



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

Achieving Transformation through Investment in Young People

Professor Jo Boyden, Professor Stefan Dercon
with Dr Thang Nguyen, Dr Tassew Woldehanna and Dr
Caine Rolleston, Young Lives

Launch of Young Lives Round 3 Survey Data
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 26 September 2011

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

Delivering for Children: Understanding children's
lives as they are lived

Jo Boyden (Director, Young Lives)

Inclusive Growth: What helps poor people
participate in growth

*Professor Stefan Dercon (Department of International
Development, University of Oxford)*

Education in the Context of Delivering Growth

*Dr Thang Nguyen (Country Director, Young Lives in
Vietnam)*

Delivering on the Growth and Transformation
Programme

*Dr Tassew Woldehanna (Principal Investigator, Young
Lives Ethiopia)*

Education and the Poverty Cycle

*Dr Caine Rolleston (Education Research Officer, Young
Lives)*



WHAT WE DO

12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years

Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru,
Vietnam

Two age cohorts in each country:

- 2,000 children born in 2000-01
- 1,000 children born in 1994-95

From infancy to parenthood

Pro-poor sample: 20 sites in each country
selected to reflect country diversity, rural-
urban, livelihoods, ethnicity etc; roughly equal
numbers of boys and girls



Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

Delivering Economic Growth for Children

Professor Jo Boyden,
Director, Young Lives

Young Lives Seminar
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague,
26 September 2011

POVERTY REDUCTION -> GROWTH-LED DEVELOPMENT

- Quality growth entails:
 - governance (quality services, fiscal regimes, market regulation, etc.)
 - sustainability (esp. Environmental)
 - long-term accumulation of human capital
- Young Lives focuses on human capital formulation
- Human capital framework:
 - holistic conceptualisation of human development: health and nutrition; cognitive skills
 - and some stress non-cognitive skills (agency, self-efficacy, sense of inclusion)

IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD TO HUMAN CAPITAL FORMATION

- Childhood experience = key to adults we become
 - Interaction of different developmental domains > what happens in one domain may affect others
 - Some aspects of children's development - more amenable to external influences than others
 - Outcomes of child poverty may be profound, long-lasting and possibly irreversible
- Children experience household poverty differently to other members
- Greater proportion of children face poverty than other groups:
 - Families with children - higher risk of being income-poor than other groups
 - Young people = about half the world's income poor

POLICY ATTENTION TO CHILDREN IN RECENT DECADES

- First wave measures (health, nutrition, water and sanitation) extraordinarily successful at improving child survival & health
- Second wave measures education, increased pre-school & primary enrolment, dramatically changing children's aspirations
- But third wave (child protection) floundering
- And specific challenges remain to first and second

YOUNG LIVES FINDS THAT GROWTH HAS IMPROVED CHILDREN'S CONDITIONS

Young Lives sample - pro poor - experienced growth 2002-09

- Wealth - e.g. Peru
 - Consumption increased by about 15% in real terms between 2006 and 2009
- Service access - e.g. Peru
 - Safe water increased by 50% between 2002-09
- Aspirations to a different kind of childhood - e.g. Ethiopia
 - Transformation beliefs/practices around 'girlhood'
 - Education and labour market aspirations have raised marriage age
 - School: site of social transformation - campaign against FGC/early marriage

HOWEVER, WHO BENEFITS FROM GROWTH?

- Same households/children repeatedly excluded - disadvantaged:
 - Ethnic minority children, low caste, rural and poorest & children whose mothers have no/low education at increased risk of doing less well across series of indicators in education, health, subjective well-being
- Household threshold for tolerance of poverty/other shocks = low:
 - Poorest carry higher burden
 - In Andhra Pradesh children who lost a family member (other than caregiver) 70% less likely to be enrolled in school
- Households with little or no access to social support groups = vulnerable:
 - Community groups (eg saving clubs) exclude poorest (can't reciprocate)
 - Children in these households: = 40% less likely to have healthy weight in Andhra Pradesh & healthy height for age (Ethiopia, Peru)
 - & rate themselves lower in subjective well-being (Ethiopia) and health (Andhra Pradesh)
- Disparities in life chances widen over the life course:
 - In Vietnam 5% point difference in school enrolment between poor & the rest - more than tripled between ages 12 & 15

ON WHAT TERMS ARE POOR INCLUDED IN GROWTH

- India: state - skewed investment/in retreat - despite economic growth
- Privatisation of education
 - 24 % of older cohort in private schools at 8 years old in 2001 but by 2009 44% younger cohort in private schools at this age
 - Many leave state schools because of poor quality
 - Scheduled tribes - forced to migrate for education/hostels entrenching marginalisation
- Health insurance - secondary care
- Poor-quality services
 - Many children leave school without even basic literacy and numeracy
 - Peru: the kind of education children get influenced by household characteristics associated with family affluence etc. (as well as independent effect of maternal education)

POLICY COMMUNITY

- Risks of attending to only low-hanging fruit
 - first generation of pupils benefit school access, but unless improve quality = diminishing returns
- More attention to equity and equality
 - central to human capital formation
 - Social exclusion/stigma = adds layers of disadvantage
 - loss of agency, human potential
- Inequality = source of social risk (Naxilite civil unrest etc.)

WHAT KIND OF SKILLS FOR WHICH KIND OF LABOUR MARKET?

- Informalisation of labour > new skills
- Human capital model underpinning growth - narrow range of academic skills. What about other life and non-cognitive skills?
- Ethiopia
 - caregivers gradually and deliberately expose children to *practical (everyday) responsibility* - hard work > 'good child' (child idleness disparaged)
 - everyday activities / responsibilities - reproduces *reasoning (thinking) & moral logic (empathy)* = the 'mature' person.
- Social protection - panacea?
 - cannot do it on its own (ameliorative)
 - effective systems - expensive (as in OECD countries)
 - impact on children? Unintended consequences

FINDING OUT MORE...

www.younglives.org.uk

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

