or once in two weeks. Earlier we used 25 kilos of pure *teff* (cereal grain) for making *injera* (Ethiopian flatbread) but now we mix *teff*, rice and wheat to make *injera* because the price of *teff* has gone up." Another caregiver said: "I also take some other [work] such as washing clothes in addition to my regular work." Other coping strategies included children starting work (4 per cent of households) or changing from fee-paying private schools to government schools (4 per cent of households). Other strategies involved migration for work, including abroad, and partitioning houses to rent out rooms to earn some extra income.

8 A relocation sub-study was carried out in three Young Lives urban sites in Addis Ababa and one in Hawassa. In the survey a total of 466 caregivers and 451 children were included. Of the 451 children 299 (64 per cent) are from the Younger Cohort (aged between 11 and 12 years old at the time of the study), whereas 152 (36 per cent) are from the Older Cohort (aged between 17 and 18 at the time of the study). In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 79 children and their caregivers (Pankhurst and Tiemelissan 2013).

To add to the uncertainties experienced by families in Bertukan, the plan to demolish and move the food market is likely to have a massive impact on the livelihood opportunities of most of the Young Lives households, who rely on activities linked to the market. Finally, the residential area is among those that are due for demolition and urban renovation to stimulate business and provide housing. Three blocks of flats have already been built on the outskirts of the city, but 82 per cent of caregivers said they could not afford the high down-payments being required of tenants, nor the monthly rent. Residents have been told they will have to move and adjacent areas have already been demolished. While this has not yet happened in Bertukan, people feel unsure about the future.

*“Earlier we would eat meat twice or three times a week but now we eat it just once a week or once in two weeks. Earlier we used 25 kilos of teff for making injera, but now we mix it with rice and wheat because the price has gone up.”*



## **Message 2. Poor children and their families experience repeated environmental and economic shocks and have fewer resources to help them cope**

Message 1 draws attention to the continuing vulnerability of the poorest children, families and communities, despite economic growth. This section expands the analysis by focusing on the impact of environmental shocks as well as the economic shocks and food price inflation that followed the global economic downturn in 2008. Young Lives countries have been identified as especially vulnerable to environmental shocks (World Bank 2009). On global indicators, Ethiopia is second most at risk of drought, India the third most at risk for flooding, and Vietnam fourth for being affected by storms and tenth for flooding.

### ***Recurrent shocks and food insecurity have long-term impacts on children's development and well-being***

Poor households tend to be located in the areas most at risk of exposure to environmental hazards and have more precarious livelihoods and so are prone to experiencing the same shocks repeatedly. Between 2002 and 2006 environmental shocks (such as drought and crop failure) were reported by 47 per cent of Young Lives households in Ethiopia, 39 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, 22 per cent in Peru and 34 per cent in Vietnam.

Table 1 illustrates that 80 per cent of households in Ethiopia that had reported an environmental shock between 2002 and 2006 also reported a further environmental shock between 2006 and 2009. Recurrent family illness or death were common, as well as sharp changes in the costs of goods bought or sold, death of livestock, loss of job or source of income, and disputes with neighbours concerning land or assets (Dornan 2010).

**Table 1. Households reporting the same shocks in 2002–6 and 2006–9, Ethiopia (%)**

Type of shock	Same shock reported in 2006 and 2009	
	Yes	No
Economic shock	70.6	29.4
Environmental shock	80.9	19.1
Family illness or death	57.9	42.2

Source: Dornan (2010).

Following the global economic downturn, households described a marked increase in economic shocks and food price inflation. From 2006 to 2009, economic shocks increased by 20 per cent in Ethiopia and 39 per cent in Vietnam, compared to the period 2002–6. There was also a small increase in Andhra Pradesh, although a small decrease in Peru. In 2009, households were also asked if they had experienced food price inflation in the previous three years. Of the children in the Younger Cohort, 32 per cent in Vietnam, 77 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, and 88 per cent in Ethiopia were in households that reported food price increases since 2006 (Save the Children 2012).

Communities vary in the ways in which they are affected by food insecurity, whether as a result of environmental shocks or inflation, but such shocks threaten children's nutrition. In Ethiopia, households in urban areas described higher exposure to food-related shocks as they grew little food and so were unable either to consume their own produce during food shortages or to benefit from price increases by selling their own produce. For example, 99 per cent of households in urban Leku (SNNP region) reported food price inflation, with a third of households reporting sometimes or frequently not eating enough. In rural areas dependence on agriculture heightens susceptibility to environmental shocks. Drought was reported by 94 per cent of households in Selata (Tigray) and 79 per cent in Zeytuni (also in Tigray). Drought is linked to food insecurity, with 70 per cent of households in Selata and 19 per cent in Zeytuni reporting not having enough to eat sometimes or frequently (Dornan and Ogando Portela in press). Neither community saw much increase on the wealth index between 2002 and 2009, highlighting that the shock burden tends to be higher in poorer areas.

Young Lives research has shown that food shortages affect children's development, even during middle and later childhood. Analysis of children's outcomes when they were 15 demonstrates that experiencing food shortages when they were 12 years old was associated with an additional risk of poorer health and well-being (after controlling for a range of factors, including ethnicity, location and household wealth) (Pells 2011b). Children with a past household experience of food shortage:

- were 60 per cent less likely to have a healthy body mass index (BMI) for their age in Peru
- scored lower in cognitive achievement tests in Andhra Pradesh and Ethiopia<sup>9</sup>
- reported lower self-rated health in Vietnam and Andhra Pradesh
- reported lower subjective well-being in Ethiopia and Peru.

***Social protection schemes and self-help groups can buffer the impact of shocks by protecting livelihoods and protecting or developing longer-term assets***

Households draw on a range of strategies to cope with and respond to shocks and adverse events. Children play a key role in the management of risk, through their paid and unpaid work and domestic responsibilities (see Message 5). But some families are able to draw on other sources of support through the growth of social protection schemes, alongside informal associations or traditional self-help groups.

For example, in Andhra Pradesh informal community self-help groups have been consolidated and expanded through the Velugu/Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) programme funded by national and state-level Government, NGOs and international donors, including the World Bank. The programme focuses on women's empowerment through access to credit and there are currently over 700,000 groups in the state (Galab et al. 2011). In Ethiopia customary informal community groups are prevalent in the majority of Young Lives sites. In 2006, 61 per cent of Young Lives households belonged to *iddirs* (funeral associations), 11 per cent to religious groups and 3 per cent to traditional rotating credit associations (*iqqub*) (Pankhurst and Tiemelissan 2012).

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9 This is a combined measure of two tests, one testing receptive vocabulary or school readiness, and the other testing maths (Pells 2012).



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Membership of informal associations, organisations such as the Women's Union or other groups that provide social and sometimes economic support is associated with better outcomes for children, after controlling for household characteristics. Self-help groups may provide some support to enable households to respond better to shocks but these informal sources of support are likely to be most available to those with some resources and greater social connectedness in communities. In families that have little or no access to social support groups, children are 40 per cent less likely to have a healthy BMI-for-age in Andhra Pradesh, and 40 per cent less likely to have a healthy height-for-age in Ethiopia and Peru (Pells 2011b). In Ethiopia, children who live in households that belong to self-help groups are 2.2 times more likely to be enrolled in school and in Andhra Pradesh children who live in households with low group membership are half as likely to be enrolled.

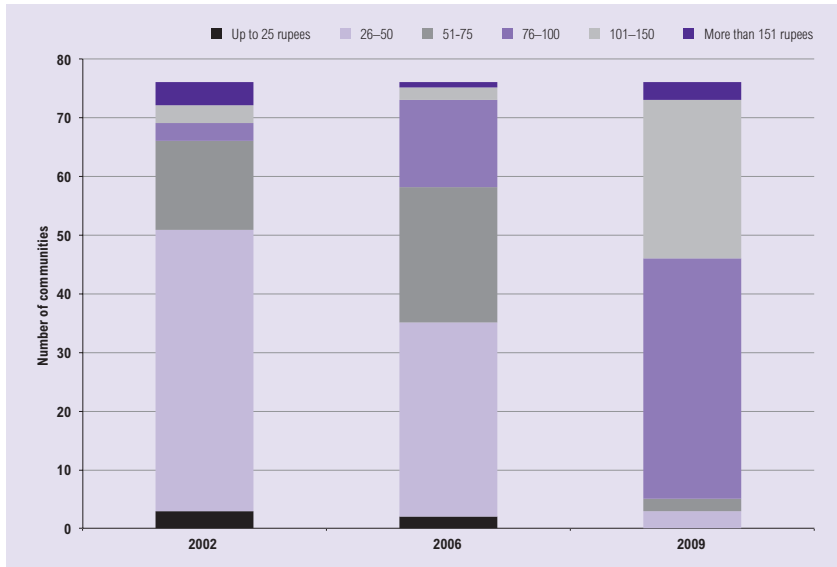
Recent years have also seen the expansion of social protection schemes as part of attempts to reduce poverty and provide a safety net in the event of shocks (UNICEF 2009). None of these schemes existed in Young Lives countries in 2002, but since then, the PSNP in Ethiopia, the cash conditional transfer programme *Juntos* in Peru and the MGNREGS in India, were rolled out (Porter with Dornan 2010; Woodhead et al. 2013a). Social protection schemes offer new employment opportunities, contribute to community development and can act as an insurance mechanism for coping with shocks, and do not entail the same debt traps as other borrowing or credit schemes.

The MGNREGS in India was introduced in 2005 and provides 100 days of employment a year at a minimum wage rate to every adult in a rural household willing to undertake unskilled manual work. By 2006 45 per cent of Young Lives households in rural sites reported having a job card to work on MGNREGS, which had increased to 78 per cent by 2009 (Galab et al. 2011). Households that were prone to seasonal shocks, lean agricultural periods and drought and food price inflation were 11 per cent more likely to register for and use the scheme (Uppal 2009; Dornan 2010). Registration and take-up of the scheme is correlated with positive nutritional outcomes for children (Uppal 2009).

As well as acting as insurance, the MGNREGS has altered economic opportunities and household coping strategies. Figure 5 illustrates how MGNREGS has put a floor under wages (a level below which wages do not fall), as indicated by respondents reporting increases in male wages since its introduction.



**Figure 5. Typical male wages reported by Young Lives communities, Andhra Pradesh, 2002–9**



Source: Kumar (2013).

MGNREGS requires that one-third of participants be women, and equal wages to be paid to female and male participants. Mothers' participation is associated with an increase in the school attendance and grade attainment of their children, particularly daughters and children from the poorest families. This impact is over and above any effect associated with the extra income generated from participation in the scheme. This can be attributed to women's greater economic contribution to the household, leading to more involvement in decision-making and greater bargaining power (Afridi et al. 2013). However, barriers remain to women's participation. Although on-site childcare facilities improved between 2006 and 2009, not all sites had facilities and much more is required in terms of quality (Kumar 2013).

Studies of *Juntos* in Peru have found similar positive impacts on children's well-being and new economic opportunities for families (Streuli 2012). *Juntos* is a monthly cash transfer for households with children under 14 years old, paid on the condition that children attend school, have regular health checks and have received all their vaccinations. The scheme is reported to benefit children's nutrition, physical health and schooling and there is evidence

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that it is enabling families to invest in productive activities such as animal husbandry or small-scale agriculture. Around 60 per cent of Young Lives families enrolled in the scheme describe it as 'good' or 'very good' (Escobal and Benites 2012). However, there are concerns over the poor quality of the education and health facilities accessible to households participating in *Juntos*, as well as the risks of tensions within communities over who access the programme and those who do not (Streuli 2012).

## Summary

- Poor households experience recurrent economic, environmental and health shocks. Following the global economic downturn in 2008 households reported a marked increase in economic shocks and food price inflation, leading to food insecurity.
- Children who have experienced food shortages are at additional risk of poorer outcomes in physical health, learning and subjective well-being.
- Social protection schemes can help buffer the impact of shocks and when implemented effectively they can have positive effects on children's health and education. It is important that schemes that are aimed at households take account of potential adverse consequences for children, such as pressure on them to work as substitutes for adults within the home or on the actual scheme.

*Social protection schemes offer new employment opportunities, contribute to community development, and can act as an insurance mechanism for coping with shocks.*

## **Community case study: Changing ways of coping during difficult times in rural Andhra Pradesh, India**

Katur village is located in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. Katur is a drought-prone area and all the major crops grown, such as sunflowers, peanuts, pulses and peas, are dependent on rainfall. During the non-agricultural season, many inhabitants used to migrate to cities like Mumbai and Tirupati in search of paid work and to Bangalore for work in a concrete factory.

Adults report that living conditions improved between 2007 and 2010 and attribute this to the increases in social protection schemes. Women described the important role played by more than 20 self-help groups in Katur, organised under the state government IKP programme. One woman explained:

*“Many families have purchased cows and goats through the group loans. There is no problem repaying the loans and we are regularly repaying the loans taken. We are taking the loans only in [the self-help] groups and completely banned the outside loans which have more interest rates (2 rupees per 100 rupees) ... as the group loans are being provided with one rupee interest.”*

This has also meant that there is less bonded labour to repay debts as families no longer need to borrow from *Kamma* (higher) caste families. However, other women felt that self-help groups were a “big headache” as “when we do not have work, then how can we repay the amount to the self-help groups?” In addition not all community members can obtain loans. As one woman explained: “If a household has more sons then there is more inclination to lend money as the family can send the sons to work and repay the amount without fail. As is the case with households who own individual assets like land, there are more chances for recovery of the money.”

Community members also describe the positive impact of MGNREGS. Among Young Lives households in Katur, 95 per cent had job cards and had worked on the scheme in 2008–9 (Camfield and Vennam 2012). Community members report that migration to urban areas for work has declined and that MGNREGS has created a wage floor. Tejaswini, aged 8, stated that only the landowners had not benefited from MGNREGS as no one was prepared to work for 40 rupees per day any more. Children felt that there was more money available to meet their needs. For example, Triveni, aged 16, described how “previously

when there was less money, I used to buy fewer notebooks and used to write two subjects in one book only. Now after the drought works [MGNREGS] came, I am able to keep one book for each subject.”

MGNREGS also helps families cope with shocks. Govindh, aged 17, described the struggles his family had faced over the past few years:

*“Seeds did not grow in the first year, and the second year rains have not come ... so we didn’t harvest ... We did not have money to buy vegetables and other things to celebrate festivals ... so it was not well at home.”*

In addition, his mother had been ill and the family had to pay 10,000 rupees for treatment. Govindh said: “We borrowed money from my grandmother’s village ... We borrowed a little, two, three times,” and they also borrowed from his uncle. However, the introduction of the MGNREGS has enabled the family to cope better: “Through the employment guarantee scheme we cleared the loans.” Govindh works on MGNREGS in the school holidays and at the weekend in order to support his family.



## **Message 3. The rapid expansion of basic services, roads and communications is increasing opportunities for many children and families, but new forms of exclusion are emerging**

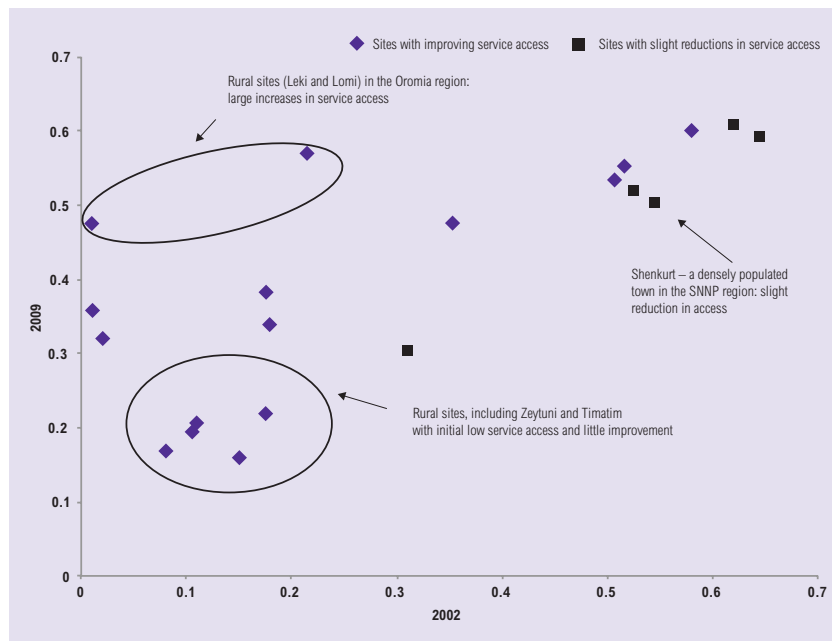
Messages 1 and 2 summarise evidence on the ways in which where children live shapes the extent to which they have benefited from macro-level economic and social change, as well as on their greater vulnerability to shocks. In this section we explore the extent to which other changes in the environment have increased opportunities or risks for poor families, with a specific focus on basic services, roads and new communications technologies. Improving access to basic services is widely recognised as essential for children's growth and development (e.g. Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007), which is confirmed by Young Lives data. For example, the presence of a hospital or of good sanitation within a community is associated with an increased likelihood of physical catch-up growth from being stunted at the age of 1 (Schott et al. 2013; Outes and Porter 2013).

### ***The expansion of basic services is benefiting poorer communities, but with wide variations in the extent of change***

Access to basic services, including electricity, safe drinking water and improved sanitation (having a flushing toilet or pit latrine) has increased significantly across all Young Lives countries. However, Young Lives research also draws attention to the importance of ensuring that water and sanitation services are clean, safe and well maintained so that children use and benefit from them. One study found that unclean toilets in the home or at school can lead children to view them as a source of illness and so to prefer defecation in the open, with the result that there was no significant difference in the nutritional status of children who had access to pit latrines and those without it (Cameron 2009).

In general, the roll-out of services has benefited poorer communities more because less poor communities had higher access initially, as reported in Message 1. But summary data across different socio-economic groups mask very substantial variations between communities. Figure 6 summarises changes between 2002 and 2009 in the service access component (measured between 0 and 1) of the household wealth index (i.e. safe drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and electricity) aggregated for specific communities in Ethiopia. The diamonds represent sites which have seen improvements in service access and the squares indicate sites where there have been slight reductions. However, these tend to be sites which had good access initially and so the change is unlikely to be significant. Typically, the sites which have seen the biggest change, such as Lomi, had the lowest levels of access in 2002, which is a positive indicator of effective roll-out to areas previously not covered by basic services. However, a group of sites, including Zeytuni and Timatim, had poor access in 2002 and had only experienced a slight increase by 2009.

**Figure 6. Changes in service access for the 20 Young Lives sites in Ethiopia, 2002–9**



## ***Rapid expansion of roads and communications is increasing opportunities for some, but risks reinforcing social exclusion for others***

The extent to which communities are connected – physically, socially and economically – to other communities, and especially to economic and administrative centres, affects the nature of the risks to which families are exposed. Extreme isolation may reinforce community poverty and exclusion, entailing poor access to services, and reduced prospects for households and children.

Pankhurst and Tiemelissan (2012) monitored the ways in which road construction and improved local transportation in Ethiopia can rapidly reduce the 'remoteness' of rural communities. For example, in one rural site, the journey time to the district capital was reduced from 180 minutes in 2002 to 60 minutes in 2009. The three communities (Lomi, Leki and Weyn) that saw some of the largest increases in service access (see Figure 6), also saw the biggest reductions in the time taken to travel to the nearest town. Where people live shapes the opportunities available, which can serve either to reduce or to reinforce other forms of disadvantage.

But remoteness and connectedness are not simply about physical distances. New communications technologies have the potential to have a levelling effect, by enabling greater connectedness, even for remote communities. Access to mobile phones and the internet has increased rapidly. In Ethiopia, in 2002 the mobile phone network was virtually non-existent. By 2009 more than a third of households in urban sites owned a mobile phone. In rural areas, mobile phone ownership was still rare in 2006, but only three years later more than 10 per cent of households owned a mobile phone in five of the rural sites. Besides the social benefits of mobile phone access, there are economic benefits: rural farmers are able to gain better knowledge of market prices, so bypassing middlemen. Mobile phones also help migrants to keep in touch with relatives, enabling remittance flows and social support networks (Pankhurst and Tiemelissan 2012). However, there is a danger that the growth in telecommunications will be another factor that reinforces pre-existing inequality. The poorest 20 per cent of Young Lives households in Ethiopia were the only wealth quintile for which increased levels of access to mobile phones were not statistically significant. Similarly, in Vietnam, ethnic majority (Kinh) households were twice as likely to have access to a mobile phone compared with ethnic minority households (Pells et al. 2013).

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Improvements in basic services and transportation, and the rise of communications technologies are also linked to greater mobility of people and knowledge (see also Messages 5 and 6). Moving within urban areas is the most common type of mobility across Andhra Pradesh, Ethiopia and Vietnam. Among the Younger Cohort children living in urban areas, one in twelve in Andhra Pradesh, one in ten in Ethiopia and just over one in six in Vietnam had moved within urban areas during the period 2002-9 (i.e. before the age of 8). In Ethiopia and Vietnam, households that had moved within urban areas had started out with a higher wealth index in 2002 than households in urban areas that had never moved (i.e. were poorer). These patterns reinforce social divisions, in so far as families with more resources are better able to move to locations with better services and economic opportunities.

There is much less evidence of rural to urban migration among Young Lives households. Only around 2 per cent of children from rural households across Andhra Pradesh, Ethiopia and Vietnam had migrated to urban areas between 2002 and 2009. However, in both Ethiopia and Vietnam migration is actively discouraged by the Government. In Andhra Pradesh rural households that had migrated to urban areas had higher wealth index positions in both 2002 and 2009 than households in rural areas that did not move. These slightly better-off households are more likely to have had the resources to pay for transportation, or they possibly had marketable skills or relatives in urban areas, from whom they received funds (Chzhen unpublished).

In short, where children live and how their communities are changing over time are important factors in shaping their development and experiences. Young Lives data draw attention to the multiple ways in which community physical disadvantages compound social disadvantages such as minority status. In Andhra Pradesh, physical remoteness is frequently just one expression of social exclusion; for example, it is notable that Scheduled Tribe communities normally live in remote rural areas.<sup>10</sup> These households and children are doubly disadvantaged by coming from a low socio-economic and stigmatised group and living in an area distant from markets and services. Another example from Andhra Pradesh highlights the ways isolation can be exacerbated by adverse weather conditions. The community of Patna does not have all-weather access roads to all of the settlements and the frequent cyclones cut the community off from the surrounding areas. Bus

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10 'Scheduled Tribes' are indigenous people recognised by India's constitution as historically disadvantaged.



services are also infrequent so people have to walk long distances to the nearest town (Vennam and Andharia 2012).

Disadvantage becomes concentrated, with children who live in these areas having poorer indicators of well-being in multiple domains. For example, Timatim is a densely populated rural area in the SNNP region of Ethiopia, growing enset (false banana), which has poor nutritional value. Households in this site have seen the least change on the wealth index and also have a higher percentage of stunted children, who perform less well in maths and vocabulary tests (Dornan and Ogando Portela in press).

## Summary

- Access to basic services, including electricity, safe drinking water and improved sanitation, has increased significantly across all Young Lives countries and has in general benefited poorer communities.
- Rapid expansion of road systems and communications technologies has increased opportunities for migration and access to information, but also risks reinforcing pre-existing inequality. The poorest households are less likely to have access to mobile phones and the internet or have the resources to move to locations with better services and economic opportunities.
- Recognising the ways in which community characteristics moderate the impact of economic and social changes and shape specific opportunities and constraints for children is an important starting point for context-relevant policy development.
- Area-based policies have the merit of avoiding the complexities of targeting individual households and the consequent risk of resentment within communities. However, they may create tensions between communities and it is important not to neglect poor children living in other communities, especially within urban areas.

*“Where children live and how their communities are changing are important factors in shaping their development and experiences. Community disadvantages compound social disadvantage such as minority status in multiple ways.”*

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## ***Community case study: Service expansion in a rural, ethnic minority community in Vietnam***

Van Lam is a commune in a central coastal province of Vietnam. It has six hamlets consisting of just over 6,000 people, with ethnic minorities (most of whom are Cham H'roi) accounting for 37 per cent of the population. Van Lam is very poor and half of its Cham H'roi households were classified as poor or nearly poor in 2011, so the commune is covered by various government schemes, in particular the Programme for the Socio-Economic Development of Extremely Difficult Communes in Ethnic, Mountainous, Boundary and Remote Areas (known as Programme 135), which focuses on the development of infrastructure (roads, community centres, schools, etc.) and scholarships. As a result, the commune has greatly changed and so have children's daily lives. Roads have been built to connect the hamlets with the administrative centre and facilitate transport for older schoolchildren. At the same time the Cham H'roi Grade 1–3 children do not have to travel far to school because a satellite school has been built in their hamlet. Schooling is offered free, health insurance is free, and children from poor households receive money and support with textbooks. This has significantly improved children's school attendance and reduced the numbers of children leaving school prematurely.

Among the numerous changes that have happened recently, community members have highlighted the installation of electricity, replacement of traditional thatched houses with houses that are more sturdily built, and the construction of a sugar-processing plant. Electricity has helped 'lighten up' the villages and reduce the hardship of their farming life ("returning home from work, I just need to press the button, water will be immediately available") and diversify their cultural life (they now have karaoke to sing and TVs to watch). About half of the Cham H'roi households have new houses where they are safe from storms and the building of the sugar plant in the local area has made their lives more economically stable. According to local people, the recent government policies have improved their lives, and especially those of their children: "Our children's lives now are many times better than our lives in the past."

Yet caregivers are also concerned that some of the changes may have a negative impact on their children. Many parents worry that mobile phones and the internet may put children at risk from cyber-bullying or distract them from studying. Changing livelihood patterns related to the building of the

sugar plant may raise the opportunity costs of staying in school as during the sugercane harvest children can work to earn money to support their families. Ethnic minority children tend to start school late and to drop out early, and this is especially true of children from poor families and of girls. Only a few children in the hamlet have finished high school or have technical or college training, hardly any of them find jobs and almost all end up working on their families' fields or doing hired work with low pay. Others have been discouraged by these examples and believe that school cannot save them from being poor.

Most recently, people in Van Lam have become worried about a government plan to build a dam in their commune, which will cause some families to lose their land. The farmers do not know what to do to make their living as they believe the compensation will be low, not even enough for food for themselves and their children. "What can farmers do without cultivating land?" is the question they keep asking each other.

*"According to local people, recent government policies have improved their lives: 'Our children's lives now are many times better than our lives in the past.'"*



## **Message 4. Almost all Young Lives children have been enrolled in school, but for education to transform their life-chances, its quality must be improved**

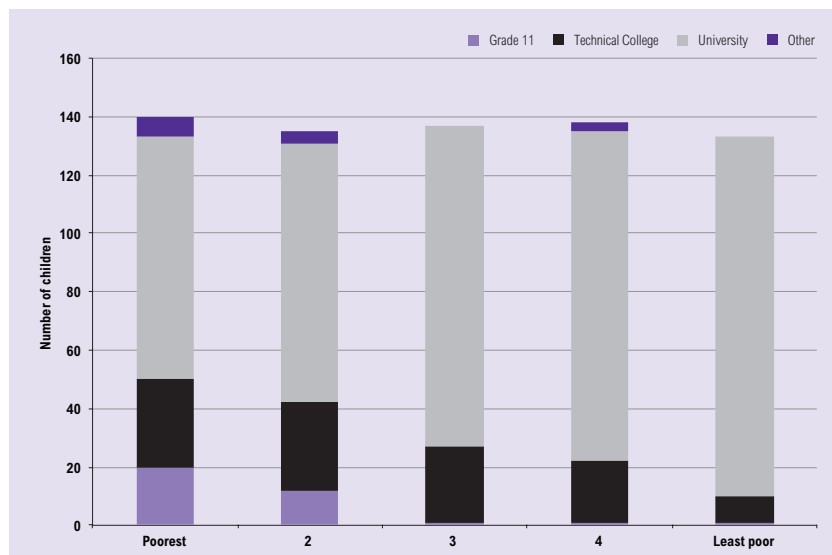
Primary school enrolment was already at 97 per cent or above for 8-year-olds in three of the Young Lives study countries in 2002. The exception was Ethiopia, which has seen rapid increases in enrolment. In 2002, only 66 per cent of 8-year-olds were enrolled in school, rising to 77 per cent in 2009. This is more dramatic in rural areas, where only half of 8-year-olds were enrolled in school in 2002, rising to over two-thirds in 2009. While achieving universal enrolment is both an EFA goal and one of the eight MDGs, it is now recognised as only the first step towards achieving the more ambitious vision of Learning for All, which includes early childhood education, improving the quality of education, and addressing adult literacy, and which places considerable emphasis on both equity and quality in education (World Bank 2012a). This section draws attention to the ways in which accessible, high-quality education is widely recognised by parents and children as having the potential to transform lives, reduce risks and extend opportunities. Yet high expectations have not been matched by improvements in school quality, effectiveness and relevance in many Young Lives communities. In this section, we also summarise evidence on the new opportunities and challenges being brought by the growth of the low-fee private education sector, particularly in Andhra Pradesh.

### ***Children's and parents' aspirations for education to change their lives are high***

Increased aspirations for schooling are the single most striking intergenerational change in the lives of children across all four countries. These high aspirations are shared by children and their families from all socio-economic backgrounds (Camfield 2011; Crivello 2011; Morrow 2013; Tafere 2010). Figure 7 illustrates that in Peru, while caregivers' aspirations for their children are highest for the least poor group, four out of five of the poorest caregivers also wish for their children to complete technical college or university.



**Figure 7. Caregivers' aspirations for children at age 12 by wealth quintile, Peru**



Among children, educational aspirations are slightly different by gender. In Peru and Vietnam girls have higher aspirations than boys, with the reverse being the case in Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh is the only context where caregivers have markedly lower aspirations for their daughters than their sons at the age of 12, and by the age of 15 girls have lower aspirations for themselves (Dercon and Singh 2013).

Children and families view education as a route out of poverty towards improved social standing, whether for the children or for the family as a whole. Typically between 60 and 80 per cent of 15-year-olds across all four countries aspired to jobs requiring university-level education (Murray 2012). Many children aspire to become 'professionals', such as doctors, teachers, business people, police, engineers or government officials (Boyden 2013; Crivello 2011; Morrow 2013; Pells et al. 2013). The perception is that schooling will prepare children for more skilled work in the future. As one caregiver in Andhra Pradesh explained: "Nowadays most of the jobs are computer-based jobs. And for working with computers one needs good education ... we don't want our children to suffer like us" (Murray 2012: 1). These perspectives offer little support for the view that parents with low levels of education have low aspirations for their children (Appadurai 2004).

## ***Increased enrolment needs to be matched by improvements in school quality, effectiveness and relevance in order to transform children's life chances***

All four countries have made significant investments in programmes to improve the quality of the education children receive in recent years (Rolleston et al. 2013). However, not all children have been able to benefit from increased enrolment, given the clear variations in quality. Gaps in children's learning outcomes on vocabulary, reading and maths tests at the age of 8 have been linked with levels of parental education, urban/rural location (particularly in Ethiopia) and household wealth (although to a lesser extent in Andhra Pradesh) (Cueto et al. 2011; Rolleston and James 2011). In Ethiopia and Peru, when comparing 2002 with 2009, increases in the ability of 8-year-olds to read a sentence were significant only among children from the least poor quintile (Pells et al. 2013).

The school environment can either compound or mitigate household disadvantage, which affects children's learning, progression through school and the age at which they leave. A school survey was introduced into Young Lives in 2010, which allows us to link longitudinal information from the household survey with data on the schools attended by the Young Lives children. In Ethiopia large differences in infrastructure were found between schools in different areas. Urban schools were more likely to have electricity, toilets and water than schools in rural areas. However, overall, fewer than half the schools surveyed provided toilets for girls with an acceptable degree of privacy. Urban schools were also better resourced, and more likely to have working computers and a library (Frost and Rolleston 2011). Schools with drinking water, adequate toilet facilities and electricity had much lower drop-out rates (Nega 2012).

Children's classroom experience is also influenced by teachers' characteristics, including their qualifications, subject knowledge and motivation, which are predictive of the teaching style that they use in the classroom. In Ethiopia, teachers in rural schools are less qualified and less experienced, which is associated with children making less progress in mathematics (Frost and Little 2014).

Evidence from the school survey in Andhra Pradesh has found that, controlling for household factors, teacher characteristics (such as experience, gender, content knowledge and specialisation) are not

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associated with significantly higher learning outcomes for children. However, practices including regularly checking homework, how close the teacher lives to the school and the teacher's perceptions of the children and schools, were important determinants of children's learning outcomes (Singh and Sarkar 2012).

There are large differences between the effectiveness of school systems in enabling students to learn. For example, Young Lives education research suggests that the Vietnamese school system is more successful at supporting disadvantaged students than schools in Andhra Pradesh, based on evidence the poorest children in Vietnam make the greatest learning gains (reducing gaps between them and less poor children during the school year) (Rolleston et al. 2013). Possible reasons include the higher levels of absence observed among teachers in Andhra Pradesh, who have lower levels of formal training and are also less likely to mark homework, plus lower levels of resources such as textbooks. In addition, the growing divide between children accessing private schools and those attending government schools in Andhra Pradesh is at risk of amplifying inequalities (see below).

As well as questions over the quality of schooling, there are concerns about the relevance of schooling for future transitions to the labour market and the availability of skilled work. In Vietnam, Baulch et al. (2012) looked at whether the education system was 'right' for an industrialising and fast-growing economy. They found that despite Vietnam's relatively generous spending on education, school enrolment in upper secondary school (after the age of 15) and attainment at that level were low compared to its competitors in surrounding middle-income countries (Philippines, China, Malaysia and Thailand). Indeed, Vietnam now has the largest number of out-of-school children of secondary age in South-East Asia (UNESCO 2008). In addition to the poverty factors that push young people into the labour market earlier than in other countries, the manufacturing economy of Vietnam has limited demand for workers with post-secondary education (Baulch et al. 2012).

### ***The growth of low-fee private schooling risks reinforcing social and gender inequalities***

Families often invest their scarce resources in sending their children to school and in seeking the best possible schooling that they can access. Within low- and middle-income countries, rapid economic growth, increased opportunities for social mobility and high aspirations for education combined

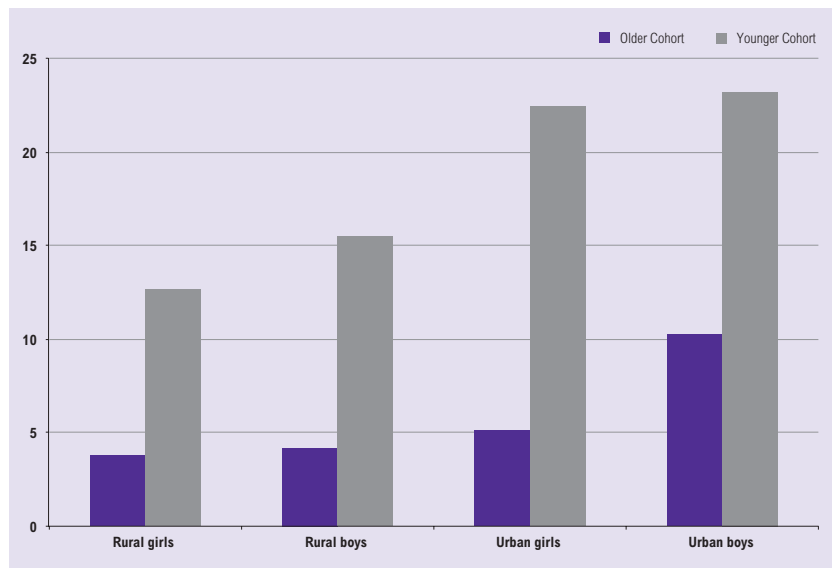


with disillusionment with the quality and effectiveness of government schools have fuelled the demand for low-fee private schooling, even among poor families (James and Woodhead 2014). This has long-term implications for equity and for the quality and regulation of services for children (Woodhead et al. 2013b; Woodhead et al. 2009).

Andhra Pradesh has witnessed especially rapid growth of low-fee private education over the past decade. Whereas 24 per cent of 8-year olds were enrolled in private schools in 2002, this had increased to 44 per cent in 2009. While private sector participation dramatically increased among poorer children and those living in rural areas, girls and children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to access low-fee private schools (Woodhead et al. 2013b). This has further implications for the trade-offs that families make, for example, choosing to invest in one sibling over others, often to the disadvantage of girls (Pells 2011b; Woodhead et al. 2013b). Likewise, in Peru, children from less poor households and with better-educated parents are more likely to be enrolled in private schools (Guerrero et al. 2012).

Children and caregivers take multiple factors into account when deciding where children should go to school. In Andhra Pradesh this includes 'school availability; perceived quality and social value; accessibility; and most importantly affordability, for one or more children in the household' (James and Woodhead 2014; Boyden 2013). Attending low-fee private schools places poor households under considerable financial strain, as one mother explained: "[We] have to raise that money somehow and pay her school fee and later on try to clear the incurred loans. ... We spend everything on education." Within this more marketised system, children frequently change schools in an attempt to find what parents and also children perceive to be both a good-quality school and affordable. Figure 8 illustrates that the numbers of children being moved between schools have increased substantially between 2002 and 2009. In 2002 only 4.8 per cent of 7–8 year olds had moved school since starting, but in 2009 this had risen to 16.1 per cent

**Figure 8. Cohort comparison of children who have changed school by age 8, Andhra Pradesh (%)**



Source: James and Woodhead (2014).

Even in systems where virtually all children attend government schools, families are often faced with various forms of top-up costs. These can include contributions to school infrastructure, buying compulsory uniforms, paying the salaries of support staff and contributing to other costs not adequately covered by government. In Vietnam, where the government is committed to investing in public education, private tutoring in the form of 'extra classes' has become the norm, with extra classes taken by students from all sections of the population, including those from the poorest households and communities (Le et al. 2011). Communities are also expected to share in the costs of education, although extra support is provided for poor districts (Rolleston et al. 2013).

Economic growth, the expansion of education systems and the growth of the private sector are changing the ways in which inequality is expressed (Dercon and Singh 2013). Whereas in the past, poorer children were less likely to be enrolled in school, now they are likely to be enrolled but less likely to receive a good-quality education. Likewise, in Andhra Pradesh girls were less likely than boys to be enrolled in school in the past, whereas in recent

years they are just as likely to be enrolled (in the earlier grades) as boys, but more likely to be in government rather than private school, as parents make hard choices about which child or children to invest limited resources in.

## Summary

- Increased aspirations for schooling are one of the most striking intergenerational changes among Young Lives households. Children and families view education as a route out of poverty towards a better life and improved social mobility.
- Increased school enrolment has not always been matched by improvements in education quality, effectiveness and relevance. The percentage of 8-year-old children able to read, write or answer a simple maths question did not increase notably between 2002 and 2009.
- Disillusionment with the quality and effectiveness of government schools has fuelled the demand for low-fee private schooling, notably in India. Whereas 24 per cent of 8-year-olds were enrolled in private schools in Andhra Pradesh in 2002, this had increased to 44 per cent in 2009. This has long-term implications for equity, as well as for the quality and regulation of services for children.
- Increased enrolment and aspirations offer a foundation on which policies for better-quality, well-resourced and well-managed school systems can build.

*“Increased aspirations for schooling are one of the most striking intergenerational changes among Young Lives households. Children and their parents view education as a route out of poverty towards a better life and improved social mobility.”*

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## **Community case study: How increased educational aspirations are shaping children's lives in rural Peru**

Andahuaylas is a Quechua community located in the southern highlands of Peru, with a population of 2,863 inhabitants. The community is mainly reliant on agriculture, predominantly potato and corn production. It is characterised by high levels of seasonal migration, particularly during the months of November and February. The community has grown in size in recent years, and is now considered a 'minor settlement' and entitled to elect a local mayor and council. It has three schools (kindergarten, primary and secondary level) and a health post attended by a doctor and a nurse.

Parents place a very high value on education. Their overriding desire is that children should escape farm work (on the *chacra*, or smallholding), which they associate with suffering and hardship, and instead have the opportunity to pursue higher education and enter the labour market as professionals. Given the limited opportunities available in this small community, aspirations for work and education are inevitably underpinned by plans to migrate to urban centres.

Many caregivers are prepared to make huge sacrifices to enable their children to attend school. Marta's mother, for example, struggles to cover the indirect costs of her children's schooling, particularly transport and accommodation costs for her sons, who study away from home. She is forced to relinquish valuable assets when she is short of money:

*"I worry when I don't have money, sometimes I can't make ends meet, and so I sell my cows ... before I had enough money, I lived well, now I am short of money as my children are studying, that's why I'm short."*

Fifteen-year-old Marta attends the local secondary school, while her brothers go to school in the provincial capital, where the quality of education is perceived to be better. Her mother explains that she does not have sufficient resources to send all her children to the same school. Marta hopes that she can pursue further studies and become a nurse. She tells her mother, "We're not going to suffer like this in the mud ... it's better that I go and study." Yet although Marta aspires to migrate out of the community and study further, she is acutely aware that her future is uncertain. She therefore views secondary education as serving a dual purpose: to enable her to progress to tertiary studies but also to equip her with skills so she can succeed at generating an income selling agricultural produce if her aspirations are not realised.

Increased aspirations for education and work are increasingly reshaping relations between children and their caregivers. Most caregivers are keen that children finish school, and possibly higher studies, and that they delay getting married and having children. This contrasts sharply with their own life histories. Alvaro's mother married at 14 years of age and had her first child at 15. She is keen that her own son, who is 16, does not find a partner too early because "he wouldn't count [in life], with a wife and without studies". Esmeralda, who is 17, hopes to go to university. She states: "Young people are not like before ... they are studying, that is all ... [Before] they didn't use to study, they would only work and get married and all that. Now many have entered [university]." Her mother is also keen that she follows this path: "I tell her, 'Daughter, first finish studying ... [later] there will be people for you to marry.'"

When children are unable to fulfil such high expectations, parents can be left disappointed, particularly if they have made considerable investments in their children's education. Atilio, for example, left school and migrated to Lima, where he works in the market selling food. His mother feels that he now has limited opportunities in life and will end up back in the community in the fields: "All his life, he will suffer in the fields." She had hoped that he would become a professional and now feels that her efforts to secure his education were wasted, "I placed him in a school in the provincial capital [but now it seems] I put him there just for the sake of it."

In these ways, children's engagement with school is pivotal in defining what it means to be a successful child, as well as shaping migration away from the village. There is considerable stigma attached to children who leave school early and work on the fields. As Esmeralda's mother explains, "They don't know anything ... if they don't finish [school], they are worthless."



## **Message 5. Many children balance school with work that is often unpaid but that contributes to family livelihoods and teaches life skills**

While there is much research on the potential hazards of children's work in developing countries, and the international policy focus has been on eliminating extreme forms of child labour, few studies explore the changing nature and extent of children's everyday working lives as societies transform (Bourdillon et al. 2010). One common assumption is that near-universal school enrolment (as outlined in Message 4) will be reflected in a shift in children's time use and in their identities. However, Young Lives research confirms earlier findings that attending school does not replace contributing to the household or farm, or doing paid work, especially in contexts of poverty, weak school systems and uncertain future opportunities (Boyden et al. 1998; Woodhead 1999, 2001).

In this section, we explore how economic pressures and social norms continue to draw children into paid and unpaid work, as well as domestic responsibilities, with formal schooling sometimes placing competing demands on children's time. These pressures are often felt as much by parents as by children, with work and domestic duties continuing to be an important part of children's responsibilities within the household, and considered important for the development of skills, socialisation into family roles and preparation for future working and married life.

### ***Young children are spending less time on paid work but unpaid work remains a large time burden***

The numbers of young children reporting paid work was already relatively low at the start of the study in 2002 and this trend away from paid work has continued, as illustrated by Table 2. For example, in Ethiopia, 8 per cent of 8-year-olds reported undertaking paid activities in 2002. Approximately seven years later, less than 1 per cent of 8-year-olds were doing paid work (Woldehanna et al. 2011). Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, participation in paid

employment among 8-year-olds declined from 6.2 per cent in 2002 to 3 per cent in 2009. The decline was most marked for children from the Scheduled Tribes (from 17.9 per cent to 3.8 per cent), though there was a severe drought in 2002 which may have contributed to the high levels of child work at that time (Morrow et al. in press; Galab et al. 2011; Krutikova 2009).

**Table 2. 8-year-olds reporting working for pay over the last 12 months, 2002 and 2009 (%)<sup>11</sup>**

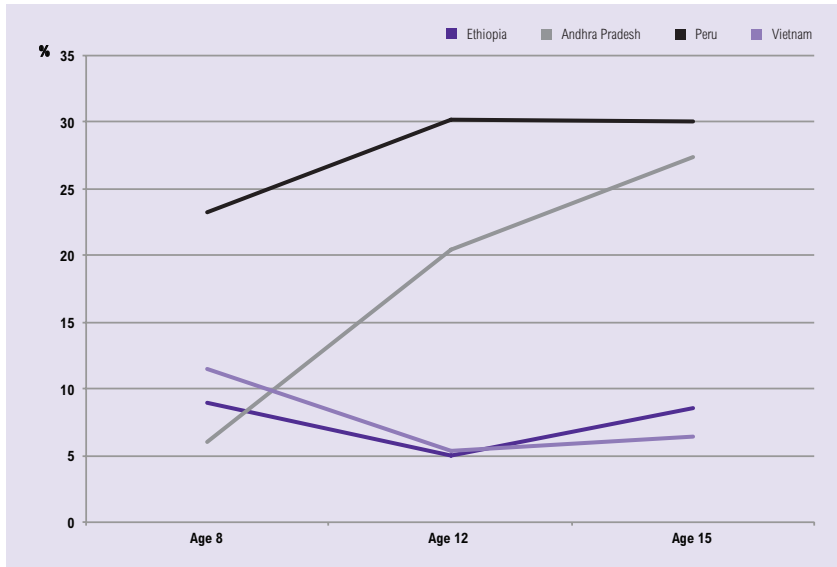
	2002	2009
Ethiopia	8.0	0.3
Andhra Pradesh	6.2	3.0
Peru	23.2	8.8
Vietnam	11.4	0.0

Trends in paid work for older children require cohort comparisons at later age points than are currently available at this stage of the Young Lives study (until the Younger Cohort reaches age 12 and 15). But analysis of data from the Older Cohort is instructive about trends in children undertaking paid work between 8 and 15 years old. The picture is mixed, depending on the context. Figure 9 illustrates that paid work increased in Andhra Pradesh at each age point and in Peru increased between the ages of 8 and 12 before plateauing. In Ethiopia there was a reduction in the percentage of children reporting paid work after 8 years of age, as not all children had started school by that point. While the numbers of children working for pay in Vietnam at the age of 15 were small (with the majority of working time spent performing unpaid work for the household), the working hours tended to be long, with 20.5 per cent working eight hours or more per day (Le et al. 2011).

11 The wording of the question put to children varied slightly in 2002 and 2009. In 2002 the question asked: 'Have you done anything in the last 12 months to earn money for yourself and for your family?' In 2009 the wording ran: 'Now I want you to think about the past year. Did you do anything to help your family, or to get money or things for yourself?' A follow-up question then asked which of the stated activities were paid and which were unpaid.



**Figure 9. Older Cohort children reporting working for pay over the last 12 months, at ages 8, 12 and 15 (%)**



It is important to interpret these trends with caution as the numbers of children reporting paid work are small. Given the increasing national and international pressure to eliminate 'child labour', it is likely that there is a large amount of under-reporting.

While the numbers of children stating that they work for pay are relatively small, the majority of children do report involvement in household chores or work on family farms and within family businesses.<sup>12</sup> In Ethiopia 90 per cent of 8-year-olds undertook some kind of paid or unpaid work (Woldehanna et al. 2011). Household chores took up the biggest proportion of children's time, followed by childcare activities and unpaid work for the family, mostly farming and herding cattle. Oldest girls typically have a heavier burden of tasks than their brothers or younger sisters (Heissler and Porter 2013). As a general rule, boys spend more of their time on unpaid work on family farms or businesses and girls spend more time caring for others and on domestic tasks.

Gender differences are also evident in Andhra Pradesh (Krutikova 2009). Both boys and girls report spending on average almost eight hours per day

<sup>12</sup> There are not comparable data on unpaid work in 2002.

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in school and a further two hours studying at home. However, girls also report spending three hours undertaking tasks on family farms or businesses, in comparison with 2.1 hours spent by boys (Galab et al. 2011).

The ways cultural as well as economic factors combine in shaping girls' and boys' daily lives is revealed by qualitative research in rural Andhra Pradesh. Pre-pubescent girls have traditionally been favoured for pollinating cotton due to cultural notions of purity, belief that children's participation ensures a good crop and the cheaper wages paid to children. This places a considerable burden on girls' time, as illustrated by the following case of Harika, aged 13:

I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning and sweep the floor. I sweep the floor and wash the dishes. I bring water. After bringing water, I brush my teeth ... drink the tea ... . I study for a while and after studying ... I go to the fields. After the crossing [pollination] work, I come back at 11 o'clock and take a bath. I study for some time and come to school at 2 o'clock ... after eating lunch. I come to the school ... and go back home at 4.30 p.m. After going I press the cotton and sweep the floor and cook the food for night.

(Morrow and Vennam 2012)

In Peru, work patterns vary according to children's location and economic status. Nearly three-quarters of all 8-year-olds were doing household chores in 2009, while in rural areas children were also engaged in activities such as agriculture and cattle-raising (Cueto et al. 2011). Whereas only 7 per cent of children in the least poor wealth quintile were working on family farms or businesses, this increased to 26 per cent of children in the poorest quintile.

The picture in Vietnam is very different to the other countries. Fewer than 5 per cent of children reported working on family farms or herding sheep or cattle, though this increased to 20 per cent of children whose parents had no education. Among ethnic minority children in the Northern Uplands region, 13 per cent were participating in agricultural work for the household (Le et al. 2011).

### ***Children face the challenge of balancing work with the new demands of schooling***

The key difference between the situation facing this generation and that faced by previous generations is that many young people negotiate

schooling and raised expectations for the future of their families as a whole, due to the hopes invested in education as a route out of poverty, at the same time as maintaining their traditional working roles and contributions to the household (Morrow and Vennam 2012). Children also play an important role in managing risks faced by families, through their work and care activities, as discussed in Message 2 (Boyden 2009; Heissler and Porter 2013; Ogando Portela and Pells in press; Vennam et al. 2010). Multiple, recurrent adverse events and shocks and the persistence of poverty mean that families have to balance the need for survival in the present with the anticipated rewards of keeping children in school. In some cases the costs of education can be a factor in decision-making, as children from poor households may work in order to pay for their schooling, while households may make sacrifices such as selling off livestock and other assets (Boyden 2009; Heissler and Porter 2013; Tafere and Camfield 2009).

Permanent school drop-out by the age of 12 is reported by very few households. More common are repeated periods of absence, the inability to concentrate at school because of worries about the home situation or hunger due to food shortage, and children taking on additional responsibilities at home (Orkin 2011, 2012; Pells 2011b). Following crop shocks in Vietnam, children from poor households that also reported limited opportunities for borrowing were 15.8 per cent more likely to have left school than children whose households did not experience the shock (Nguyen 2013). The study time of poorer children from households with limited opportunities for borrowing which experienced a shock was reduced by 31 per cent compared with poor children whose households did not experience a shock (ibid.).

Even if children do not drop out of school permanently, repeated or prolonged absences affect their learning and progression. Often, they do not achieve the standard required to progress to the next grade, so even if they leave school in their mid- to late teens, they may only have a low level of literacy and numeracy. Late entry compounded by absenteeism is a major reason for children's slow progression through school in Ethiopia, especially common for boys, which is likely to be due to their work responsibilities in many cases. For girls, having younger siblings was found to increase their likelihood of being absent for extended periods of time, suggesting that they play an important care role within the household (Frost and Rolleston 2011). In Andhra Pradesh, children's paid and unpaid work increased on average by two hours if the household suffered loss of income, with girls experiencing an even larger increase (Krutikova 2009).

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As children become older, the opportunity costs of schooling rise and changes in employment opportunities, such as the opening up of factories, can contribute to children, particularly boys, leaving school in order to work to support their families. Young Lives data draw attention to an important gender difference in Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam, with poor boys more likely than poor girls to have dropped out of school by the age of 15. This could be linked to higher wage-earning potential for boys and in the case of Vietnam, boys doing less well in exams (Dercon and Singh 2013; Pells 2011a). In Ethiopia, the most common reason for dropping out for girls was to look after siblings and the second was that the direct costs of schooling were considered to be too high; a reason which was much more commonly given for girls than for boys (Frost and Rolleston 2011).

### ***Work remains fundamental to many children's current roles and sense of responsibility and as preparation for the future***

Children's work is inextricably linked to their roles, relationships and identity within families and the community (Morrow and Boyden 2010). Contrary to assumptions that children are compelled to work by their parents, children often describe work as a source of pride as they feel it is important to be able to support their families and is part of what is considered being a 'good child' (Boyden 2009). In Andhra Pradesh one boy recounted how his mother had been told by others in the community: "Look, you are a blessed one. You are being looked after by your son and there is no need for you to work. He is not only earning but also taking care of you." The boy said, "I felt very happy. I want to get a good name, still want to work hard and do better things" (Morrow and Vennam 2012).

While most international attention is on the harmful effects of hazardous child labour, moderate levels of work can contribute to children's sense of self-efficacy within the household and wider community and support their learning and acquisition of skills (Bourdillon et al. 2010; Boyden 2009; Woodhead 2004). It can also enable them to pay for school materials, uniforms, informal fees levied by some teachers and/ or transportation costs associated with school attendance. In Ethiopia there is evidence that children who experience paternal or maternal illness report significantly higher levels of agency than their peers, as they take greater responsibility, often including taking care of younger siblings (Ogando Portela and Pells in press). However,

not all children view work positively. Across the four countries children from poor households are significantly more likely to experience work-related injuries than children from less poor households. This is especially true for boys, and is often a consequence of physically demanding roles, such as stone-crushing and farm work that involves the use of pesticides and sharp equipment. Among poor children, injuries are often exacerbated by delays in seeking medical treatment because of the financial and time costs involved (Morrow et al. 2013).

Work is also considered essential preparation for the future. Children and caregivers believe that learning manual skills is important, given uncertainty over whether children will be able to complete their schooling and whether enough skilled jobs will be available in the future (Morrow 2013; Rolleston and James 2011). A young man in Andhra Pradesh explained:

*“As it is, we are not sure of getting employment after completion of education. We are not sure of getting a job. So we cannot depend on one source for employment alone. We have to take up studies and work simultaneously during holidays. If we do these two things at a time, maybe we will be able to do some work to survive in case we don't get a job. We can do one of these jobs and earn a living. We can also have some confidence in us that we can take up one of these jobs and survive. If we depend totally on education alone we will not be able to do any work in case we don't get a job.”*

(Rolleston and James 2011)

For girls, learning household chores and how to work on family land is considered essential for future marriage prospects, particularly in Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh. As one mother in Andhra Pradesh explained: “If we give her away to another's house, there they will scold her if she does not do the work, saying, ‘Who taught you the work? Did your mother and father not teach you?’” (Pells 2011a).

Policy initiatives often centre on the role of children's work or child labour as a major ‘pull factor’ in low attendance at school and high drop-out rates. However, Young Lives research also points to other important factors, including illness of a child or family member, and the poor quality and perceived irrelevance of schooling, while for some children schooling is made possible by their work (Orkin 2011; Morrow et al. in press; Murray 2012). This highlights the importance of school flexibility, for example, half-day schooling or shifts and terms/semesters arranged around harvest times,

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to accommodate the range of challenges and responsibilities that children face growing up in poverty (Orkin 2011). In addition increasing the capacity of the household to respond to shocks, for example, through social protection schemes, is vital (as discussed in Message 2).

## Summary

- Many young people face competing pressures on their time through combining schooling with traditional work roles and contributions to the household. While the numbers of young children reporting that they work for pay are relatively small, the majority of children are involved in household chores or work on family farms and businesses.
- In general, boys spend more of their time on unpaid work on family farms or businesses and girls spend more time caring for others and on domestic tasks. In Ethiopia oldest girls typically have a heavier burden of tasks than their brothers or younger sisters and in Andhra Pradesh girls spend on average more hours working than boys.
- Children's work is inextricably linked to their roles, relationships and identity within families and the community. Work can be a source of pride and considered essential preparation for future working and married life, although some kinds of work can be hazardous or a source of social stigma.
- A more balanced policy approach would focus on the structural causes of children working, and support the poorest households and those prone to shocks and illness, for example, through social protection schemes. School flexibility is also important in order to enable children who are combining schooling with work to remain in school.

*“Children’s work is inextricably linked to their roles, relationships and identity within families and the community. Work can be a source of pride and essential preparation for future work and married life.”*

## ***Community case study: Economic change and children's work in rural Tigray, Ethiopia***

Zeytuni is only a few kilometres away from the capital of Tigray region, Mekelle, but it is a relatively remote rural community with a road that is only passable in the dry season. The major economic activities on which the community relies are farming, animal rearing, poultry, trading, masonry and wage labour.

Over the last few years two major economic activities have developed, which have led to changes in the working roles of children: stone-crushing and irrigation schemes. In response to the fast-growing construction projects in towns, individuals have increasingly invested in stone-crushing plants. The stone-crushing work has attracted a large number of children of both genders, including Haymanot (see below). As the work requires at least eight hours per day, it affects children's school attendance.

Irrigated farming activities based on water-harvesting schemes have expanded and are bringing change in the lives of the community. Irrigation works cover a large area in the village, and some people rent out their land for this purpose. Vegetables and fruit seedlings are now harvested as a result of the irrigation schemes. Children from around the age of 13 participate in this activity by assisting their parents. For example, Mihretu, a 16-year-old boy, is responsible for watering and taking care of vegetables on the family's irrigated farm.

The area is highly prone to drought. In recent years the PSNP has become the major mechanism by which families cope with droughts. Households undertake work on public schemes (e.g. road building, forestry, school renovation) in return for assistance from the government in the form of grain or cash. While many caregivers participate in this scheme while their children attend school, some children may also be involved in the work or take over chores in or around the household while their parents work. These activities take up children's time and they often miss school (Tafere and Woldehanna 2012).

While the new economic opportunities help children's families by subsidising their economic situation, which is aggravated by protracted droughts, children's roles and responsibilities have also changed in response.

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For example, in 2008, at the age of 14, Haymanot attended school in the afternoon and worked on the PSNP in the morning with her sister as her mother was too sick to work. She was also responsible for household chores and doing some embroidery work. However, Haymanot's sister also became ill. A combination of famine, drought and sickness ran down the household assets, with the result that Haymanot dropped out of school in Grade 5. She described her sadness, as she was winning awards at school, but says it was her decision to stay at home and care for her mother: "I feel very bad because I am not going to school and my mother is sick. ... I will be happy if I continue going to school and my mother gets better." At this time Haymanot was also suffering from repeated malaria, diarrhoea, vomiting and fever, exacerbated by her work in the stone-crushing factory. Three years later Haymanot married. She feels that: "it has benefited me because I have got rest from going to work". She said her health was much better and she now gets enough to eat.

On the one, hand stopping school and caring for her mother restricted Haymanot's opportunities and affected her physical health for a time. On the other hand, going back to school in these circumstances would not be well regarded in the community. Haymanot's mother explained that if "she leaves any job and continues with her education, people will make fun of her, saying 'Look, Haymanot is idle' ". Working and supporting her mother enhanced Haymanot's reputation: "Some people who saw her always working admired her and asked how she managed to work and withstand the hardship at this age." Haymanot did not feel that her experiences had affected her life negatively. She hoped to delay having children and return to school the following year.

*"Working and supporting her mother enhanced Haymanot's reputation: 'Some people who saw her always working admired her and asked how she managed to work and withstand the hardship at this age.'"*



## **Message 6. Rapid social change is creating new dilemmas about how best to protect children and prepare them for the future**

Earlier sections have summarised the many ways in which children's lives are being transformed by economic and social change, as well as new policies and services, and especially the promise of education. We have also identified the challenges experienced by families and children aspiring to improve their situation but facing the realistic prospect that their children's futures may still depend on traditional roles and livelihoods. In this final section, we focus on areas where Young Lives research highlights the tensions between 'traditional' and 'modern' childhoods, especially during periods of rapid change.

### ***Existing norms shape choices about girls' and boys' education, opportunities and mobility***

One of the most marked intergenerational shifts is directly linked to the perceived power of education, as 'school success is fast becoming children's chief familial responsibility' (Boyden 2013). Children in Andhra Pradesh had completed more grades at school than their parents, even by the age of 12. This was even more pronounced among the poorest children, who had already overtaken their parents in terms of grade completion, even by the age of 8.

Young Lives research in Peru draws attention to the ways formal schooling is viewed as offering a new route to acquiring social standing, or 'becoming somebody' (Crivello 2011). Studying well is considered important for both boys and girls because it helps them acquire a 'good name'. Increased aspirations have also fuelled a growing trend for children to migrate to urban centres in the search for what is perceived to be better-quality or more relevant education or to enable children to stay with families more able to support their schooling (Boyden 2013). In Andhra Pradesh, children from poor families frequently go to school in nearby towns, staying in school hostels under a government scheme for disadvantaged groups (James and

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Woodhead 2014). In Peru transition to secondary school is often the incentive for migration. Of the 15-year-olds who reported leaving their previous locality, the main reason for doing so was to study. Over 70 per cent of those who had moved said they were 'better off' now compared to before they had migrated.

However, these new opportunities also challenge traditional expectations, notably around the roles of girls and boys as they make the transition through puberty and towards marriage. For example, older girls in Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh report greater restrictions on their mobility than boys, because of the risks of gender-based violence if they travel unaccompanied (Boyden and Crivello 2012; Camfield and Tafere 2011). Some caregivers fear that the increasing opportunities for girls and young women to study and delay marriage may put them at greater risk of acquiring a 'bad name' or not being able to marry. They think that others may doubt the reputation of their daughters if they spend time studying away from home and this may reduce their marriage prospects (Pells 2011a). In choosing a college for Santhi, aged 16, in Andhra Pradesh, her mother explains the importance of selecting a place with a good reputation as it is seen as a social risk to send girls out of the village. She comments how some people in the village are concerned about letting girls study instead of arranging marriages: "They are scared that girls might do something wrong." So Santhi's family decided to send her to a college attended by other girls from the village, including the niece of the Sarpanch (elected head of the village).

Schooling is not just changing gender dynamics and decision-making within households. It is also enabling young people to access new kinds of information, for example about reproductive health. Across the countries (although to a smaller extent in Andhra Pradesh) girls and their caregivers report that it is becoming more socially acceptable to get married later and to delay childbirth, for economic and health reasons (Pells 2011a; Pells et al. 2013). For example, Luz is 17 years old and from the Aymara indigenous group in Peru and lives in the Andean city of Juliaca. She is adamant that:

*"I don't want to marry, I want to be like my aunt, [who is] single. She is 27 and she is single. My aunt enjoys herself. I want to be like that ... she is a professional. My mother also tells me: 'Stay single, don't look for a husband, be a professional, look at your aunt who is alone. She enjoys better, nobody stops her, nobody says anything to her'. So I want to be like that, like my aunt, have fun and then marry, at 30 years old."*

Luz sees marriage as an obstacle to her desire to go to university and become an accountant or a manager and avoid the unequal, and on occasions violent, relationships she has witnessed between her parents and uncle and aunt (Ames 2013).

Once again these examples draw attention to the pivotal role of education in transforming the expectations of children and young people. Fatuma lives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and is 15 years old. She was brought up by her grandmother, who also stresses the importance of education: "If she succeeds in her education, she will have a job. She might have her own house, and anyone who is educated can support himself. The problem is if you are not educated." She said it was up to Fatuma whom she married, and elaborated, "I want her to marry when she has a job and in her 25th year or so." She thinks that having children around that age is good, because then: "you will have a job, you will organise your living. You can bring up the child comfortably, you will not have something to regret" (Pells and Murray 2012).

Alongside new pressures to study as the foundation for a better life, there is still a strong sense among young people of the need to be able to fulfil the traditional filial responsibilities of providing and caring for family, especially parents in old age (Crivello et al. in press). This is particularly the case for boys. Qualitative research in Andhra Pradesh with boys who had already left school by the age of 15, found that they were preoccupied with how to help their families to pay their sisters' dowries as well as with their own future marriages. They also grappled with conflicting pressures and expectations around what it means to 'succeed' in life, particularly as the route to employment through formal schooling was no longer open to them (Morrow 2013).

### ***Efforts to eliminate traditional practices may result in new social risks if they do not engage with root causes***

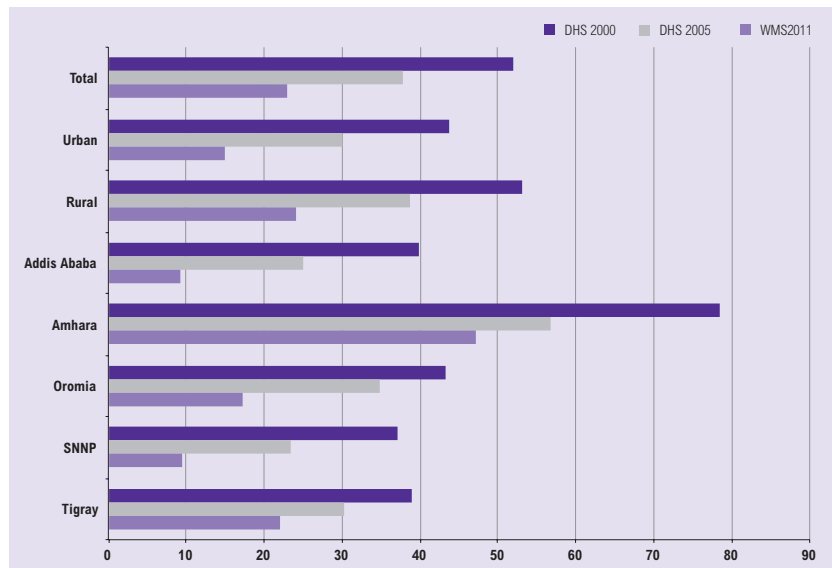
Much international attention has focused on the risks to children from traditional practices that are now considered harmful and in violation of their rights (UNICEF 2013). In some areas of Ethiopia intensive advocacy, supported by greater participation in school and economic opportunities for young people, has resulted in changes in values and practices regarding early female marriage and female circumcision.<sup>13</sup> Figure 10 summarises

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<sup>13</sup> We have used the more neutral term 'female circumcision' instead of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), which can stigmatise girls who have been circumcised.

national data to illustrate that female circumcision among girls is declining, but with considerable regional variations in both the pace of change and prevalence.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 10. Reductions in circumcision of daughters and girls under 15, by region in Ethiopia, 2000–11**



Sources: Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (2000 and 2005) and Welfare Monitoring Survey (2011).

Young Lives qualitative research in each of the regions displayed in Figure 10 provides insights into how these changes are experienced by young people and their families. Specifically, interviews with caregivers and young people draw attention to the challenges of implementing social reform in ways that respect the difficulties that changing practices entails for local communities, and that recognise the wider customs and cultural understandings of which these traditions are a part (Boyden et al. 2013). Early female marriage and female circumcision together have often been seen as protecting girls from engaging in pre-marital sex and thereby preventing them from being

<sup>14</sup> Data for 2000 and 2005 are taken from the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) where mothers were asked if they had at least one daughter circumcised. The data for 2011 come from the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS), which asked about girls under 15 years old who were circumcised. This means that the data for 2011 are not directly comparable with the data from 2000 and 2005 but are indicative of the general pattern of change.

stigmatised and from the risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy before marriage. In some regions circumcision is understood as preventing 'bad behaviour', ensuring girls are calmer and better suited to domestic chores. This has resulted in resistance to reform in some regions, notably Oromia, including in some communities that have experienced intensive advocacy condemning the practice. This resistance has caused disagreement within families, contestation of state policy and clandestine actions, such as elopements under the guise of abduction and undercover circumcision rituals, themselves potentially a heightened risk to the girls involved because the rituals are conducted at night with poor lighting and by less experienced practitioners.

Two examples crystallise the issue. In one case, a mother from Oromia explained how peer pressure led her 14-year-old daughter to push her into organising the girl's circumcision:

*"It was done at her request. After she witnessed a girl insulting another who was not circumcised, my daughter came home and asked me to organise her circumcision. She told me she does not want to be insulted in the same way. ... We did the circumcision in the evening for the fear of the local officials who could punish us. ... Despite being prohibited by the local officials, everybody circumcises their daughter."*

The second example concerns a grandmother from Tigray who had herself been circumcised as a child and married at the age of 9, but regretted what happened to her because of the pain she suffered as a result and the breakdown of her marriage. In condemning the practice, she also encapsulated the cultural dilemma:

*"On the one hand, when I see some girls going around with the boys, I think that it would be better to circumcise my child because she would be calm and wouldn't be seen with boys all the time. So, you can think even if it [circumcision] has bad consequences, it is preferable. If the girl has an unwanted pregnancy, if she gives birth from an outsider, what can be done then? On the other hand, you can see some girls who are circumcised but are not disciplined. So, maybe it depends on the nature of the girls. Thus as I have experienced female circumcision is very bad, so that it has to be condemned."*

Our evidence indicates that reforming traditional practices is by no means straightforward. In the face of strong prohibitions and advocacy, traditional practices can be driven underground rather than disappear. Boyden et

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al. (2013) highlight how efforts to eliminate a traditional practice seen as a physical risk and a violation of children's rights may result in new concerns and social risks. Stigma, social isolation and even abandonment can be faced by uncircumcised girls in traditional communities, and at the same time, feelings of shame and regret can be faced by circumcised girls adapting to the new social norms. Finally, these findings are a reminder of the importance of addressing traditional practices as part of more comprehensive social reform, to ensure young people have the good quality and accessible health and education services, and greater employment opportunities that would help reduce attachment to traditional practices.

### ***Violence is an everyday risk for children***

While this paper has exemplified many ways that children's lives have been changing during the first decade of the twenty-first century, one area of social reform is especially intractable. Violence remains a feature of children's lives despite national and international attempts to reduce violence within the home and within the school environment (United Nations 2006).

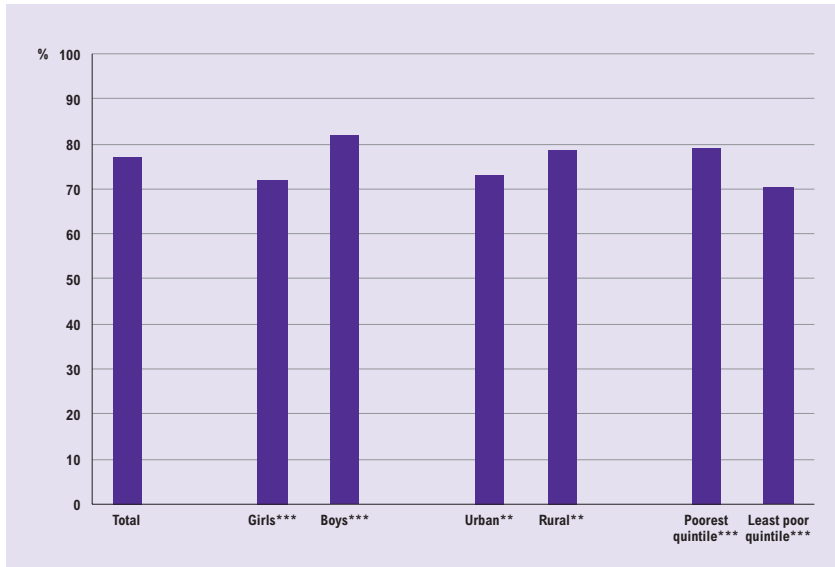
For example, Young Lives evidence suggests that corporal punishment is endemic in schools in Andhra Pradesh, despite being prohibited by law. Figure 11 illustrates that over three-quarters of 7–8-year-olds report being beaten or physically hurt by a teacher in a typical week.<sup>15</sup> Boys and children from the poorest wealth quintile are significantly more likely to experience corporal punishment than girls or children from the least poor quintile. Children in rural areas also report experiencing more punishment than children in urban areas. Qualitative research evidence suggests that poor children are more likely to be beaten for lacking school materials and uniforms and for being absent because of the need to work. Children also report discontinuing school because of their experience, or fear, of corporal punishment (Morrow and Singh forthcoming).

*“Violence remains a feature of children’s lives despite national and international attempts to reduce violence within the home and at school.”*

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<sup>15</sup> Physical punishment includes spanking, beating, punching, twisting a child's ears or any other hitting, with the hand or any implement.

**Figure 11. Children aged 7–8 experiencing of physical punishment at school in the last week, Andhra Pradesh, 2009 (%)**



\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Similarly in Peru physical punishment 'is the cornerstone of the disciplinary system' even though it is prohibited (Rojas 2011). Physical violence is used not only between teachers and pupils, but also among students who reproduce 'the authoritarian and masculine system of the school' whereby physical strength is associated with what it means to be male. This has the potential to legitimise violent behaviour and reinforce gender norms.

Violence within the home is also a reality for many children, as demonstrated by Table 3. Over a third of girls and a quarter of boys in Peru and 11 per cent of girls and 15 per cent of boys in Vietnam reported being physically hurt by a family member.<sup>16</sup> Qualitative research in Vietnam has revealed how children's experiences of violence in the home are shaped by poverty, gender hierarchies and access to social and economic resources. In Vietnam focus group discussions indicated that there was greater acknowledgement of violence in the home and more support services available in the urban

<sup>16</sup> These data come from the Self-Administered Questionnaire which was given to the 14–15-year-olds to complete in 2009. It is important to note that there is likely to be under-reporting.

sites than the rural sites. In rural areas, violence in the home is more normalised, by children as well as adults. In urban areas, there are more wage-earning opportunities for women and children to reduce dependency on men. However, the persistence of the ideal of family harmony in Vietnamese society and the continuing view of family violence as a private matter means children and caregivers are reluctant to seek support, even where services exist (Pells et al. forthcoming).

**Table 3. 15-year-olds reporting being physically hurt by a family member or stranger, Peru and Vietnam, 2009 (%)**

		Girls	Boys
Physically hurt by family member	Peru	36	27.19
	Vietnam	11.63	15.06
Physically hurt by stranger	Peru	14	26.9
	Vietnam	2.86	11.51

Table 3 also indicates the high prevalence of 'stranger' violence towards children, especially boys.<sup>17</sup> While Young Lives does not have comparative data on physical harm by strangers in earlier rounds, children were asked to agree or disagree with the question: 'Is the area you live in safe for children?' The percentage of children aged 8 who thought that their area was safe increased across all the countries between 2002 and 2009, with the exception of Vietnam where it remained unchanged at 88 per cent. However, this masks differences between urban and rural communities. Children in urban areas were slightly less likely to feel their area was safe, particularly in Ethiopia and Peru, although in both countries the trend of children feeling unsafe increased over this period from 72 to 81 per cent among urban children in Ethiopia and 65 to 70 per cent in Peru. However, children in urban areas identified social risks (particularly in relation to girls and personal safety) and saw insecure surroundings as a source of risk (Vennam et al. 2010). Insecurity and social distance between groups of people do not only affect the well-being of children who are from the poorest families. In Peru, Susan (age 16), who is from a less poor household, was very worried by what she perceived as rising violence and crime in Lima and how this would affect

<sup>17</sup> Stranger is translated as 'unknown person' in the local languages. However it is possible that different interpretations of 'stranger' exist in different areas. For example, in rural, remote communities, 'strangers' may not be people who are completely unknown, but outside the family and immediate social networks.



her studies, as she would have to commute to university: "I'm getting close to the point where I won't go, I won't go and study away from home, as it makes me afraid ... because they say that it is getting more unsafe" (Pells et al. 2013).

## Summary

- Schooling is playing a pivotal role in challenging traditional expectations, notably around the roles of girls and boys as they make the transition through puberty and towards marriage.
- In Ethiopia intensive advocacy, supported by greater participation in school and economic opportunities for young people, has resulted in changes in values and practices regarding early marriage and female circumcision. However, these changes have created difficulties for some children and families, especially where traditional practices have been seen as protective against stigma and a source of social insurance, mobility and even survival.
- Violence within the school, community and home remains a feature of children's lives. Over a third of girls and a quarter of boys in Peru and 11 per cent of girls and 15 per cent of boys in Vietnam reported being physically hurt by a family member.
- Policies addressing traditional practices need to take account of the broader structures, such as poverty and gender norms, that shape children's and families' experiences. Ensuring that young people can access good-quality schooling, health services and employment opportunities is an important part of reducing attachment to traditional practices.

*"Policies addressing traditional practices need to take account of the broader structures that shape children's experiences ... ensuring that young people can access good-quality schooling, health services and employment opportunities."*

## **Community case study: Gendered experiences of school in rural Andhra Pradesh, India**

Poompuhar is located in rural Andhra Pradesh and has a population of just over 2,000 people. The majority of the community are from the Backward Classes but there is a sizeable number of Scheduled Caste households who are located in a specific area near the entrance to the village.<sup>18</sup> The majority of people are engaged in agriculture, livestock rearing and daily wage labour.

There has been rapid change with regard to schooling. A new secondary school has been constructed around 3km away. Children report that they like the new school in spite of the distance because of the space and the environment. In 2007 and 2008 caregivers and community officials reported that girls from this community were educated to the level available within the village, namely Grade 10. By 2010 attitudes to girls' education were changing.

Shanmuka Priya is 8 years old. Her mother cannot read or write, although her uncles were educated, and her father attended school until he was 10, when he had to drop out to help his family. Shanmuka Priya's mother notes that there has been a change in attitudes to education for both boys and girls since she was young.

*“Earlier, people never used to send their children to school. Now even girls go. Everybody wants to be educated. What is so good about agriculture? There is hardly any reward for working so hard. I think only education is important; children can get a job and live happily when they grow up.”*

Shanmuka Priya enjoys school and studies hard but is annoyed that there is only one girl in the top group. She reports the following exchange with her teacher:

*“I said: ‘Why did you put me in B group? I am a good student.’ He said: ‘There are no girls in Group A.’ I said: ‘Pavitra is in Group A.’ He said they were keeping her there for two days and then they were going to move her too.”*

<sup>18</sup> Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are official government groupings designed to aid positive discrimination for minorities.

Shanmuka Priya's younger brother, Prashant, now goes to a private school. Her mother said parents placed more emphasis on boys' education because their sons would look after them when they were old, while girls left for their husband's family. A number of girls from the community have been enrolled into institutions away from the community, for senior secondary education (Grades 11 and 12); however, Shanmuka Priya's parents remain undecided:

*"Shanmuka Priya is a girl; we won't give her higher education. And in the case of Prashant we will make him study as much as we can. We want our only son to get a good education. We have up to 10th grade in the village school for Shanmuka Priya. We will see what happens after that."*

*"... parents placed more emphasis on boys' education because their sons would look after them when they were old, while girls leave to live with their husband's family."*



# Conclusions and policy implications

While there is wide consensus over the fundamental principle of acting 'in the best interests of the child', there is much less consensus about how to do so (Myers and Bourdillon 2012). Acting in children's best interests requires an understanding not only of the impact on children of a dynamic economic, social and policy environment, but also of the responses of children and their families in the context of their specific circumstances, beliefs and aspirations. Without a holistic understanding of the features of children's lives and development in specific contexts and how they shape children's and families' aspirations, perceived risks and decision-making, policy is at risk of focusing on symptoms rather than causes. For example, in seeking to increase school uptake and reduce gender differentiation, we need to ask why some children work and do not go to school, or why parents treat sons and daughters differently. Effective policy engages with underlying context, not only consequences.

This paper summarises new insights into the significance of children's living environment for their development, finding that where children live powerfully shapes the extent and nature of the risks and opportunities to which they are exposed. Most importantly, the living environment is dynamic, with rapid changes taking place in Young Lives communities that alter the experience of childhood for successive cohorts of children. We have summarised Young Lives research into six key messages, which synthesise new findings on the extent to which the poorest families and children are benefiting from changes in the macro-level economic, social and policy environment in the early decades of the twenty-first century. We have highlighted concerns over whether the large investments being made by families in education will pay off for the poorest children and over the new risks children face especially in relation to social change. In this final section, we revisit each of the six messages and consider how to build on the positive advances that have been made towards creating a supportive environment for all children's development. The first three areas reinforce findings from other studies, but draw out the key elements necessary for a supportive or enabling environment for children. The second three areas highlight key factors that need to be taken into account, to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised children are not 'left behind', as prioritised by the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda (United Nations 2013).

- Rapid economic growth in many low- and middle-income countries provides a vital opportunity to improve the circumstances of poor children. Growth can increase household resources, improve services, strengthen social networks and reduce the risks faced by poor families. However, the gains have not been evenly distributed, as shown under Message 1, and translate slowly and variably into improved outcomes for the poorest children (see also McKay 2009). The disconnect between growth and substantial or equitable benefits underlines the importance of ensuring growth is pro-poor, and supported by the extension of good-quality services, such as education and healthcare, as well as by social protection and greater availability of jobs (see also Shepherd 2011).
- Message 2 demonstrated that poor households remain vulnerable to repeated environmental shocks alongside new pressures, such as food price inflation, with long-term implications for children's well-being (see also Hossain and McGregor 2011). The expansion of social protection schemes has the potential to increase the options available to poor households, by enabling them to avoid debt traps and helping them to access productive livelihood opportunities (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004; World Bank 2012b). It is important that public works schemes that are aimed at households take account of potential adverse consequences for children, such as pressure to work as substitutes for adults within the home or on the actual scheme (UNICEF 2009).
- Poorer communities have, in general, benefited from the expansion of access to basic services, including electricity, safe drinking water and improved sanitation. Message 3 showed how the rapid expansion of road systems and communication technologies creates new opportunities for some, but risks reinforcing social exclusion for others. This may concentrate disadvantage for communities and children living in these areas (see also Nandy 2012). Area-based policies have the merit of avoiding the complexities of targeting individual households and the risk of resentment within communities. However, they may create tensions between communities and it is important not to neglect poor children living in other communities, especially in urban areas.
- The expansion of formal schooling has been one of the most significant changes in the lives of poor children in recent decades. High educational aspirations and increases in enrolment offer a strong foundation upon which to build learning for all. In recognition of the challenges of school

quality, all four countries have introduced quality improvements for government schools. However, there are currently large differences in school effectiveness, within and between countries, as summarised in Message 4. The growth of the low-fee private education sector in Andhra Pradesh raises important equity concerns and illustrates the need for better quality, well-resourced and well-managed school systems that can translate high aspirations into realistic opportunities for young people (see also UNESCO 2012).

- Message 5 documents the ways children's work, whether paid or unpaid work in the household or for family farms and businesses, continues to contribute to household livelihoods and the management of household risks and shocks, as well as being seen as essential preparation for an uncertain future. Children spend more hours and more years in school, but the majority also carry out work or domestic responsibilities, which results in additional pressures on their time. Policy debates at the international level have moved away from the important distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous work towards eliminating all forms of children's work. Arguably, there is a need for a more balanced approach which focuses on the structural causes, and supports the poorest households and those prone to shocks and illness, for example, through social protection schemes. School flexibility is also important in order to enable children who are combining schooling with work to remain in school.
- Social change brings new opportunities for children, such as attending school for longer, as well as changing expectations for future roles and responsibility regarding fertility and marriage. At the same time there are new tensions and social risks, especially for girls and young women. Message 6 reported that in some regions of Ethiopia, girls and caregivers express fears that delaying marriage and forgoing traditional practices can put girls at risk. Policies addressing traditional practices need to take account of the broader structures, such as poverty and gender norms, that shape children's and families' experiences. Ensuring that young people can access good-quality schooling, health services and employment opportunities is an important part of reducing attachment to traditional practices.

The expansion of national policies and interventions to influence the lives of children has never been greater. The imperative to ensure these are both context-appropriate and take account of the dynamic social changes affecting each new generation of children is clear from Young Lives research. But policy development is only the beginning. Great care is needed to increase the effectiveness of policy – to work towards safer, healthier, and better-quality environments for all children, in the home, school and community. Improved access to clean water and sanitation, health services and schooling are significant gains; poor-quality services, high malnutrition rates in many countries and wide inequalities between children present worrying challenges. This is the context for the post-2015 environment, and for the development of effective social policies to ensure that ‘no-one is left behind’.

*“The expansion of national policies and interventions to influence the lives of children has never been greater. The imperative to ensure these are both context-appropriate and take account of the dynamic social changes affecting each new generation of children is clear.”*



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## Changing Children's Lives: Risks and Opportunities

Children's development and well-being are significantly influenced by their family and community environment, with poor and marginalised children facing a heavier burden of risk. This paper summarises emerging findings from the Young Lives longitudinal study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, Peru and Vietnam. It examines how children's development is shaped by different environmental influences, highlighting the changes in children's daily lives during the first decade of the twenty-first century, including the changing nature of risks and opportunities.

We show how poverty reduction and improved access to services and schooling have reduced some risks and created new opportunities for many children. However, the poorest children are being left behind against the backdrop of generally rising living standards. For example, although school enrolment rates have increased, the poorest children most often experience poorer quality education, and while malnutrition and stunting are declining, the reductions are far greater among less poor children. Creating a supportive environment for children's development requires tackling the structural causes of disadvantage, with a particular focus on communities where children experience multiple disadvantages.



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