

Conference and Call for Papers

Adolescence, Youth and Gender *Building Knowledge for Change*

8-9 September 2016

Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

‘Adolescence’ has risen high on the global agenda, with a particular focus on girls. Researchers, policymakers and practitioners are increasingly interested in the second decade of life as a newly recognised ‘window of opportunity’ to reduce poverty and inequality and to prevent the transmission of poverty across generations.

Over the past few decades, the early years of childhood have been highlighted as a critical period for intervention, resulting in impressive achievements – a dramatic reduction in child mortality and the expansion of primary schooling. More recently, the international development community has extended its focus to ‘adolescence’ as a way to sustain and build upon these gains, funding numerous campaigns and programme initiatives, aimed particularly at the empowerment of adolescent girls, in low- and middle-income countries. Funnelling efforts to improve the life-chances of girls, it is argued, will result in greater individual and national prosperity and will promote gender equality, since it is during the second decade of childhood that gender differences widen, particularly for the poorest children. Decisions about education, work, marriage and fertility have critical impacts on long-term outcomes for girls, boys and families.

But the current enthusiasm about the potential benefits of ‘investing’ in adolescents is not without its problems. Interventions aimed at young people commonly reflect a false dichotomy wherein ‘adolescence’ is viewed as relevant to girls, whereas ‘youth’ refers to young men. There is overlap in international definitions of *adolescents* as young people between the ages of 10 and 19 and *youth* as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. To what extent are these concepts useful, not only in terms of practical interventions, but also as a reflection of social life? There are further challenges of reaching girls in contexts where they are excluded from public spaces, understanding the role of culture in bringing about change, and there is a risk of focusing on the individual rather than structural barriers as the solution to marginalisation and exclusion.

This two-day international conference, organised by *Young Lives* (www.younglives.org.uk), will promote dialogue and critical reflection on the latest evidence, current paradigms, concepts and approaches to adolescence, youth and gender in international development and consider the implications for policy and programming.

Conference Questions

The conference will address key questions relating to adolescence, youth and gender in global contexts, for example:

- When and how do gender inequalities emerge and manifest themselves during the first two decades of life, and what are the later consequences for both young men and women?
- What is the interplay between gender norms, political-economic structures and individual behaviours?
- How does gender relate to poverty and to other intersecting inequalities in adolescence and youth (age, ethnicity/race/caste, class, location, sexuality, disability, etc.)?
- What does 'empowerment' look like for young people in different contexts, and is empowerment a solution to exclusion and discrimination?
- 'What works' to reduce gender inequality, and how does reducing gender inequality in the first two decades of life have long-term effects over the life course?

Call for Papers

We welcome high-quality papers and presentations addressing these questions, especially:

- Studies carried out in low- and middle-income countries, or in contexts of poverty and inequality
- Papers based on quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods analysis, including evidence-based evaluations
- Papers using panel and longitudinal data, or a life-course approach
- Papers based on evidence and learning from policy and programme formulation and implementation
- We want to facilitate discussion about 'what works' in different contexts, and therefore ask all authors (wherever possible) to consider the implications of their findings for policy and practice.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 February 2016.

To submit an abstract: Abstracts should be no more than 300 words in length and should include: (a) author(s) name and affiliation; (b) contact e-mail address; (c) title of proposed paper and; (d) a preferred thematic stream (optional, see below). If your paper is co-written by more than one person, please indicate who will present. Please send your abstract to younglives@younglives.org.uk with the words 'Abstract Submission' in the subject line.

Panels and posters: We would also be pleased to receive proposals for panels of 3 related papers on one topic (e.g. how to measure empowerment) to be presented in one parallel session, or proposals for posters. Please send an abstract (as above) indicating in the abstract and in the e-mail subject line the words 'Panel submission' or 'Poster submission'.

We particularly welcome papers using Young Lives or other longitudinal data (although submissions are **not** restricted to those using Young Lives data). Household and child-level data from the first three rounds of the Young Lives survey are available to download from the [UK Data Archive](#). We will provide early access to the Round 4 survey data (due to be publicly archived in early April 2016) to authors of accepted conference abstracts who wish to use it. Preliminary findings and documentation from the Round 4 survey are available on the website to assist with writing your abstract.

Notifications of acceptances will be sent by **15 March 2016**.

For guidance on how to write 'a killer conference abstract' see <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/01/27/how-to-write-a-killer-conference-abstract/>

Conference programme and streams

The conference will consist of keynote presentations and parallel sessions organised around a small number of streams. We are expecting papers on a range of topics including: education, health, sexual health and reproductive rights, understanding sexuality, marriage and parenting, empowerment, migration, work, violence, and which are likely to include gendered perspectives on:

- a) Trajectories and life-course inequalities: children's early circumstances and later outcomes, risk and protective processes, trends across the life-course, including aspirations and other factors influencing gender pathways
- b) Intersecting inequalities: gender, age, ethnicity/race/caste, class, location, sexuality, health, disability, etc.
- c) Time-use and transitions: paid and unpaid work, care work, and impacts on young people's life-chances; gendered transitions to secondary and post-secondary education, and transitions to employment
- d) Social norms, structures and behaviours: the interplay between gender norms, political-economic structures and individual behaviours; critical perspectives on empowerment
- e) Intergenerational dynamics and transmission of poverty
- f) 'What works': points for intervention, methods for creating and assessing impact.

Conference organisers

Jo Boyden, Gina Crivello, Marta Favara, Caroline Knowles. The Conference Organisers will work with a Committee of experts to review abstracts and select papers. Please send all enquiries to: younglives@younglives.org.uk.

Online registration will open in early February 2016. We regret Young Lives is not able to cover costs of participants. Participants will have the option of booking accommodation at the conference venue (Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford) on a first come, first served basis. (Some funding may be available for presenters from developing countries.)

Further information

[Visit the conference page](#) for further information and details of plenary speakers.