



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

**‘Modernity, Mobility and the Reshaping of Childhood in
the 21st Century: Educational Aspirations and
Challenges’
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OUTLINE

- **PART I: THE PROMISE OF MODERNITY**
THE PROMISE
THE ASSUMPTIONS
- **PART II: YOUNG LIVES EVIDENCE ON EDUCATION**
HOW DOES EDUCATION FIT WITH EVERYDAY LIFE?
THE SOCIAL POWER OF EDUCATION
- **PART III: THE EDUCATION-MIGRATION NEXUS**
THE CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE
CURRENT MODEL

PART I: THE PROMISE OF MODERNITY



THE PROMISE

- Never before in human history has so much been invested in children - both in their present (e.g. CRC) and in their future as adults
- A prosperous future for society depends on individuals being sufficiently skilled to take advantage of life's 'opportunities'
- While economic growth promotes child development, the economic performance of nations depends on 'successful' child development outcomes - and education is key
- **The World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020:** 'Simply put, investments in quality education lead to more rapid and sustainable economic growth and development. Educated individuals are more employable, able to earn higher wages, cope better with economic shocks, and raise healthier children.'

THE ASSUMPTIONS

- **School is a social good:** if they are to grow, modern economies require schooled, as opposed to working, childhoods. Schooling is a right - the chief means of upward social mobility for children and their families
- Thus, ECCEs, schools (and families) are at the heart of the growth agenda: parents and children need to be convinced to buy into the model (advocacy and compulsory schooling)
- **Migration and mobility are a social evil:** destabilising economies, threatening state security and sovereignty and posing a challenge to social integration of education systems. Sedentary populations are easier to control. Migration-restricting measures and anti-migration rhetoric abound - 'irregular/illegal migration', 'brain drain' etc.....
- **Autonomous child migration is synonymous with child trafficking**

PART II: YOUNG LIVES EVIDENCE ON EDUCATION



RESEARCH DESIGN

- Interdisciplinary, mixed methods, cohort study that is researching the causes and consequences of childhood poverty
- Following 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh) Peru, Vietnam, over 15 years
- Two age cohorts in each country:
 - 2,000 children born in 2000-01
 - 1,000 children born in 1994-95
- Pro-poor sample: 80 sites across the 4 countries selected to reflect country diversity, rural-urban, livelihoods, ethnic, religious differences; roughly equal numbers of boys and girls
- Data: children, selected siblings, caregivers (households), communities and schools (selected)

SOME BROAD EDUCATION TRENDS

The economies of all 4 Young Lives countries grew rapidly from 2002 to 2009 and primary school enrolment is now near universal in 3 of them.

But:

- In Ethiopia, only one in five of the older cohort had completed primary school by the age of 15, despite 90% still being enrolled.
- In Peru, children with less educated mothers and/or who speak an indigenous language are more likely to attend primary schools with fewer services or poorer infrastructure, to repeat grades and to have poorer results in achievement tests by age 8.
- In India, the drop-out rates for children from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes groups is almost double the rate of drop out for the Other Caste groups.
- In Vietnam, drop out of older cohort children is high among poor children, rural children, ethnic minority children and those whose parents had little or no education.

HOW DOES EDUCATION FIT WITH EVERYDAY LIFE?



CHILD REARING NORMS: ETHIOPIA

- **Hard work is an indicator of a ‘good child’:** it facilitates the development of *reasoning, empathy* and *moral responsibility*
- **Mashresha (aged 13, the third of 7 children).** His mother said: ‘His knowledge is improving and his way of speaking shows good progress.... He keeps the livestock, cares for his younger siblings, the crop.... He has realized the importance of keeping cattle, caring for children; he is differentiating the bad from the good things...he knows that if he becomes careless, we become poor, then we may be forced to have our children in labour....Yes, he is getting mature and he knows how much we are suffering for them.’
- **Work remains a crucial context for learning important collectivist values and also enables children to contribute to the domestic economy**

SCHOOL AND WORK ARE INTERCONNECTED (ETHIOPIA)

Minaya Abay (aged 13): Miniya's parents are deceased and she lives alone with her grandmother.

- **She is keen to help her grandmother:** “I am supporting my grandmother alone but my children might have a better life by having parents who can support each other.”
- **She studies hard and sees this as part of her duty to her grandmother:** “Since my grandmother is working hard to send me to school, I also have to work hard to get a better result”.
- **She is doing well at school and has high hopes for the future:** “...when I complete my education I will have a job to support myself and my grandmother and my life will be better [than my parents' lives]”.
- **If children do well at school, they can reciprocate later in life**

BUT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFTEN INVOLVES MAJOR SACRIFICES (ETHIOPIA)

Seife (from Aksum) suffers from epilepsy and his father has also been ill for a long time. Seife works gathering stones, feeding the cattle and doing household chores. He claimed, “I don’t even eat till my cattle eat their food,” and resents pressure by officials to make him go to school.

Seife: They [community officials] told me to go to school because I’m old enough. They insisted I go to school, so I did.

Interviewer: But you didn’t want to?

Seife: No, I didn’t want to go.

Interviewer: Why not?

Seife: Both my father and mother are getting old – nobody helps them with their work except me.

THE SOCIAL POWER OF EDUCATION



PERU

- **Rural life is strongly associated with suffering and hardship:**
‘We’re not going to suffer like this in the mud...it’s better that I go and study’ (Marta, rural Andahuaylas)
- **Caregivers struggle to give their children the best chances in life:** Esmeralda’s mother said:
‘I feel proud *mami*, I suffer... I brought my children into this world, I will ensure they study’
Her husband drinks so she must work hard, sometimes selling her cows to pay for her children’s education. Her two sons study in town, but money is short so Esmeralda attends the village school
- **Education is the way out of suffering:**
‘I also walk in the fields with sandals. At least he will go with shoes if he gets a good head with education’
(father, rural Andahuaylas)

'BECOMING SOMEBODY' IN PERU

- **Education is essential to 'becoming somebody' in Peru:**
 - Becoming a professional *'que sea profesional'*
 - Defending oneself/coping *'para que se defiende'*
 - Becoming different *'que tenga una vida diferente que yo'*
- **Eva plans to use education to get away from the land:** she finds working on her parents' farm disagreeable (her clothes get dirty and her body is 'shattered'). She is adamant that the skills she has acquired at work will not be useful in the future: 'I am not going to be a peasant (*campesina*)'. She hopes to go to Lima to study nursing.
- **This progression is part of the natural order of things:**
As one caregiver said: 'senora, my daughter is not meant to work in the fields'.

MIGRATION FOR EDUCATION IS RESHAPING CHILDHOOD (ANDHRA PRADESH)

- **E.g. changing ideas around gender:**
- Traditionally, girls from the Jathapa tribe in Patna were not free to go outside the home alone after puberty because of the reputational risks.
- Today many tribal children move into hostels to access schools outside the village. This provides girls with new freedoms, as 12-year-old Santhi explained:

[I]f one remains at home all the time it may not be possible to know anything about the outside world. So I want to go out ... We will know about the views of different people ...One ought to know about the world outside. So, I want to join a hostel and know much more ... I feel I might be able to live.

MIGRATION CAN ALSO DESTROY EDUCATION HOPES (PERU)

- Atilio didn't finished secondary school and has left for Lima with his girlfriend. His mother has not seen him for some time.
- She believes that her son's chances in life are ruined and that he will end up back in the village working in the fields: 'all his life he will suffer in the fields'
- She feels he has broken an explicit agreement: 'he said to me, "I'm not going to be like everyone else, I am going to study...perhaps to be an engineer." It seems I put him [into secondary school] just for the sake of it'.

THE EDUCATION-MIGRATION NEXUS



THE MISCONCEPTIONS

- Illiterate parents don't value education or care about its effectiveness
- Education has intrinsic worth and should not be the subject of cost-benefit calculations
- Education quality and relevance can wait until enrolment and access are resolved
- School replaces work in children's lives and school is free
- Children's emotional stability and socialisation rely on their growing up in residentially-fixed, stable, nucleated families
- Economic growth and structural reform guarantee employment for young people - so long as schools train them well

THE REALITY

- Adults and children everywhere are convinced of the value of education:
 - e.g. To the extents that schools have even led to the settlement of nomadic populations and (conversely) the flight of refugees
- EFA has transformed childhood experience globally, but was far too neglectful of education quality, relevance and equity
- With aspirations running so high, and so many schools failing, children and families see migration for education (and child work) as the logical option:
 - e.g. many children migrate for jobs so that they can cover school expenses

MIGRATION INCENTIVES AND EDUCATION

- **Some countries actively discourage migration and school mobility, eg *Vietnam and Ethiopia*:**
 - Without permission to move from local authorities, migrants lose right to school access. This forces family separation as individual members go in search of work
 - School shortages in rural Ethiopia - some children move in with relatives in town
 - In Vietnam school is supplemented with extra tuition
- **Some countries actively encourage migration and school mobility, eg *India*:**
 - Relocation and boarding in hostels are a condition of continued school access for children in tribal groups
 - Special Schools for all tribal children: as if they comprised a single linguistic/cultural group - major integration problems
 - Massive expansion of 'affordable' private schools + loss of confidence in the state system - increasing numbers of children shift between schools, some regularly

THE CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT MODEL



THE CHALLENGES

- ‘Turning children into “learners”, and excluding them from work, leaves governments with the problem of converting young people into “earners”’ (Morrow 2010:437)
- Parents and children understand this challenge and feel that mobility for education is necessary given current system constraints, even though governments (and NGOs) may resist children moving
- But how can parents and children be expected to know which are the best school choices? (Some illiterate parents are alienated by the school environment)
- Are the tremendous sacrifices worth it when good jobs are so scarce?
- How are governments addressing integration challenges? (language and cultural differences)

THE LIMITATIONS

- There has been far too much emphasis on children, families and schools in the growth model (though the focus is now on ECCE)
- Education systems are under inordinate pressure and funding is at risk, while inequality, unemployment and social exclusion are rising with economic growth
- The post-2015 MDGs debate is likely to focus on inequalities and inequities - school education may exacerbate these problems, but does school relocation, mobility and migration help?

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