

YOUNG LIVES COUNTRY REPORT

Young Lives: Peru Round 2 Survey

Summary

September 2008

Young Lives is a long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in 4 developing countries – Ethiopia, Peru, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh) and Vietnam – over 15 years. This is the time frame set by the United Nations to assess progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Through interviews, group work and case studies with children, their parents, teachers, community representatives and others, we are collecting a wealth of information not only about their material and social circumstances, but also perspectives on their lives and aspirations for the future, 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 2001-2 and 1000 children who were born in 1994-5. The sample focuses relatively more on poorer groups and ethnic minorities than a nationally representative sample (known as a pro-poor sample) would do, but the data reflects the diversity of the country's population in a broad range of indicators. These groups also provide insights into every phase of childhood. The younger children are being tracked from infancy to their mid-teens and the older children to 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 on the margins move in and out of poverty, and the policies that can make a real difference to their lives.

The report presents initial findings from the second round of data collection which was carried out in Peru 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 a broad outline of 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.

Peru is a 'medium' human development country, featuring as 87 out of 177 countries in the United Nation's Human Development Index. It has enjoyed substantial growth and an overall impressive macro-economic performance in recent years. There has been an increase in social public expenditure. There has also been an increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood in the policy agenda. This was clearly signalled by the release of the National Plan of Action for Childhood and Adolescence (2002-2010) and by the inclusion of pre-school as part of basic education, making it free and compulsory. While the impact of these policies remains to be seen, the political and policy context is undoubtedly more favourable for children than in the past.

However, despite this good economic performance and the positive policy context, monetary poverty continues to be very high, with almost half the population living in poverty and one of every six Peruvians living in extreme poverty. Only in the last few years has poverty fallen slightly, from 48.6% to 44.5% between 2004 and 2006. In addition, profound inequalities persist. Although poverty has declined, this has been due entirely to improvements in urban areas, with poverty rates in rural areas remaining virtually unchanged. In addition, inequalities in child well-being indicators persist. Malnutrition remains high and progress through school remains low in the poorest regions.

Poverty and wealth and access to services

Eighty per cent of Young Lives children live below the national poverty line. This is higher than the general poverty rate for Peru, which was 44.5% in 2006.

For children under 5 the rate is 60%, and for children between 6 and 11 years it is 58%. The high proportion is due in part to our pro-poor sampling methodology, but despite this, over time, between 2002 and 2006/7, we have observed an improvement in household living standards for both the younger and older cohorts across several indicators. Most of these improvements were found in urban areas, thus closely resembling Peru's trends over the same time period, and pointing to the inequalities that persist despite recent economic growth. Peru's inequalities are reflected in the Young Lives sample. Inequalities in wealth, access to services, and opportunities are prevalent, especially between urban and rural areas and between ethnic groups.

We see that household resources have improved in terms of both wealth and assets, and this is reflected in the perceptions of poverty reported by the children's caregivers. While in 2002, 32% of the younger children's families felt they were destitute, this had fallen to 22% in 2006/7. The number of families reporting that they could manage to 'get by' increased from 27% to 37%. In the older cohort, the number of families reporting that they felt themselves to be destitute fell from 36% to 28%, although there was only a small change in the number of families feeling they can 'get by' (up from 25% to 27%).

These changes are in part due to improvements in access to services. Electricity and sanitation facilities in urban areas have improved by 10% between Rounds 1 and 2. Within the younger cohort, 70% of families now have access to electricity (compared with 59% in Round 1), although there are significant differences between rural and urban areas and across our wealth index. Ninety per cent of households above the poverty line have access to electricity but only 65% of poorer households do. The figures in terms of access to sanitation are equally stark, with 70% of richer households having a flush toilet or septic tank compared with only 35% of poorer households. The picture is similar for the older cohort, where 65% of families now have access to electricity (up from 55%), although stark differences are seen in access to sanitation between urban areas (61% access) and rural families (only 9%).

Nutrition

Malnutrition is a major issue for Peru and of great concern for policymakers and planners. Based on the WHO 2006 standard, 37% of the Young Lives younger cohort was found to be chronically malnourished in Round 2. This was particularly pronounced in rural areas, where children appear to be malnourished from the first few months of their lives. By the age of 18 months, more than half rural children are stunted. Rural boys in particular are shorter than their urban peers at every age.

The analysis also finds that urban children are favoured in two respects compared to their rural peers. First, although they are relatively short, on average urban children are still able to follow a normal growth curve. Secondly, urban children appear to catch up with average growth at 4 to 5 years old, while rural children do not. It seems that children who have improved access to public services have greater chances of such catch-up. Although further research is still needed, current results show that part of the catching-up process is mediated by access to key private assets, such as maternal education, and access to public services, such as electricity, safe water and proper sanitation facilities.

In addition, changes in malnutrition rates between Rounds 1 and 2 for the younger cohort are associated with characteristics such as birth weight and mother's health status. Rates of malnutrition were more likely to increase for girls between rounds, but only for the younger cohort. In the older cohort, rural girls are more malnourished than their urban peers. Finally, those children whose mothers are educated are less likely to suffer from chronic malnutrition but showed no difference in malnutrition between rounds.

Education

In the education sector, a new General Law of Education was approved in 2003 that includes pre-school as part of basic education, making it free and compulsory. It is not surprising then that pre-school enrolment is relatively high (81%) among the Young Lives children. However, it is mediated by inequalities according to rural-urban residence, ethnicity and socio-economic status. The Quechua and Aymara population report pre-school enrolment rates that are 12 and 19 percentage points below the Spanish-speaking population. Other indigenous groups in the Amazon show the lowest enrolment at 54%. There appears to be little

difference in the enrolment of boys and girls in pre-school education. Interestingly, the probability of ever attending pre-school is lower for children with disabilities in urban areas, reflecting another dimension of inequality. Maternal education is found to be a strong factor that determines pre-school enrolment.

In Round 2, the older children were at the stage where they were just completing the transition from primary to secondary school. For this cohort, school enrolment is almost universal, reflecting the trend in Peru as a whole – primary enrolment is 96%, secondary 70% in 2005, according to the UN Human Development Report 2008. However, a vast majority of these children (60%) are overage (above the normal age for their grade either because they started school late or have been kept back due to poor achievement). Lack of maternal education is a strong predictor of this result. In addition, there is evidence of a gender gap, as boys in urban areas more likely to be overage. A qualitative sub-study will complement this quantitative data for both cohorts by looking at the perspective of parents, teachers and students regarding the availability and quality of educational services, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary.

Child work

For the older cohort, paid child labour has increased from 24% to 51% between rounds. Although an increase in child labour was expected (as the children are getting older), the percentage of children involved in paid work is high compared to official statistics which report that less than 30% of children of the age of our cohort work for a wage or compensation. In fact, this result resembles the average level of child labour found in the poorest quintile of the population. Evidence of a gender dimension is also found, with boys more likely to be involved in paid activities and girls more likely to work in unpaid domestic chores.

Subjective well-being

Children in the older cohort were asked about their perceptions of their own well-being. In particular, they were asked to position themselves on a nine-step ladder. Using regression analysis, several interesting results are found based on their answers. Urban children consider themselves to be higher up the ladder than children in rural areas. Girls are also more likely to position themselves higher than boys, and so do children living in households where the father is present. Interestingly, it was also found that ethnicity

is correlated with a lower position in the ladder, which could be associated with a perception of discrimination by these children.

Conclusion and policy implications

The current policy context is favourable for influencing policies aimed at children. For example, the country is in a process of decentralisation, where regional presidents are looking for initiatives to improve current social conditions. Second, the government has recently implemented a national strategy to fight poverty (with an emphasis on children) which aims to link existing programmes on child poverty. Finally, political parties will soon begin elaborating government plans for the presidential elections of 2011 and will want to show what they have or can achieve in crucial areas such as child poverty.

Young Lives has produced policy-relevant research on programmes included under the national strategy to fight poverty, such as the Wawa Wasi pre-school programme, where we have published a series of studies suggesting ways in which it could be strengthened, and Juntos, a programme that aims to break the inter-generational transfer of poverty by targeting mothers of children under 14 in poor rural households. They are given cash on a monthly basis if their children attend school and access other public services. Our research suggests that while Juntos is valued by recipients, the quality of services in education and health is not up to the level needed to achieve significant changes in poverty.

Overall, the Young Lives sample confirms some aspects already evident from other nationally representative surveys and provides evidence of lesser-known aspects. For example, it shows that differences in children's nutritional trajectories between urban and rural areas are defined during the first months of life. It also shows some evidence of catch-up growth in urban children, possibly mediated by access to key private and public assets. These results highlight the importance of investing in early childhood.

Our research also confirms that the Peruvian economy is growing and that there are some improvements in well-being at the level of the households, especially in urban areas. However, despite increases in public infrastructure and social expenditure, inequality remains an important factor in Peruvian society, and is reflected in the Young Lives sample, which shows that inequalities in wealth,

access to services, and opportunities are prevalent, especially between urban and rural areas and between ethnic groups. Our research clearly shows the impact this can have on nutritional outcomes such as stunting and being under-weight.

We are working so that empirical evidence can have a more important role in the future in shaping children's policies than it does now. For the next phase we are planning to continue research in the areas mentioned above, focusing on how inequalities arise or change for different groups, mainly by socioeconomic status, urban-rural, gender and for different ethnic groups. We also plan to engage with those working on such

policies, to ensure that our research is relevant to their work. For example, we aim to promote the creation of a community of researchers and policy-makers that will meet periodically to discuss issues relevant to both. We have already organised workshops to discuss our research, disseminated publications to targeted audiences, written op-ed pieces in national newspapers summarising research and its policy implications and revamped our web page, so that Young Lives gradually increases its role in promoting the well-being of poor children in Peru.

The authors

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We are pleased to announce that the Young Lives team in Peru recently won an Honourable Mention in the World Bank/DFID Regional Award for Innovation in Statistics.

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 Peru are:

Instituto de Investigación Nutricional (Institute for Nutrition Research, IIN)

Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (Group for the Analysis of Development, GRADE)

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