

# **Gendered Trajectories through School, Work and Marriage in India**

Uma Vennam, Anuradha Komanduri and Jennifer Roest



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# Summary

This paper discusses the school, work and marriage trajectories of young people in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India. It draws on Young Lives qualitative longitudinal data gathered from 23 young people and their parents, as well as descriptive survey statistics. A case study approach was used to analyse a selection of young people's narratives, exploring the intersecting factors at individual, household and community level that explain their trajectories over time. Early disadvantages resulting from poverty, family death, debt or illness play a key role in determining these trajectories, while gender norms influence the different opportunities and social risks that girls and boys are exposed to and the roles and responsibilities they are expected to fulfil. Most notably, poverty emerged as a key influencing factor, often irrespective of gender, on young people's trajectories. Moreover, it was when families were most financially insecure that gender norms became most salient and differences between girls' and boys' trajectories most distinct. Though gender roles can be set from a young age, it was not until adolescence that the most substantial differences began to appear, with poorer girls more likely to experience early school exit and transition to marriage, while poorer boys became increasingly responsible for providing financially for their families. The data presented in this paper suggest that gendered differences in girls' and boys' trajectories through education, work and marriage still exist despite the implementation of a number of state programmes and efforts to address these gaps, with differences emerging most conspicuously at the point at which poverty and gendered social norms intersect.

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### About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

Over recent years India has seen large-scale economic growth. Significant gains have been made in health and education, and a burgeoning middle class has become established (World Bank 2016). It is predicted that India will ‘soon have the largest and youngest workforce the world has ever seen’ (ibid.), and the attention of policymakers is now focused on how to ‘capture this demographic dividend’ (Government of India 2014: 3). However, there is also widespread inequality and poverty, which leaves many millions of young people relatively excluded from the benefits of India’s economic growth (Drèze and Sen 14 November 2011). In 2015, at the launch of his ‘Skill India’ Campaign, Mr Modi, the Prime Minister of India, explained that

through a policy-driven approach we have waged a war against poverty and we have to win this war. India’s youth is not happy simply asking for things. He or she wants to live with pride and dignity. I believe Indian youth has immense talent, they just want opportunities.

Over the next decade, India will have surplus labour of 40–50 million people. Mr Modi has warned that without efforts to provide the youth of India with the skills and ability to tackle global challenges, this demographic dividend will become a challenge in itself.

## 2. Background to the situation of young people in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana: legislation, policy and demographics

The National Youth Policy, 2014, defines ‘youth’ as those aged 15 to 29, a group that constitutes 27.5 per cent of India’s population (Government of India 2014). The National Youth Policy is one of a number of recent social policies related to young people in India, and focuses on education, employment, skill development and entrepreneurship as priority areas. Its objectives are that all young people should (1) have equitable access to high-quality education; (2) be able to develop the necessary skills required for the labour market; and (3) be enabled to find decent work and livelihoods. Gender is a major component of the initiative, which promotes the education, health and empowerment of young women. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is the main institution responsible for youth at federal level in India and respective departments support it at state level. However, the Finance Minister of Andhra Pradesh recently announced (in February 2016) that the State Government would issue its own youth policy soon, predicted to focus on jobs and skill development for young people in Andhra Pradesh (*Times of India* 28 February 2016).

## 2.1 Education

In terms of education, one of the key pieces of legislation in recent years has been the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act). This makes it a constitutional obligation for all 36 states and union territories in India to provide free and compulsory education in local schools for all children between the ages of 6 and 14. Alongside the Education for All Programme, it has led to almost universal enrolment at primary school level and to greater parity in enrolment between boys and girls. However, India is now seeing greater disparity in the type of school children enrol into, with 'children from rural areas, lower socioeconomic backgrounds and girls [continuing] to be under represented in [low-fee paying] private schools' (Woodhead et al. 2013: 2). A private school education is perceived to confer greater advantage onto students when they reach the labour market than an education in the free government schools and as of 2012/13, 48 per cent of the 11 million students enrolled in primary school in united Andhra Pradesh were attending private schools (Galab et al. 2014a).

In recent years, there has been 'an increasing focus on the successful transition from primary to upper primary school and to secondary school' (ibid.: 1). Enrolment rates have improved at primary level (particularly for girls and for children from the Scheduled Tribes),<sup>1</sup> however, school performance among children from Young Lives in united Andhra Pradesh (measured as the percentage of 12-year-olds answering the same maths questions correctly) declined by 14 per cent between 2006 and 2013, with those from poorer households and from Scheduled Tribes or Castes achieving the worst test scores (ibid.). For many young people, particularly those from poorer households, Grade 10 (age 15/16) is the stage at which their trajectories into continued education, work and/or marriage become established. Education is free and compulsory up to that point, but beyond then families must make financial contributions in the form of tuition fees, books, transport, hostel fees and so on. Children's performance in their Grade 10 examinations is thus a critical factor in whether poor families choose to invest further in their child's education, and children themselves can become demotivated by their poor performance or failure. Concurrently, performing well at school becomes a real challenge for children if they have little time available to study because of competing household responsibilities (Morrow 2013a).

Two programmes – the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (the National Mission for Secondary Education) and the Rashtriya Ucchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) (the National Higher Education Mission) – have been launched to support secondary and higher education respectively. The RMSA (2009) targets government secondary schools throughout India and focuses on quality improvement, information and communication technologies, access and equity, and integrated education for disabled children. The RUSA (2013) provides strategic funding to eligible state higher education institutions, with allocation determined by critical appraisal of each state's strategy to address issues of equity, access

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1 The Hindu caste system divided society into a five-fold hierarchy, with Brahmins at the head, followed in order by Kshatriyas, Vishyas or traders, Shudras or servants, and Dalit/untouchables. Scheduled Castes are the lowest in the caste structure and were earlier considered to be 'untouchables'/Dalit. Scheduled Castes have been subjected to discrimination and had no access to basic services, including education. Backward Castes or Classes are people belonging to a group of castes who are considered to be 'backward' in view of their low level in the caste structure. Other Castes are disadvantaged Shudra castes. Scheduled Tribes are indigenous communities, who are traditionally disadvantaged and live in forests and mountainous areas. If they do continue in school, Scheduled Tribe children tend to have to stay in hostels, often from a very young age. Forward Castes are generally economically better off than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, who are not only at the bottom in the structure but are also resource-poor. The Government therefore has special schemes/programmes to address their needs and facilitate their development.

and excellence within said institutions. There are a number of other policies in united Andhra Pradesh which seek to help girls in particular to stay in school. These include the Girl Child Protection Scheme 1996–97; the New Girl Child Protection Scheme (established 2005); and Bangaru Talli MAARPU, an initiative that supports girls' families from birth until graduation (MWCD 2015b).

## 2.2 Employment

Employment provision for young people has been and remains a key challenge in India. The youth unemployment rate (for the age group 15–24) was 10 per cent according to the 66th round of the National Sample Survey, in 2009–10. In this context, the Government of Andhra Pradesh launched an innovative public–private partnership called Rajiv Yuva Kiranalu (RYK) in 2011 to promote youth employment. RYK aims to train young people (between the ages of 18 and 35) in rural and urban areas, to help them gain employment in the private sector. The key stakeholders are the State Government, industry, training centres, unemployed young people, and placement institutions. The initiative works with non-literate and unskilled young people (and some who are educated but unemployed), including those from rural areas and slums, those with disabilities and those from minorities (Government of India 2016).

The National Skill Development Agency is responsible for harmonising and coordinating 'all skill development efforts of government and the private sector during the Twelfth Plan Period in order to bridge the social, regional, gender and economic divides in skills across all regions of the country' (Galab et al. 2014b: 1).

## 2.3 Marriage/parenthood

Arranged marriages are the norm in India and childbirth happens predominantly within, and often follows quickly after, wedlock (Singh and Vennam 2016; Santhya et al. 2010). India is one of the ten countries with the highest rates of early marriage<sup>2</sup> in the world (UNICEF 2014), though this rate has been declining over the past two decades (Loaiza and Wong 2012). It fell by 7 per cent nationally between 1993 and 2006 according to National Family Health Survey of India (NFHS) data and by 36 per cent in Andhra Pradesh specifically between 1993 and 2015 (IIPS 2016).<sup>3</sup> However, census data from 2011 revealed that the number of early marriages taking place nationally had increased in absolute terms by 0.9 million since 2001 (Singh and Vennam 2016). Similarly with regard to early child-bearing, the teenage pregnancy rate (those who gave birth under the age of 18) declined substantially between 1998 and 2006 (by 21 per cent according to Demographic and Health Survey data) but absolute numbers are projected to rise in coming years (Edilberto and Mengjia 2013).

Among the states and union territories of India, united Andhra Pradesh had the ninth-highest population of married children in 2011, but prevalence was similar to the national rate (Census of India 2011; Singh and Vennam 2016). NFHS-4 data (for 2015/16) revealed fairly substantial differences in prevalence between rural and urban sites, with rates of both early marriage and early child-bearing consistently higher in rural areas (see Table 1).

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2 The definition of early marriage used in this paper aligns with international norms and standards, i.e. a marriage where one or both parties are aged below 18 years old.

3 NFHS data from 1992 relate to united Andhra Pradesh whilst data from 2015 used here relate to Andhra Pradesh only. The prevalence rate for Telangana was 25.7 per cent.

**Table 1.** *Child marriage in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2015/16 (%)*

Indicator	State	Total	Urban	Rural
Women aged 20–24 years married before age 18 years	Andhra Pradesh	32.7	26.3	35.5
	Telangana	25.7	15.7	35.0
Females aged 15–19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey	Andhra Pradesh	11.8	8.8	13.2
	Telangana	10.6	6.5	13.8

**Source:** Roest (forthcoming), compiled from NFHS-4 data.

In 2006, the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) of 1929 was replaced by the more progressive Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA). This strengthened the law by prohibiting child marriages<sup>4</sup> and enabling their annulment for up to two years after any child involved reached his/her majority (Singh and Vennam 2016). In recent years, there have also been a number of policy initiatives targeted (directly or indirectly) at reducing child marriage and early child-bearing. In 2015, for example, the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the daughter, educate the daughter) scheme was launched, aiming to ‘address the issue of decline in child sex ratio (CSR) in 100 gender critical districts’ (MWCD 2015a: 1). This is relevant because a lower ratio of girls to boys has been found to exacerbate the purchase of young brides in some states (Government of India 2006). For further discussion of laws and policies relevant to early marriage, see Jha et al. (2016); Roest (forthcoming); Singh and Vennam (2016); and UNICEF (2011).

### 3. Research literature

There is very little research that focuses specifically on young people’s trajectories in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but there is some research on transitions to adulthood in other parts of India from a gender perspective. Arnot et al. (2012), for example, explore young women’s transitions to marriage and motherhood by comparing case studies from rural northern India (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and northern Ghana. Some research focuses on schooling and girls’ education, is cross-sectional and based on surveys, and though there is some ethnographic research (see Froerer 2011, 2012, 2015 on Scheduled Tribe/*Adivasi* girls, in rural Chhattisgarh), there was none for Andhra Pradesh/Telangana that we could locate that was longitudinal (i.e. tracking the same children over time).<sup>5</sup> This is where Young Lives can make a unique contribution to our understanding of young people’s trajectories, experiences, and changing hopes and aspirations – taking into account their point of view, and using their own words (see also Young Lives papers and book chapters, as well as journal articles written by Young Lives researchers, e.g. Boyden and Crivello 2011; Boyden 2013; Crivello et al. 2014; Feeny and Crivello 2015; Morrow 2013a, 2013b; Morrow and Crivello 2015; Morrow and Vennam 2010, 2012; Vennam and Andharia 2012; Vennam and Sarkar 2013).

4 Defined as marriages where either party is a child, classified in Indian law as a girl below the age of 18 and a boy below the age of 21.

5 See also Chakraborty (2012, 2016) on Muslim young people in Kolkata; Jakimow (2016), who writes about hope within a low-income community in rural Telangana and explores what happens when education no longer fulfils its promise as a pathway to social mobility; and from an economics perspective, Kabir (2016), who explores transitions from school to work for Muslim young people in Uttar Pradesh.

### 3.1 Schooling and education

As noted, the roll-out of compulsory primary and secondary schooling in India is relatively recent. Some research has focused on reasons why girls discontinue schooling, or do not make the transition to secondary schooling. Shahidul and Karim (2015), in a review of research in low-income countries, highlight economic factors, household factors, and school-level factors. Distance to school is a common reason for girls not to continue in secondary school in rural areas, if they have to travel. Social norms limit girls' independent mobility, and there may be limited transport available. Other structural factors include lack of adequate facilities and poor teaching standards in schools. Mohanraj (2010), in qualitative research undertaken with 24 out-of-school girls and their families, as well as schoolteachers and administrators of the education department in Ratlam district of Madhya Pradesh, India, found that

[t]he social positioning of girls and women, the perceived future role of girls as mothers and home-makers, the patri-local marriage system, community pressure and the usefulness of girls at home have detrimental consequences for girls' education. These detrimental consequences are augmented by the ways in which teachers and educational administrators operate. The absence of an effective implementation system for the incentives set up by the government to encourage girls into school further undermines the latter's educational opportunities.

(Mohanraj 2010: 2)

Ghosh and Sengupta (2012) describe qualitative research on girls' schooling in Purlia District in West Bengal, and found that from the families' perspective, the costs of educating girls were likely to be higher and the benefits more tenuous than for boys. This discrepancy is greater and matters more in poor households, where educating girls may seem a less attractive investment than boys. It is the family, especially the parents, who usually decide how much education their children will receive. The most frequently cited reasons for girls leaving school included these: (a) parents suggested it, (b) education not considered useful, (c) to augment household income, (d) to help with domestic chores, (f) to look after younger siblings, and (g) economic constraints in the family.

Seasonal migration for work may be a factor in the likelihood of children attending school, but this has received little attention. Children often accompany their parents when they migrate, and may drop out of school to work alongside family members in manual work (Smita 2008). Frequently in such circumstances, girls manage household chores and the young siblings to release their parents for paid work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) seeks (among other objectives) to reduce seasonal migration, though with mixed results. While for many families it helps their children to stay in school and to meet the cost of school materials, in other instances children's school attendance has been negatively impacted. Where children substituted for ill parents in MGNREGS directly, or substituted for a parent at home in caring for younger siblings, their attendance at school was jeopardised (Camfield and Vennam 2012).

Family indebtedness is a common phenomenon in rural areas. It becomes a 'distress phenomenon' if loans are taken out for non-productive purposes, and becomes a heavy liability if the loan has high rates of interest from non-institutional sources like money-lenders (Radhakrishna 2007). Indebtedness affects children's trajectories when they work to repay family debts. Various factors perpetuate the phenomenon, including poverty, unexpected expenditure, taking on debts to pay for weddings, buying seeds and fertilizers, inheritance of

family debts and the presence of money-lenders who encourage small farmers to borrow (Pujari 2011).

### 3.2 Children's work and gender norms

Despite rapid economic growth since 2000, the distribution of income and wealth has remained highly unequal in India (Drèze and Sen 2011). Because of poverty or near-poverty, many children need to engage in economic activities (helping with farming or the family business) to ensure family survival, and new technologies/ agricultural appliances are not affordable for many families, who must rely on manual labour instead. In a lot of poor households, children help with farming or family businesses, or engage in domestic chores such as cooking or fetching water.

Where resources are scarce, household decisions about how tasks are allocated and how much investment is made in children's education may be 'shaped by perceptions of future opportunities' (Feeny and Crivello 2015: 4). Girls have fewer employment opportunities than boys, boys typically have higher earning potential than girls, and it is sons who are traditionally relied upon to support their parents into old age (Feeny and Crivello 2015; Lin and Adserà 2012). In a discussion paper for the Institute for the Study of Labor, Lin and Adserà use data from NFHS-3 (2005–6) to explore the relationship between 'son preference' and the extent of children's housework. They describe how patrilineal and patrilocal norms still prevail within much of Indian society, whereby 'only men can continue the family lineage and daughters after [marriage] traditionally move with their husband's family' (2012: 5). These factors are instrumental in creating son preference, wherein boys often experience greater investment in their education or training (as noted above); a better quality of care; more time for play and leisure; and less housework (since this is seen to do little by way of developing boys' human capital) (Lin and Adserà 2012).

These norms (particularly in the context of economic hardship) influence the types of work that are typically undertaken by boys and girls. The latter are seen as destined for reproductive, caring and other household or unpaid roles in the homes of their in-laws, and being skilled in domestic chores can be important for girls' marriageability (Pells and Woodhead 2014). Indeed, some Young Lives caregivers expressed their concern that girls' continued attendance at school might impact negatively on their ability to develop and practise these skills. Girls experience competing demands on their time because of such work, often with negative repercussions for their experience of school (Hardgrove et al. 2014; Morrow 2013b). Contrastingly, Lin and Adserà found that, since doing too much housework was perceived to be unhealthy, 'parents will refrain from assigning much housework to sons in order to maintain their health capital' (2012: 6). In this context it is clear why Young Lives found that girls were more likely to leave school in order to work than boys, and why boys were more likely to cite paid work and girls more likely to cite agricultural, domestic or caring tasks as the reason for school exit (Morrow 2013a).

### 3.3 Marriage and parenthood

Early marriage and child-bearing have become a focus of policy attention and concern in India and Young Lives has produced a number of papers on these topics, exploring how structural factors and social norms intersect to affect the trajectory of girls into early marriage (Singh and Vennam 2016; Roest forthcoming; and Espinoza and Singh 2016). Young Lives findings show that, firstly, girls were far more likely to experience early marriage than boys – 28 per cent of Young Lives girls were married before the age of 18 compared to only 1 per

cent of boys. Second, girls who stayed in school for longer married later – regression analysis by Singh and Espinoza (2016) showed that not being enrolled in school at the age of 15 was a key predictor of being married by age 19. Third, where resources were limited, parents were forced to make decisions (particularly regarding education) which were detrimental to girls and were influenced by gender norms (including those regarding son preference discussed above). Fourth, girls whose parents aspired for them to stay in school for longer were found to be less likely to experience early marriage, but those aspirations diminished during girls' adolescence<sup>6</sup> as the reality of girls' limited employment opportunities and lack of alternatives to early marriage became more apparent. Lastly, social norms encouraged early child-bearing as a means through which young couples should 'prove' their fertility. This was compounded by young people's limited and inequitable access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, leading some married girls to give birth earlier than their other married peers (Singh and Vennam 2016; Roest forthcoming; and Espinoza and Singh 2016).

Young Lives survey findings also showed that it was girls from the poorest households, living in rural locations, from more disadvantaged social groups (e.g. Backward Castes or Scheduled Castes or Tribes) and with less educated caregivers with lower educational aspirations for their daughters who were most likely to experience early marriage. Similarly, girls who were themselves less educated and had lower aspirations for their own education were more likely to be married early. Earlier menarche also meant an earlier marriage for many girls as parents sought to reduce the time after puberty during which their daughters could experience pre-marital sexual activity. In this way, marriage was used as a means to keep girls safe and protect their social reputation.

These findings were consistent with a number of reports that discuss the role played by rurality, caste, poverty, early menarche, child and parental education level and social norms in determining the timing of girls' marriage and first child (see also ICRW 2013; Jha et al. 2016; UNICEF 2012, 2014). Other sources highlight the importance of recognising the formative role that structural factors (e.g. poverty and limited access to labour markets) play in creating and reinforcing these (discriminatory) norms. Patriarchal norms that determine girls' role in society motivate parents to arrange early marriages for their daughters, since few alternative paths are available, accessible or imagined (ICRW 2013; Nirantar Trust 2015). Equally, early marriage is often seen as a protective measure against the risk that the reputations and safety of girls (and their families) may be compromised by pre-marital relationships or exposure to sexual violence (Pells 2011). Loss of reputation can be damaging to girls' 'marriageability' and hence also to their future well-being, since this is largely seen as dependent upon the arrangement of a suitable marriage alliance. This is particularly pertinent for poorer families, who are less able to provide financially for their daughters in the long term (Roest forthcoming).

As noted above, fertility is strongly associated with marriage, and pregnancy and childbirth often follow quickly after a couple is married. This means that one of the strongest determinants of early child-bearing is early marriage, and the predictors of the first bear strong similarity to those of the second; common predictors include enrolment, caste, age of menarche, parental and child aspirations (Espinoza and Singh 2016).

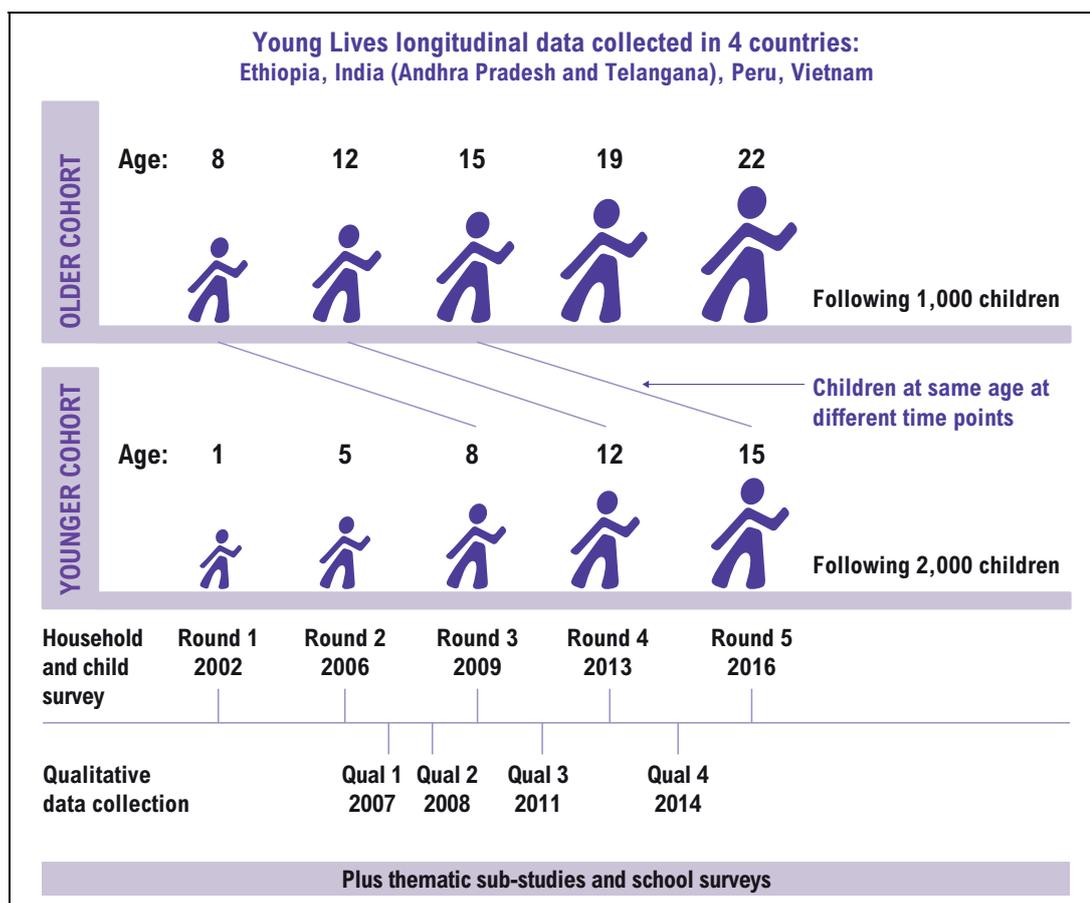
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<sup>6</sup> The term adolescence is used to refer to the period of a young person's life between the ages of 10 and 19 years old, as per the definition used by the United Nations.

## 4. About Young Lives: study sample and methodology

In order to explore children’s trajectories and pathways to adulthood in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, we draw on survey and qualitative data from Young Lives, a longitudinal study of child poverty in four low- and middle-income countries – Ethiopia, India (the former state of Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam – taking place over a 15-year period, 2002–2017. Young Lives follows 3,000 children each country: 2,000 born in 2000/1 (the Younger Cohort), and 1,000 born in 1994/5 (the Older Cohort), making a total of 12,000 overall. Young Lives has collected four rounds of survey data from children, their households and their communities, in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2013. This paper draws on Round 4 survey data relating to the Older Cohort in India. This round was conducted in 2013, when the Older Cohort were aged 19 and there were 952 young people in the cohort. Findings from the survey data are complemented by analysis of four rounds of qualitative data, gathered in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2014. The qualitative research was nested within the collection of survey data, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** *Young Lives survey design*



## 4.1 Sampling

For the survey, using sentinel site sampling, 20 sites per country were selected using a pro-poor sampling method. The sites included urban and rural areas, and represented a range of regions and contexts that reflected ethnic, geographic and political diversity. Within each sentinel site, 100 households with a child aged between 6 and 18 months (Younger Cohort) and 50 households with a child aged between 7 and 8 years (Older Cohort) were randomly selected (see Barnett et al. 2013). For the qualitative research, four study sites – three rural and one urban – were selected from the 20 survey sites in order to provide insights into the survey data. The four qualitative sites were chosen in such a way as to represent the diversity of the full sample.

The sites have been given pseudonyms to protect respondents' identity. The four qualitative sites are known as Patna, Katur, Poompohar and Polur. Patna is a very poor remote rural community in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh; Katur is a poor, rural, drought-prone mandal in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh; Poompohar is a very poor mandal in southern Telangana; and Polur, a densely crowded area in Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh. In rural areas, the population is predominantly Hindu, while in urban Hyderabad, it is predominantly Muslim.

In each Young Lives country, 50 children and their caregivers were drawn from the survey sample in the qualitative sites (in 2007) for qualitative longitudinal research (see Crivello et al. 2013; Morrow and Crivello 2015). This paper focuses on the 23 young men and women from the Older Cohort of the qualitative sub-sample. Young Lives has research ethics approval from the University of Oxford, and consent was obtained from caregivers and children (see Morrow 2009). All names of people in this paper are pseudonyms.

For this paper, a mixed-method approach is used. First, we analyse survey data and present descriptive statistics. These are used to show, for example, whether the young people in the Older Cohort are engaged in full-time work or education and they are disaggregated according to socio-economic group (whether young people's households are from the poorest, middle or least poor tercile), location, caste and gender. We then use a case study approach to analyse young people's narratives over the four rounds of qualitative research, to explore their hopes and expectations and how these change over time, and their trajectories (see Crivello et al. 2013). All the Older Cohort young people in the qualitative sub-sample were grouped on the basis of their trajectories, and factors common to each trajectory were drawn together for discussion. The children whose individual cases are discussed in more depth were selected as the most illustrative of various themes identified from the sub-sample as a whole. The qualitative longitudinal research puts Young Lives in an advantageous position by allowing for a case analysis of children's biographies. In addition, it enables us to look into the factors at the individual, household and community level that explain the trajectories of these children, particularly the deviations from what they had expected/reported during the earlier rounds of fieldwork (see Morrow and Crivello 2015). The limitation of the sample, however, is that it is too small to draw any generalisations, either quantitative and qualitative.

## 5. Overview of gender-based differences and outcomes at age 19 – survey trends

This section presents an overview of the outcomes of the Young Lives Older Cohort in India at the age of 19 (2013), focusing on education, work and marriage/parenthood, while describing differences by gender, location, caste/ethnicity and socio-economic status. It summarises trends from Round 4 of the survey and provides context for situating and understanding the qualitative case studies and findings presented in Section 6.

### 5.1 Transitions within education

**Table 2.** *Education/employment status of young people in the Older Cohort, by gender, location, wealth and caste at 19 (%)*

Education/employment		Only studying	Studying & paid work	Studying & unpaid work	Studying & paid & unpaid work	Only work-ing (paid)	Only working (unpaid)	Only working (paid & unpaid work)	Not studying or working	Total number
<b>Total</b>		33.4	3.57	8.51	3.05	17.44	6.41	11.97	15.65	952
<b>Gender</b>	Male	33.76	4.52	13.33	4.95	23.66	3.66	12.47	3.66	465
	Female	33.06	2.67	3.9	1.23	11.5	9.03	11.5	27.1	487
<b>Location</b>	Urban	48.94	4.93	2.11	0.7	19.72	3.17	1.06	19.37	284
	Rural	26.77	3.01	11.28	4.06	16.39	7.82	16.69	13.98	665
<b>Wealth tercile</b>	Poorest	23.15	1.85	7.41	7.41	23.15	8.33	19.44	9.26	108
	Middle	22.64	3.72	7.74	3.44	23.21	5.73	18.91	14.61	349
	Least-poor	43.23	3.84	9.29	1.82	12.12	6.46	5.45	17.78	495
<b>Caste</b>	SC	29.9	3.92	3.43	2.94	25.98	5.39	12.25	16.18	204
	ST	30.19	5.66	9.43	3.77	15.09	4.72	16.98	14.15	106
	BC	27.79	3.42	9.79	3.64	15.03	8.66	14.58	17.08	439
	OC	50.74	2.46	10.34	1.48	15.27	3.45	3.45	12.81	203

Source: Young Lives survey data from Round 4 (2013)

Table 2 shows the education/employment status of the cohort. Overall, one-third were in full-time education, a little over one-third were in full-time work, either paid or unpaid, one-sixth were involved in some study and work while the remaining one-sixth neither worked nor studied. In terms of gender, there was little difference between those engaged in full-time education – 34 per cent of young men attended full time compared to 33 per cent of young women. Gender differences were clear, however, in other ways: 23 per cent of young men combined education and work while the corresponding figure for young women was 8 per cent. Overall, 57 per cent of young men were still in education (with/without combining this with work) compared to only 41 per cent of young women. Moreover, a much higher percentage of young women were categorised as neither working nor studying (27 per cent female compared to 4 per cent male), though figures may under-represent those who were

involved in household chores and/or work on the family farm. These activities are neither paid nor full time and hence are often not recorded.

Location mattered for young people's educational status; 49 per cent of young people from urban areas were in full-time education compared to 27 per cent of those in rural areas. Moreover, only 7 per cent of young people from urban areas were combining education and work compared to 18 per cent of the ones from rural areas. Consistent with this, a higher proportion of young people in rural areas were engaging in unpaid work alongside their studies (11 per cent) compared to those in urban areas (2 per cent). Regarding wealth, as would be expected, those from the least-poor third of households were more likely to be in full-time education (43 per cent) than those from the poorest third (23 per cent).

Caste-wise, the data show that young people from the Other Castes were more likely to be enrolled in full-time education (51 per cent) than those from the Scheduled Castes (30 per cent), Scheduled Tribes (30 per cent) and Backward Classes (27 per cent). Young people from the Scheduled Tribes were most likely to be managing both education and work (19 per cent), followed by those from the Backward Classes (17 per cent), Other Castes (14 per cent) and Scheduled Castes (10 per cent). Engagement in education and unpaid work was almost the same across the Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Other Castes while it was lowest among the Scheduled Castes, at 3 per cent. This could be an indication of the amount of assets owned by the household, or its resources, a theory which is supported by the fact that 26 per cent of the Scheduled Caste respondents were engaged in paid work.

**Table 3.** *Level of education young people were enrolled in at age 19*

Current educational level enrolled in	Male		Female		Total	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
Not enrolled	202	43.44	288	59.14	490	51.47
Secondary	2	0.43	2	0.41	4	0.42
Senior secondary	58	12.47	24	4.93	82	8.61
Post-secondary/vocational	48	10.32	24	4.93	72	7.56
University	155	33.33	149	30.6	304	31.93
Total	465	100	487	100	952	100

Source: Young Lives survey data from Round 4 (2013)

Table 3, above, shows that there was little difference in enrolment between males and females at the university level – 31 per cent of females and 33 per cent of males were enrolled. However more young men were enrolled at the senior secondary and post-secondary/vocational levels, for example at polytechnics, industrial training institutes (ITIs), etc. compared to young women. In terms of their trajectories, it appears that young women either dropped out early or took a traditional academic route through the education system.

## 5.2 Transition to work

Engagement in full-time work was quite high; 36 per cent of young people were in paid or unpaid work at the age of 19. More young men than women were in full-time paid work, while more young women than young men were engaged in unpaid work, or remained without work or study (Table 2). Table 4 shows the employment status of those who were working for pay. Unsurprisingly, young people in rural areas were mostly engaged in agriculture, either

self-employed or working for wages (58 per cent), while in urban sites they tended to be employed for wages and salaries, mostly in the informal sector.

**Table 4.** *Employment type, by gender of young people in work at age 19*

Type of activity	Male		Female		Total	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
Self-employed (agriculture)	114	40.28	95	48.97	209	43.82
Wage-employed (agriculture)	31	10.95	35	18.04	66	13.84
Self-employed (non-agriculture)	37	13.07	30	15.46	67	14.05
Wage-employed, unsalaried (non-agriculture)	41	14.49	10	5.15	51	10.69
Wage-employed, regular salary (non-agriculture)	60	21.2	24	12.37	84	17.61
Total	283	100	194	100	477	100

Source: Young Lives survey data from Round 4 (2013)

### 5.3 Transition to marriage for young women

The survey data on marriage for young women showed over one-third (36 per cent) were married by 19. Table 5 shows the marital status of young women in the sample, disaggregated by caste, revealing that marriage was more prevalent among the Scheduled Castes (37 per cent), Scheduled Tribes (33 per cent) and Backward Classes (41 per cent) when compared to the Other Castes (26 per cent) (see also Singh and Vennam 2016; Roest forthcoming; and Singh and Espinoza 2016).

**Table 5.** *Females: marital status by caste, aged 19*

Marital status	SC		ST		BC		OC		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single (never married)	63	62.38	40	65.57	124	57.41	81	74.31	308	63.24
Married	37	36.63	20	32.79	89	41.2	28	25.69	174	35.73
Widow	0	0	0	0	1	0.46	0	0	1	0.21
Divorced	1	0.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.21
Separated	0	0	1	1.64	2	0.93	0	0	3	0.62
Total	101	100	61	100	216	100	109	100	487	100

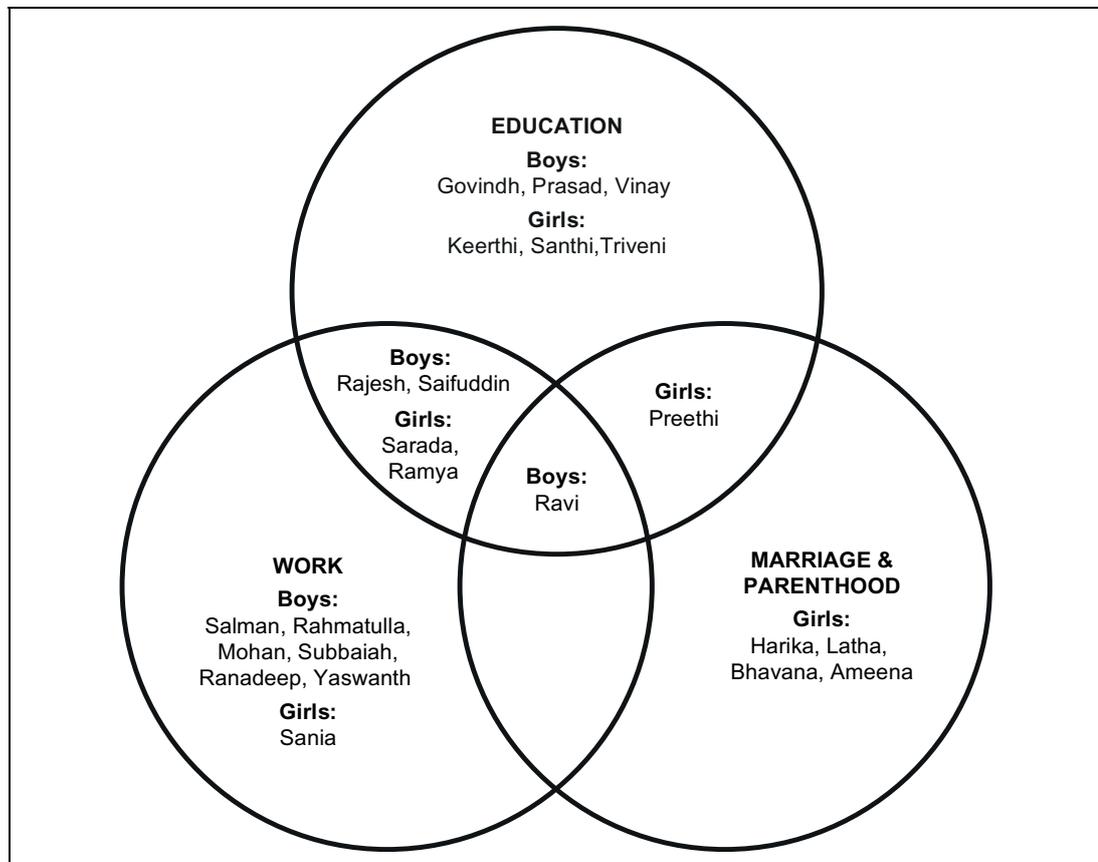
Source: Young Lives survey data from Round 4 (2013)

## 6. Individual trajectories from adolescence into early adulthood: qualitative data and case studies

This section describes the schooling, work and marriage trajectories of the 23 case study children. It uses cases and findings from the qualitative research to explain and reflect on

trends coming out of the survey described above. Figure 2 depicts the trajectories of the case study children, showing whether they embarked on a marriage, education or work pathway, or a combination of these. Our analysis suggests six different pathways, the dominant of these being moving from full-time education into full-time work for boys, and moving from full-time education into marriage for girls.

**Figure 2.** *Trajectories of the qualitative sub-sample in 2014, aged 20*



## 6.1 Education

Analysis of survey data revealed that household circumstances and broader structural factors, including wealth, caste and location, mattered for enrolment; young people from the least-poor third of households, from the more socially advantaged 'Other' Castes and from urban areas were more likely to be 'only studying' at the age of 19 than those from poorer households, rural areas, or from Scheduled Castes and Tribes or Backward Classes (see Table 2). Gender also mattered, with girls less likely to be enrolled (43 per cent vs 59 per cent) and less likely to report combining work with school than boys. As will be explored in this and subsequent sections, many girls undertook a substantial amount of work alongside or instead of their studies but, as noted earlier, this work tended to go unrecorded or under-recorded, so that a much higher percentage of girls were categorised as neither working nor studying than boys (27 per cent vs 4 per cent).

The qualitative case studies of the three young men and three young women who were still enrolled and 'only studying' were consistent with findings from the survey in showing that household and economic factors played a significant role in determining young people's continued enrolment in education.

### 6.1.1. *Expectations and aspirations*

Earlier findings from Young Lives (Galab et al. 2013) showed that parental aspirations had a positive impact on the probability that a child was enrolled in a private school. Their findings were further supported by qualitative evidence suggesting that higher parental aspirations for a child would lead to higher investment in that child's education. From our qualitative case studies we found similar indications that caregivers' expectations and aspirations for their children's education were influential for continued enrolment. The cases suggested that coming from a more financially stable background as well as having a teacher as a caregiver (possibly because of their own more substantial education) raised caregiver expectations for children's educational and employment outcomes, as well as raising the aspirations children had for themselves. These aspirations then appeared to motivate and encourage children's continued enrolment.

Even from when they were very young, Vinay and Santhi's families held high expectations for their education. Their fathers were both schoolteachers in government schools. Vinay's father was very supportive of his son's education, planning it together with Vinay so that Vinay could study to become an engineer. Vinay was sent to a good private school and then, in 2014, after passing the state-level entrance exam, he travelled about 350 km from his home to pursue an engineering course in a college. He was experiencing some difficulties with his studies and his father was becoming an alcoholic when he was interviewed in 2014; however, he maintained strong aspirations for the future:

I have thought, if in case my future plan goes correctly in M. Tech if I get a good group and after that if I get a job, related to that course then I am planning to get married, if I don't get a [place] in a good college for M. Tech then I will go for civils coaching [coaching for the civil service exams] and only after achieving civils I will get married, both ways anything after I achieve.

For Santhi, a Scheduled Tribe girl from Patna, being 'middle class' (and from the least-poor tercile within Young Lives sample) made her family very different from other families from the same tribal group. Indeed, her pathway through education differed to that of poorer girls within the qualitative sample. The family moved from Patna to a nearby town in 2005 in order to access what they perceived to be high-quality schooling for their children. Santhi's father was a teacher and her uncle and cousins were engineers and medical students. Initially Santhi wanted to be a doctor. She did well at school, despite experiencing ill health and great deal of anxiety about her examinations. Later, she changed her mind and hoped to become an engineer. Some of the key factors that shaped her trajectory were her father's education, his work as a teacher and the importance that all the family members attributed to education.

As well as encouraging Vinay and Santhi's continued enrolment, family members also influenced their decisions regarding their careers and fields of study. In 2014, when Santhi was interviewed for the fourth time, she was happily pursuing a degree in computing, even though ill health had prevented her from getting into the engineering course she had previously aspired to. Her parents and uncle had offered her guidance, selected the college she would attend and also chosen the course she would take.

While Vinay and Santhi were from the least-poor third of families, parental support and aspirations also seemed to be contributing to the continued enrolment of children from the poorest households (though other factors were involved as well, such as social support from government schemes). Keerthi and Prasad's caregivers maintained high aspirations for their children's education, even though their households were originally among the poorest in the

Young Lives sample. At 19 years old, both Keerthi and Prasad were attending college for higher education. Keerthi had moved some distance away to study engineering, while Prasad was pursuing his undergraduate course in a nearby town by commuting every day. Parental aspirations and support played a key role in both cases. Keerthi described how her mother and wider family had helped her overcome the difficulties she experienced while studying at college:

I felt happy in the beginning. But slowly that happiness is gone. More than anything I have developed the fear that I won't be able to handle it since I came from [a] Telugu medium [school]. Due to that I used to get fever and could not attend the college. My mother understood what I was going through and she encouraged me giving me hope that I can study. Really, ma'am, she encouraged me constantly and well ... Due to her encouragement I am able to come this far.

Meanwhile Prasad's family was prepared to pay for private college and, when he failed his intermediate exams, they enrolled him in computer training so as not to waste that academic year. As he explains, "[W]hatever they can do they will do ... They buy all the note books and other requirements." In these cases, family (and particularly parents) were instrumental and worked determinedly towards the fulfilment of their aspirations for their children. At the same time, the children were motivated to work towards their parents' aspirations, which fed into and reinforced their own.

### 6.1.2 *Early disadvantage and social protection*

Two girls from the poorest households, Triveni and Keerthi, also continued to be enrolled in education despite financial constraints. There were several similar contributory factors in both cases: first, they received financial support from social protection schemes, second, their caregivers were strongly supportive of their continued enrolment, and third, they themselves held high aspirations for their education.

Triveni's pathway to higher education was not as smooth as that of Santhi, discussed above, and at every stage she had to persuade her family to allow her to remain in education. This is more consistent with the findings from the research literature, which show that girls' education is often undervalued. It may be that these norms were less influential in Santhi's case because of the family's greater financial security. Indeed, in Triveni's case, obstacles to her continued education appear to have been overcome predominantly because of the financial support she received from an NGO.

Triveni lives in Katur and belongs to a Backward Caste. She is the youngest of the three siblings. When she was first interviewed in 2007, her eldest sister was married and resided in a nearby village, while the second sister and Triveni lived in another village under the care of their paternal grandmother. Triveni's parents died when she was very young and her grandmother looked after the children using the income she earned by selling vegetables grown on her small piece of agricultural land. When she was first interviewed, Triveni aspired to become an ANM (auxiliary nurse midwife). She was confident of staying at school up to Grade 10, but was not sure of her education after that because of her economic circumstances. Grade 10 was the minimum educational qualification needed to become an ANM. Triveni was clear from early on about the need to work hard at school and gain employment in order to maintain herself, in particular because she did not like the agricultural tasks (including groundnut harvesting) that she was engaged in during the school holidays.

Apart from being supported by her grandmother, Triveni received support from a well-known local NGO which helped the family to build a small house and contributed to Triveni's education. After completing Grade 7 at the local government school, Triveni moved to the school in the neighbouring village, which was 5 km away, and she had to walk all the way, until the NGO provided her with a bicycle. This motivated her to study well, as did the NGO's condition that her education would only continue to be supported if she passed all the grades.

She worked hard both at home and school, drawing inspiration from her neighbours, who were prospering in their studies and jobs. The children in their family, however, had not had to work on farms alongside their education, unlike Triveni who had been combining school with household chores and wage labour since her childhood. When she was interviewed in 2008, aged 13, Triveni reported that she disliked wage labour 'because it is very hard to do that work'; however, at the age of 15 she was still doing daily wage labour during the school holidays, working under the MGNREGS using her sister's job card (she was not old enough to legally enrol for the scheme). As a result of feeling 'lonely and uncared for' in the absence of both parents, Triveni was determined to study well and get a job. In 2014 when she was interviewed for the fourth time at the age of 19, she was in the second year of her undergraduate course and continued to receive support from the NGO. She hoped to become a teacher.

Alongside the support she received from an NGO and her own determination to succeed, birth order also seems to have played a key part in Triveni's continued enrolment. Her two older sisters did not have the opportunity to continue to higher education. Given the household circumstances, where there were three young girls depending on an aged grandmother, the focus was on quickly getting them 'settled down'. Triveni's oldest sister was married quite early, and the second one, who provided financially for the family along with the grandmother, was married a little later. When it came to Triveni, she was allowed to take her time as she was the only girl left; she was determined to pursue higher education, to get a job using her qualifications and to not get married until after that.

Keerthi, on the other hand, was the only daughter and the eldest of three children. Her mother moved the family from their native village to a nearby town to facilitate the children's education and made use of all the government provisions available for Tribal children through the ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency). In both cases, external support (from an NGO in Triveni's case and the ITDA in Keerthi's) enabled the girls to continue in education despite their poor economic status.

### 6.1.3 *Combining schooling and work*

In contrast to the trajectories described above, some children still in education were not able to attend full time because of competing demands on their time. They needed to work in order to support themselves and their families. We know from the survey data that boys were far more likely to report working and studying than girls (23 per cent vs 8 per cent), but these figures are undermined by the likely under-recording of a wide range of unpaid household and agricultural tasks regularly undertaken by girls. This may explain why, out of the four children from the qualitative sample who were combining schooling and work at the age of 19, there were equal numbers of girls and boys. Saifuddin and Rajesh worked part time to support their families, while Ramya worked seasonally on the family farm and did household chores, and Sarada worked to pay for her education, took care of her own needs and supported her family from time to time. Three of the children were from rural areas and only

Saifuddin was from an urban site. All these young people had started working quite early, doing household chores and/or working on the family farm, and had gradually moved into paid work. During their childhoods, they described the difficulty they experienced in managing both school and work.

For Ramya, whose family was from one of the least-poor households in Young Lives' sample, her work in the family fields and on household chores conflicted with her education. She was the youngest of four daughters and so had less responsibility for household chores than her older sisters, but was still tasked with activities such as fetching milk and sweeping, as well as being required to work in fields on cottonseed and tobacco crops (Morrow and Vennam 2010).

When Ramya was interviewed in 2008, her work was negatively affecting her school attendance as well as her ability to study at home. She explained that she was sometimes scolded or beaten by her teachers for being absent or for not having done her homework,

I feel very bad when teacher scolds me. I like to be regular in school, do homework, but I can't do it all, it is difficult. But there is no choice, I have to do all the work that mother and grandmother say.

Though her mother was sympathetic to Ramya's desire to go to school rather than work in the fields, circumstances were such that sometimes her labour was vital – particularly around harvest time,

If I say "I don't like to go to the field", every day, she understands it and does not force me. If I want to go to school, she will allow me. But she doesn't let me during the cotton crop season...if it is done by [too] few people, ... the crop goes to waste, that's why we have to go every day.

Ramya's family had also taken on debt (including a loan for her older sisters' marriages) and she described how because of this, "I have to work, though it is hard work; we have to clear the loans". At this time, Ramya expressed an ambition to study until degree level and become a teacher. However, her work responsibilities had already impacted negatively on her studies, causing her to score less than she should have in her seventh grade examinations (for further discussion of Ramya's experiences up to the age of 13, see Morrow and Vennam 2010).

When Ramya was interviewed in 2010, aged 15, she was enrolled in a government junior college (senior secondary school) in a town about 150 km away and was staying in the hostel along with her friend (Harika, discussed below) from the same village. The village sarpanch helped them both to gain admission to the college and hostel. Ramya was happy, mainly because she was relieved from doing farm work. In 2014, Ramya (aged 19) was back in the village and was enrolled in a degree college about 30 km away. However, this meant she had to commute every day by bus, which she found tiring. Now that she was at home, she had also returned to farm work, as well as to doing the household chores. She found these impossible to manage, and could only attend college irregularly. She had failed a couple of exams in the first year, and was due to re-sit them alongside her second year examinations. Ramya said that she would try and complete the course somehow, but was disappointed in her performance. She had always felt that balancing school and work was difficult.

### 6.1.4 Summary

As mentioned previously, the cases discussed above suggest that economic and household factors have a key role to play in influencing the trajectories of young people over time. Where families experienced economic stability and parents were employed in education (or had themselves been well educated), children appeared better able to commit their time and attention fully to their studies. Ramya's case demonstrates the greater difficulty experienced by children who must (because of their household circumstances and the agricultural nature of their livelihood) work alongside their education. It was challenging for such children to complete school and perform well in their academic work. Added to this, children's aspirations and ambitions appeared to be influenced by parental aspirations and support; children's trajectories through education were influenced by the kinds of role imagined (and in some cases chosen) for them by their parents.

As regards the three girls who continued in full-time in education (Triveni, Keerthi and Santhi), their mothers/grandmothers were motivated by their own challenging experiences to seek a different path for their daughters/granddaughters. Education was seen as key for overcoming poverty and hardship, and they made great efforts to help the girls pursue it. Girls of a similar age from the same communities did not have similar experiences, perhaps in part because of their caregivers' more limited aspirations, though at the same time, these aspirations are likely to be a function of their household circumstances. For example, more financially secure families, such as Santhi's, may feel less pressured by gender norms that traditionally under-value girls' education when they make decisions about how to invest their money. Santhi's family encouraged her to continue in education rather than marry early.

The cases above also show the critical role that social protection can play in helping children from poorer backgrounds to overcome the financial constraints to their continued education. The services for Tribal children for example, and in particular the residential schools for girls, seem to be making a sizeable contribution to the promotion of higher education among these groups. The cases above also illuminate some of the norms surrounding birth order, particularly with regard to girls' responsibilities. In Triveni and Ramya's cases, being the youngest daughter with older sisters meant they experienced fewer demands on their time. Since the older sisters were able to perform household chores and farming work, their caregivers were more inclined to support the youngest daughters' continued education.

## 6.2 Work trajectories

The survey findings show that boys were more likely to be working in paid roles than girls (24 per cent vs 12 per cent), and girls were slightly more likely to be working unpaid than boys (9 per cent vs. 4 per cent) (Table 2). 27 per cent of girls reported neither studying nor working at the age of 19 (compared to 4 per cent of boys), but, as mentioned, these figures may hide a wide variety of unpaid household and agricultural activities. Young people living in rural areas were more likely to be combining work with study than their urban peers, and those living in urban areas, from the poorest (and middle) wealth terciles, and from the Scheduled Tribes were also more likely to be 'only working' in paid roles than their peers.

Regarding 'type' of employment, girls were slightly more likely to be undertaking farming work for family than boys (49 per cent vs 40 per cent), and far more likely to be involved in agricultural activities overall (waged and for family) than boys (67 per cent vs 51 per cent) (Table 4). Conversely, boys were more likely to be employed in non-agricultural activities, both unsalaried (but waged) and salaried (36 per cent vs 18 per cent).

The cases of children in full-time work from the qualitative sample were consistent with these findings. In 2014, eight young people were working full time, and seven of whom were boys. The only girl in this category, Sania, did not self-identify as working full time and, although she undertook housework all day, she describes this as 'not doing anything'. Four boys initially managed school and work; Mohan left school after Grade 9 and the other three after failing in the Grade 10 public examinations. The other three boys' cases are discussed below.

### 6.2.1 *Boys assume household responsibility*

Our qualitative cases confirm that there are strong cultural values of intergenerational mutuality and interdependence within families and that, where children are required to take on responsibility in times of household difficulty, it on boys that the expectation of providing financially for the family often predominantly rests (Morrow 2013a). Of course, this does not mean that girls are not also contributing work to support their families, and in fact a higher proportion of girls reported leaving school in order to work than boys (Morrow 2013a), but in girls' cases this was more likely to be in order to undertake unpaid household or agricultural activities, while boys were more likely to leave for paid working activities. Certainly among our qualitative cases, four of the seven boys assumed greater financial and work responsibility within their households in times of economic hardship and crisis. Their increased work responsibilities were eventually too onerous to combine with education, causing them to leave school.

Among the main triggers for this increased burden of work were debt (often associated with loans to pay for the weddings of older siblings) and the illness or death of family members. By the age of 12, Ravi, for example, had hardly attended school but stopped completely at this point because his family's debts led him to become debt-bonded to a neighbouring family. Salman also started work quite early to help his family after the death of his father, working in shoe shops, at a hotel and later as a driver. His urban location provided him with multiple work opportunities. Similarly, Rahmatullah had to give up school after the sudden death of his older brother, who was the main income provider for the family, because of the ill health of the father. Up until his death, his brother had been doing well and had been paying for Rahmatullah to attend a (low-fee) private school, where he had stayed until Grade 9 before leaving to start work.

Yaswanth was from a Backward Caste but lived in Patna, a predominantly Scheduled Tribe community. Throughout his childhood, he described how he could not access the same services as his Scheduled Tribe peers. Yaswanth's father died when he was in Grade 1, and his mother "struggled, worked hard, and took care of me and my sister". When first interviewed, in 2007, Yaswanth was helping at home, fetching water and firewood, and buying provisions from the shops. His mother had high hopes that he would settle into a "small job", so that he could take care of her in the future. As the only son, Yaswanth felt very responsible for his mother, and this sense of responsibility was a constant feature of all his interviews. In 2010, he said, "I just want to lead a simple life and take care of my mother and myself." His sister had recently married and his mother had incurred debts in order to pay her dowry. The debts were a source of anxiety for Yaswanth as he explained that "if we don't repay them they will mortgage my house".

Yaswanth had also been ill and payment for his treatment had led to further debt. Yaswanth ideally wanted to finish senior secondary school and to go to university, but when interviewed in 2010, he was very fearful that he would not complete Grade 10. He described struggling at school: "I feel I want to study, but I can't. ... lessons are hard to understand and learn." The

economic situation of the family and his difficulty at school meant that Yaswanth was considering leaving after Grade 10, and was looking for “anything which will earn me and my mother to lead happy life ... anything, like repairing vehicles ... we must have the capacity to earn.” He described how he had enjoyed school when he was younger, because at that time, “we had no debts, now we have debts, so my mother is worried ... she keeps thinking about the debts.” He also mentioned that she worried “when she has to buy me books because she will not have money”. Family-oriented expectations seemed to structure his ambitions. In 2014, Yaswanth had discontinued school and migrated to Vijayawada, which is about 500 km away from his native village, to work as a construction labourer. He felt happy that he was able to contribute to the family, explaining, “[W]hatever the debts we have I am paying back, helping to build house; if she takes loans to do something I am clearing them.”

### 6.2.2 *Children’s declining aspirations*

Children’s aspirations for their education and subsequent employment prospects were relatively high when they were younger. However, in circumstances of household poverty, illness, death and debt, our case study children modified their hopes and plans gradually through adolescence to reflect their diminishing opportunities and prospects. These modifications brought the plans and aspirations of young people and their parents more closely into line with the traditional gender roles expected of boys and girls. In times of economic hardship, for example, boys’ plans were often adjusted towards the pursuit of financially gainful employment, while girls who were unable to pursue further or higher education were more likely to focus their expectations on marriage, as were their families.

Ranadeep, for example, initially held high aspirations for continuing in education, but his work on the family farm conflicted with his education and eventually led to him leave school. He was from a Backward Caste in Poompuhar and worked in cotton pollination during his childhood. In 2008, he described how the farm work his family ‘made’ him do conflicted with his education, leading him to be scolded by teachers for missing school. His ambition was to study until Grade 11 and attend junior college (senior secondary school) in a nearby town. He eventually wanted to migrate and start a business running a shop (Morrow 2013a).

However, by 2010 he had left school and was farming. He had failed maths, but had applied to re-take a supplementary exam. His parents had told him he needed to combine work with his studies. He said,

[T]here is nobody to work in the fields, and there is no labour ... and we need to pay 100 rupees as wages every day, and we were not able to afford it, so they stopped me from going to school. [My parents] told me I need to do both work and studies.

By 2014, Ranadeep had re-taken and passed the Grade 10 exams, but after briefly attending junior college, he found he still needed to work on the farm. This meant his attendance at college was irregular and he had failed his most recent exams. He was now back working on the family land.

At this time, he realised that his family’s limited financial circumstances meant he was unlikely to achieve his ambition of opening a shop (for further discussion of Ranadeep’s experiences up to the age of 15, see Morrow 2013a).

### 6.2.3 Summary

From the above examples we see the substantial impact on children's educational trajectories of the work responsibilities they assume as a result of certain household circumstances, including rurality (and thus having livelihoods based on agriculture), household poverty and shocks (e.g. debt and the illness and death of family members). Aspirations diminish differently for boys and girls, so that boys' plans are often modified towards supporting their families financially, while girls (as we will see below) are more likely to find their trajectories directed more quickly towards marriage. The cases also highlight that children who work face obstacles associated with schools themselves, as well as due to economic and household factors. Even though children had little choice about missing school for work, when they could attend they were blamed for their absences rather than offered understanding and support. Punishments by teachers for absences can make children reluctant to attend further and demotivate them while at school (Morrow and Singh 2014).

Both Ranadeep and Yaswanth's cases demonstrate the long-term, multidimensional effects that poverty and shocks can have on children and their parents' aspirations and realities. Ranadeep had initially hoped to use his education to move out of agriculture and into shop-keeping. However, his family's circumstances and debt meant he was tied to the family farm, which prevented him from completing his education and finding a livelihood outside of agriculture. After his father's death, Yaswanth's priority became to provide financially for his family, and thus he pursued any type of work that would pay him. Yaswanth's primary objective was to ensure his mother's financial security and alleviate her anxiety. The debt incurred through his sister's marriage added to his economic responsibilities, making it harder for him to achieve his educational goals. More positively, his construction job enabled him to fulfil his responsibilities to the family, and in doing so gave him a sense of fulfilment, pride and happiness. Yaswanth's case also reinforces the impression that government schemes are doing much to redress the disadvantage typically experienced by those from Scheduled Tribes, revealed here through his dissatisfaction that people from the Backward Castes, like himself, were not receiving similar support even though his circumstances were extremely difficult. In this way, the scheme is also discriminatory.

Finally, the cases reveal some of the differences between the types of roles and responsibilities typically undertaken by boys and girls. As expressed, both often do a large amount of work to support their families, with girls frequently spending more time on work. However, it is arguably boys who assume greater responsibility for providing economic support to families, particularly in times of poverty, debt, illness and death. Boys' working responsibilities can prevent them from gaining education or training from school or vocational activities. In this way, families' heavy reliance on boys for financial support can limit their future employment prospects.

## 6.3 Trajectories through marriage and parenthood

By the age of 19, 36 per cent of girls in the Young Lives India sample were married (1 per cent had been married but were now divorced, separated or widowed). This compares to only 2 per cent of boys. Of those who were married, 59 per cent already had a child (Galab et al. 2014b). Of the five married girls in the qualitative sample, three were from the poorest third of households when first interviewed and none from the least-poor, four were Hindu and three were from rural sites, one was from a Tribal area and only one from an urban area – Ameena, a Muslim girl from Hyderabad. Two of the girls, Bhavana and Ameena, were married at 16 years old, while the remaining three were married when they were 19 or 20

years old. Four out of the five married girls had already given birth when interviewed in 2014. Here, we focus on two case studies of girls who married early, Harika and Bhavana, using them to illustrate how social norms, as well as economic, household- and school-level factors interact to shape girls' trajectories into marriage and parenthood.

Harika was from Poompohar, a very poor rural village in southern Telangana. When interviewed in 2007, she was struggling to combine school with her other responsibilities. Her mother's work in the family fields was their main source of income, since her father was unable to work, owing to a leg injury. As the only daughter among three children, Harika was thus responsible for most of the household chores alongside her work in the fields. As a result she missed school and her academic performance suffered (Morrow 2013b).

She had initially aspired to be a teacher and she won a scholarship in 2008, payable on the proviso that she remain in education. The aim of the scholarship is to support students from poorer households to attain higher levels of education and it is paid from Grade 9 to Grade 12, for a maximum of four years. Finances improved for Harika's family in general in 2008 as her father recovered from his injury.

Over the next two years, Harika had fewer work responsibilities and she was able to concentrate more on her education. By 2010, she was at junior college, and hoped to become a doctor. She explained that education was a means through which one could achieve a better quality of life – get a better job and make more successful marriage alliance (with an educated man), which would reduce the need to do hard daily labour,

[Y]ou will have a better life if you study, there will not be much work. You will get better jobs, ... if you study well, you will get an educated husband. ... if you get a husband who is in agriculture, you have to go to the fields and work, and if you get an educated husband, you can be happy.

(For further discussion of Harika's experiences up to the age of 15, see Morrow 2013b)

Unfortunately, in 2014 she had to leave education because she had not been awarded a place on a degree course in a college with a hostel. This meant she would have needed to travel to school each day on the bus, which her brother disapproved of, saying, "[I]t is not good for girls to go and come every day in the bus, and whatever education she had is enough" (Singh and Vennam 2016).

Harika's marriage followed quickly afterwards. It was arranged for the same day as her older brother's (though a few hours earlier) in light of community norms regarding auspicious/ inauspicious times to marry and the order in which daughters and sons should be married. Harika's grandfather had died five years previously and traditionally marriages in her community could only be performed in the fifth and ninth years after the death of an elder in the family. This was the reason for organising her brother's wedding that year, and after the family had realised that girls of marriageable age must also be married before their brothers, they arranged Harika's marriage for the same time. She explained how "all my family members decided about my marriage – mother, father, paternal uncle and maternal aunt – and did not inform me about the wedding in the beginning."

Harika was married to an educated boy from the same village and, when interviewed in 2014, she appeared to be happy in her marriage. At that time she was eight months pregnant, having already had a miscarriage. (For further discussion of Harika's experiences at the age of 19, see Singh and Vennam 2016)

Bhavana was 20 years old when interviewed in 2014. She was living in a rural area of Karnataka (having grown up in Katur in Andhra Pradesh) with her husband and in-laws. She had had very little schooling, having left education after Grade 2 at the time her father died. When her father was alive, Bhavana used to be interested in school work, but after his death she lost her concentration and interest in it. She continued to accompany her mother and brothers on their seasonal migration to Mumbai in search of work. Initially Bhavana prepared the food for the family, then she worked laying roads and doing construction work.

From the first time we interviewed Bhavana, she described learning to work ‘properly’ – whether at housework or in the fields – in order to avoid problems with in-laws later on. In 2010, Bhavana expected she would marry during the next three years, and foresaw difficulties with her in-laws. It was important for her to learn how to work well, she said, because “by the time we go to our husband’s house, we must have learnt all these things . . . if we don’t know these works . . . they might say ‘What work do you know? What work have your parents taught you?’ . . .so we have to learn now” (see Morrow 2013a).

Bhavana married at the age of 16. She said she was not interested in marriage, but her brothers convinced her that it was a good alliance. At the time she was afraid and didn’t know what to expect. After the marriage she went to her in-laws’ home and gradually adjusted. She continued to do paid farm work on other people’s land, but was now doing all the household work as well, including cooking, serving the food, washing up, sweeping, and collecting and heating the water. Bhavana and her mother always thought that marriage was going to be an escape for her from the difficult circumstances in which she was living. However, when interviewed in 2014, Bhavana reported that things were not very different after her marriage, saying “[I]t’s only a different place now.” She seemed to be feeling isolated in her in-laws’ home and her husband sometimes scolded her and was lazy, and he often missed work. She also had some health problems, which meant that she could not conceive and she was worried about this.

### 6.3.1 *Social norms and limited household resources*

These case studies are consistent with other reports (discussed above) in demonstrating that girls’ roles and status in society are, to a large extent, shaped by entrenched patriarchal and patrilocal norms. Their mobility is restricted (particularly after puberty) because of the reputational risk posed by actual or perceived interactions with boys and men; their engagement with education or work is shaped by the limited skilled/decent employment opportunities available to women; their trajectories through marriage are determined predominantly by their parents and male relatives, leaving them with little say in when or whom they marry; and the timing of both their marriage and first child are influenced substantially by pressures from the wider community.

In Harika’s case, after early difficulties combining work with education, she later failed to gain entry to a higher education college that would have enabled her to avoid a lengthy journey to school. Her brother decided she should no longer continue in education because of the social risks posed by this journey. Once she was out of education, a decision made by another of her male relatives led to her marriage, with the timing of the wedding determined by local customs. In Bhavana’s case, not only did her male relatives take the decision that she should be married without consulting her, but the timing of her marriage was also influenced by pressure from the wider community. Prevailing social norms in her community dictated that a girl her age (and out of education) should be married, or else the family might be seen as neglectful.

It is clear that social norms play a significant role in shaping girls' trajectories into marriage and parenthood; however, economic and household factors also play a substantial role and where resources are limited, gender norms (such as those relating to the value of girls' education and their vulnerability to social risk) appear to become more salient in decision-making – particularly with regard to girls' early school exit and marriage. If Harika's family had been able to afford to pay for her to stay in 'safe' accommodation, she might not have been withdrawn from education. If Bhavana's family had not experienced the death of her father and extreme impoverishment, perhaps she too might have continued in education or not been required to undertake such heavy work (leading her to view early marriage as an 'escape'). As mentioned earlier, caregivers often look to marriage as a means to secure girls' future financial welfare and well-being. This may happen more quickly where families are experiencing poverty themselves, and particularly where parents are worried they may die soon because of poor health. As Sarada's mother explained:

They say, 'What is the guarantee that we live long? So it is better to marry them off.' They say that all the time ... They want to see their daughter married off before they die. And then they worry that they are going to die soon.

Where families have more resources at their disposal, they appear to be more inclined to delay their daughters' marriage and are not forced to make decisions guided by thoughts of financial insecurity or early death.

### 6.3.2 *Education as a protective measure*

There appears to be a protective element to girls' continued attendance at school. We see from Harika and Bhavana's cases that both had left education prior to getting married. Indeed, for Harika, marriage followed very quickly after she left school. Sania's situation was similar: by 2014 she had given up school because of household circumstances and her mother was planning to arrange her marriage as soon as the debts incurred in connection with the elder daughter's marriage were cleared. When interviewed in 2014, Sania said, "I am not doing anything. I am not even studying any more. I am just staying in the house. I have put on weight." Her mother said she would like Sania to get married in the next two to three years but would prefer her son to get married first. Conversely, for Keerthi (who was able to remain in education despite her family's poor financial circumstances owing to support from the ITDA), her parents were happy for her to delay her marriage in order to continue in her education. Her mother explained:

If Keerthi can get a job after her studies then we won't have to worry about her ... when it comes to her marriage, we are not hurrying. ... We were worried whether we could find a good boy for her. Since she is studying and if she finds a job we don't have to worry about her. ... We [will] marry her to whomever she likes after she gets into a job.

Education was prized among girls as a way to achieve 'a better life', to work less, and to get 'an educated husband' who would not require his wife to work in the fields (since he would not be employed in agriculture). Education also holds out the possibility that girls may acquire decent employment themselves. In these ways, while girls are still in education there remains the potential that their future welfare and well-being will be secured, either through a successful marriage alliance or through their own employment. While this was the case, parents were not so likely to resort to early marriage; however, once girls left education, there were few alternatives available for them. Moreover, the longer girls remained unmarried after puberty, the greater the risk they were perceived to be at of damaging their social reputation

(and thereby their marriageability) through pre-marital sex or exposure to sexual harassment. For girls like Harika, Bhavana and Sania, once out of education, their families were highly motivated to see them under the perceived social and financial protection of marriage.

### 6.3.3 *Early disadvantage and its implications for girls' marriage*

Young Lives caregivers were dedicated to securing their daughters' future well-being, with this being seen as highly dependent upon the arrangement of a suitable marriage alliance (Roest forthcoming). Traditionally, marriageability was largely dependent upon the education, employment and temperament/character of the male, and the modesty, chastity and skill in domestic chores of the female. More recently, there has been some movement in social norms so that, while girls' education is still seen by many as reducing marriageability (as it may make a girl less biddable), others feel that being better educated may increase it. Certainly we heard both views among our sample. Ranadeep, for instance, wanted a wife with an equal amount of education to himself or less, and Sania's mother, 'while she [wanted] her daughter to continue with schooling, she [was] clear that this should not be at the expense of learning the domestic skills required to position her favourably in the marriage market' (Boyden and Crivello 2011: 178).

Contrastingly, Salman had changed his mind about his future wife's ideal level of education and was hoping to marry an educated girl. Crivello et al. (2014) note that 'before, he wanted his future wife to be uneducated; now he prefers an educated wife ... he thinks that girls (even if they themselves are not educated) will prefer to marry an educated boy, not "this boy who drives an auto, or rickshaw"' (p. 108). Keerthi's mother thought that not only was it important for Keerthi to be educated, but that she should also find paid employment before looking for a husband:

Then I made it clear to her if we look for alliance after she settles in a job she would surely find a boy who has job. Having job makes a difference and so it is good to look for a boy after she finds a job. Otherwise, they would say that she has education but no job.

In comparing Harika and Bhavana's experiences, we see that household circumstances can influence when and how a match takes places, as well as affecting the type of man a girl marries, i.e. whether he has a job, whether he works hard, whether he is prone to violence, etc. Girls like Bhavana (whose family experienced poverty and bereavement, who had little education and who was in low-skilled employment), have little leverage or means through which to negotiate an alliance with a more eligible partner. Her family appears to have accepted the first possible alliance (her mother said that no other offers had been made) and since she was extremely unhappy in her situation at the time, Bhavana was hopeful that marriage would offer some respite from her work responsibilities. Unfortunately, her husband turned out to have limited employment prospects and a poor work ethic, and her experience living with her in-laws was unhappy, isolating and physically demanding in terms of the work expected of her. In this way, girls' earlier disadvantages can continue to impact negatively upon their long-term outcomes.

Girls from less disadvantaged households may be able to stay longer in education, may have a broader network of social connections, and may even be able to obtain their own paid employment positions. Their families can also afford higher dowry payments and need not feel so pressured to secure the financial welfare of their daughter at an early age through marriage. In Harika's case, though she wished she had been able to wait for a few more years before getting married, and she again had little say in whom she married, her alliance

was with a more educated man, from a better-educated family in general. It is this higher level of education with which she associates her in-laws' kindness towards and support of her. Indeed, in their attitude towards women's work, she even finds them progressive – again, ascribing this to the men's education and the experience they have had of looking after themselves while studying. When interviewed in 2014, she explained:

I have seen how my father and my paternal uncle behave. They never help their women folks in anything. They just go to the farm and come home and sit idle but never help. But in my house even after coming home the men would help around the house. In my in-laws' families when the women wash clothes the men will put them on the clothes line for drying. They all help the women, because they are all educated. They understand that one person cannot do everything. But in my parents' house it is not like that. ... The people who get education often have to stay away from home to pursue studies. So they end up cooking and cleaning and also doing all the work themselves. So they know how hard the work is. But people who work in the farms are very crude. They think it is wrong to do cooking since it is women's chore. Educated people don't feel like that, madam. They don't mind doing everything.

#### 6.3.4 *Knowledge of reproduction and attitudes to fertility*

As discussed by Singh and Vennam, a 'majority of married girls ... reported a lack of awareness about contraceptives and sexual [and] reproductive health' (2016: 24). In each of the four cases in our qualitative sub-sample where the married girls had also given birth, lack of knowledge of reproduction and family planning appears to have played a role in hastening conception. Latha and Ameena, for example, both spoke of having little knowledge of what to expect of married life beforehand or about pregnancy, and both became pregnant soon after their marriages. Harika, too, conceived swiftly after marriage; she conceived five to six months after marrying in 2013, had a miscarriage after three months, conceived again three months after that and was eight months pregnant at the time of her interview in 2014. She had experienced difficulties with both pregnancies and had neither intended nor wanted to have children so soon, but had had little idea how to prevent this:

Harika: We thought we will not have babies so soon. But it has happened and we did not want to get rid of it.

Interviewer: Did you use anything to prevent getting pregnant?

Harika: No, we did not use anything. We thought it would be good not to have children for three years. We never expected to get pregnant so soon.

In Preethi's case, her husband supported her in continuing her education after getting married in 2013, but she became pregnant six months later, explaining that at the time, she had not even known how to tell if she was pregnant. She had also not discussed with her husband when they would like to have a child.

Compounding the lack of knowledge of sexual and reproductive health is the pressure experienced by some young couples to prove their fertility by conceiving quickly. This may be explicit, as in the experience of one young mother from a focus group held in Katur: "If we don't conceive immediately then they will comment on us and keep taunting us. They will say 'Look, she has no children' and in this way a finger will be pointed at us." These attitudes may also be so entrenched that individuals feel an unspoken pressure or do not consciously realise they are applying pressure to others. In Bhavana's case, for example, she was very self-

conscious about not having conceived after three years of marriage. Her husband had told her he was not worried, but she was still anxious: “They don’t even ask. I myself feel bad.”

## 7. Discussion

The data presented in the sections above show how various factors at the individual, household and community levels, and often a combination of these, influence the life trajectories of boys and girls. It is evident that gender plays a significant role, alongside other factors, including poverty, bereavement, birth order, location, debt and illness within the family. Each of these factors shape girls’ and boys’ trajectories in different ways – often propelling them away from outcomes they had aspired to for themselves. Consistent with Morrow’s findings regarding the aspirations and schooling of Young Lives children in united Andhra Pradesh (2013b), some of the case study children’s aspirations appeared to decline over time in response to certain constraints. Ranadeep and Harika, for example, had each held high aspirations for continuing in education early on in life, but adjusted these in light of household poverty and the presence of reputational risk (Harika).

While both boys’ and girls’ aspirations diminished, particularly during adolescence, young people modified their plans differently depending on their gender. In almost all the cases the boys were the ones who took on family responsibilities and moved into full-time work while the girls became engaged in family farm work and household chores in preparation for marriage. For Ranadeep, norms which encourage sons to share financial responsibility in times of economic hardship meant that, faced with his own family’s financial insecurity, his aspirations diminished progressively, from continuing in education, to leaving school but opening a shop, to leaving school early and remaining in agriculture. Harika had hoped to continue in education and become a doctor. However, norms that undervalue girls’ education and see their continued attendance at (and associated travel to) school/college/university as posing a risk to their own and their families’ social reputations, caused her to leave school and subsequently enter swiftly into marriage and parenthood.

Regarding education, poverty was a key influencing factor and gender also played an important role, with our quantitative findings showing that 57 per cent of boys compared to only 41 per cent of girls were still enrolled in education at the age of 19. However, other factors also affected children’s ability to continue their education, including parental education, occupation and both child and parental educational aspirations. In some cases, children and their caregivers’ high aspirations appeared to help overcome the obstacles caused by poverty and gendered expectations. However, in these instances other influences were also present, such as financial support from NGOs or social protection programmes, so that aspiration alone is unlikely to have been the main determining factor. In Keerthi’s case, for example, her mother took advantage of the support available to Tribal girls from the ITDA, without which she may not have been able to encourage her daughter to pursue further education.

Where children combined school and work early in life, it led for some boys to leaving school and moving towards full-time work and for some girls gradually towards early marriage. The work burden experienced by children still in school often affects their performance because of increased absenteeism, and schools show limited sympathy or understanding for children in this situation. Consequently, these children often lag behind in school, fail to understand the lessons and get punished by the teachers for poor performance. They easily become demotivated and gradually drop out of school. Residential schools offer some salve to this

problem, giving children an opportunity to live away from home, close to their school, in a safe environment and away from their extra-curricular responsibilities to the household.

Another trend that clearly emerged from the case studies and the survey data was that girls who were not in school were more likely to get married early. Both Bhavana and Latha discontinued school at primary level. A couple of years after they reached puberty, their families gave in to community pressures and the girls were married. Subsequently, couples' lack of knowledge about reproduction and family planning, combined with their families' expectations regarding fertility, may be contributing to widespread early pregnancy and childbirth; indeed, four of the five married girls conceived and gave birth quickly after they had wed. Delays in having a first child can put pressure on a couple (and on girls in particular), as in the case of Bhavana, who felt bad about not being able to have a child after three years of marriage.

Lastly, location played a substantial part in influencing the trajectories of young people, and there was a big variation between those in full-time education in urban and rural areas (49 vs 27 per cent). Moreover, having to combine school and work seemed almost inevitable for children from rural areas and this often resulted in premature school exit, full-time work and early marriage. Young people from rural areas were far more likely to be combining work with school, predominantly working in agriculture, and there is a need for schools to take a more sensitive and flexible attitude towards children's work responsibilities.

## 8. Conclusion

A combination of intersecting factors can be seen to shape children's trajectories into adolescence and early adulthood. Early disadvantages resulting from poverty, family death, debt or illness play a key role in determining these trajectories, as do gender norms, which influence the different opportunities and social risks girls and boys are exposed to and the roles they are expected to fulfil. Most notably, poverty emerged as a key influencing factor, often irrespective of gender, on young people's trajectories. Young people from the least-poor families experienced less need to combine work with their studies and were thus better able to maintain and pursue their educational and employment aspirations. This was the case for both young women and young men, so gender was not the key organising principle here. Indeed, while all young people held high aspirations from a young age, these diminished among those whose opportunities were limited by poverty, household shocks and disadvantage.

It was where families were most financially insecure, through poverty, debt, or the death or ill health of a family member, when gender differences between girls' and boys' trajectories became most distinct. Among the more financially stable, gender norms that devalue girls' education appeared less salient. Indeed, as can be seen from the survey data, the number of girls able to continue full time in education, which can require a certain level of financial security, was almost equal to the number of boys (though there are likely to have been differences in the type of educational institution they attended). It is where economic hardships and shocks occurred that girls' trajectories moved more quickly towards early school exit and marriage, while for boys it was towards the pursuit of wage-earning activities in order to fulfill their expected role of financial provider for the family.

Though some gender roles are set from a young age, for example, those that determine that girls should undertake more household chores than boys, it was not until adolescence that many other differences began to appear. Up until this point, there was parity of enrolment in education, but once children reach secondary school – and particularly at the time of their Grade 10 exams – boys' and girls' trajectories diverged more distinctly. As discussed above, it is at this point that education stops being free and compulsory and when parents' decisions about how to invest in their children became crucial. These choices are influenced by gender norms (such as those relating to son preference) and, in the case of girls, by the social risks attached to remaining unmarried for too long after puberty.

Gender norms remain distinctly influential for many young women in determining the timing of marriage as well as that of the birth of their first child. As we have seen, families are fearful for multiple reasons of delaying their daughters' and sisters' marriages, not least because parents are concerned to provide for the long-term welfare of their daughters in light of worries about their own health and mortality. Distance to school and safety on the way to school emerged as factors that inhibited girls' continued education. Since girls who stayed longer in education were marrying later, addressing these problems could help delay girls' marriages. In certain ways, the norms relating to girls' education appear to be shifting and some families are placing greater emphasis on the importance of keeping their daughters in school. However, this too may be related to the financial stability of the family. Furthermore the value attached to girls' education remained strongly tied to the positive impact it could have on their marriageability; their education was not generally viewed as important in its own right.

The discussion above and the case studies presented in this paper suggest that gendered differences still exist in spite of the implementation of a number of programmes and efforts to address gaps. Indeed, though there is currently policy attention in India on skill development and increased access to education and employment for young people, for many, poverty and early disadvantage undermine their ability to take advantage of these opportunities and often reinforce discriminatory gender norms around girls' and boys' roles in society. Much work is needed to ensure that India's large-scale economic gains are used to overcome the current inequities among its young people, rather than allowed to reinforce the disadvantages which currently hold so many of them back.

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# Gendered Trajectories through School, Work and Marriage in India

This working paper examines how gender affects girls' and boys' school, work and marriage trajectories across adolescence and into early adulthood in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India. It explores when gender inequality begins to open up in childhood; in which domains, how and why gender disparities persist across adolescence and into early adulthood; and, finally, whether and how gendered norms, values and practices impact on children's trajectories.

Based on analysis of qualitative longitudinal data, gathered from children and their parents, and descriptive survey statistics, we find that:

- early disadvantages resulting from poverty, debt, the illness of a family member or a death in the family, play a key role in framing young people's trajectories, as do gender norms that influence the different roles, responsibilities, opportunities and social risks that girls and boys are exposed to;
- poverty emerged as a key influencing factor, often irrespective of gender, on young people's trajectories;
- it was where families were most financially insecure that gender norms became most salient and differences between girls' and boys' trajectories most distinct;
- though gender roles can be set from a young age, it was not until adolescence that the most substantial differences began to appear, with poorer girls more likely to leave school early and transition to marriage, while boys became increasingly responsible for providing financially for their families.

The data presented in this paper suggest that gendered differences in girls' and boys' trajectories through education, work and marriage still exist despite the implementation of a number of government programmes and efforts to address gaps, with differences emerging most conspicuously at the point at which poverty and gendered social norms intersect.



An International Study of Childhood Poverty

## About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

## Young Lives Partners

Young Lives is coordinated by a small team based at the University of Oxford, led by Professor Jo Boyden.

- *Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia*
- *Pankhurst Development Research and Consulting plc, Ethiopia*
- *Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, India*
- *Save the Children India*
- *Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), Peru*
- *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional, Peru*
- *Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam*
- *General Statistics Office, Vietnam*
- *Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, UK*

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