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# Understanding Children's Experiences of Violence in Peru: Evidence from Young Lives

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## OFFICE OF RESEARCH – INNOCENTI PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUNG LIVES

This paper is part of a series of working papers produced by UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti in collaboration with the University of Oxford's Young Lives research programme. Under its multi-country study on *The Drivers of Violence Affecting Children*, the Office of Research has undertaken research in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe which examines how structural, institutional, community and individual factors interact to affect violence in children's lives, with a particular focus on the risks and experiences of violence by gender and age.

Complementing UNICEF's multi-country study, a number of papers have been produced using the longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data produced by the Young Lives research initiative. Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, initiated in 2000, which has followed 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Viet Nam. This set of papers aims to understand various aspects of children's experiences of violence, and the impacts of violence on children's lives over time, across different settings.

Two papers use the quantitative data from the four Young Lives study sites to examine the issues of corporal punishment and bullying, their prevalence, impacts on children and the social support available to them. (Ogando Portela and Pells, *Corporal Punishment in Schools: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*; Pells, Ogando Portela and Espinoza Revello, *Experiences of Peer Bullying among Adolescents and Associated Effects on Young Adult Outcomes: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*, published respectively in 2015 and 2016 by the UNICEF Office of Research).

The remaining four papers draw primarily on the qualitative research undertaken in each country to obtain in-depth insights into children's experiences and perceptions of violence. As the surveys were not originally designed specifically to analyze violence, there are some limitations to the data, discussed in each paper. However, taken together, the papers illuminate the varied experiences of violence, primarily physical and emotional, that affect children in different country contexts, and in different settings – home, school and community. The findings show how experiences of violence condition children's life chances and key transitions (including schooling, friendships, emotional well-being etc.), and also shed light on children's own agency and their responses to violence across multiple contexts.

For other papers related to the Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children, visit [www.unicef-irc.org/research/274/](http://www.unicef-irc.org/research/274/).

## UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN PERU: EVIDENCE FROM YOUNG LIVES

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**Abstract:** This paper describes children's experiences of violence at home in Peru, using a life-course approach. Violence against children at home tended to increase with age, as children took on more chores (especially in rural areas), and spent more time away from home (in some cases, in urban areas). The chances of being hit by parents increased when children failed in their responsibilities; spending more time away from home also presented potential dangers for children (e.g., being robbed in the community, joining a gang, etc.), and so violence was used as a means to protect them and to prevent them from being led astray. We discuss how living in poverty affects relationships between parents and children. Meeting the basic economic needs of a family is the priority for parents, who then have limited time, energy and resources to devote to their children. We also found that children exposed to violence in the home are also frequently exposed to corporal punishment at school. Parents are often aware of this situation and support teachers to punish their children, because it is considered critical for children's learning and education. Addressing violence affecting children requires a multi-level approach that incorporates not only measures to address the manifestations of violence affecting children, but also the underlying factors driving that violence.

**Key words:** Violence affecting children, corporal punishment, children's experiences, Peru.

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## ACRONYMS

<b>CUNA MAS</b>	An early childhood development programme
<b>DHS</b>	National Demographic and Health Survey
<b>ENDES</b>	Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Familiar (Continuous Demographic and Health Survey)
<b>EPOCH</b>	End Physical Punishment of Children
<b>IIN</b>	Instituto de Investigación Nutricional (Nutrition Research Institute)
<b>JUNTOS</b>	A conditional cash transfer programme
<b>MIMP</b>	Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables (Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations)
<b>MINEDU</b>	Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)
<b>PRONOEI</b>	Programa no escolarizado de Educación Inicial (Non-formal programme for early childhood education)
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Peru, violence is considered a major public health concern. In the last 20 years, there have been significant efforts to prevent, punish and eradicate violence, particularly in the case of violence against women. Nevertheless, the prevalence of violence against children in Peru remains very high (around 30 per cent).

The paper has been commissioned as part of the UNICEF *Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children* in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. The Multi-Country Study is analysing how factors at the individual, inter-personal, community, institutional and structural levels interact to shape everyday violence in children's homes. It uses the socio-ecological model to explore the complexities of violence affecting children in order to help communities develop more effective national strategies for violence prevention. This paper focuses on children's accounts of their experiences of violence at home, and explores drivers of violence at the individual, interpersonal and community level. In line with international definitions, we analyse the occurrence of three forms of violence enacted by parents on children: physical violence (the intentional use of physical force against a child that either results in or has the potential to harm the child's health, survival, development or dignity); mental or psychological violence (not providing an appropriate and supportive environment for the child, including acts that can be detrimental to a child's psychological development, emotional health and well-being); and neglect or negligent treatment (the failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from danger or obtain medical, birth registration or other services when those responsible for their care have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so) (UNICEF, 2014; Pinheiro, 2006; WHO, 2002).

This paper draws on analysis of qualitative data from Young Lives, gathered from children and caregivers in four Peruvian communities over a period of seven years (2007-2014). Children identified violence at home as the most frequent form of violence they experience. Given that Young Lives is a longitudinal study, the paper adopts a life-course approach to understanding children's diverse experiences of violence, since children start to spend more time outside the home as they grow older, and thus the types of violence to which they are subjected can change over time. The findings from Young Lives complement, overall, the findings from the Multi Country Study—and particularly with the overlap of country sites in Peru and Viet Nam.



**Key findings:****■ The drivers of violence against children**

- **Families' economic activities and livelihoods shape the drivers of violence affecting children, and these differ between rural and urban areas.**
  - In rural areas, children have responsibilities both in terms of domestic chores and tasks related to the family's livelihood (such as herding animals and tending fields), as well as schoolwork. As they get older, rural children's home/family responsibilities increase, as does the likelihood of failing to fulfil these responsibilities. Thus, rural children experience violence most often as a result of failing to fulfil home/family responsibilities.
  - In contrast, in urban areas, children are primarily responsible for their schoolwork. Though they often participate in the family's economic activities, these responsibilities are considered secondary to their school responsibilities. Urban children generally experience violence most often as a result of failing to complete their school homework.
  - In urban, single-parent households, children are often left on their own at home for extended periods of time. Neglect in the form of inadequate supervision of children at home is also common in urban areas.
- **Families' lack of resources to confront a variety of shocks and stressors (whether in the form of job changes, economic shocks, illness, etc.) is an important driver of violence affecting children.**
  - Responses to such shocks include increased work hours for parents; increased labour participation for children; older children caring for younger siblings, etc. The stress incurred as a result of economic shocks or changes to family dynamics increases the likelihood that parents, who are busy and tired from an increased workload, will use violence against their children.
  - The lack of resources to confront shocks is especially problematic for single-parent households, increasing the likelihood of violence in the form of neglect as well.
  - These difficult situations, may lead to (a) authoritarian parenting styles based on compliance with rules and physical punishment in the case of transgressions, and (b) a lack of quality family time.

**■ Children's understandings of violence**

- **Violence was most often linked with failing to fulfil one's responsibilities, whether in terms of domestic chores or schoolwork.**
- Children identified fathers (and men in general) as the main perpetrators of violence in their generalised accounts about violence affecting children. Yet, when referring to their individual experiences, **mothers were often identified as the most common perpetrators of violence** (particularly harsh punishment), though children also reported being hit by their fathers occasionally. (This is because mothers are usually the primary caregivers, responsible for children's behaviour).
- **Boys were seen as subjected to more frequent and harsh treatment than girls.** This was explained by children primarily within the gendered stereotype of boys being both tougher and more likely to misbehave.
- **Social norms and beliefs around child-rearing practices are an important factor explaining violence affecting children.**
  - The use of violence to control children's behaviour is widely seen as a necessary educational tool, and is justified as such by both parents and children.
  - The use of violence against children is transmitted across generations. Parents who were subjected

to violence as children tend to believe that violence is an appropriate way of teaching children to behave correctly and are more likely to use it as a disciplinary tactic with their children. Likewise, children who are subjected to violence expect to raise their own children the same way.

- **Children are experiencing different forms of violence simultaneously and this is reinforcing their understanding about the normalization of violence.**

- Children exposed to violence at home were also frequently exposed to violence at school perpetrated by teachers. Failure to fulfil responsibilities at school is the most common reason for corporal punishment at school.
- As a result, children draw a direct link between and violence and learning how to behave.

- **Children's responses to violence against them**

- **Children have little scope to respond to violence against them.**

- Children's understanding of violence as a valid mechanism for correcting their behaviour negatively impacts their capacity to question the use of violence.
- Children hardly ever react or reach out for help when subjected to violence for fear of further violence or embarrassment to the perpetrator; though some children described strategies to reduce the intensity of punishment.
- Children do not seek help from their parents for violence experienced at school because they fear further violence from their parents.

Overall, the findings discussed in this paper show that the main risk factors for violence affecting children seem to be located at the inter-personal level (family). Living in poverty shapes socio-economic dynamics as well as relationships within families that create circumstances that increase the likelihood of violence.

The risks for violence affecting children evolve over the developmental life-course. As children grow older and take on more household responsibilities, the likelihood of being subjected to violence increases. Cycles of violence are typically transmitted inter-generationally, with parents who themselves experienced violence in their childhoods being more likely to use violence as a way of controlling their own children's behaviour. In the context of strong social norms and beliefs relating to the use of violence to regulate children's behaviour, children have little scope to respond to or question the violence they experience. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that when mothers received advice about child-rearing practices from a 'professional' considered to have an expert opinion – such as preschool teachers or psychologists – they reacted positively and changed their actions accordingly, suggesting there is scope for policy interventions to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of the cycle of violence.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence affecting children occurs everywhere in the world, influencing the lives, development and well-being of many children. According to a recent UNICEF publication (UNICEF, 2014), 6 in 10 children between the ages of 2 and 14 worldwide are regular victims of physical punishment perpetrated by their caregivers, while 7 in 10 children experience psychological aggression. These numbers are probably underreported, partly because some forms of violence against children are socially accepted or not perceived as abusive. In fact, according to the same report, about 3 in 10 adults worldwide believe that physical punishment is necessary to raise or educate children properly (UNICEF, 2014).

In Peru, the government has adopted two important policy documents to guide initiatives: the National Plan of Action in Favour of Children and Adolescents 2012-2021 (*Plan Nacional de Acción por la Infancia y la Adolescencia*, MIMP, 2012) and the National Strategy against School Violence 2013-2016, (*Paz Escolar*, MINEDU, 2014). A landmark step towards the eradication of violence affecting children was the adoption of a law prohibiting the use of physical and other humiliating punishment against children and adolescents in December 2015 (Ley N° 30403: *Ley que prohíbe el uso del castigo físico y humillante contra los niños, niñas y adolescentes*, see EPOCH, 2016).

These policy efforts are significant; however, the prevalence of violence against children in Peru remains very high. According to the National Demographic and Health Survey/DHS (INEI, 2014), nearly 30 per cent of mothers report using corporal punishment to discipline their children (28.6%). The use of corporal punishment in the home is not only widespread, but also considered a legitimate disciplinary and punitive mechanism. According to the DHS (INEI, 2014), 19.6 per cent of mothers considered physical punishment to be necessary sometimes to educate their children. This percentage was higher among mothers without formal education, where 31 per cent thought corporal punishment was necessary to educate their children.

Evidence from the Young Lives longitudinal study in Peru, on which this paper draws, also shows a high prevalence of physical punishment. Approximately one in three 15-year-old girls in the sample in Peru (36%) reported being physically hurt by a family member. In the case of boys, one in four 15-year-olds (27.19%) reported the same (Pells and Woodhead, 2014).

The international literature shows that children who are exposed to violence at home may suffer a range of severe and lasting effects. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), violence causes stress that is associated with impaired development of the nervous and immune systems. As adults, maltreated children are then at increased risk of physical, mental and behavioural problems, including depression and substance misuse. They may also be more vulnerable to further experiences of violence, either as perpetrator or victim.

In addition to these health and social consequences of violence and their related economic costs, Pinheiro (2006) suggests that one of the more dramatic consequences of experiencing violence during early childhood is that children lose trust in other human beings, which may negatively impact their socio-emotional development.

This study analyses longitudinal qualitative data on family dynamics and child-rearing practices from the Young Lives study in Peru<sup>1</sup> in order to understand the drivers of violence against children in the home, and its consequences for children's well-being. This paper has been commissioned as part of the UNICEF *Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children* in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. The Multi-Country Study is analysing how factors at the individual, inter-personal, community, institutional and structural levels interact to shape everyday violence in children's homes and communities to develop better national strategies for violence prevention. The findings from this Young Lives study complement findings from the Multi-Country Study adding the depth of longitudinal qualitative data that follows children over time.

In this paper we focus on violence affecting children at home, which children participating in the Young Lives study in Peru identified as the most common form of violence they experienced during their lives. Given that Young Lives is a longitudinal study, we adopt a life-course approach to understanding children's experiences of violence, since, as children grow, they start to spend more time outside the home and thus their experiences of violence may change over time.

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<sup>1</sup> In each of the study countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam), Young Lives is following 2000 boys and girls born in 2001–2002 and up to 1000 born in 1994–1995 over 15 years. Four survey rounds have been administered to the full sample in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2013; and four rounds of qualitative data have been gathered from a sub-sample of children from both age cohorts, in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2014. This paper analyses only qualitative data from the younger cohort, following 25 children over seven years in Peru.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011):

“violence” is understood to mean “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” as listed in article 19, paragraph 1, of the Convention (p. 4).

This is a broad definition that covers different types of violence. Usually four subtypes of violence can be distinguished: physical violence, mental (or psychological) violence, neglect or negligent treatment, and sexual violence<sup>2</sup> (UNICEF, 2014; WHO, 2002). We specifically analyse the occurrence of the first three subtypes. A definition of these forms of violence is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Definitions of three types of violence considered in this study<sup>3</sup>**

	<b>Definition*</b>	<b>Specific behaviours*</b>
Physical violence	The intentional use of physical force against a child that either results in or has the potential to harm the child's health, survival, development or dignity. It involves a caregiver using an object or part of his or her body to physically harm a child and/or to control a child's actions. This includes corporal punishment, which is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light.	Hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children with the hand or with an implement (whip, stick, belt, etc.). Kicking, shaking or throwing children, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning.
Mental (or psychological) violence	Not providing an appropriate and supportive environment for the child, including acts that can be detrimental to a child's psychological development, emotional health and well-being. Additionally, it should be noted that all physical and sexual violence involves some psychological harm.	Scaring, terrorizing and threatening; insults, name-calling, humiliation, belittling, ridiculing and hurting a child's feelings; ignoring, isolating, rejecting, showing emotional indifference.
Neglect or negligent treatment	The failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from danger or obtain medical, birth registration or other when those responsible for their care have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so.	Withholding essential medical care or education, deprivation of food resulting in hunger, poor hygiene, abandonment, lack of/inadequate supervision. *Based on: UNICEF, 2014; Pinheiro, 2006; WHO, 2002

<sup>2</sup> The World Report on Violence against Children additionally considers harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, as a subtype of child maltreatment in the home and family (Pinheiro, 2006). These do not occur in the Peruvian context.

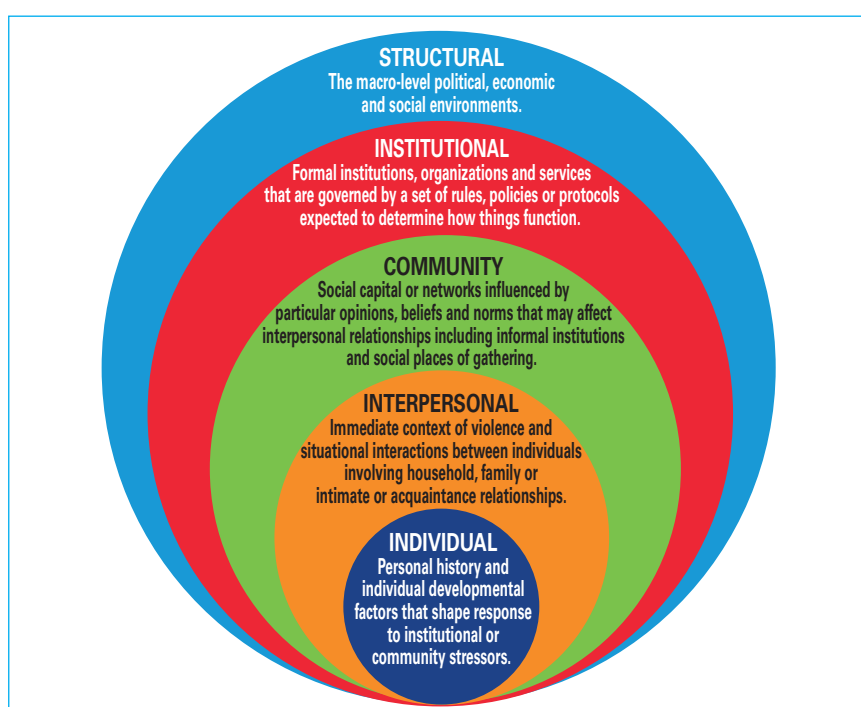
<sup>3</sup> The definitions provided in these publications are based on the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2011).

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Violence affecting children is the result of the complex interplay of individual, family, social, cultural and environmental factors; it occurs in a variety of forms and is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices (WHO, 2002). Understanding this complexity requires a systemic perspective. Most theoretical frameworks to understand violence are based on the ecological model suggested by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977). The ecological model sees violence against children within a system of risk and protective factors that interact across four levels: 1) the individual level, 2) the family microsystem (relationships and changing situation), 3) the exosystem (the larger community that surrounds the family) and 4) the social macrosystem (the set of cultural and social values and norms in a society). This model helps unpack how children's experiences are related to a multiplicity of issues from the distal (macro) effects of a country history and/or current political economy, to the very proximate (micro) everyday events that affect children's well-being, and may be grounded in their community.

The model presented in Figure 1 sees violence affecting children within a system of risk and protective factors that interact across five levels 1) the individual level, 2) the interpersonal (relationships and changing situation), 3) the community, 4) the institutional and 5) the structural. Given the focus on children's experiences of violence at home, this paper focuses on drivers of violence at the individual, interpersonal and community levels, and how contexts of poverty may underpin violence towards children.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1 – Multi-Country Study Framework:**  
**A socio-ecological model for understanding violence**



Source: Maternowska and Fry, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The paper does not discuss children's experiences of corporal punishment at school, except where it interlinks with violence at home – for in-depth qualitative research, see Rojas, 2011, and for research exploring the effects of corporal punishment on children's learning outcomes, see Pells & Ogando, 2015.

Most violence affecting children occurs in families, communities and schools and is committed by people the children know. This paper views violence affecting children not merely as matter of personal behaviour, but as a socio-ecological phenomenon influenced by contextual factors, such as the quality of relationships within families, the family's social connections to others in the community, the family's level of financial security and/or education, and community social norms including beliefs regarding the discipline and supervision of children, expressions of warmth and other behaviours. The quality of formal institutions such as schools, social services, the police, and judiciary and the economic and political situation of the country and the commitment of its policymakers to child protection also affect children's risks. Figure 1 illustrates these various socio-ecological levels.

Based on the socio-ecological model, violence risk factors can be found across different levels. At the individual level, international literature shows that children's age, sex, as well as other characteristics, such as premature birth, temperament, and behavioural problems, have been associated with violence. In relation to age, infants are "most vulnerable in the time immediately after birth; they remain [...] so throughout their first year and early childhood (0 to 4 years)." (Pinheiro, 2006), with fatal cases of physical abuse found largely among young infants (WHO, 2002). Using a gendered lens, Barker (2010) analyses global data and suggests that psychological violence is more common against girls, while severe physical violence is more common against boys. This is probably because punishment is seen as a preparation for adult roles and responsibilities, or because boys are considered to need more physical discipline (WHO, 2002, p. 66). Finally, in relation to a child's individual characteristics, there seems to be an association between (difficult) behaviour and a higher risk of physical violence (Woodward and Ferguson, 2002; Grogan-Kaylor and Otis, 2007). The mothers of 'temperamentally difficult' children are likely to report more stress, which in turn is related to the use of severe forms of punishment (National Research Council (U.S.), 1993).

Previous research on factors at the individual level in Peru has mainly addressed differences by sex. Bardales and Huallpa (2005) suggest that a child's sex does not factor into explaining violence. The authors conducted a quantitative study in 2004 with a sample of 925 boys and girls aged 9-11 years old, from three districts in Peru (San Martín de Porres, Iquitos and Cusco). The authors found a prevalence rate of 66.1 per cent (n=611) of psychological child maltreatment at home, with no statistically significant differences between boys and girls. The prevalence of physical child maltreatment in the sample was 69.2 per cent (n=640), again with no differences between boys and girls.

At the level of interpersonal relationships, certain socio-demographic characteristics of the caregiver, as well as some aspects of the family environment have been associated with a higher risk of violence. Moreover, any discussion of violence affecting children in the home and family necessarily involves parents' (or caregivers') child-rearing practices. Based on a review of specialised literature on child maltreatment, Wolfe and Mclsaac (2011) propose a hypothetical continuum of positive to negative parenting behaviours. While positive parenting practices involve guidance on how to handle emotions or conflicts in a manner that promotes children's responsibility, self-esteem, dignity and integrity (physical and psychological), children are often raised and disciplined using methods that employ physical force or verbal intimidation to punish unwanted behaviours and promote desired ones (UNICEF, 2014).

Previous international research conducted both in low- and middle-income countries as well as in high-income countries indicates that women report using more physical punishment than men (WHO, 2002). This may be explained by the fact that mothers tend to spend more time with children, and are responsible for children's discipline and education (Larrain and Bascuñan, 2008). Bardales and Huallpa (2005) also found that most children identified their mothers as the perpetrator, and cited the most common reasons for being punished as disobeying instructions and not doing their homework. Recent qualitative research from Peru confirms these results. For example, a study conducted by Ames (2013a) suggested that disobedience was the main reason that mothers punished their children at home. The study recommended considering both socialization and child-rearing practices in order to fully understand and address violence towards children. Oré Luján and Diez Canseco (2011) also conducted a qualitative study in urban and rural communities in Peru and found that violence affecting children at home was not usually seen as a form of child maltreatment. On the contrary, it was considered to be an educational or disciplinary mechanism, and as such, a valid method for correcting children's behaviour.

According to the international literature, mothers who resort to physical violence are more likely to be young, single, less educated and poor (Pinheiro, 2006; WHO, 2002). The size of the family and the level of overcrowding of the household are also characteristics of family environments that have been positively associated with the incidence of violence affecting children (Pinheiro, 2006; WHO, 2002). Similar results have been found in Peru by Benavides and León (2013) where the authors used information from the national demographic and health survey (ENDES) in 2000 and 2010 to study factors associated with violence affecting children in the home at different levels. They found that although the prevalence of violence affecting children in the home declined from 53% to 47% over the course of the decade, the main risk factors for violence remained the same. Less educated mothers, who were younger, of a lower socio-economic status, and who lived in rural areas were more likely to use physical punishment with their children.

Children living in families with these risk factors are the most vulnerable because the lack of adequate social support available for the family usually leads to further stress and social isolation (Pinheiro, 2006). According to WHO (2002), the stress resulting from poverty, job changes, loss of income, health problems, or other changes to the family environment can increase the level of conflict in the home and impair the ability of family members to adequately cope with stressful situations or to find support.

The role of a prior history of abuse should also be considered. Parents who use violence against their children may well have experienced violence as children themselves (Pinheiro, 2006). A history of family violence (Berger, 2004) or a personal history of strict parenting (Woodward and Fergusson, 2002) also affects children's probability of being abused. Grogan-Kaylor and Otis (2007) highlight the importance of paying attention to parents' beliefs regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of harsh disciplinary tactics, since parents make a conscious decision to use corporal punishment on the basis of those beliefs. Additionally, the results of their research provide evidence that parental use of corporal punishment is associated with a lower incidence of parental provision of a cognitively stimulating environment for children (Grogan-Kaylor and Otis, 2007, p. 89).



Furthermore, the fact that violence against women in the home is frequently associated with violence against children should also be noted. Domestic violence may be the most important precursor to child fatalities from violence, in low- and middle-income countries as well as in high-income countries (Pinheiro, 2006). Poverty, social isolation, and such factors as alcohol abuse, substance abuse and access to firearms are risk factors for more than one type of violence. As a result, it is not unusual for some individuals at risk to experience more than one type of violence (WHO, 2002, p. 14).

Specifically in the case of Peru, Benavides and León (2013) found that mothers' own histories of violence (e.g. as a child, having experienced violence perpetrated by their own parents), the existence of domestic violence in the home, and finally, mothers' attitudes towards punishment were also positively associated with physical violence against children. These results have also been documented in the work of Gage and Silvestre (2010) with data from ENDES. The co-occurrence of different types of violence has also been documented by other studies. Bardales and Huallpa (2005) found the existence of domestic violence increased the likelihood of child maltreatment by five times, and highlighted the importance of a holistic, intergenerational approach. Benavides, León and Ponce de León (2015) found similar results regarding the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment in a recent quantitative study in three regions in Peru (Huancavelica, Lima and Loreto). They found that children whose mothers had suffered from domestic violence were twice as likely to be maltreated by their mothers, thus demonstrating how victims of domestic violence can become perpetrators of violence within the same household.

At the community level, the prevalence of violence affecting children tends to be higher in communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment, as well as those with high rates of overcrowded housing (WHO, 2002). High rates of poverty usually predicate deteriorating physical and social infrastructures and fewer resources in general, which can in turn affect parental behaviour and resources (WHO, 2002).

Finally, the socio-ecological model also considers the influence of cultural and social norms that exist in a given society. (WHO, 2002). The belief that some types of violence against children are necessary to properly raise or educate children is socially accepted in different contexts and is a major factor in the perpetuation of violence (Pinheiro, 2006). The cultural norms surrounding gender roles, parent-child relationships, and the privacy of the family (WHO, 2002) are also factors considered to have important impacts on the well-being of children, although they have not yet been extensively studied in the available literature. A qualitative study conducted by Oré Luján and Diez Canseco (2011) on violence against children in Peru concluded that the use of violence within these communities was normalized because parents, children and key community informants conceptualized violence as a frequent, acceptable, and in some cases even necessary, practice.

As this literature review suggests, understanding the complex issue of violence affecting children requires a socio-ecological perspective, which accounts for differing levels of risk or protective factors as well as the interplay between them. A socio-ecological approach may also help to understand how violence affects children differentially over the course of childhood and adolescence. In addition to a socio-ecological perspective, a life-course perspective allows for the

identification of circumstances and events that matter most for children's well-being, and the extent of their reversibility (Dornan and Woodhead, 2015, p. 13). While the forms of violence to which children are exposed tend to increase with age, the potential impact of violence may be greater at younger ages (UNICEF, 2014, p. 13). As Pinheiro (2006) indicates, the forms of violence to which children are exposed vary according to age and stage of development. At the same time, according to UNICEF (2014), as children become more independent and begin interacting with people other than their primary caregivers, the likelihood of abuse by caregivers (usually in response to a child's increased independence) also increases.

## 4. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper aims to explore children's experiences of violence in the home and the impact on their well-being. An analysis of children and families in four communities in both urban and rural Peru, seeks to address the following research questions:

- What are the drivers of violence affecting children in the home during childhood and early adolescence?
- How do children experience and understand violence against them at home?
- What are children's responses to violence?

### 4.1 METHODS

Qualitative research is uniquely suited to unpack or explain the phenomena observed through large quantitative surveys, such as Young Lives household survey. Qualitative longitudinal research is particularly useful for exploring children's experiences and agency over the course of their childhoods, contextualised in the broad trends found in the survey data. A biographical, longitudinal approach captures the links between differing aspects of children's lives, such as between violence at home, in schools and in communities, as well as illuminating diverging experiences and trajectories (Morrow and Crivello, 2015).

#### 4.1.1 Participants and community profiles

The Young Lives qualitative research in Peru was conducted in four locations selected to explore variations in location, ethnicity and socio-economic circumstances (see Crivello, Morrow and Wilson, 2013). Rioja and Andahuaylas are rural sites located in the northern jungle area and in the southern highlands of Peru, respectively. San Román and Villa Maria del Triunfo are urban areas located in the south Andean highlands and in Lima, the capital of Peru. In each of these locations, we carried out research with a sub-sample of the Young Lives Younger Cohort (born 2001/2002), comprising a total of 25 children.<sup>5</sup> Within the sites, children were randomly selected from the larger Young Lives sample.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2 – Number of participants according to gender and area of residence**

Areas	N°	Boys	Girls
UrbanSites	14	8	6
RuralSites	11	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>

In 2007 at the start of the study, most of the children were 6 years old and attending kindergarten or the first grade of primary school. By the last round of data collection in 2014, most of the children were 13 years old and were in the first years of secondary school.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 3 for a complete list of participant children; all names have been changed

<sup>6</sup> In each district we base our work in one community. In order to maintain the anonymity of the individual communities, we use the name of the province or district when referring to children's communities or neighbourhoods.

The four qualitative sites contrast in terms of area of residence (rural/urban); geographical location (coast, Andes, Amazon); poverty (poor and non-poor); and presence or absence of an indigenous population (see Appendix 1 for a brief description of each site, including the location, infrastructure and access to services, main economic activities, children's participation in those activities, and the main problems or shocks that were reported).

#### **4.1.2 Data**

The qualitative component of Young Lives sought to collect information on children and their families in the categories of: transitions, well-being, and access to services during childhood. To address these themes, qualitative research employed multiple data collection techniques: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, drawing and writing activities, and photo elicitation (for a detailed description of Young Lives qualitative methods and toolkits, see Crivello, Morrow and Wilson, 2013; Ames, Rojas and Portugal, 2010).

Though the Young Lives qualitative research was not designed as study of violence, we found that all 25 children in the Younger Cohort had been victims of violence in their homes. During the first round of qualitative fieldwork in 2007, when the children were between 5 and 6 years of age, the number of children who mentioned experiences of violence at home was lower. In following rounds of data collection (2008, 2011), we found that eventually all children in at least one of these two rounds of the survey had experienced physical or psychological violence at home. In recognition of this prevalence, we collected information on children's perceptions and experiences of violence in the final round of qualitative fieldwork (2014) in the four sites of the study, using the method described below. We also included a series of questions about children's experiences of violence in the interviews with children and caregivers.

The four rounds of qualitative research (2007, 2008, 2011 and 2014) provide a longitudinal perspective on children's experiences of violence and the impacts on their well-being. Qualitative research is well-suited to taking a systemic perspective, because it allows the researcher to study in-depth issues such as parents' histories of violence, social norms and beliefs around child-rearing practices, stressors within the household and how these factors may interact, thus shaping the risk of violence for children. More specifically, we have drawn on the following methods and resulting data from the Younger Cohort for the qualitative analysis:

- Individual interviews with children and caregivers (Rounds 1 to 4). Interviews partly addressed children's and parents' perceptions of children's experiences of violence and how these influence their well-being. Brief ethnographic observations were also made to gain a better understanding of their family relationships and each child's individual contexts.
- Children's and caregivers' timelines (Rounds 3 and 4). These allow us to look into different episodes and events in the lives of the child and caregiver. Crises affecting the household (such as parental ill health, loss of crops because of drought, cold or disease, taking on debts, and so on) appear to be linked to experiences of violence.

- Well-being method with children (Rounds 1 and 3). This is a participatory group method where children discuss their perceptions of well-being and ill-being; that is, what defines a child who is doing well in life and one who is not doing well in life.
- Violence group method with children (Round 4). This is a participatory group activity that provides information about children's experiences of violence and the risks and resources available within their homes and communities. We first asked children to draw how a child of his or her age experiences violence. The instructions given to children were open-ended enough for them to choose the scenario in which the violence would occur (see Ennew and Pierre-Plateau, 2004). Then we asked them to discuss a hypothetical situation (see Appendix 2).

The following table summarizes the information about the methods and the rounds in which they were administered.

**Table 3 – Methods used for data analysed**

	R1: 2007	R2: 2008	R3: 2011	R4: 2014
Individual interviews with children and caregivers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children's and caregivers' timelines			✓	✓
Well-being method	✓		✓	
Violence group method				✓

All the interview guidelines and related methods detailed above are part of a qualitative research protocol revised and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional* (IIN) in Peru. Specifically, given the sensitivity of discussing the topic of children's experiences of violence, the protocol requires researchers to be respectful and empathetic, to create a safe setting in which children could disclose their experiences, and to provide them with closure after disclosing emotions related to these experiences at the end of the interview/participation.

#### **4.1.3 Analytic strategy**

Data coding included a process of thematic coding to identify children's understandings and experiences of violence at home as well as in different settings in their lives. Based on the outputs of those broad thematic codes, we searched for general patterns regarding children's experiences of violence at home. In a second stage, we conducted a more refined analysis to further unpack the risk factors and consequences of violence for children's agency.

Additionally, we identified eight case studies (two in each site) that illustrate children's experiences of violence, the influence it bears on their relationships and trajectories, and children's responses to violence. The selected cases were children who described experiencing violence at home in at least three of the qualitative rounds of data collection.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4.1.4 Limitations**

There are some limitations to our approach. The most important, previously mentioned limitation, is that the Young Lives study is not a study of child protection or violence by design. Our initial

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 3 for a list of case studies considered for the analysis are indicated.

focus was on understanding children's general well-being, experiences of poverty, and progress over time. However, all children in our qualitative sample reported experiences of violence during the earlier rounds of data collection, leading us to intentionally address violence in the last round of qualitative work. Our sample does not, therefore, include children who have not experienced violence at some point in their lives, even though the comparison of those who have experienced violence and those who have not would have been interesting. A second limitation is that while Young Lives attempt to ensure privacy when interviewing children, the contexts of data gathering (with research being conducted in homes, fields, or community premises), may affect how violence was reported, and children may have felt inhibited if they feel they can be overheard.

## 4.2 FINDINGS

The findings presented in this section illustrate the interplay of community, interpersonal and individual factors associated with violence affecting children in the home. This section is organized into four sub-sections. In the first two subsections, we present the influence of community and family factors shaping children's experiences of violence in the home. In the third section we report children's understandings of violence against them in the home, considering the role of social norms, and intergenerational transmission of violence. Finally, we examine children's resources and agency in confronting and deterring violence.

### 4.2.1 *The wider context of children's experiences of violence: socio-economic dynamics in rural and urban areas*

Where families live plays an important role in shaping their productive activities. Our analysis demonstrates how different types of economic activities undertaken by families influenced both family dynamics and subsequent levels of violence affecting children.

In the rural areas, agriculture and cattle rearing are the main economic activities. In Rioja and Andahuaylas, both rural sites, children were involved with domestic chores and family agricultural work from early childhood. As soon as they can walk, children accompany their parents to the fields, and take on responsibilities as they grow older and more capable. Rural children are generally considered fully independent by 7 or 8 years old (see Ames, 2013a). The cases of Hugo and Fabricio clearly illustrate this. When Hugo from Rioja was 5 years old, he helped his mother with some chores but didn't have any specific responsibility assigned. However, his responsibilities have increased as he has grown up. Over time, he learned to sweep, to feed the animals raised at home, to wash his school uniform and to take care of his younger brother when his mother went to the fields. In the case of Fabricio from Andahuaylas, he learned to graze the animals when he was 5 years old. At 8 years old, he gained more responsibilities at home: sweeping, cleaning, cooking and also feeding the animals. Fabricio said that all those chores left him little time for his school homework.

As children assume more household duties, the possibility of failing to fulfil their duties increases and with this, the likelihood of violence from parents. At various rounds of data-gathering, rural children described how, as they gained responsibilities in the fields, they became more likely to be hit, as the following quotes from Hector and Fabricio illustrate.

*Interviewer: Do you like to lead the cattle to the fields or not?*

*Héctor: No, I did not like it in that year (referring to the past).*

*Interviewer: And what happened if you didn't want to lead the cattle, or do you always have to graze the cows?*

*Héctor: No, the thing is that we fought with my dad. He hit us with his belt and my brother and I had to take the cows alone.*

(Rural boy, aged 10, Andahuaylas, 2011)

*Interviewer: And what happens if you don't harvest?*

*Fabricio: We won't have potatoes.*

*Interviewer: Do you like to go to the fields?*

*Fabricio: Yes.*

*Interviewer: And your father, what happens if you don't want to go?*

*Fabricio: He hits me.*

*Interviewer: With what?*

*Fabricio: San Martín [whip].*

*Interviewer: What do you think about that? Is it right or wrong?*

*Fabricio: Wrong.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Fabricio: Because I cry.*

(Rural boy, age 13, Andahuaylas, 2014)

Rural girls were also beaten, though perhaps slightly less, by their parents. Carmen (From Rioja and aged 13), when comparing herself to boys, noted that when her mother did hit her, it was not as frequently or severely as boys. Nevertheless, Carmen also reported an increase in the frequency of physical violence from her mother as she got older for not fulfilling her chores at home.

In urban areas, informal trade and wage labour predominate and children generally participated less in family economic activities. The two urban sites – San Román and Villa María del Triunfo – help to further explain family dynamics and children's experiences of violence at home. In San Román, for example, most parents worked from home as traders. Children were usually involved with helping their parents manufacture or sell their products. Both Isabel and José had parents that ran family businesses. Isabel's parents owned a small store and José's parents were textile sellers. However, children's participation in the family business was not seen as one of children's main responsibilities; on the contrary, both parents and children agreed that children should focus primarily on school and their studies. In contrast with rural children who experience violence most often as a result of failing to fulfil home responsibilities, urban children generally experience violence most often as a result of failing to complete their school homework.

In Villa María del Triunfo, most households were female-headed, and dependent on a single income. Single mothers worked very hard to compensate for the lack of a second source of income, as illustrated by the case of Esmeralda. Since the divorce of Esmeralda's parents, her mother had worked as a housemaid and she did not have a lot of time to be with her daughter or pay much

attention to her education. Esmeralda's mother talked to her daughter and told her that she worked late for their own good, in order to improve the family's financial situation. Esmeralda was responsible for cleaning her room and the bathroom, and making her bed. In addition, Esmeralda had to do her homework since her studies were her main responsibility. One of the consequences of urban mothers from Villa María del Triunfo spending most of the day away from the home, is that children often experienced inadequate supervision and negligent treatment, spending much of their time alone at home for reasons we explore more deeply in the next section.

#### **4.2.2 The family context: poverty as a risk factor for violence against children**

Most children who participate in this study, were from households that experienced diverse stressful situations mainly related to poverty. The lack of economic resources appeared to have played a fundamental role in shaping family relationships and children's treatment. Families had to cope with a range of economic problems, such as lack of money; economic shocks (i.e., crop failure); debt from loans; parents divorce, and/or family illnesses. The stress incurred as a result of economic shocks or changes to family dynamics increases the likelihood that parents, who are busy and tired from an increased workload, will use violence against their children.

The case of Fabricio illustrates how family economic constraints had an impact on family dynamics and relationships. Fabricio's parents got a loan to finance some debts originally incurred when their lands in Andahuaylas were affected by floods in 2011. The parents were very concerned about the repayment and both of them worked on their own lands but also as labourers for others. They would have liked to have been able to send Fabricio to study in a secondary school in the city but due to their economic situation, he had to stay and help his parents with agricultural work. Sometimes Fabricio did not want to help his parents because he felt tired, but he knew he must do the work, otherwise they would hit him.

A stressful situation, such as a family illness, is also a driver of violence against children. Isabel's case study from San Roman, illustrates that due to her mother's illness (she was diagnosed with cancer in 2011), she and her sister had to do their mother's domestic chores. When she was 12, she reported that if they do not accomplish those duties her father punishes them with a whip because they are not taking care of her.

In the case of single-parent families, both in rural and urban areas, the economic stress was exacerbated when mothers spent long hours trying to compensate for the income of the absent parent. In Villa María del Triunfo for instance, Christian's mother did not spend much time at home due to the hours she worked at a cleaning service, mostly on the night shift (she left the house at 4pm and returned at 7 or 8am). When his mother returned from work, she was too tired to spend time with Christian. Christian spent most of the day alone, inside his house and without adequate supervision. In the case of Héctor from Andahuaylas, his mother said that since she divorced her husband, she had been the only income earner for the family. Due to problems with her husband's family, she had to move back to her natal community but despite living near her relatives, she did not receive any support from them. She reported that she and her children "suffer due to a lack of resources". Héctor reported that if he did not help with his chores his mother or his elder brother hit him because he needed to learn to be a hard worker.



These descriptions of the family situations in which the children lived illustrate the strain on households. Parents' additional work (undertaken in order to pay debts or to increase household income) left them with little time to spend with their families, and may also lead to authoritarian parenting styles based on compliance with rules and physical punishment in the case of transgressions. Parents, busy and tired from work, resorted to violence to ensure that their children fulfilled their responsibilities. According to WHO (2002), the stress resulting from such economic shocks increases the level of conflict in the home and impairs the capacity of family members to cope with the stressful situation. As seen from the examples above, stress resulting from economic problems was linked in children's accounts of violence.

Case studies show that parents expected obedience from their children, but some parents lacked the time to sit down and reason with their children when they misbehaved, and thought they should be hit in order to learn how to behave and to fulfil their duties. The time that they did spend together was strained, with the stress of the household economic situation impacting parents' and children's capacity to communicate. Further, parents did not seem to have adequate sources of social support, and this contributed to additional strain and fewer emotional resources for parents.

Only in two cases, presented below, was some support provided, and mothers accepted advice given by professionals about parenting practices, despite the difficult circumstances. The impact of these opinions from a teacher and psychologist respectively, appear to have helped them reduce the violence affecting their children at home:

*Hugo's mother: ... Sometimes I believe it is good to use some 'rigour'<sup>8</sup> for them to learn, no? But maybe, they're not of the age for learning with discipline (in a very strict way).*

*Interviewer: What did the teacher tell you?*

*Hugo's mother: Well, I use discipline with my children when they start primary school. Because when they are at this age [five years old, like Hugo at the time of the interview], I don't think it's OK. That happened with my older daughter. When she was at kindergarten I used to hit her. So her teacher talked to me and explained that is not ok to put "rigour" to the child when she is that age [kindergarten age is from 3 to 5 years old]. So you can start with "rigour" when your children are in primary school, between first year and second year of school.*

*Interviewer: Ok...*

*Hugo's mother: Yes. Because she told me that they are too little to be hit.*

*Interviewer: Ah, ok.*

*Hugo's mother: Yes. That is why I don't hit my son [Hugo] for not doing his homework. If he wants, he will do his kindergarten homework.*

(Rural mother, Rioja, 2007)

<sup>8</sup> "Rigour" as used by people in Rioja has a connotation of physical violence. "Using rigour with children" means beating children.

*Christian's mother: He [Christian] is going to a psychologist.*

*Interviewer: Where?*

*Christian's mother: Here, at the health post in the neighbourhood. But the insurance recently changed and he is not going anymore.*

*Interviewer: Why did he go to the psychologist?*

*Christian's mother: Because sometimes he used to say "Oh, I would like to die, I would like to kill myself."*

*Interviewer: When did he say so?*

*Christian's mother: He cried a lot when I had to go to work. So I got worried and took him to the psychologist. (...) I think I needed help, no? With his development, because he is a teenager now.*

*Interviewer: Did you speak with his psychologist?*

*Christian's mother: Yes.*

*Interviewer: What did she tell you?*

*Christian's mother: She told me that he needed therapy, she told me that I should not hit him. I punish Christian when he misbehaves but I do not hit him anymore. Before yes, I wanted to hit him. But the psychologist told me, "when you feel that you want to hit Christian, you should leave the room and not say anything because you are going to hit him and that will be worse" (...) I should punish Christian by forbidding things he likes. Also she recommended that I spend more time with him during my free time.*

*Interviewer: Ok...*

*Christian's mother: "You have to take him out of the house" she told me, "he is always in the house and that is stressing for him. You have to spend time together (...)"*

*Interviewer: Do you feel those things that she told you were useful?*

*Christian's Mother: Yes. I try not to hit him anymore. I call his attention and try not to hit him.*

(Urban mother, Lima, 2014)

The stresses and strains of living in poverty appear to be strong indicators of increased violence in the home and often against the household's most vulnerable: the children. When provided with information and support, however, two mothers described changes in their behaviour. Overall, though, parenting practices seem entrenched in structural inequalities (such as poverty), as well as deep-rooted beliefs and norms, explored in the following section.

#### **4.2.3 Children's understandings of violence, social norms, and intergenerational transmission of violence**

Children understood that violence against them in the home is most often linked with failing to fulfil one's responsibilities, whether in terms of domestic chores or schoolwork. Their discourses unveil that violence against children was common and justified by both parents and children, due to existing social norms that depict violence as a legitimate and important way of educating children on appropriate behaviour.

According to children, violence included not only verbal or physical aggression, but also being kept back from school and being forced to work, as described by a child in Rioja (though he acknowledged this was a rare situation). Moreover, children mentioned that violence at home was frequently related to completing household chores and to misbehaviour (saying bad words, not obeying their parents, spending hours playing outside or in internet booths, disrespecting parents, etc.). Nine of twelve children participating in the group activity (drawing and discussing hypothetical scenarios) in Rioja, Andahuaylas and Juliaca drew a child being hit or yelled at by a caregiver at home. In their drawings, children did not explicitly identify mothers as the perpetrators of violence against children in the home. Most of them spoke of the father (*el padre*) or parents (*los padres*) when describing their drawings, and they noted that fathers were usually the ones to hit, yell, or insult children. Nevertheless, children's individual experiences of violence were mostly inflicted by their mothers, who were the main caregivers and therefore the person with whom children spent the most time. This apparent contradiction could be explained by previous research which found that children who are victims of female-perpetrated violence tend not to disclose these experiences to the same extent as they do where the perpetrator is male (Renzetti and Edleson, 2008, p. 262). Below, the illustrations from the group activity and dialogue from interviews with children show how their descriptions of experiences of violence typically associated perpetration of violence with males rather than females.

**Figure 2 – Failure to fulfil domestic chores and responsibilities: The most common trigger for violence at home**



*Interviewer: How are they hit by their parents?*

*Ana: With a whip.*

*Interviewer: Why is the child being hit by their parents?*

*Ana: When a father told a child "you're going to feed the cow," but the child has gone to play with his or her brothers and has not fed the cow. That is why they hit you.*

*Interviewer: How does the child feel?*

*Ana: Sad*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Ana: Because they hit him.*

(Ana, age 13, Andahuaylas, 2014)

Furthermore, failure to complete their school homework was also mentioned as a common reason for violence in the home, especially in urban areas. For example,

*Interviewer: What happened yesterday?*

*José: She punished me.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*José: I did not do my homework.*

*Interviewer: How did she punish you?*

*José: She bathed me with cold water.*

(Urban boy, aged 6, San Román, 2007)

Children from urban areas mentioned that they also experienced violence at home when they put their responsibilities aside in order to go to public internet booths. Parents believed that going to the booths distracted children from their home or school responsibilities and "leads them astray" (*"los lleva por el mal camino"*). According to parents, children who go to internet booths were irresponsible and undisciplined. José's father described how José was supposed to be looking after his younger brother, but instead had gone to an internet booth:

*José's father: He (José) had left my younger son (alone in the soccer field). When we arrived there at 11:30, we did not find José. He had left home at 8:30 or 9 in the morning. We thought that he would be in the house, but he was not there. It was 4pm when we came back home, "Where is he?" we asked. His mother said "go get him" and I thought, "what I do, what I do?" We waited some more and he appeared. ... And his mother, she was angry. She punished him hard (bathed him with cold water). She punished him; they did not talk or anything. (...) He was punished (...). And that happened because he wanted to upgrade his level in an internet game (...). That is the fear I have... That he will be led astray by his friends. that's the biggest fear that I have. As I say, if he can't control his addiction to the internet, he won't be able to control other vices, such as alcohol use. That's my biggest concern. (...)*

*Interviewer: And the booths are near or far away (from home)?*

*José's father: Unfortunately there is one on every block.*

*Interviewer: And you had to go look to bring him home?*

José's father: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is the internet bad for José?

José's father: Because internet games are a vice. Hmmm ... due to his internet addiction, he has been irresponsible with his studies.

(Urban father, San Román, 2014)

In Lima, however, only one of the six participants (a girl) explicitly drew a father punishing his daughter, while the other participants drew violent situations in the community, such as gangs (*pandilleros*) or football fans (*barristas*) attacking children.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that parents in urban areas are fearful of allowing their children out because of gangs, and this then leads to authoritarian parenting styles including use of violence to discipline children to keep them at home. When discussing the cases in the vignettes, children in Lima talked extensively about experiences of violence at home, including their own. This contrasted with their more hypothetical and less personal discussion of the gang and football-related violence.

**Figure 3 – Children's accounts of violent situations in an urban community**



Children in all sites agreed that violence enacted by parents in the home was more frequent and harsh for boys, confirming findings from Barker (2010) who suggests this may be linked to the types of responsibilities children have. The children thought this was because boys are tougher and also misbehave more often than girls. However, some girls in Villa María del Triunfo believed that girls were punished more often than boys, because they are responsible for more domestic chores. In this sense, the scale of children's responsibilities was related to their perceptions of the frequency of punishment.

Parents and children shared the perception that violence against children at home should not necessarily always be considered 'ill-treatment', and some children clearly stated that a parent hitting their own child/children should not be considered as 'violent'. In many cases, boys and girls indicated that their caregivers hit them because it is their role to control them until the age of 18 (the age of majority in Peru), as the following extracts from a group discussion with 13-year-olds shows:

<sup>9</sup> The focus of drawings on violent situations in the community is a reflection of the characteristics of their neighbourhoods. Most children live around "la cancha de futbol", the place where gangs usually meet and drug dealing happens.

*Hugo mentioned that when a child misbehaves and their parents hit him it is not violence. Alexander pointed out that it is not violence because his parents hit him because he behaved badly and that they have the right to do it when they misbehave. Gabriela also said that it is not violence because a child should behave well.*

(Rioja, 2014)

Referring to the punishment they receive from their parents, José said: "if we are punished, it is because we deserve it, because we have done something wrong". And Camilo pointed out:

*"When I was little and I was in kindergarten, my teacher used to give us (classmates) homework and I usually didn't do it and for that reason my mom used to beat me. So when I passed to the first grade of primary school, I already knew I had to obey my (new) teacher".*

(San Román, 2014)

Children mentioned that parents had the right to hit them as an educational mechanism and that it was children's responsibility to obey their parents. Only one girl in Juliaca, Leticia stated that it was not always right to beat children. She said: "Some scientists have discovered that if a child our age is beaten, he or she will think it's OK to hit others", but the other children participating in the group method disagreed with her statement and said they had learned how to behave or obey after their mother hit them. Most of the children – including Leticia – thought they should not go to play if they had duties at home; children should fulfil all their chores and do their homework first, and this was a lesson they said they learned from experiencing violence.

Although children discussed the need for violence in the instance of bad or disrespectful behaviour, they understandably did not like to be hit:

*Lupe: My dad says "I'm not doing anything", but he does hit me.*

*Interviewer: Do you like it when that happens?*

*Lupe: No.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Lupe: Because he hits me for no reason.*

(Urban girl age 13, Villa María del Triunfo 2014)

*Interviewer: Do you remember that instance when you came back from the town by yourself? How was it?*

*Carlos: Ugly.*

*Interviewer: Why ugly?*

*Carlos: Because they (my parents) hit me.*

*Interviewer: Who hit you?*

*Carlos: My dad.*

*Interviewer: Why did he hit you?*

*Carlos: Because I came back home late, by myself, walking.*

(Rural boy, age 13, Rioja, 2014)

Additionally, the normalization of violence also appeared to be related to parents' own childhood experiences. Some of the mothers in our qualitative sample were also beaten by their caregivers and therefore understood it to be a good way to learn right from wrong. Héctor's mother believed that hitting was a good way to prevent her child from becoming lazy. Her father also hit her when she was a child, and Héctor said he would like to raise his own children the same way in future. The mothers of Hugo, Carmen, Fabricio and José were also hit by their parents as children, as was Isabel's mother, highlighting patterns of inter-generational violence.

*Interviewer: And... Do you scare your children [with the possibility of hitting them]?*

*Isabel's mother: Yes I pull out my [whip] and they run. [Laughs]*

*Interviewer: They got scared?*

*Isabel's mother: I scared them but I also hit them too.*

*Interviewer: With the whip?*

*Isabel's mother: Yes (...)*

*Interviewer: Do you have one?*

*Isabel's mother: Yes*

*Interviewer: Where did you buy it?*

*Isabel's mother: I didn't. It is from my father.*

*Interviewer: Your dad gave you the whip?*

*Isabel's mother: Yes, it was his whip.*

*Interviewer: And when you were a child did he hit you with the whip?*

*Isabel's mother: Oh yes.*

(Urban mother, San Román, 2014)

The intergenerational transmission of violence is a well-documented finding in the Peruvian context (see for instance Benavides and León 2013). It is therefore easy to understand why children from the qualitative sample expected to raise their own children using the same methods as those of their parents.

Our data indicates that children are experiencing different forms of violence simultaneously and that this is reinforcing children's understandings about the normalization of violence. Our analysis showed that 22 of the 25 children had also been exposed to corporal punishment by teachers at school. Students reported that teachers hit them in order to correct their behaviour when they did not do their homework or when they misbehaved in class,<sup>10</sup> and parents accepted this behaviour. For instance, Isabel from San Roman, was hit by her primary school teachers with a stick or belt when she didn't do her homework or misbehaved. Her mother knew about this and she thought it was a good way for children to learn and pay attention to the teacher. When she attended secondary school, Isabel's mother knew that in secondary school some teachers brought a whip to class but she believed they only use it to scare the students. She mentioned that teachers should actually use the whip in the school as a way of correcting students' behaviour. That way, teachers would be teaching better, and her daughter would learn more.

<sup>10</sup> This is consistent with Rojas' findings regarding secondary school violence with adolescents from San Román (2011).

Children seem to understand that a teacher beat the students because he or she was educating them ("los está educando"), just as their parents did.

*Interviewer: ... do you always accomplish your duties?*

*José: Sometimes.*

*Interviewer: When can't you accomplish your duties?*

*José: When there are a lot. For example, when I have to take care of my brothers and I also have to do my homework.*

*Interviewer: What happens if you don't do it?*

*José: They hit me, my mom or my teacher. The teacher hits me if I do not do my homework; my mom does it if don't take care of my brothers or if I get bad grades.*

(Urban boy, age 13, San Román, 2014)

Therefore, children made clear the direct connection between learning to behave and violence, based on their experiences in both settings: home and school.

#### **4.2.4 Children's responses to violence**

The prevailing acceptance of violence as a valid method of discipline negatively affects children's capacity to question its use against them, thereby restricting their responses. In group discussions using vignettes about a hypothetical case of a child experiencing violence at home (see Appendix 2), we asked what options/strategies children had to avoid being hit. All children (except two girls, one in Lima, and the other in San Román) believed that there was little the child could do. The children thought that the hypothetical child should endure the punishment and obey his/her parents and fulfil his/her responsibilities. For instance, children in Andahuaylas stated that the child could beg and promise that he/she would not do it again to receive a less harsh punishment from the caregiver, but the children were very clear that he/she would be punished anyway. In San Román, children said that if they were hit by their parent or caregiver, they would not tell a neighbour or a friend, as this would cause embarrassment for the parent, but it might also lead to further punishment. Similar responses were elicited in interviews, and most children said that they hardly ever reacted or sought help when badly treated by their parents, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*Interviewer: When does he put you in the cold water?*

*José: When I behave badly, more naughty.*

*Interviewer: Ah, when do you behave badly?*

*José: Sometimes I untidy the bed. Sometimes I'm taking care of my little brother and he misbehaves. That's why he puts me in the cold water.(...)*

*Interviewer: And when you talk with your father, do you talk to him and tell him "Dad, I don't like it when you put me in the water"?*

*José: No.*

*Interviewer: No? You don't talk to your dad?*

*José: Yes, if...if I say that to him he puts me in the water.*

*Interviewer: Ok. And you talk to your dad about other things? About what things for example?*



*José: Not about him hitting me with a belt or putting me in the water.*

*Interviewer: You don't talk about that?*

*José: No.*

(Urban boy, age 6, San Román, 2007)

*Interviewer: Is that something good or bad [when the father hits them for not grazing the animals]?*

*Héctor: Something bad.*

*Interviewer: And what did you do? Did you tell your father not to hit you with his belt?*

*Héctor: No, I just cried.*

*Interviewer: And what did your mother say when he hit you with his belt?*

*Héctor: My mother didn't say anything to him.*

*Interviewer: She didn't say anything? And you didn't like it obviously.*

*Héctor: Yes.*

*Interviewer: Ok. And did you ever do something when your father hit you with the belt? Did you complain? Did you tell someone?*

*Héctor: No, not yet.*

(Rural boy, age 13, Andahuaylas, 2014)

The narrative also demonstrates how children did not turn to their parents when they experienced corporal punishment in the school. Children assumed it was their own fault if a teacher hit them, and thought their parents would hit them for 'misbehaving' if they found out. For instance, Héctor's primary school teachers kicked and whipped him when he didn't do his homework or when he misbehaved. At age 9, a teacher cut his hair against his will because it was too long. Héctor and his mother mentioned in 2011 that she thought that it was fair for teachers to hit students because students needed to learn to behave and to complete their homework. Héctor did not tell his mother about the violence he experienced from his teachers at school. Recently (2014), he broke a ball and his sports teacher said that if he didn't pay for it he would be beaten. Héctor did not tell his mother about this because he was scared that she might whip him for breaking the ball.

Although children in general did not say much to confront or avoid these situations, some children described strategies to reduce the intensity of the punishment. For instance, José mentioned that he negotiated with his younger brother (offering him candies) to take responsibility for José's bad behaviour, knowing that his parents will not punish the younger brother as harshly as they would punish him. Using a different strategy, Isabel said she showed her bad grades to her father when he was in a good mood and under the influence of alcohol, when he would not be so concerned about her poor academic performance.

*Interviewer: Who punishes you when you have bad grades? Your dad?*

*Isabel: Yes.*

*Interviewer: Or your mom?*

*Isabel: Both, but I'm afraid of my mom.*

*Interviewer: And are you afraid of your dad?*

*Isabel: No.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Isabel: Because when he is drunk and I show him my bad grades [from the school] he doesn't hit me.*

*Interviewer: And, when he is not drunk?*

*Isabel: He does [hit me].*

*Interviewer: And which of them punish you more?*

*Isabel: Mmm [thinking]*

*Interviewer: What do they hit you with?*

*Isabel: With a little rope.*

(Urban girl, age 13 San Román, 2014)

These examples suggest that children had limited scope to respond to or attempt to prevent violence against them in the home. Children are acutely aware of the causes and consequences of violence, but hardly ever react or reach out for help when subjected to violence, at least in part because they understand (physical) punishment as an expected way of being taught appropriate behaviour. In addition, children often do not report the violence they experienced in order to protect parents and out of fear of retaliation.

## 5. THE INTERPLAY OF DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN IN THE HOME OVER THE LIFE COURSE

Young Lives qualitative data demonstrates how violence towards children at home is pervasive throughout childhood. Violence in the home, with parents hitting children with their hands or implements, such as a belt or a whip, appeared to be common. Children also reported being exposed to verbal abuse by their parents, with the psychological violence occurring primarily before or after the physical/emotional punishment. From a life-course perspective, we found that reports of violence against children in the home tended to increase with age, as children took on more chores (especially in rural areas), and spent more time away from home (in some cases, in urban areas). The chances of being hit by their parents increased when they failed in their responsibilities; spending more time away from home also presented new potential dangers for children (e.g., being robbed in the community, joining a gang, etc.), and so violence was used as a means to protect them and to prevent them from being led astray.

While beyond the scope of this paper, all levels of the socio-ecological framework – from the macro to the micro – play a role in determining how and when violence affects children in the home. Our analysis focusing on the child within the home and community demonstrates how living in poverty affects relationships between parents and children. Meeting the basic economic needs of a family is the priority for parents, who then have limited time, energy and resources to devote to their children. However, it is important to note that parents care deeply about their children and are primarily concerned about their children's development. Nevertheless, the use of violence to regulate children's behaviour is rooted in parents' beliefs in the appropriateness and effectiveness of harsh discipline to educate children, which reflect cultural norms and practices. These beliefs are profoundly entrenched because they are passed from one generation to the next, establishing an intergenerational transmission of violence.

Violent behaviour towards children appears to be reinforced as children move from one authority (their parents) to another (their teachers). We found that children exposed to violence in the home are also frequently exposed to corporal punishment at school. Parents are often aware of this situation and support teachers to punish their children, because it is considered critical for children's learning and education. Teachers also seem to have an ambiguous role in relation to the perpetuation of violence against children, because, on the one hand, they may advocate on behalf of children to discourage violence from parents, (as described by one child) but on the other hand, they may also be committing violence against children (as described by many more children).

Finally, social norms ultimately constrain children's responses to violence. This study shows that children's agency to avoid or respond to violence in the home is limited. However, some children described strategies to reduce the intensity of the punishment. Moreover, the fact that children are often accepting of the violence they experience does not mean they do not find it painful or upsetting, or that they are not conscious of violence. On the contrary, children are incredibly aware and do suffer when they experience violence in the home. They may, however, not appear to question its use by their parents because, as we have seen, violence is normalized as an acceptable mechanism for discipline.

## 6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Addressing violence affecting children requires a multi-level approach that incorporates not only measures to address the manifestations of violence affecting children, but also the underlying factors driving that violence.

Social norms relating to the use of violence must be challenged by current and future interventions. Violence is often understood by parents and children as an acceptable and expected mechanism for educating children. Challenging social norms relating to the use of violence must begin early. Parents and children often dismiss (or expect and condone) corporal punishment by teachers as 'educating' children about proper behaviour. Information for parents about the long-term effects of violence on children, and support for using alternative methods of discipline, could be implemented alongside existing social and health programmes, such as Cuna Mas (an early childhood development programme), Juntos (a conditional cash transfer programme), and/or pre- and post-natal care and/or paediatric care. A network of local social workers familiar with communities may be best placed to provide that information and support in a locally relevant and contextually sensitive way.

Finally, violence affecting children at home and school are currently treated as disconnected issues; however, our findings demonstrate the need for interrelated policies to fully address the pervasiveness of beliefs about the use of violence and 'e

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## **APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR SITES OF YOUNG LIVES QUALITATIVE SUB-STUDY IN PERU**

### **RIOJA**

This rural community, located in the upper Amazon in northern Peru, is populated by Andean immigrants from a neighbouring region who speak Spanish. Basic services in the village include piped water but no sewage system. Since 2008, the majority of the population has had electricity in their homes. In 2014, internet access became available in the school and municipality. There is a preschool, primary and secondary school available in the village, as well as a health post.

In Rioja, most people work predominantly in agriculture and raising cattle. The main agricultural product in the village and in the region is coffee, a cash crop on which most families rely. In our observations, the men in the community were found to be primarily responsible for the agricultural work. Women worked in the fields, caring for and collecting milk from the cows. From a very young age, children are also involved in minor agricultural activities such as feeding the animals and weeding. In this way, children learn these chores through observation and then progressively take over responsibility for these activities themselves (Ames, 2013b). Boys learn to use a machete for cutting grass and caring for the cattle from the age of 6. While girls do learn to milk the cows, they are primarily in charge of taking care of their younger siblings and other domestic chores.

### **ANDAHUAYLAS**

This rural Andean site, located in the southern highlands of Peru, represents one of the poorest regions of the country with a mainly Quechua speaking community. Basic services available are piped water, electricity and latrines. In 2009, limited electricity was available to some families. By 2013, public phones and a public internet booth had been installed. The village has a preschool, primary and secondary school, as well as a public community day-care programme, one PRONOEI (non-formal programme of Initial Education, i.e. early childhood education programme), and a public health post.

Men and women work primarily in agriculture (planting and harvesting), with children spending more time in the fields than in Rioja. It is very common for children to be responsible for caring for the cattle from the age of 8 (Ames, 2013b). The difficult financial situation among some families leads parents to work as labourers for other people, in addition to working in their own fields. Caregivers reported that it is very common for boys to start working as labourers for others from the age of 12. Girls, on the other hand, mainly work in the families' own fields.

### **SAN ROMÁN**

This urban community is located in the southern Andes of Peru, in the region of Puno. San Román is an economic and commercial centre in Puno. The main language in the city is Spanish, but there are also many members of the two foremost indigenous groups in the Andes, the Quechua and the Aymara, both of which have their own language. San Román has access to electricity, piped water



and sewage, as well as telephone and internet services. There is a public preschool and a public primary school in the neighbourhood, as well as some private schools, a regional hospital, and a recreational park. Secondary schools are available in other nearby neighbourhoods. In 2011, a few main streets in the neighbourhood were paved in order to reduce flooding during the rainy season. Common occupations include informal trade, commerce, and the textile industry. Boys and girls contribute to their families' productive and economic activities by weaving, packaging, and selling goods in the market with their parents.

### **VILLA MARÍA DEL TRIUNFO**

Villa Maria de Triunfo is a community located in an urban neighbourhood in the southern part of Lima, the capital. The neighbourhood is inhabited mainly by internal migrants from within Peru, as well as new generations born in Lima. There is electricity, piped water, and sewage, as well as telephone and internet services. Most streets are paved. There are several schools, including public and private preschools, primary schools and secondary schools, as well as a health centre.

Villa Maria de Triunfo is a working-class district whose inhabitants undertake diverse economic activities, such as informal trading, cleaning (both commercial and working as maids in domestic service in middle-class houses), factory work, and construction. In contrast to the situation in rural areas, children are not involved in the economic activities of their parents. Here, children usually go to school and then stay at home while their parents are out working. Children undertake domestic chores, but those activities are perceived as 'help' rather than responsibility. In Villa María del Triunfo, children remain inside their homes most of the time due to a common belief that the streets are unsafe.

## APPENDIX 2: VIGNETTES USED IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO ELICIT DATA ON VIOLENCE

### STORY 1

Julia is 12 years old; she lives with her mother and father. One day, both parents went to work and left her with some household responsibilities: wash the dishes, clean her room, take care of the animals, etc. When Julia's parents came back home, they found that she had not fulfilled any of the duties they had asked her to do. As a consequence, her parents became angry and punished her, as always happens when she does not do what she is told.

*What do you think Julia's parents will say to her? What do you think they will do with her? What would be the punishment?*

*What can Julia could do to react against her parents' punishment? Can she do something to avoid punishment? Do you think she can or cannot?*

*How do you think Julia feels about this?*

*What advice would you give to Julia?*

*And if Julia was Julio (a boy), do you think their parents would have reacted in the same way they did to a girl? What would have happened to Julio? Why?*

*Are cases like Julia's story common in your community or neighborhood? What do you think about that?*

### STORY 2

Fernando is 13 years of age and he is attending his first year of secondary education. He always liked school; however since the beginning of this school year he has started to say that he does not like it anymore and that he does not want to go. Fernando told his friend, who lives in the same neighbourhood, that he does not wanted to go to school any longer because his classmates beat him and make him feel bad. Moreover, he told his friend that there is also a teacher who treats him badly.

*What do you think his classmates could be doing to Fernando for him to feel bad?*

*Do you think it is good that his classmates make Fernando feel bad?*

*Can he do something to confront the classmates? What? Do you think that Fernando could look for help? From whom? What would you advise Fernando to do?*

*How will his classmates react if Fernando decides to do something?*

*Do you think Fernando will ask his parents to take him out the school?*

*If Fernando was Fernanda (girl) do you think her classmates would bother her in the same way? How? Why do you think that?*

*And about Fernando's teacher, what do think he could be doing to Fernando? He told his friend his teacher is not treating him well.*

*Do you think it is ok that a teacher mistreats his students? Why?*

*Do you think Fernando can do something about this situation? What? Do you think that Fernando will ask for any help? What would be your advice to Fernando if he*

*was your friend?*

*Do you think the same thing would happen if Fernando was a girl? How do you think the teacher would react? Would it be the same? Why?*

### **STORY 3**

Juan and Luciana are siblings, he is 12 years old and she is 13 years old. Both live with their mother. Their mother agreed to cook for the celebration party of their neighborhood, but when she was cooking she realized that she needed to buy more potatoes and rice in the street market. The mother asked Luciana to buy what she needed because she was busy cooking. She asked Juan to go with his sister too because it was late and there might be some strange people around the neighbourhood due to the party. On their way to the market, they saw people drinking alcohol and some were arguing in the streets.

*How do you think Juan and Luciana felt in their way to the market?*

*What could happen to them? Do you think the people in the streets would do them harm? What could they do?*

*Do you think they could do something to defend themselves from these people?*

*From whom can they ask help?*

*What do you think could happen if Juan went to the street market by himself?*

*What do you think could happen if Luciana went by herself?*

*Do you think there are risks for children in your community? What kind of risks?*

## APPENDIX 3: BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN INTERVIEWED

Sites	Child's name	Family composition	Main caregiver	Education level of caregiver	Main family economic activity
Rioja	Alejandro	Alejandro lived with his parents and two younger siblings.	Mother	Secondary school (incomplete)	Farming
	Gabriela	Gabriela lived with her father and her 7 older and younger siblings.	Older sister	Primary school	Farming
	Carmen*	Carmen lived with her parents and uncle (older siblings moved out)	Mother	Primary school (incomplete)	Farming
	Hugo*	Hugo lived with his parents, his older sister and his younger brother.	Mother	Primary school	Farming
	Carlos	Carlos lived with his parents (older siblings moved out).	Mother	Technical education	Teaching
Andahuaylas	Fabricio*	Fabricio lived with his parents. Elder siblings live in the city.	Mother	No education.	Farming
	Felipe	Felipe lived with his parents (older siblings moved out).	Mother	No education	Farming
	Héctor*	Héctor lived with his mother, his older brother and his younger sister. His elder sister lived in Lima. His father abandoned them.	Mother	Primary school (incomplete)	Farming
	Ana	Ana lived with her parents, her grandmother and her two sisters (one older and one younger).	Mother	Primary school	Farming
	Rosa	Rosa lived with her parents and two sisters (her older siblings moved out).	Mother	No education	Farming
San Román	Isabel*	Isabel lived with her parents and 6 siblings.	Mother	Secondary school	Family ran a small shop; father was a school teacher.
	Leticia	Leticia lived with her mother and 3 sisters (two older siblings moved out). Her father works and lives in a different city.	Mother	Secondary school (incomplete)	Father worked at the municipality.
	José*	José lived with his parents and two younger brothers.	Mother	University	Textile business
	Cecilia	Cecilia lived with her parents and her two older siblings (four other siblings moved out).	Mother	Primary school (incomplete)	Mother worked renting cell phones.
	Camilo	Camilo lived with his mother and his older brother. His older sister moved out and his father works in a different city. He visits during the weekend.	Mother	Primary school (incomplete)	Father worked as bus driver.
	Rafael	Rafael lived with his father and his older brother. His baby brother lives with his aunt since his mother passed away in 2011.	Father	Technical education (incomplete)	The father worked as a carpenter.

Sites	Child's name	Family composition	Main caregiver	Education level of caregiver	Main family economic activity
Rioja	Andrés	Andrés lived with his parents and his two younger siblings.	Mother	Primary school (incomplete)	Textile business.
	Lupe	Lupe lived with her father and her older sister. Her parents are separated.	Father	Technical education (incomplete)	Father worked as deliveryman for a gas cylinders company.
	Esmeralda*	Esmeralda lived with her mother and her older sister. Parents divorced.	Mother	Secondary school (incomplete)	Mother worked as a housemaid.
	Christian*	Christian lived with his mother and grandmother. Parents divorced.	Mother	Secondary school	Mother worked for a cleaning service.
	César	César lived with his mother's godmother. He also lived with his younger half brother and the son and partner of his mother's godmother. His mother lives in a different house in the same city.	Mother's godmother	Secondary school	His mother worked in transportation.
	Diego	Diego lived with his mother and his grandfather.	Mother	Technical education	Mother worked selling clothes and jewels.
	Eva	Eva lived with her mother, her grandmother, one aunt, two uncles and one cousin.	Grandmother	Not available	Mother worked cleaning offices and houses.

\* In each site the stories of two children who had experienced violence in the home from Round 1 to Round 4 were examined in detail.

Source: Qualitative research round 4, 2014