

Providing evidence on violence affecting children

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Violence affecting children and youth is a widespread global problem, and poorer children appear to be particularly affected. While Young Lives is not a violence prevalence study, Young Lives has had a key role to play as it provides one of the few sources of longitudinal data on violence affecting children, and it is able to generate high-quality research examining the causes and consequences of violence affecting children and youth. In particular, Young Lives' collaboration with UNICEF's Office of Research (OoR) has led to significant impacts, including contributing to the passing of a new law in Peru prohibiting physical and humiliating punishment of children in all settings. In 2015, UNICEF OoR Multi-Country Study on Drivers of Violence Affecting Children commissioned Young Lives to produce a series of working papers, aimed at strengthening violence prevention initiatives at national, regional and international levels. Four papers analysing Young Lives data on children's experiences of violence were produced, one for each study country, and published in November 2016. Impacts here relate closely to Young Lives' aim of creating a strong evidence base that supports the improvement of policies for poor children.

UNICEF's OoR acts as an 'amplifier' of Young Lives research, enabling findings on violence in childhood to be developed into policy recommendations and widely disseminated, and facilitating the building of relationships with larger organisations. A series of films were produced in Peru by UNICEF that cite Young Lives findings on ending violence against children, and an 8-page brief produced by UNICEF OoR includes Young Lives findings (see Maternowska, M., Potts, A. and Fry, D. (2016), *The multi-country study on the drivers of violence affecting children: a cross-country snapshot of findings*. UNICEF Office of Research, Florence: UNICEF).

Prior to this, a preliminary version of the paper on children's experiences of corporal punishment was influential as part of moves to encourage Peru to formally outlaw corporal punishment. The approval of Law 30403 in late 2015 was a product of a long-term effort by international, national, and governmental organisations, part of which consisted of producing research evidence on the persistence of violence against children and the impact this had on their lives. Young Lives research, together with research conducted by Dr Debi Fry at the University of Edinburgh, formed part of this evidence.

The working paper on children's experiences of violence in Ethiopia has also had important influence. During 2016 draft versions were presented at the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice to the inter-ministerial committee on preventing violence affecting women and children; at the African Child Policy Forum to the Civil Society Working Group on Child Protection; at a workshop organised by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF; and at the Child Research and Practice Forum for policy, civil society and researchers. In addition, the paper helped to secure funding from the Oak Foundation for a qualitative sub-study to build on the findings and to collect data on violence affecting children in Ethiopia, which started in 2017. Literature and policy context analyses have already been presented to the Child Research and Practice Forum at UNICEF, and a stakeholder analysis has also been conducted.

Efforts to tackle bullying have lagged behind those directed at other forms of violence affecting children, and far less is known about children's experiences of bullying in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries. However, in recent years the issue of bullying has started to move up the international policy agenda (as evidenced, for example, by the 2014 UN Resolution on protecting children from bullying).

In October 2016, UNICEF OoR and Young Lives published a discussion paper on 'Experiences of Peer Bullying'. This paper particularly considered how wider societal and structural factors shape the contexts within which bullying occurs, using Young Lives longitudinal data from all four study countries to address two questions: which children are at greater risk of being bullied, and how, at age 15?; and why are certain groups of children bullied? In May 2016, an earlier version of this paper was presented by Dr Kirrily Pells, by invitation, at an Expert Consultation on Bullying and Cyberbullying hosted by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Young Lives research was specifically cited as evidence in the UN Secretary General's report 'Protecting Children from Bullying', issued in July 2016. The report was accompanied by a new publication 'Ending the Torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace', to which Young Lives contributed a chapter. This resulted in an invitation to an UNESCO conference in South Korea; while Young Lives was unable to attend, Young Lives findings were included in the report that accompanied the event.

Overall, the multi-country study on drivers of violence has informed National Action Plans for Children in four countries (Italy, Peru, Vietnam and Zimbabwe); the change of law in Peru was swiftly followed by a change of law in Paraguay, with the prohibition of the use of corporal punishment and any kind of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of children. In Vietnam, the Child Protection Creed – a new sub-law of the Child Protection Law – has enacted multi-sectoral action against violence (for example, in health, education and justice). Young Lives research has therefore made a

significant contribution to the global understanding of this issue and helped to create the space for new discovery around the drivers and effects of violence, dictated by national players.

““ The collaboration with Young Lives Oxford as well as the on-the-ground research teams, notably in Vietnam and Peru, has given UNICEF OoR an enormous amount of traction nationally and internationally. At the national level, we have strengthened the relationship with Governments and we are really making visible the strength of the national data to explain issues around violence and risk or protective factors ... At the global level we have had almost immediate traction ... the result from our first (of many) papers with Young Lives was to be able to produce a sub-study on bullying so that when Marta Santos Pais [UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children] visited the OoR we had data and results ready to go. That was a significant moment. ””

Catherine Maternowska, Senior Research and Evaluation Specialist at UNICEF Office of Research (2015/16 Annual Report)

The research emerging from Young Lives' collaboration with UNICEF is also informing the work of the Know Violence in Childhood Global Learning Initiative. Launched in November 2014, the Initiative is a collective response by multilateral institutions, NGOs and funding agencies concerned about the global impact of violence in childhood and the lack of investment in effective violence prevention strategies. Young Lives was commissioned by Know Violence to prepare a background paper on children and violence, and this provided a thematic synthesis of Young Lives qualitative data, drawing

on the series of papers commissioned by UNICEF OoR as well as on other Young Lives research. The paper forms part of the Know Violence in Childhood 'Ending Violence in Childhood: Global Report 2017', and will be published separately as a joint Know Violence/Young Lives paper. Know Violence's report is intended to serve as a reference point on the causes and consequences of violence in childhood and will provide a roadmap for implementing global prevention strategies. It will be launched in New York and London in Spring/Summer 2017.

““ One of the things we wanted to come through strongly in 'Ending Violence in Childhood: Global Report 2017' was the reflection of children's descriptions of the experience of violence, in their own words. We wanted to weave into the narrative the kinds of things children say when they talk about violence, which brings the corresponding data on violence to life. This was a difficult piece to get right, to reflect honestly children's accounts of their experiences without making it sound tokenistic. We commissioned the background paper by Young Lives because we also knew that the voices of children emerged from ethical research and long-term work with communities and children. Longitudinal research is a very important source of credible evidence about the impacts of often intangible issues like violence on people's lives. We found the sections on poverty and on children's responses to violence the most helpful and valuable additions to our text. The Young Lives material really lifts the report substantially and perfectly illustrates points we are making, so the integration has been seamless. Quite fantastic. ””

Ramya Subrahmanian, Executive Director, Know Violence in Childhood