

How poverty and gender combine to affect youth/adolescence

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Young Lives' aim is to ensure 'that international agencies and national policymakers have a better understanding of when and how gender disadvantages emerge, and a better recognition of how gender disadvantage intersects with poverty' (Theory of Change 2015). Our particular strength in this area is that we are able to link many different aspects of young people's lives (decisions around education, health, economic participation, family formation) rather than focusing on each in isolation, and to trace the effects of earlier characteristics and exposures on later outcomes. This builds a more powerful picture of the challenges and opportunities facing young people, and enables Young Lives to influence ongoing debates about youth trajectories, empowerment and gender, as well as to challenge and broaden views of adolescence. A key achievement this year was a highly successful conference on adolescence, youth and gender, which allowed Young Lives to engage with many important stakeholders, and is now stimulating a new area of work on 'youth transitions'. Other engagements have taken place with influential actors such as the World Bank and Global Early Adolescent Study.

Young Lives' 'Adolescence, Youth and Gender' conference in September 2016 attracted over 170 international researchers, policymakers and civil society representatives. Participants came together to share global research findings and consider when and how gender inequalities emerge; the relationship between gender norms and wider structures; how gender and other inequalities interact during adolescence and youth; what 'empowerment' looks like; and what works to reduce gender inequality. The conference focus was on knowledge for change: change which makes a positive difference to children and young people's lives.

“ The papers were all based on empirical research evidence, hence discussions were very interesting and helped point to both contradictions and similarities in experience across contexts. A huge learning. ”

Conference participant

The conference generated considerable momentum which is now leading to interdisciplinary collaborations on the theme of youth transitions, recognising the complexity of children's transitions to adulthood in low-resource contexts, where school, work and marriage do not often follow one another in a linear progression. In particular, the conference strengthened Young Lives' relationship with the [Know Violence in Childhood Initiative](#), which subsequently commissioned Young Lives to prepare a background paper on violence affecting children, to form part of their flagship report 'Violence in Childhood' expected to be launched in spring/summer 2017. Young Lives is also exploring opportunities for partnering with the international [Global Early Adolescence Study](#), which had a large presence at the conference and on whose board Jo Boyden, Director of Young Lives, sits. Young Lives will run collaborative activities with the Global Early Adolescence Study at the International Association for Adolescent Health World Congress in October 2017. Following the conference, Gina Crivello, Senior Research Officer at Young Lives, was invited to an [expert roundtable](#) on children and care work hosted by UNICEF – Innocenti, where she shared Young Lives findings on girls' and boys' care work.

The strength of Young Lives' research in this area has resulted in other types of policy influence. Save the Children has used Young Lives evidence on adolescence, youth and gender to inform their programme planning, their internal documents, and the way they collect data. Jo Boyden was both a keynote speaker and a panellist at the Emerging Markets Symposium in January 2016, and this led to her being asked to contribute to the report '[Young People and the Future of Emerging Markets](#)' launched in May 2016. Jo Boyden was also invited to give a keynote to the World Bank Group's [Global Youth Forum](#) in June 2016, which engaged a large number of stakeholders, young people and World Bank staff. As a result of this, Young Lives was invited to contribute to a review by the World Development Report team in preparation for the tenth anniversary of the flagship 2007 report 'Development and the next Generation'.

“ Young Lives is a project we at Save the Children want to track very closely and ... to use your learning in our programmes as well as in the way we collect data on children. Your findings and technical notes can be extremely informative for the programme and advocacy work we do. As an example, the Young Lives findings which identified that gender-based gaps tended to widen during adolescence has been widely cited in our internal documents and provided evidence to check/confirm assumptions made by programming staff. ”

Silvia Paruzzolo, Deputy Director, Child Poverty Global Theme, Save the Children (November 2016)

Jo Boyden was on the advisory group for the development of the Commonwealth's 2016 [Global Youth Development Index](#) launched in late 2016. As a consequence, a Young Lives case study highlighting the value of longitudinal research in understanding poverty in childhood and adolescence has been drafted for a Youth Mainstreaming Guide that will be launched at the 9th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Uganda in July 2017. Highlights from Young Lives findings were also presented at a Youth Policy group meeting for youth organisations at the Commonwealth Secretariat in January 2017.

In Latin America, Young Lives has contributed to the design of an IADB/IDRC-funded project on youth and the labour market. This cross-country study is taking place in eight Latin American countries to investigate the transition to the labour market for young people aged 15-24. A number of Young Lives survey modules have been included, and a comparative study will be carried out using the data collected for the eight study countries plus Peru, using Young Lives data.

“ Our project seeks to better understand the opportunities and barriers that young people in Latin America face for their social and economic integration. We expect to measure youth aspirations and expectations, cognitive and non-cognitive

skills, material and emotional well-being, and risky behaviour and social attitudes, as well as how these correlate with educational and labour market outcomes. Young Lives study methods and data greatly helped us guide the development of our own survey. Young Lives rich questionnaire covers many aspects of the lives of adolescents and young adults that are relevant for our study. We have benefited from its tools and measures in building a more effective instrument that will hopefully help inform policy towards improving youth opportunities in our region. ”

Andrea Repetto, Espacio Publico and Rafael Novella, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)