

# The social and moral dimensions of educational migration in rural Peru

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Young Lives   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

# Aims of the presentation

*Using data from a child poverty study in Peru:*

- Situate migration for education within the broader context of social and economic inequalities, with a particular focus on rural and urban disparities in the country
- With reference to two rural communities, explore the way education, geographic mobility and social mobility are linked processes in children's everyday lives
- Emphasise the underlying social factors and values that motivate young people's aspirations and choices around education and migration
- Point out that migration/mobility can be a resource for the young in some contexts, but that it is an unequally distributed resource

# Peru: migration & inequalities

Peru has an established history of migration and population mobility:

1980s/early 90s: political violence, civil war led to mass disappearances and deaths (~65,000) and displacement

Nearly half a century before the war, rural-to-urban migration was well underway, contributing to urbanization: until the 1940s, Peru's population was 65% rural; by 2005, it was 25% rural (INEI 2007)



Lima represents 10 per cent of the country's territory, yet claims 1/3 of the population; high density of services in terms of health, education and sanitation in the coastal region.

# Peru: migration & inequalities

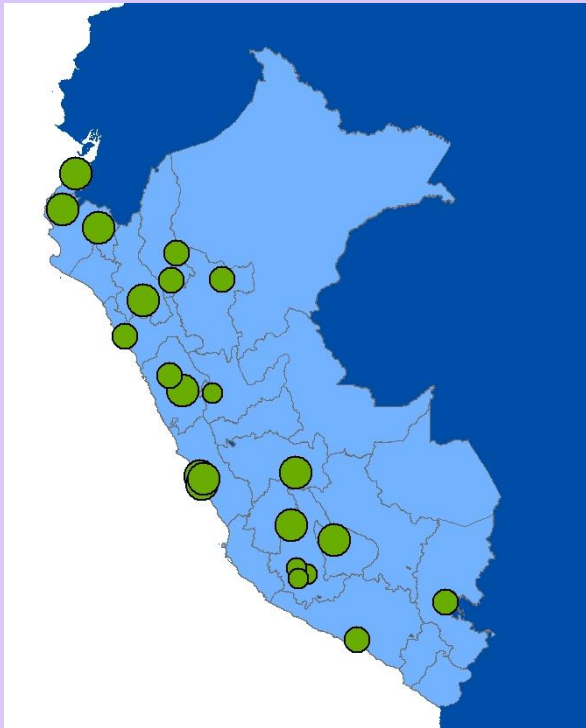
Much of the migration is fuelled by entrenched inequalities between regions and between social groups.

In YL sample, rural areas and indigenous populations are poorest and most disadvantaged; this is reflected in patterned disparities in children's outcomes

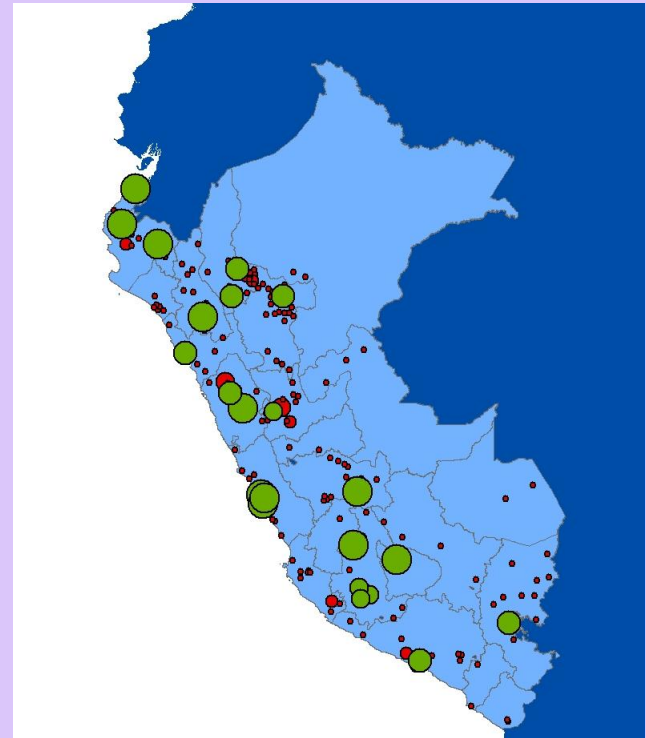
For example, drop out rates were 3 times higher for rural children compared to urban children; children who were rural or poor or whose mother spoke an indigenous language were more likely to have repeated a grade and to be overage.

The YL sample in Peru can be characterized by inequalities and by high levels of mobility.

# 1/4 of households moved (2001-9)



**Round 1 (2001)**



**Round 3 (2009)**

# Concerns for children's movement

- In the wider policy context, there are concerns around children's mobility.
- Peru's new National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (2012-2021) mentions migration in the section on Girls, Boys and Adolescents in situations of trafficking (for sex work, labour and begging)
- Focusing on migration as a risk and a child protection issue neglects children's everyday experiences of migration/mobility

# Migration as a resource

At household level, by R3, of those households who reported improved economic conditions (moving up two expenditure quintiles) 74% had moved from rural to urban areas between 2006 and 2009.

## Child's main reasons for moving:

- Study 19%
- Work 11%
- Family disputes 10%

## How life compares now with before the move:

- Better off 73%
- About the same 23%
- Worse off 4%

Reported child migration increases from age 12 (start secondary school)

# Where are the schools?

	Public Primary		Public Secondary		Technical		University	
	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Yes	94.1	96.4	75	45.5	35.3	1.8	22.1	0
No, but nearby	5.9	3.6	22.1	54.5	64.7	94.6	70.6	89.1
Non-existent	0	0	2.9	0	0	3.6	7.3	10.9

(N= 119 communities: urban 54.62%; rural 45.38%, 2009 survey)

Good access to primary school.

By secondary school, 1 in 3 rural children attend a school outside their village (R2).

Migration becomes increasingly necessary to access school education.



# High aspirations for education

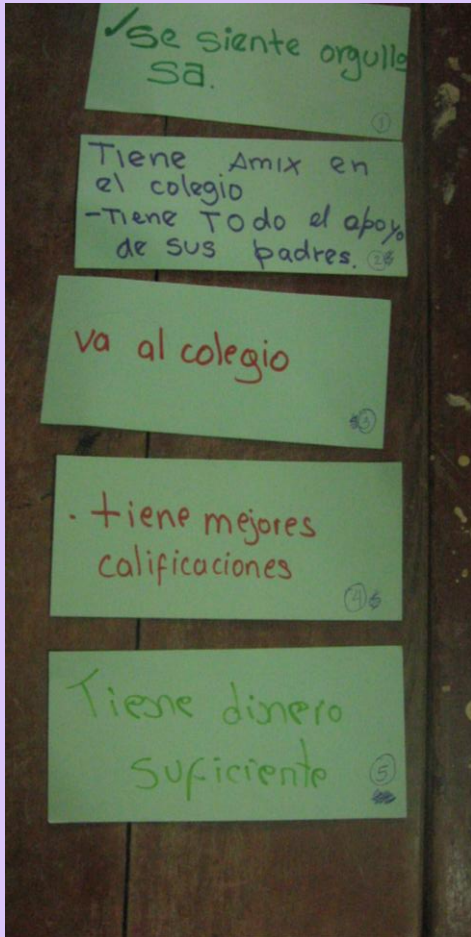
Migration is a resource within the context of high educational aspirations, where families want to access schools

Aspirations, age 15 (2009 survey)

	Urban	Rural
Primary	0	5.03
Secondary	5.39	10.69
Technical	16.96	27.67
University	70.71	54.72
MA/Phd	5.78	0.63



# Wellbeing in Rioja (age 16)



## Girls' group

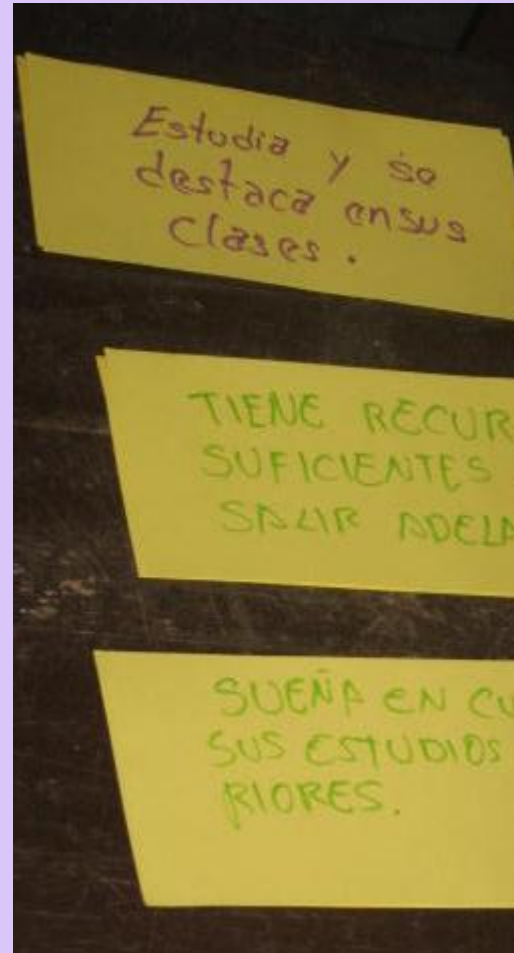
Feels proud

Has friends at school and has full support of parents

Goes to school

Has the best qualifications

Has enough money



## Boys' group

Studies and rises above others in class

Has enough resources to 'get ahead'

Dreams of continuing his (higher) education



# Qualitative study contexts

Rioja: rural, jungle



Andahuaylas: rural, Quechua-speaking, highland



53% of rural mothers had between 1-6 years of schooling.

By age 12, many of the children already had more formal education than their mothers

# Social dimensions of migration for education

1. Children's social relationships and networks
2. Social responsibilities in family contexts
3. Social becoming: expressed through a variety of related concepts:
  - 'becoming somebody in life'
  - 'getting ahead'
  - 'improving oneself'
  - 'be worth something'
  - 'be different/distinct from...'

Becoming educated is at the heart of these processes.





# Social becoming and distinction

- School-based education is believed to enhance social worth and power.
  - For example, Esmeralda's mom said she suffered a lot to keep all her children in school, believing that when children drop out early: 'they don't know anything....if they don't finish (school) they're not worth much, they've got no authority.'
- Important spatial aspects pertaining to the symbols and values surrounding education and migration; the city associated with opportunities and the village with hardship and suffering in the fields
  - For example, Eva insists, 'I'm not going to be a peasant!' Her sister paints the entire village as ignorant, saying, 'There's not a single letter of the alphabet in anyone's head', so, she argues, Eva should finish school in the city.
- Children's social identities are therefore constructed in and through places (imagined and real) and through negotiated movement between those places.

# Social (un)becoming

Children receive strong messages about who they should become:

A teacher in **Rioja** village tells his students:

‘If you want to be professionals you have to look after yourselves...if you don’t look after yourselves, who will? ... We, as your parents, as your teachers, we give you all the support you need so you have to grab it and later on you’ll be better for it, you’ll be professional... Or do you want to be like your parents? ...‘Nooooo’ (the students say).’

A teacher in **Andahuaylas** says that in his classes the children who speak Quechua are made to speak Spanish. He tells them:

‘Your parents said you have to improve your Spanish...anyways, it will serve you well when you go to the big city where they speak Spanish. They won’t make fun of you... Or haven’t you seen the movie ‘Gregorio?’

# Gregorio

Film (1985) about an indigenous boy who migrates to Lima. Age 12 leaves school to work in the streets.

‘Gregorio has to look for a route to overcome obstacles and limitations.’



# Social networks

- The majority of rural families are organized trans-locally, or across multiple localities
  - Luis mother (Rioja): ‘Well, they leave me, my other son’s already left me... They become ‘youth’ and they leave us...well, I’ll end up alone.’
- Children’s migration aspirations, plans and experiences map onto these kin networks
- Older siblings are important as hosts/mentors for younger siblings, but also for the remittances they send home
  - For example, Nicolas (from Rioja) has three sisters who are domestic maids in Lima; they told him: ‘Were working for you...so you can be well, so you can go to secondary school. Don’t be like us.’



# Social responsibilities

- Children's migration for education/work is a way for them to actively work to overcome their poverty and to improve their family situation
- Migration for education is not an individual undertaking, nor is it a single event or act; it's a process, a collective effort for mutual benefit.
- While children's work is often essential to mitigating household poverty *now*, education is considered an investment in long-term futures of individuals and families.



# Elmer's experience

From Rioja, now 16 years old.

Age 12, relocated to Lima, to live with elder sister who wanted him to look after her two young children so that she and her husband could go out to work.

In exchange, she paid for all his schooling costs, and he completed his first year of secondary school in Lima.

When asked why it was important for him to go to Lima, he answered: 'well, to know more.'

The year before, Elmer's older brother had been helping out his sister, but he wanted to return to the village to graduate with his friends, so Elmer replaced him.

Elmer thought the school in Lima was better than the one in the village, he liked the computers.

He was also proud to have learned how to cook 'city food.'

# Elmer's experience

Elmer's mother: 'education is better in the city, not so backward as it is over here.' 'I don't want him to be like me, with no education...it's not the time for not having studies, not anymore.'

By age 13 he had moved back to live with his parents. His older brother, having graduated high school, returned to Lima to live with the sister so he could continue his studies there.

'Circulating' children in this way is an established pattern in many communities, where rural children are relocated in better-off urban households; it relieves natal home of financial burden and children often promised education in the city. 'New' or intensified pressures around education can be met by traditional mechanisms and systems.

# Maria's experience

Maria, age 16, is also a return migrant.

Age 12, when it came time to study secondary school she was sent to live with her grandmother about an hour's drive away, because the school was better. She helped her grandmother with chores. She liked the new place because it had water and electricity and she didn't need to use candles to study. But she missed home.

When asked, Maria's mother did not think Maria would ever return to the village: 'It's very difficult here, here there are no jobs. She will have to go to the city. She'll have to work there to look for a job, so she can study.'

Age 13, she returned home to be closer to her family. 'She couldn't get accustomed there' [Mom] 'acostumbrarse' = skill

Age 15, her entire family moved near the grandmother where they had been preparing land and a house, so the girls could go to secondary school there together.

# Maria's experience

But one month before the school year ended, Maria's parents announced that they were moving back to the village.

She was sad because she had made a good friend there.

'It was nice living there. There were things to see in the streets, more shops. The school was better too.'

This time, asked if Maria might leave Rioja, her mother says:

'Here there's nothing, here where's she going to study?'

Depending on what Maria decides to do after secondary school, the family might relocate again.

# Concluding thoughts

- Children's migration in this context is fluid, circular, responds to changing family circumstances, and in many cases children's wellbeing is at the heart of migration decisions
- Difficult to disentangle migration for education - for work - for family - for self, etc. (Maria's mom: 'She'll have to work there, to look for a job, so she can study')
- In contexts marked by entrenched inequalities, migration can be considered a resource, but it is not equally distributed. (Im)mobility becomes another potential source of disadvantage for young people
- The study shows that decisions around migration and education reflect consideration of material and social factors. The 'returns' to migration and of educational investments is a fundamental question in tracking the life trajectories of these and other groups of children and families. But it is important that the economic story of migration and education does not overshadow the social one.

**Thank you**