Young Lives
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

Assessing Learning Progress in Ethiopia:
challenges and approaches for effective measurement in Young Lives

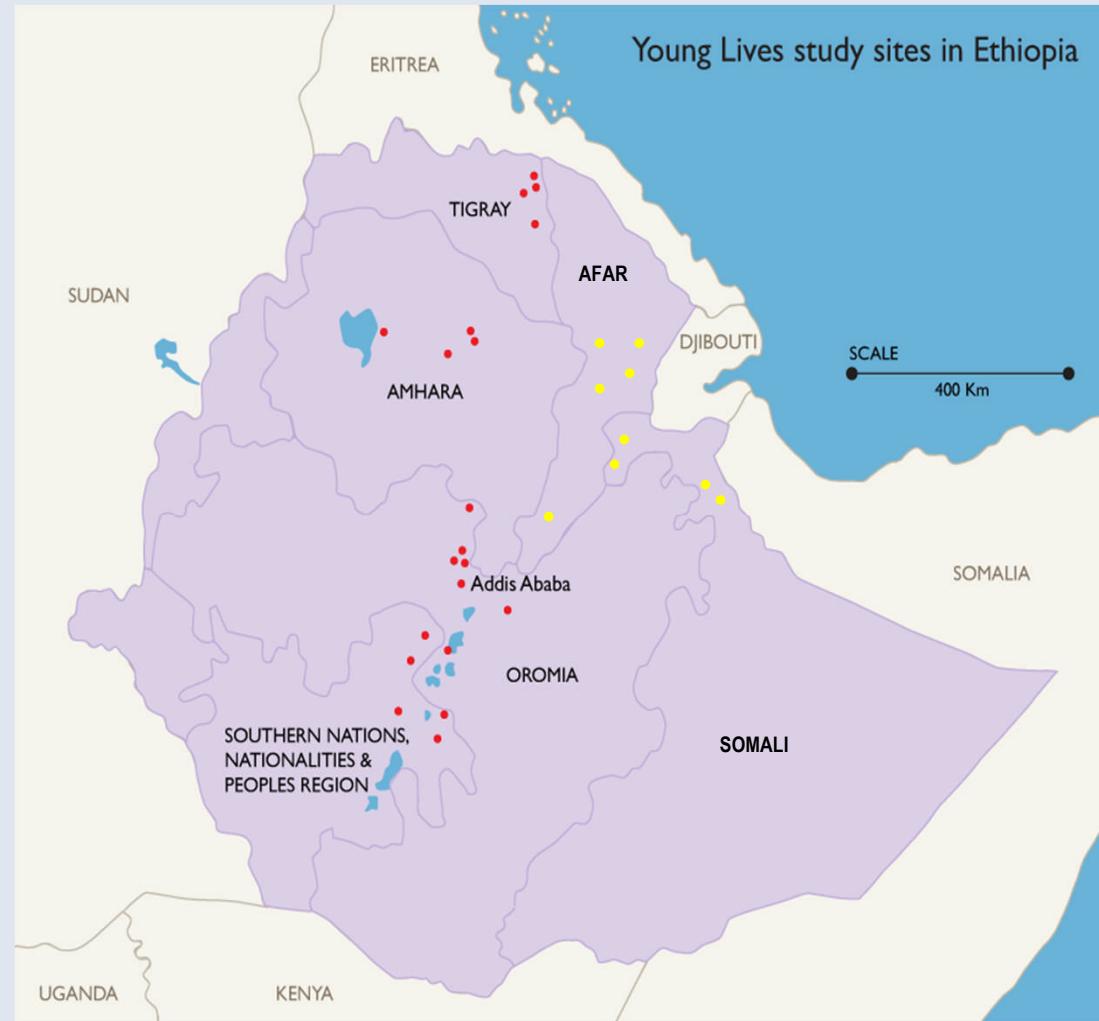Zoe James

UKFIET Conference
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YOUNG LIVES IN ETHIOPIA

Household survey

-   5 regions
-   20 sites
-   3,000 children in 2 cohorts

School survey 2012-13

-   7 regions (extension to Somali & Afar)
-   29 sites
-   Site-level school 'census'
-   All pupils in grade 4 & 5
-   ~11,000 children

Young Lives study sites in Ethiopia

SETTING THE SCENE: A COMPLICATED LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

- 80+ languages

    - From Semitic, Cushtic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan roots
    - In both Ge'ez and Latin script

    - With varying levels of difficulty and diverse literate histories and environments

- 1994 Education and Training Policy

    - Watershed in way languages were used for teaching and learning
    - Shift toward teaching in mother tongue or nationality languages at the primary level

THERE IS SIGNIFICANT DIVERSITY OF MOTHER TONGUE ACROSS YOUNG LIVES CHILDREN

Table 1: Mother tongue of Young Lives children

Mother tongue	Younger Cohort		Older Cohort	
	Total	%	Total	%
Afar	5	0.3	1	0.1
Amharic	**830**	**43.4**	**418**	**42.7**
Guraghe	93	4.9	45	4.6
Hadiyya	101	5.3	49	5.0
Oromiffa	**305**	**16.0**	**157**	**16.0**
Sidama	98	5.1	50	5.1
Silti	4	0.2	4	0.4
Tigrigna	**386**	**20.2**	**202**	**20.6**
Wolayta	90	4.7	51	5.2
Other	0	0.0	3	0.3
Total	1912	-	980	-

Source: Young Lives data

THERE IS SIGNIFICANT DIVERSITY OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION ACROSS STUDY SITES

Table 2: Main languages of instruction used for most subjects by region

Region	G1-4 MOI policy	G5-6 MOI policy	G7-8 MOI policy	G4 MOI in survey schools	G5 MOI in survey schools
Addis Ababa	Amharic		English	Amharic	Amharic; **English**
Amhara	Amharic; Awingi; Hammittena Oromiffa			Amharic	Amharic; Oromiffa
Oromia	Oromiffa; Amharic			Oromiffa; Amharic	Oromiffa; Amharic
SNNP	Multiple including: Amharic; Hadiyya; Sidama; Silti; Wolayta	English		Amharic; Wolayta; **English;** Sidama; Hadiya	**Amharic**; English
Tigray	Tigrigna			Tigrigna	Tigrigna
Afar	Amharic; Afar (ABE)	Amharic	English	Amharic	
Somali	Somali; Amharic			Somali; **English**	Somali; **Afar;** Amharic; **English**

Source: adapted from Heugh et al, 2007 in Vujcich, 2013 forthcoming

THIS COMPLEXITY RAISES SERIOUS ISSUES OF CROSS-LANGUAGE & CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARABILITY

Aim:
Good 'outcome' measures that enable meaningful comparison across groups and over time

Problem:
Cross-language & cross-cultural setting raises questions:

- Does the 'construct' mean the same thing?
- Is there equal familiarity with the method of admin?
- Do the items mean the same thing?

Impact:
Are differences between groups the result of some child or household characteristic, or a result of non-comparable outcome measures?

EXAMPLE: ETHIOPIA SCHOOL SURVEY 2012-13

- ~11,000 children

- 7 regions (core + Somali & Afar)

- 7 mediums of instruction

- All grade 4 and grade 5 classes in all schools in sites

- Assessments of Maths and Literacy linked to varying degrees to the Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs)

ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND CONCEPTUALISATION

- Development of common framework, in relation to MLCs & textbooks
    - separate process for maths and literacy

- Identification of appropriate 'test adaptors' in each language

- Developed prototype test in English, then worked to develop that into Amharic

- Then each language test adaptor began adaptation process

    Key point being
    maintenance of
    difficulty level across
    tests
    NOT simple translation

PILOTTING AND REFINEMENT

- Pilotted in 6 regions & 6 languages

- In each region visited 1 school & 2 classes

- Administered pilot assessments

- Used 'Item Response Theory' to examine item function and refine items to minimise the potential impact of inconsistent across-language item adaptation

- Aiming for conceptually sound and consistent tests rather than ones which need a lot of post-hoc adjustment
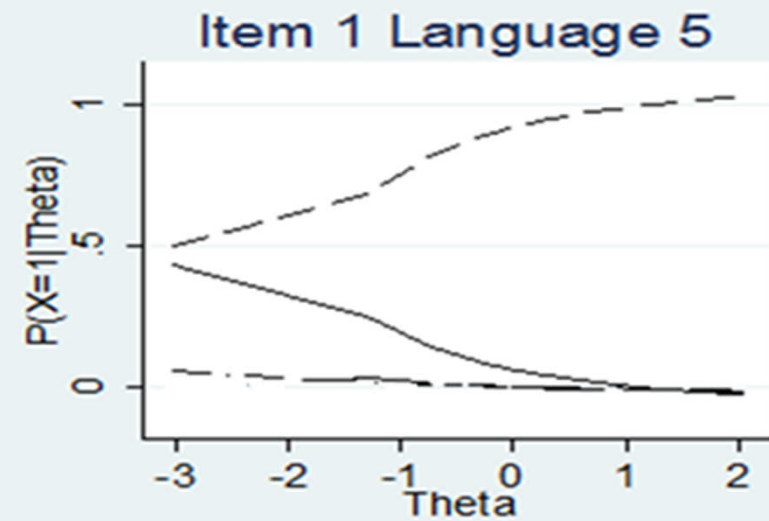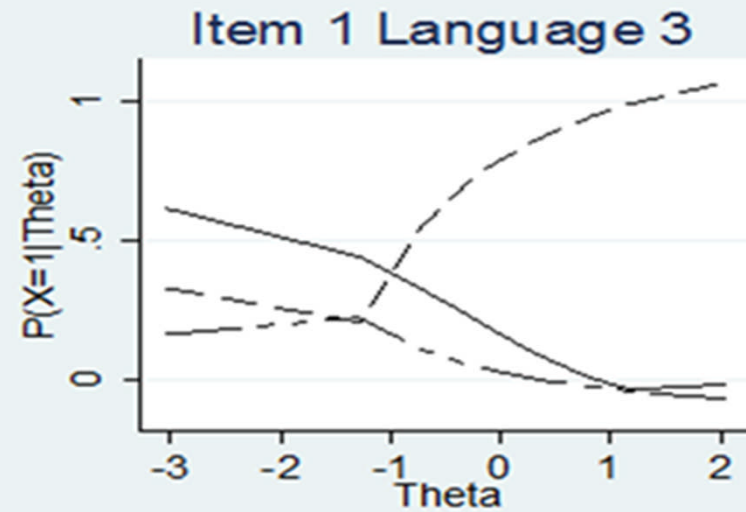
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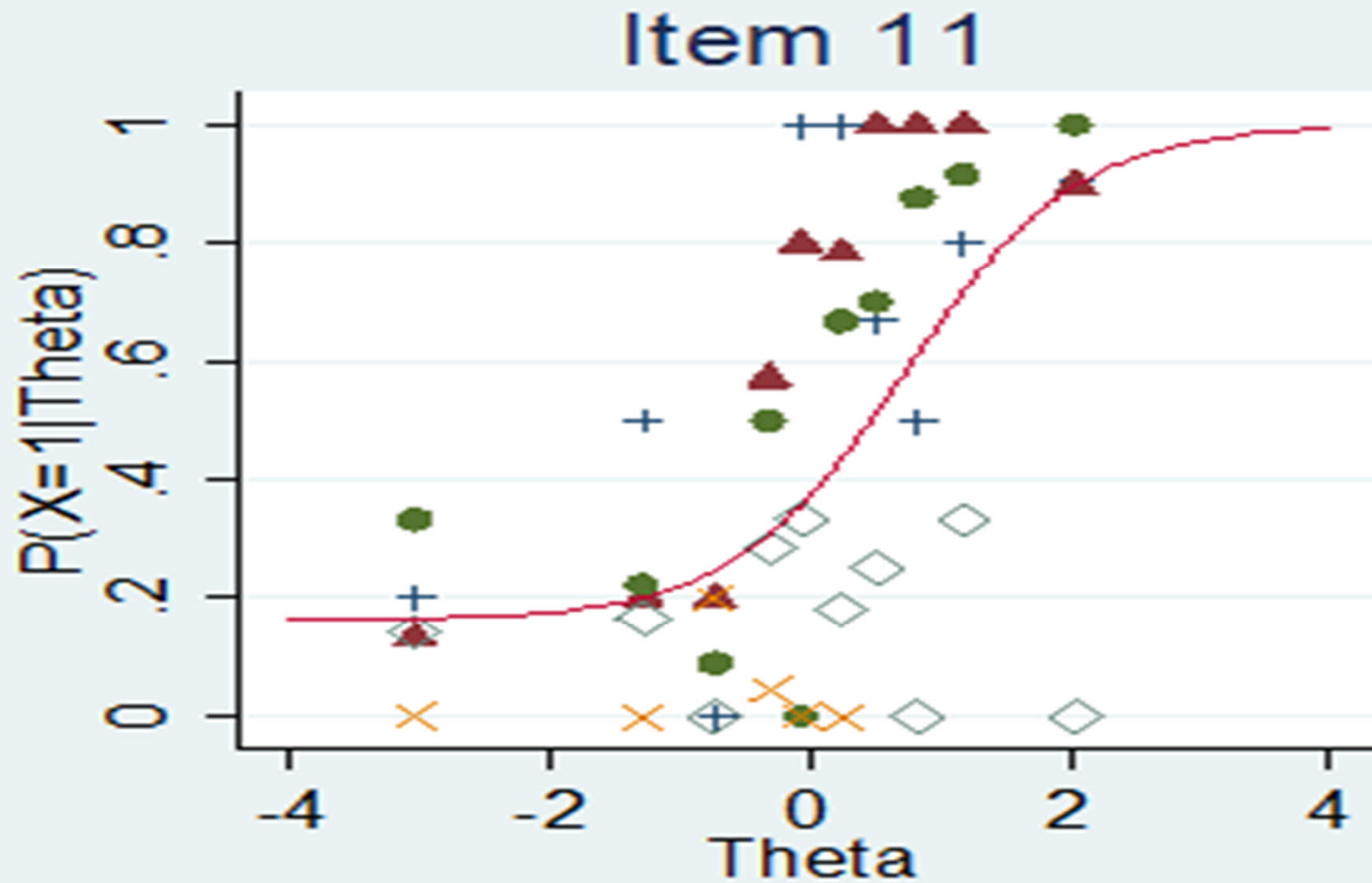
REVIEWING THE 'DISTRACTORS'

A – Solid; B – Dash; C – Dash + Dot

FINAL THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS…..

- **Review of final assessment data from Ethiopia looks promising**

- **Next step is analysis of reliability & validity & creating of scores**

- **Key points**
  - Working in multiple languages presents significant challenges
  - Addressing them at the design phase is time-consuming and often costly
  - But importance of engagement with issues can't be understated

FINDING OUT MORE...

www.younglives.org.uk

- methodology and research papers
- datasets (ESDS International)
- publications
- child profiles and photos
- e-newsletter

"Nothing is impossible for me"

Stories from Young Lives children

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