

This report presents initial findings from the third round of data collection by Young Lives in Peru, carried out from late 2009 to early 2010 with two age cohorts of children. 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 earlier rounds of data collection in 2002 and 2006 and this third round. Data are mainly presented for the entire age cohort, in most cases separated into gender, wealth groups, rural/urban location, and maternal mother tongue (as a proxy of ethnicity). In particular, we are able to make comparisons between the older children at age 8 in 2002 (in Round 1), and the younger cohort at age 8 in 2009 (Round 3) – to highlight changes that have happened in the study communities over that time. The full richness of the data is not fully reflected in this preliminary report, but we hope that it contains enough information to prompt other researchers, policymakers and stakeholders to start to engage with the data.

In 2002 Young Lives collected data on 2,052 children who were aged 6 to 18 months (the Younger Cohort) and 714 children aged 7.5 to 8.5 years (the Older Cohort) for the first survey round. The Young Lives sampling strategy was based on randomly selecting 100 children within 20 clusters or geographic sites throughout Peru. Overall attrition by Round 3 was 4.4 per cent over the eight-year period. The Young Lives study has also carried out three rounds of qualitative fieldwork, in 2007, 2008 and 2010, data from the first two of which are used to explain some of the findings in this report.

In recent years Peru has had consistent achievements in the economic, social and political arenas, but still faces important challenges. These achievements are consistent economic growth, the development of programmes and policies to fight poverty, and the maintenance of democracy; the challenges are a large (but decreasing) poor population, a high degree of inequality in social opportunities and outcomes, and a decentralisation process which started in 2002 in the hope that it would bring government closer to people's needs, but still needs to be strengthened. Peru currently faces the enormous challenge of making its impressive economic growth more inclusive, so that the inequalities in opportunities and outcomes that are currently so closely linked to area of residence, ethnicity, maternal education, poverty and in some cases gender diminish over time through concerted policies and programmes.

Levels of wealth, consumption and poverty

Between 2006 and 2009, Young Lives households experienced a reduction in both absolute and relative poverty (per capita expenditure below 50 per cent of the

median in the sample) which represents a significant improvement in per capita expenditure of both poor and extremely poor households. The largest reduction in absolute poverty has occurred for those living in urban areas, and within urban areas the largest reductions in poverty come from those households in which the mother's mother tongue is indigenous (mostly Quechua).

Although poverty fell, we find that most households which were poor in Round 2 were also poor in Round 3. Large improvements in consumption (moving up at least two quintiles) is higher in the rural sample (15.6 per cent) than in the urban sample (10.3 per cent). If one takes into account that 74 per cent of households that move up in the per capita expenditure distribution moved from rural to urban areas between 2006 and 2009, it becomes clear that it is in the large cities where growth has been the highest, where income-generating opportunities arise and transition out of monetary poverty is possible.

Comparing the Young Lives households across rounds, wealth was on average about the same between Rounds 1 and 2 but increased sharply from Round 2 to Round 3. These higher growth rates are consistent with the growth acceleration for the economy as a whole and the provision of basic services associated with the increase in public expenditure. Similarly, per capita expenditure also increased, although at a somewhat slower pace, between Rounds 2 and 3.

The urban–rural gap has been widening, especially in the last few years, as expenditure has been growing more rapidly in urban than in rural areas but the Spanish–indigenous gap does not follow the same trend. This is probably to be attributed to the increasing number of mothers of indigenous origin who live in urban areas, which increased by 17 per cent between Round 2 and Round 3. The gap between children with better-educated

mothers (who have completed further education) and those with mothers with low education (incomplete primary or less) is also high.

Shocks and adverse events

One of the topics that Young Lives has included in its surveys is sudden changes in the situation families live in, or shocks. About two-thirds of Young Lives households report having experienced at least one shock since Round 2. The most common shocks are those related to changes within the family (illness or death), environmental disasters, abrupt changes in economic conditions (typically changes in employment), and crimes that affected the asset base of the family. It is interesting to note that these adverse shocks have been less frequent in Round 3 than in Round 2, with the exception of natural disasters, which have increased in Round 3 (at least for the Younger Cohort households).

Access to services

Coverage of water, sanitation and electricity has increased sharply among the sample households. The improvement in access to safe drinking water occurred mostly between 2006 and 2009, while the improvements in sanitation and electricity occurred both between 2002 and 2006 as well as between 2006 and 2009. Access to sanitation and to electricity shows a greater improvement for households living in rural areas, those with less educated mothers and those where mothers are of indigenous origin. This reflects the fact that urban areas have almost full coverage and the areas with less coverage are increasingly concentrated in rural areas.

Education

Enrolment in primary school is high but there are gaps in achievement. In primary school, there are significant differences in Younger Cohort children (age 8) reaching the appropriate grade for their age, favouring children from non-poor households in urban areas, with better-educated mothers whose maternal language is Spanish.

For the Older Cohort children (age 15), enrolment has started to go down as children enter secondary school. This may be related to there being fewer secondary schools in rural areas, in comparison with primary schools, together with other non-school factors. In the Young Lives sample, drop-out is particularly high for rural children (almost three times higher than for their urban peers), as well as for children of mothers who did not complete primary school, and for the poorest children,

suggesting that education is not achieving its role as an equalising institution. Children who were rural or poor, and children whose mothers speak an indigenous language are more likely to have repeated a year or be over-age for their grade.

Beyond enrolment and children being over-age, however, there are issues of equality of educational opportunities and of quality of education for children from different groups, which remain of central importance for children in Peru. The poorest groups tend to access schools with fewer resources, while non-poor groups are increasingly opting for private education in search of better quality. Also, many children from indigenous groups do not have access to bilingual education and the education services they get are under-resourced.

Health

Stunting and wasting are important dimensions of child poverty because of the recognised link to other outcomes such as cognitive development. Malnutrition is an important issue in Peru, with stunting being more prevalent than wasting. The comparison between the 8-year-olds in 2002 and 2009 (even when corrected for the higher number of urban children in the Older Cohort) shows a significant reduction in stunting (from 33 per cent to 21.9 per cent). Despite these improvements, stunting remains a serious problem in Peru, with the highest rates among children whose mother is an indigenous language speaker or less educated, and who live in rural areas. The association between maternal education and stunting is especially striking, with the prevalence of stunting in Round 3 being seven times as high among Younger Cohort children with mothers who did not complete primary school, compared with the children of mothers who had completed further education. This association with maternal education is seen in both the Younger and Older Cohorts, and remains across the three rounds.

Obesity is also a growing problem with an increase from 7.8 per cent obesity in the Older Cohort when they were aged 8 to 12.3 per cent in the Younger Cohort children at the same age. This is especially marked among the children of better-educated mothers, where the rate has increased fourfold.

Poor families face a number of barriers in accessing healthcare. Almost one in five caregivers of children in the Younger Cohort stated that they had not taken their child to a healthcare facility when they were ill or injured, although they would have liked to have done so. The direct cost of healthcare was the biggest barrier, and not considering the child's illness serious enough

to overcome these difficulties was very common in all groups. As might be expected, difficult access and distance together with indirect costs were more common barriers in rural areas. Between 11 and 18 per cent of caregivers reported that lack of trust in the quality of care on offer was a consideration in preventing them accessing the healthcare facility, and this opinion was expressed in urban, rural, poor and non-poor families across the board.

The Round 3 survey also included a set of self-administered questions about at-risk behaviours, including smoking and drinking, for children in the Older Cohort. About 20 per cent of the cohort said they had tried smoking once or more, with boys more likely to do so. For alcohol there were only small differences by gender; instead the differences are marked by mothers' mother tongue (Spanish speakers more likely to drink), area of residence (urban children more likely to drink), and maternal education (children of more educated mothers are more likely to drink). However none of these groups reported drinking often, as most of the responses for drinking were 'only on special occasions' and 'hardly ever'. The levels of smoking and drinking reported here could be considered low, but what is interesting is the evolution of these and other at-risk behaviours over time.

Children's work and time-use

In the Younger Cohort very few children are engaged in paid work. However, most (71 per cent) do household chores, on which they spend on average a bit more than an hour a day. In rural areas a higher percentage of children care for family members, do household chores and engage in unpaid work on the family farm or business. They also spend less time studying than children in urban areas. Similar patterns can be found when one focuses on children whose mothers are of indigenous origin or children of less educated mothers.

In the Older Cohort, about 10 per cent of children are engaged in paid work with this being higher among boys, children living in rural areas and for children with less educated mothers. Comparing the children from the Younger Cohort in Round 3 with those from the Older Cohort in Round 1, when both cohorts were aged 8, the percentage of children engaged in paid work had decreased. It is very likely that the growth in per capita household income and expenditure, and the improvement in well-being indicators experienced by many, are at least partly responsible for this trend, as improved incomes may be reducing the need for some children to engage in paid work.

Subjective well-being

In keeping with its multidimensional approach to poverty, Young Lives assesses children's subjective well-being. The results are quite different in the Younger and Older Cohorts, suggesting that the developmental stages they are experiencing are linked with their responses. In general, the Younger Cohort reported higher self-evaluations of their own lives. There were almost no differences between boys and girls but a large difference between children from households in the bottom quintile of consumption who were over twice as likely to report having a 'bad life' compared with children from households in the top consumption quintile. There were also differences linked with maternal education and mother's first language, as well as area of residence, favouring better-educated, Spanish-speaking and urban children. For the Older Cohort there were differences favouring girls and children of mothers with higher education.

From the qualitative sub-studies, there is also information showing that family relationships are central to their sense of well-being. The presence or absence of their parents, the actual time they spend with children and the incidence (or not) of violence in family relationships are key to children's well-being, according to the children themselves. The ability of parents to satisfy the basic material needs of their children is also a factor. Younger children also highlight the importance of having time to play with friends and their family on the one hand, and the importance of learning, school and education on the other. Physical punishment at school is frequent and is an indicator of ill-being.

Older children support these views and add assessments of the kind of social environments they live in: rural children especially consider their communities safer and cleaner than urban areas and appreciate that, but they also acknowledge the lack of education services for the upper levels of education and the consequent need to migrate to carry on their education as detrimental to their well-being. Urban children recognise dangerous environments marked by delinquency, drug dealing and crime as threats to their well-being, yet value the access to the more numerous education opportunities.

Policies and programmes

We explored preliminary results for four government programmes which we believe have significant potential for reducing children's poverty:

- According to our results, while the Ombudsman services, DEMUNA (aimed at protecting and promoting young people when their rights are being violated), seems to be relatively well-known, it has been less used by relatively poor, indigenous young people, as well as children of less-educated mothers. This suggests that the programme needs to concentrate on work with these populations, as well as expand coverage in rural areas.
- The conditional cash transfer programme, Juntos, on the other hand, seems to be reaching its target group (the rural poor) more effectively, although it is far from achieving universal coverage in this regard. As suggested in Young Lives data and other studies, improvement in the quality of the services linked to the conditions set by Juntos is important (Alcazar 2009).
- The National Identity Document programme has reached almost half of the Younger and Older Cohort children, which was a surprise to us and is probably due to the campaigns carried out by successive

governments over the past few years. Registering children through the NID programme is the first step towards targeting services to those most in need.

- Finally, it was positive to see the relatively high coverage of the universal health insurance programme (Seguro Integral de Salud), especially among the indigenous, rural, relatively poor, and less-educated families. We do not have information on the quality of health services under this programme, but reaching children and their families is an important first step in fulfilling their needs.

Conclusion

The main message from Young Lives, as from a few other studies, is that averages hide wide disparities, both in terms of opportunities and of outcomes. Specifically, life is much more difficult in Peru for a child who is poor, lives in a rural area, has a mother with little education or belongs to an indigenous group; gender difference is also relevant in some circumstances. For a country that is showing significant economic growth, it is crucial to ask whether this means that all children will benefit or whether some are indeed being left behind, and if so what the main areas are that would need to be studied further or tackled by policy intervention.

About Young Lives

Young Lives is a long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four developing countries – Ethiopia, India (in Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam – over 15 years, the timeframe set by the UN to assess progress towards the UN Millennium Development Goals. Through interviews, group work and case studies with the children, their parents, teachers and community representatives, 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 future, set against the environmental and social realities of their communities.

We are following two groups of children in each country: 2,000 children who were born in 2001-02 and 1,000 children born in 1994-95. 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 on the margins move in and out of poverty, and the policies that can make a real difference to their lives.

The Young Lives survey team in Peru is based at GRADE and the data collection team is based at IIN. The team is led by Professor Santiago Cueto. In Peru, Young Lives is known as *Niños del Milenio*. The website gives further information in both English and Spanish: www.ninosdelmilenio.org

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