



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

**Young Lives**   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

# Changing education landscapes, privatisation and mobility between schools in India

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# SCHOOL MOBILITY FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY: A PARENT'S VIEW

*'She studied UKG, LKG, and nursery in Sribharathi [school] and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class in Siddhartha [school]. There the bathrooms were not good and ...we changed the school to Geetham Concept School for 3<sup>rd</sup> class. But it was far from here and it was difficult to go by auto daily. So again we changed to Vijayawada Ravindragharati [school] for her 4<sup>th</sup> class. There were no B.Ed trained teachers and spoken English. It was "English medium" but there were no proper English classes. She was not at all able to speak in English. We paid the fee correctly but not at all satisfied with the studies. So we have changed to Bhashayam [school] now.'*



(Young Lives qualitative research in 'Sagar', Andhra Pradesh, India, 2011)

# CHANGING EDUCATION LANDSCAPES IN ANDHRA PRADESH



- High educational aspirations
- Well established government school system
- Widespread dissatisfaction with the government sector in context of weak regulation and low accountability
- Massive increase in private schooling, including 'low-fee' schools.
- Private schools promise an 'English Medium' education
- Private increasingly in competition with the government sector, and also weakly regulated

# QUESTIONS FOR THIS PAPER

- Increasingly heterogeneous supply enables some families to ‘choose’ a school for their child and ‘vote with their feet’:
  1. Is choice potentially empowering for families...or a burden on poor households (and socially divisive)?
  2. Is choice really ‘choice’ in a context where government schools are not seen as an alternative by the ‘better-off’ and private schools are still out of reach to the poorest?
  3. What is the evidence on parents choosing and changing schools?
  4. What are the implications for children’s experience of primary school?



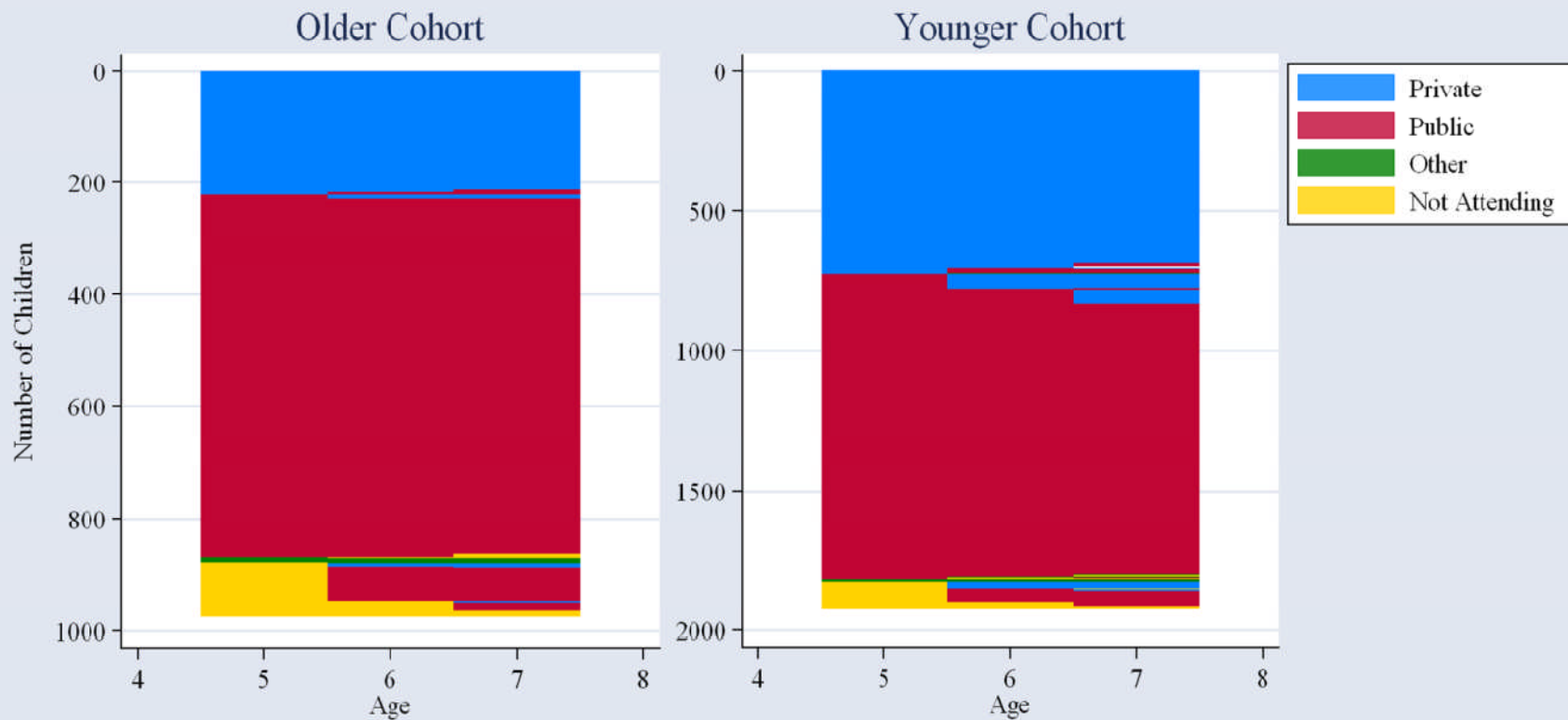
# WHAT CAN YOUNG LIVES CONTRIBUTE?

- Schooling histories: all children in two cohorts collected from caregivers in round 3 (2009), linked to detailed household data
- School survey work in 2010 visited 250 schools – 100 government, 130 private and tracked 950 younger cohort children to their schools
- School names from each academic year offer a unique longitudinal perspective and enable an examination of movement between schools within and between each sector



- Qualitative research on dynamics of household choice and children's experiences

# CHANGING SCHOOL TRAJECTORIES: COHORT COMPARISONS FOR EARLY GRADES

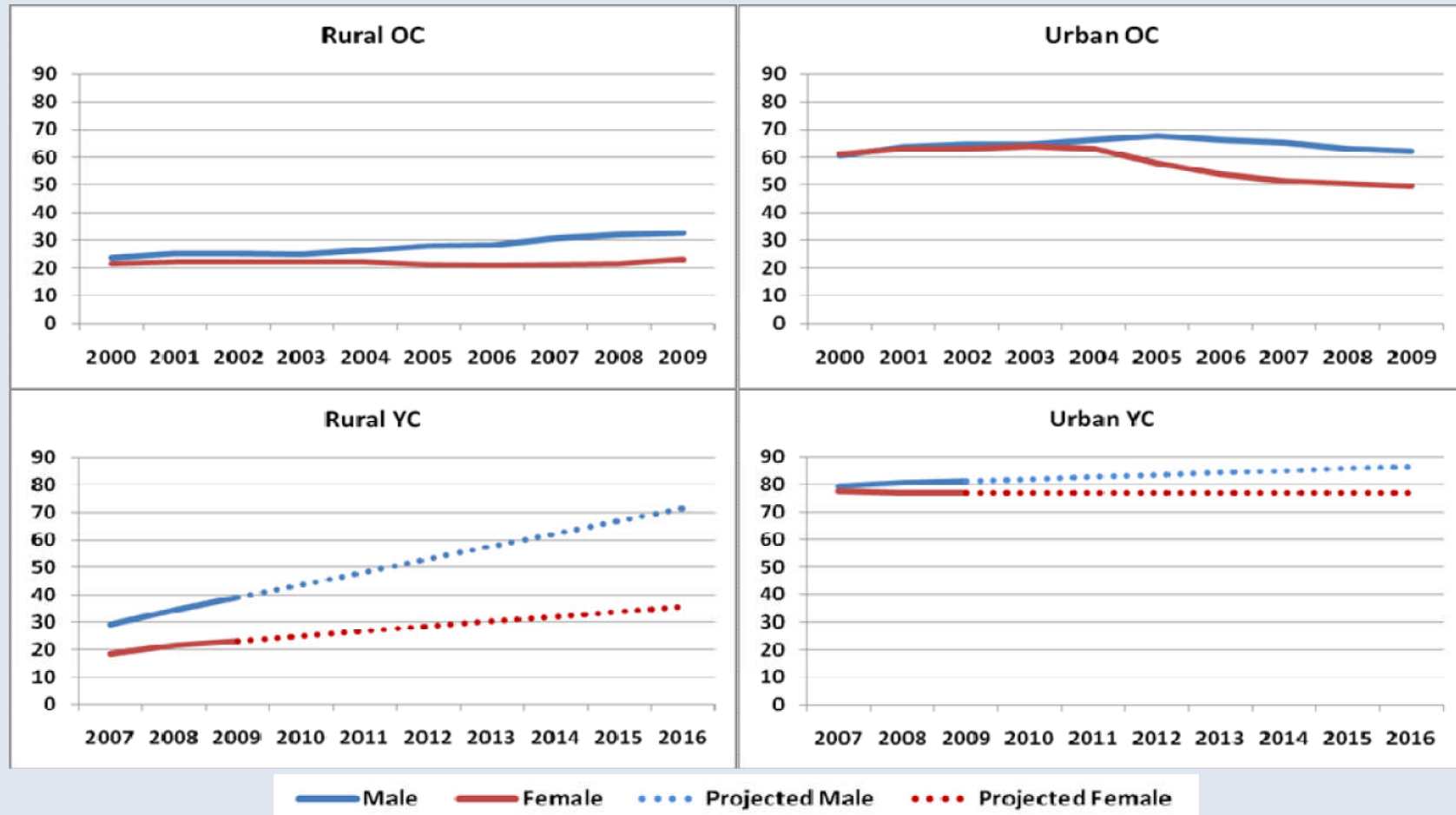


(n=994)

(n=1,931)

- 2001 24% older cohort in private schools at 8 years old
- 2009 44% younger cohort in private schools at 8 years old

# COHORT COMPARISONS BY GENDER AND LOCATION



For details see: Woodhead, M., Frost, M. and James, Z. (2013) "Does growth in private schooling contribute to Education for All?" *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33 (1), 65-73

## “SHOPPING AROUND” FREQUENT SCHOOL CHANGES DURING THE EARLY GRADES

**An unexpected finding:** 2010 school survey tracked ~1300 younger cohort children to the schools they had been attending the previous academic year.

- 18% were no longer in the same school!

### **Research for this paper:**

1. Detailed analysis of school histories:

***What is the frequency of school changes in the first years of primary and how has this changed between the two cohorts?***

2. Qualitative substudy in 3 communities with high levels of school changes between 2009-2010

***What factors influence household decision-making for school choice?***



# THE PREVALENCE OF SCHOOL CHANGES FOR THE OLDER AND YOUNGER COHORT UP TO AGE 8

**Table 1: School changes during the early primary classes in Andhra Pradesh**

	Younger Cohort (up to age 8)						Older Cohort (up to age 8)					
	Urban			Rural			Urban			Rural		
	Girls	Boys	Tot	Girls	Boys	Tot	Girls	Boys	Tot	Girls	Boys	Tot
<b>% No change</b>	76.4	75.0	75.6	85.8	83.9	84.8	91.8	87.2	89.4	95.9	96.1	96.0
<b>% change once or more</b>	23.6	25.0	24.4	14.2	16.1	15.2	8.2	12.8	10.6	4.1	3.9	4.0

- Increase in prevalence of school changes in urban areas from 10.6% of the Older Cohort by age 8, to 24.4% of the Younger Cohort
- Increase in prevalence of school changes in rural areas from 4.0% of the Older Cohort by age 8, to 15.2% of the Younger Cohort

# WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL CHANGES DOES THIS INVOLVE?

Table 2: School trajectories for younger cohort children who moved once by age 7-8

Type of movement as %	Younger Cohort (up to age 8)					
	Urban			Rural		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Government to Government	2.0	5.0	3.6	28.9	21.9	25.1
Government to Private	8.0	10.0	9.1	37.8	55.2	47.2
Private to Government	6.0	3.3	4.6	10.0	5.7	7.7
Private to Private	80.0	81.7	80.9	20.0	14.3	16.9
Other	4.0	0.0	1.8	3.3	2.9	3.

- In urban areas, 80.9% of changes are within the private sector, drawing attention to the volatility of a marketised system
- In rural areas, much greater variation in the types of changes taking place 47.2% shifting from the government to the private sector. Note that nearly 30% of girls who move, do so within the government sector.

# HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING FOR SCHOOL CHOICE - QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE



- Qualitative substudy conducted July 2011 in 3 Young Lives sites with high levels of school changes between 2009-2010
- Interviews with 30 caregivers and children purposively selected because the child had moved school between 2009-2010.
- Interviews involved construction of a school history timeline, used to discuss children's school changes and the factors that were important in the decision-making process.

# REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANGING EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN SAGAR

- High educational aspirations, schooling as a means to social mobility  
*'...people are not worried about their economic background or financial position... They are prepared to give up anything for the sake of their children's education. They want to give their children whatever they missed in their childhood and they want their children to attain that position which they failed to get.'*
- Increased choice:  
*'...in those days there was only one school for the entire...town. Now there are more than ten schools in the same area.'*
- Private schools increasingly accessed by disadvantaged communities:  
*'In those days, very few people sent their children to such [private] schools. Even children like Supraja also did not go to such schools, but nowadays all of them prefer to send their children to these private schools and they do not want their children to go to Government Schools.'*

- caregiver of Supraja, Sagar

# THE FINANCIAL BURDEN AND PARENTAL DILEMMAS

- 'low-fee' private schools come at considerable cost for poor families

*'[We] have to raise that money somehow and pay her school fee and later on try to clear the incurred loans... We spend everything on education'*

*-caregiver of Supraja, Sagar*

- Unregulated system means that fees change unexpectedly, and rise year-on-year, forcing school changes in light of resource constraints.

- Fluctuating household income also necessitates school changes in light of changing resources for schooling

- In poor communities, taking of loans, joining 'chit groups' and mortgaging of items of value emerge as strategies to cope with the financial burden:

*'we use to borrow from others and use to pay the chits and save, the weekly chit, with that money I paid they said this year it is Rs.10000/- next year it may be more, so I got frightened and joined him in government school and told him to study nicely.'*

*-caregiver, Perambalur*

# THE INFLUENCE OF QUALITY ON DECISIONS

- Near universal dissatisfaction with government provision
- Accountability as key:
  - *‘For private schools, we pay money, we can question them if children come home early or if they don’t study well, if they don’t teach properly, we won’t send the children to their school, but in government the teachers come and teach for the sake of their salaries, so they just come and go daily.’*
  - *‘we are small people.... They are government teachers’*

*-caregiver of Kavya Sri, Perambular*



- English medium provision offered by private sector seen as important in improving *‘prospects’*
- Distance, teacher quality, attendance and attentiveness, make-up of student body also important to parents making choices

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Growth of private education provision has fundamentally changed the education landscapes of many Young Lives communities
- Private has become the norm in urban communities and increasingly in rural areas
- Government schools in some communities becoming the 'choice of last resort'. Ghettoisation of the government sector?
- These trends about the perceived low quality/accountability of government sector, as well as attractiveness of the private sector
- Markets for education and 'choice' has created a situation in which children move between schools more frequently, as parents "shop around"
- Choice is only available to some families, and for some children within families - implications for equity? Who gets left behind in the race for social mobility?



Forthcoming paper:

**James, Z. and Woodhead, M.**

***“Voting with their feet? Choosing and changing schools in India’s private and government sectors”***