

YOUNG LIVES COUNTRY REPORT

Young Lives: Andhra Pradesh Round 2 Survey

Summary

September 2008

Young Lives is a long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four developing countries – Ethiopia, Peru, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh) and Vietnam – over 15 years. This is the timeframe set by the UN to assess progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Through interviews, group work and case studies with children in the study countries, their parents, teachers, community representatives and others, we are collecting a wealth of information not only about their material and social circumstances, but also their perspectives on their lives and aspirations for the futures, set against the environmental and social realities of their communities.

We are following two groups of children in each country: 2000 children who were born in 2001-02 and 1000 children who were born in 1994-95. The children were selected from 20 sites. In Andhra Pradesh, the districts selected for sampling covered approximately 28 per cent of the population. These groups provide insights into every phase of childhood. The younger children are being tracked from infancy to their mid-teens and the older children through into adulthood, when some will become parents themselves. When this is matched with information gathered about their parents, we will be able to reveal much about the intergenerational transfer of poverty, how families in the margins move in and out of poverty, and the policies that can make a real difference to their lives.

This report presents initial findings from the second round of quantitative data collection which was carried out in Andhra Pradesh in late 2006 to early 2007. It does not aim to give a comprehensive overview of all the findings from Young Lives, rather it gives an broad outline of the some of the key indicators of childhood poverty and changes that have taken place in the children's lives between the first round of data collection in 2002 and this second round. Data are

mainly presented for the entire age group cohort, in most cases separated into wealth groups or by rural/urban location. The full richness of the data is not reflected in this preliminary report, but we hope that it contains enough information to prompt other researcher, policymakers and other stakeholders to start to engage with the data. Between the two rounds, the attrition rate across the whole sample was only 0.9%, which is very low for a study of this size.

Andhra Pradesh is the fifth-largest state in India, and like the rest of India has been undergoing growth and rapid change in recent years. While Andhra Pradesh continues to be largely rural with only 27% of the population living in urban areas, the state capital, Hyderabad, is one of the leading centres of the IT revolution. Consequently, the state is witnessing a shift away from agriculture (which remains important at 30% of state domestic produce) towards the service sector, which is expanding rapidly. It is striking that poverty estimates for rural Andhra Pradesh are low (11.2% compared to the national average of 28%), although per capita expenditure in rural areas is only about 5% more than the national average – starkly illustrating the debate that exists about poverty measurement in India. At 28%, rural poverty is much lower than urban poverty.

Andhra Pradesh has achieved considerable progress on child development indicators since the mid-1990s. But despite this growth, significant disparities remain, based on sector (rural versus urban), caste and region. The discussion and analysis presented in this report, although preliminary, give important insights into trends between the two rounds of research, key factors affecting children in Andhra Pradesh and the extent of inequalities between children of different groups. The analysis enables us to pinpoint policy implications for tackling childhood poverty in India as well as important and interesting avenues for future research.

The data reflect the growth and poverty reduction witnessed in recent years and there is evidence that the Young Lives households have become better off over the four years of the survey. However, inequalities in wealth, consumption expenditure, between castes, between urban and rural areas, and between different regions of AP, are reflected in the Young Lives sample.

Levels of wealth, consumption and poverty

Our data reveals stark inequalities in wealth and consumption between rural and urban areas. Using data for Round 2 on consumption expenditure by households (based on food and non-food items), we find that overall urban consumption is over 20% higher than rural consumption. Similarly, the per capita expenditure for disadvantaged castes is considerably lower than for other castes (predominantly upper castes). Scheduled Tribes for example, have expenditure levels 1.5 times lower than non-tribal households.

Two measures of poverty were calculated for this report. Absolute poverty is defined as households spending below Rs 617.8 per capita in urban areas and below Rs.332.1 per capita in rural areas, including food and non-food expenditure. The thresholds are based on the National Sample Survey estimations. Relative poverty is defined as the proportion of households with per capita consumption below 50% of median consumption.

Using these measures, we found that 12.67% of children in the younger cohort and 7.95% of children in the older cohort live in households below the absolute poverty line. In both cohorts, the proportion of households below the poverty line is much higher in urban than rural areas (in keeping with national trends). Again, children from Scheduled Tribes are severely disadvantaged: 29.2% of the younger children and 18% of the older children from these groups live in absolute poverty. The urban-rural gap is not so stark in terms of relative poverty, where it is 11.2% in rural areas and 10.55% in urban areas, but again it is strongly located to caste and geography: Among Scheduled Tribes, 34.72% of the younger cohort and 22.68% of the older children live in the households with expenditure less than half of the median.

Household factors that contribute to poverty

The report presents analysis that is used to construct a profile of child poverty, showing who and where the poor children are, and the factors which help keep them in poverty or those that may offer a route out for some children. We found that household and community characteristics make an important contribution to poverty, particularly the education level of parents, ethnicity and the sector of residence (i.e, urban versus rural, which reflects, partly, access to services).

Household wealth is an important determinant of child outcomes. Children from poorer households are significantly more likely to be stunted. Pre-school and primary enrolment is high among the poorest families (perhaps due to the Government's midday meal scheme) but quality of education in the poorest areas remains an issue. Finally, material well-being is a strong determinant of child and household subjective well-being. However, the findings demonstrate that household resources are not the only, and perhaps not even the most important, determinant of subjective well-being.

The importance of parental education

The analysis reveals that parents' levels of education significantly affect nutritional outcomes and school enrolment. Interestingly, maternal education has a stronger impact on nutrition, while the father's education is a more important determinant of enrolment. Furthermore, the education of both parents significantly affects the child's subjective well-being.

The significance of parental education as a factor in the intergenerational transmission of poverty is clearly demonstrated, with deprivations experienced by parents during childhood impacting upon the Young Lives children. The resulting deprivations are likely to continue to have an impact on the next generation. Even if economic growth allows households to escape from income poverty, poor parental education will continue to have a negative impact on other child outcomes, such as nutrition.

Drought and other shocks

A finding of particular importance is that short-term 'shocks', such as natural disasters, can have a

devastating effect on household resources in the long term. Over a third of households in rural areas report having experienced drought in the four years between 2002 and 2006, and the data show the vulnerability of children in drought-affected households, especially in the younger cohort, where children were found to have significantly lower height-for-age scores (an indicator of chronic malnutrition), indicating long-term deprivation. Drought also had an impact on the older children, making it much more likely that they would seek paid work.

Access to services

Inequalities between urban and rural sectors are significant and persistent in nearly all the major child-poverty related indicators. Lower material wealth in rural areas is compounded by poorer access to electricity, safe water and sanitation.

These factors impact on child outcomes. Rural children suffer from significantly poorer nutritional outcomes, even when levels of household resources are taken into account. This indicates that access to services such as sanitation and safe water, and other community-level effects strongly influence child health. Access to sanitation is also a contributing factor to child malnutrition.

Access to services seems to have improved, especially with regard to access to electricity and sanitation in rural areas. The figures suggest that though it has narrowed in since 2002, the urban-rural gap is still stark, with 86% of urban households having access to sanitation in Round 2 compared to just 13.9% of rural households.

For both cohorts, there is a large difference in the access to electricity and sanitation between different wealth quartiles, with the access of the poorest quartile being much worse than the richest. In Round 2, only 9.3% of children in the poorest quartile had access to sanitation compared to 81.3% in the richest. So despite some improvement in overall access, great disparities remain.

Nutrition

Stunting, or low height-for-age, is a measure of chronic malnutrition, and the rate of stunting is high among all Young Lives children. In Andhra Pradesh, stunting in the younger cohort increased from 31% in 2002 to 35% in 2006 (but remained level between 33 and 34% for the older children). Young Lives data

allows us some insights into the factors that may contribute to, or alleviate, stunting.

The incidence of stunting is once again strongly related to household resources, residential location and ethnicity. Poorer children, scheduled caste, (formerly known as 'Untouchables', who now call themselves Dalits) and rural children are more likely to become stunted during the critical period after they finish breastfeeding: stunting among rural children increased from 36% in Round 1 to over 41% in Round 2. Regression analysis demonstrates that maternal education has a major positive effect on child nutrition even when we control for the significant effect of household resources.

Education

School enrolment rates in the Young Lives sample are relatively high compared to national levels of approximately 84%. However, although almost 99% of the 12-year-olds report having ever been enrolled in school, only 88.3% were still in school in 2006, with about 10% having dropped out. Drop-out rates are higher in rural areas (10%) than in urban areas (3%), among the poorest quartile (16%), among scheduled tribes children (possibly because of distance to school), and among girls (11%). Interestingly, there are no significant differences in enrolment between boys and girls, although initial analysis suggests possible gender biases in spending towards education favouring boys. Moreover, boys are more likely to be sent to private schools that provide better quality education.

An interesting finding was that over 86% of the younger children are reported to have attended a pre-school and 44% also claim to be already enrolled in primary school, despite being under the official starting age. Almost 50% of children from the poorest households are already in school, while 40% of children are sent well below the formal starting age. It is likely that the free midday meal provided by the state explains this.

Child labour

In the older cohort, paid child work emerges as an important issue in Round 2, despite recent legislation banning child labour. Over a fifth of the children in our sample reportedly engage in paid work; most of these children are in rural areas where the incidence of child labour (25.76%) is much higher than in urban areas

(3.73%). Breaking down these also reveals some clear patterns: child labour is highest among the Scheduled Tribes (30.84%) and lowest among the 'Other Castes', who are predominantly the upper castes, at 9.3%. Children from households which had been affected by drought are much more likely to work.

Subjective well-being

An important and innovative element of the Young Lives study is the data it captures on children's perceptions of well-being. The qualitative research with smaller groups of children goes into much greater detail on this, but questions are asked of both children and their caregivers in the survey throw up some interesting results, especially when combined with the other data about livelihoods and absolute levels of poverty.

In Andhra Pradesh, although household wealth is a strong determinant of well-being, it is not the only factor of importance. In fact urban children, who are better off in terms of material goods, have lower subjective well-being on average than rural children. Parental education, even controlling for household resources, also increases child well-being. Other important factors include caste and primary household occupation: children from Scheduled Castes, from large families or from households where casual labour is the primary occupation, have lower perceptions of well-being or expectations for their future.

It is particularly worth noting that rural children, despite their lower material well-being, have higher levels of subjective well-being, on average. This suggests that focussing on material indicators of poverty alone may not be sufficient to fully understand child well-being.

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About Young Lives

Young Lives is a collaborative partnership of research institutes and government organisations in the 4 study countries, together with UK universities and the international NGO, Save the Children UK. It is coordinated by a team based at the Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

The Young Lives partners in Andhra Pradesh are:

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Young Lives is funded by the UK Department for International Development with sub-studies funded by IDRC (in Ethiopia), UNICEF (in India), Irish Aid (in Vietnam) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.