

Impact case study (REF3b)

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| Institution: University of Oxford |
| Unit of Assessment: 24B Development Studies |
| Title of case study: Pioneering longitudinal research leads to greater understanding of childhood poverty among policy-makers |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Young Lives is identifying major influences on children's development, from infancy to adulthood, by carrying out a pioneering longitudinal study across four developing countries over 15 years. Young Lives gathers and analyses data on how childhood is changing in diverse communities, especially through the impact of economic, cultural and policy shifts, by studying two age cohorts in each country. UNICEF, the World Bank, Plan International, and Save the Children International, among others, are using Young Lives research to design childhood poverty-reduction policies in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The research also underpins the re-visioning of global child protection work by UNICEF, Save the Children Canada, and World Vision UK.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Young Lives (www.younglives.org.uk) is a large, long-term project led by a team at the Oxford Department of International Development since 2006. This group of researchers has had a long history of working in partnership with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).</p> <p>In 2000, DFID commissioned Young Lives to map the progress of the Millennium Development Goals and to inform future programming for children. Young Lives, the first comparative, longitudinal, mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) study of children in developing countries, follows 12,000 children in two age cohorts in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam over 15 years. A baseline survey was conducted in 2002, Round 2 in 2007, Round 3 in 2009, and Round 4 in 2013. A final survey round will take place in 2016. It takes time for the impact of longitudinal research to be felt, but the scientific power of Young Lives grows with each data round, providing compelling evidence on the effects of poverty, inequality and risk across critical periods of the lifespan as children are followed from infancy through formal schooling to work and early adulthood.</p> <p>The research team at Oxford are: Professor Jo Boyden (Director from 2006), Professor Stefan Dercon (quantitative lead, 2006–12), Dr Virginia Morrow (Senior Research Officer, from 2011), Dr Laura Camfield (Senior Research Officer, 2007–10), Dr Gina Crivello (Senior Research Officer, from 2007), Dr Andreas Georgiadis (Senior Research Officer, from 2011), Dr Rozana Himaz (Research Officer, 2008–10), Dr Sofya Krutikova (Research Officer, from 2011), Dr Caine Rolleston (Research Officer, 2012–13), Abhijeet Singh (Research Officer, from 2012), Professor Martin Woodhead (Senior Advisor from 2006 and Professor of Childhood Studies at the Open University).</p> <p><i>Research insights:</i></p> <p>Child poverty: Poverty and associated risks have profound implications for children; these persist throughout their lives and affect future generations [see Section 3: R1]. Nutritional deprivation in early childhood is found to have lasting effects on cognitive development and socio-emotional skills [R2]. This evidence endorses policies that focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life. However, ground-breaking research by Georgiadis and colleagues [R3] points to the potential for dramatic changes (improvement or deterioration) in children's nutritional status and associated variations in cognitive development up to the age of 8, with socioeconomic and local infrastructural factors determinant. This body of work emphasises the importance of remedial interventions to support individual recovery and reduce disparities between children [R1–R3].</p> <p>Inequality: Risk and deprivation are concentrated in particular social groups and localities, with dramatic disparities in child development outcomes. Children's experience of inequality shapes their personal and social identities, peer relationships, self-esteem and self-efficacy. During early childhood, socioeconomic and household characteristics are much stronger determinants of disparities between children than gender; these become more significant as children grow older [R4]. But, contrary to received wisdom, boys are not always advantaged and only in India is there a strong 'institutionalised' gender bias against girls in education. Subjective well-being (i.e. children's own perception) is both a major indicator of inequality, and also a channel for the transmission of poverty. Research on children's educational outcomes reveals persistent and widening inequalities in Ethiopia, India and Peru, but not in Vietnam [R5]. In Peru, family</p> |

background determines the kind of schooling children access. In Vietnam, children from less advantaged households enter school with poorer cognitive skills but make good progress [R1, R5]. This evidence points to the need for multidimensional, integrated solutions to childhood poverty and to policies that aim to overcome structural causes of inequalities rather than focusing solely on income and economic growth [R1].

Child protection: By the age of 12, one in five Young Lives children in Ethiopia had lost at least one parent, but analysis shows that outcomes are different depending on the children's age and whether they had lost their mother or father [R6]. Krutikova (2009) ('Determinants of Child Labour'. *Young Lives Working Paper* 48) found that not only do increasing proportions of children work as they grow older, but this is often in response to family income shocks, and sensitive to household composition in terms of the age and gender of other children. Morrow and Vennam (2010) ('Combining School and Work'. *Children & Society* 24 (4): 304–14) shows that children's work in cotton pollination, which interferes with school attendance, is undertaken not just for economic reasons but also in response to social norms as to their family role. These two elements of research provide evidence for child protection policies relating to orphanhood and children's work.

3. References to the research

[R1] Boyden, J, and S Dercon (forthcoming). 'Child Development and Economic Development: Lessons and Future Challenges'. *World Bank Research Observer*. (Impact factor: 2.045.)

[R2] Sanchez, A, and S Dercon (2013). 'Height in Mid Childhood and Psychosocial Competencies in Late Childhood: Evidence from Four Developing Countries'. *Economics and Human Biology* DOI: 10.1016/j.ehb.2013.04.001. (Impact factor: 2.457.)

[R3] Crookston, B, W Schott, S Cueto, K Dearden, P Engle, A Georgiadis, E Lundeen, M Penny, A Stein, J Behrman (2013) 'Postinfancy Growth, Schooling and Cognitive Achievement: Young Lives'. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. DOI: 10.3945/ajcn.113.067561. (Impact factor: 6.7.)

[R4] Dercon, S, and A Singh (2013). 'From Nutrition to Aspirations and Self-Efficacy: Gender Bias over Time among Children in Four Countries'. *World Development* 45: 31–50. (Impact factor: 1.537.)

[R5] Rolleston, C (forthcoming) 'Learning Profiles and the "Skills Gap": A Comparative Analysis of Schooling and Skills Development in Four Developing Countries'. *Oxford Review of Education*. (Impact factor: 0.446.)

[R6] Himaz, R (2013) 'Impact of Parental Death in Middle Childhood and Adolescence on Child Outcomes'. *Journal of African Economies* 22 (3): 463–90. (Impact factor: 0.574.)

Grants awarded:

Young Lives is core-funded by DFID from 2001–17 (funding to Oxford: 2006–09 £7 million; 2009–17 £16 million) and by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010–14): £2.7 million. Additional grants for sub-studies demonstrate the interest of policy and practitioner organisations: DFID Education policy team (2009–10): *Design and piloting of school survey* £200,000; Bernard Van Leer Foundation (2009–12): *Transitions in early childhood* £188,000; Oak Foundation (2009–12): *Risk, vulnerability and resilience* £226,000; DFID Ethiopia country office (2010–11): *School survey* £350,000; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation/University of Pennsylvania (2011–13): *Determinants and consequences of early under-nutrition* £227,000; National Institutes of Health/University of Boston (2012–16): *Growth, recovery, schooling and cognitive achievement* £106,000; Oak Foundation (2012–14): *Child work in Ethiopia* £207,000; Grand Challenges Canada (2012–14): *Risk factors during first 1000 days on children's development* £119,000.

4. Details of the impact

Young Lives research is conducted in partnership with independent and government research organisations in each country. This collaborative approach enables direct involvement by policy-makers in the whole research process, allowing them to influence research questions, and to directly use findings in national and sub-national policies.

The initial results of the Young Lives project led to more specific policy advisory requests, including: Plan International: '*Because I am a Girl*' reports 2010–11 (£4,000) and 2012 (£3,000); DFID for World Bank: *World Development Report* 2011 (£18,000); UNESCO: *Global Monitoring Report* on skill development 2012 (£6,000), and effects of educational opportunity and inequality on learning outcomes 2013 (£6,000); Save the Children UK: impact of environmental shocks on children for *Rio Summit on Sustainable Development* 2012 (£6,000), on stunting and education

outcomes for *Food for Thought* report for G8 Summit pre-meeting 2013 (£1,600), parents' views of school quality for report on accountability 2013 (£1,200); Oxfam GB: climate shocks and food and nutrition security 2013 (£2,200). SCUK and OSI/PERI also co-funded the Young Lives school survey in Ethiopia (2012 and 2013). World Vision UK commissioned advice and training on research on children's work (2013) [see Section 5: C1].

Poverty and inequality:

Dercon was commissioned by the World Bank to produce a background paper (since published as [R4]) for the *World Development Report 2012. Gender Equality and Development* and the report draws on the paper to illustrate gendered effects of nutrition, income reversals and family aspirations [C2, pp 41, 85, and 116]. This, and other Young Lives research [R2], was summarised for a policy audience in a 2013 report by Martin Woodhead, Paul Dornan (Young Lives policy officer) and Helen Murray (former Young Lives policy officer) *What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives*. This report was submitted to the UNICEF/UN Women thematic consultation on inequalities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (and ranked fifth out of 180 submissions for downloads). A substantial part of Woodhead et al (2013) was incorporated into the UNICEF/UN Women submission to the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda [C3, pp 44–6].

Young Lives analysis of inequalities was further developed in a paper based on children's accounts of living in poverty published with Save the Children and launched at the UN High-level Panel meeting in Bali [C4]. Understanding children's perspectives is essential in shaping policies, particularly for those seeking to deliver on the post-2015 agenda. Young Lives research has been used by UNICEF for their forthcoming contribution to the UN Secretary-General's *Report on the Girl Child* (2013) and contributed more broadly to consultations on the post-2015 agenda: according to the Director of the UNICEF Office of Research and the UNICEF Senior Adviser Post-2015 Agenda: 'Young Lives' analysis directly informed the global UN Consultation on Inequalities which was part of the consultations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, showing how multiple disadvantages in early life have been undermining children's lives' [C6]. Save the Children have also incorporated Young Lives analysis into their briefing for the IF Hunger Campaign (June 2013) [C5, pp iv, 5, 10, 17–18].

Inequality is increasing within all four of the Young Lives study countries, and the programme's model of research on poverty and inequality has been replicated at country level. According to the Director of the UNICEF Office of Research and the UNICEF Senior Adviser Post-2015 Agenda: 'Young Lives research ...[provides] important insights for UNICEF advocacy, policy and programme design, and...[is] especially valuable at national level in the 4 countries...' [C6]. In Peru, effective use of communication channels allowed Young Lives findings on inequalities in children's cognitive development to feed into the development of *Cuna Más*, the new early childhood programme. Findings on the *Juntos* conditional cash transfer (CCT) scheme 'confirmed the assumptions of our technical team on several variables' and fed into improvements developed by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, according to the Executive Director of *Juntos* [C7]. Furthermore, the Director of the Poverty Reduction and Equity Department at the World Bank confirmed that 'the fact that Young Lives has three rounds of survey available, plus comparative data for four countries makes it incredibly valuable for the development community ... its current and potential impact on policy is each time [therefore] more powerful'. This led the Peru office of the World Bank to utilise Young Lives data for a report on inequality [C8]. Internationally, Young Lives research on inequalities in school systems [R5] is informing DFID's programming [C9], Save the Children advocacy [C10, pp 12, 13, 28–9] and UNESCO monitoring [C11, pp 2, 52, 56, 189].

Child protection:

Orphanhood: Young Lives analysis was used as part of the consultation on a new policy framework for orphans and other vulnerable children in Ethiopia, and formed the basis of a further study which challenged the assumption that parental death alone results in poorer outcomes for children (Crivello, G, and N Chuta (2012) 'Rethinking Orphanhood and Vulnerability in Ethiopia'. *Development in Practice* 22 (4): 536–48). This work led to the foundation of the first child-focused research-to-practice forum in Ethiopia, supported by UNICEF and hosted by the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.

Child labour: This research led to an invitation to an International Labour Organisation-

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) meeting in Turin in February 2010 on hazardous child labour, and information gathered there fed into development of further research on children's agricultural work (Morrow, V, and U Vennam (2012) 'Children's Responses to Risk in Agricultural Work'. *Development in Practice* 22 (4): 549–61).

Harmful traditional practices: following Boyden et al. (2012) ('Child Protection and Harmful Traditional Practices'. *Development in Practice* 22 (4): 510–22) and continued efforts to influence policy in this area, Young Lives was involved in drafting the new 'National Strategy on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia' with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, and in drafting the new national Child Protection Strategy in Ethiopia in April 2013.

The Oak Foundation sponsored a Child Protection Colloquium in Oxford in May 2011, at which the key principles of empirically grounded policies relating to child protection were elaborated. A special issue of *Development in Practice* based on papers presented at the colloquium was published in 2012, and has informed a consultation on child protection policy at the UNICEF Office of Research, Florence, and UNICEF New York, which will reshape global approaches to child protection [C6]. Young Lives research on children's work is being incorporated by World Vision UK into revised programming on children's work [C1]; and used by Save the Children Canada and Plan International to promote a focus globally on eliminating hazardous child work rather than prohibiting all forms of work by children. Young Lives child protection research has been incorporated into a UNICEF report on social protection and child protection (2013) [C6].

The Bond Child Rights Group (formerly DFID/CSO child rights working group of 20 UK NGOs and research organisations working on child rights in international development and foreign policy) uses a model Young Lives piloted in 2012, bringing researchers together to discuss their work to strengthen the use of evidence and best practice. This process of building capacity of researchers and practitioners for evidence-based policy-making was documented by Gina Crivello and Helen Murray in 2012 ('Why Strengthening the Linkages between Research and Practice is Important: Learning from Young Lives'. *Young Lives Policy Brief* 19), highlighted on DFID's Research to Action Global Guide to Research Impact. Young Lives was shortlisted for the 'Analysis and Use of Evidence' award in the UK's 2013 Civil Service Awards, one of three nominees in its category. The awards recognise outstanding teams or individuals who have 'innovated, impressed and made a difference in their area'. There were 570 entries, of which 39 were shortlisted [C12].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[C1] Senior Child Rights Policy Adviser, World Vision UK, London: will confirm that Young Lives research has influenced World Vision's approach to researching children's work.

[C2] World Bank (2012) *World Development Report 2012. Gender Equality and Development* Washington DC: World Bank.

[C3] UNICEF/UN Women (2013) *Addressing Inequalities: Synthesis Report of Global Thematic Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Available at: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/299198>

[C4] Save the Children/Young Lives (2013) *Growing Up with the Promise of the MDGs: Children's Hopes for the Future of Development*. London: Save the Children

[C5] Save the Children (2013) *Food for Thought: Tackling Child Malnutrition to Unlock Potential and Boost Prosperity*. London: Save the Children.

[C6] Director, UNICEF Office of Research, and UNICEF Senior Adviser Post-2015 Agenda: confirms that Young Lives research has informed UN Consultation on inequalities (held on file).

[C7] Executive Director of *Juntos*, Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, Peru: confirms the role of Young Lives research in improving *Juntos* (Peruvian CCT) (held on file).

[C8] Director of Poverty Reduction and Equity Department, World Bank: confirms the value of Young Lives data on inequality for policy development in Peru (held on file).

[C9] Senior Education Adviser, DFID London: will confirm the importance of Young Lives School Study findings on inequality.

[C10] Save the Children (2013) *Ending the Hidden Exclusion. Learning and Equity in Education Post-2015*. London: Save the Children.

[C11] UNESCO (2012) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012. Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work* Paris: UNESCO.

[C12] <http://awards.civilserviceworld.com/civil-service-awards/shortlist>