

This is most apparent in Andhra Pradesh where Young Lives data show a clear boy bias in educational expenditure. This may be exacerbated by the rapidly growing low-fee private sector. In the first round of survey data collection (2002) 11% of boys and 9% of girls aged 8 in rural areas were receiving private education. In 2009 39% of boys and 23% of girls in the younger cohort aged 8 were in a private school. This illustrates not only the growth of private education, especially in rural areas, but that this growth is associated with a widening gender gap. Given that the private education sector (including English tuition) is highly regarded, this may mean that boys are able to obtain better-paid jobs when older. Although it is not clear whether the quality of education is higher in the private sector, parents believe this to be the case and feel compelled to invest in children where possible. This puts a large strain on household finances with parents reporting taking out loans to pay for fees. These debt traps will inevitably impact on equality and poverty reduction (UNESCO 2010).

Policy implications

Young Lives findings do show examples of girls experiencing disadvantages. However, findings also challenge assumptions about gender inequalities showing instead that gender is one of a series of inequalities, including poverty, geographical location, ethnicity or caste status, which can impact negatively on both girls' and boys' life chances. Inequalities affect both boys and girls at different ages, due to intra-household dynamics, sociocultural context and economic pressures. The patterning of gender inequalities varies between the countries included in the Young Lives study. Andhra Pradesh is the exception providing a much more consistent pattern of bias against girls.

Increases in girls' enrolment have not been matched by increases in the quality of education. Learning outcomes can be influenced by challenges faced in the school environment. It remains to be seen whether girls are able to translate school enrolment into better-paid jobs, position in society, or bargaining power within the household, particularly given the persistence of gender differences in time use. Building on the success of increased enrolment requires equal attention to the education quality and the learning environment. In order for children and parents' high aspirations to be met it is important that school equips children with the skills needed to access the labour market, vocational training and higher education.

Economic development alone will not solve gender inequalities and factors such as the private education sector may work in the opposite direction. Understanding the sociocultural factors affecting the uptake of education is the first stage in ensuring service provision meets the needs of poor children, such as reducing the need for girls to travel long distances and being flexible to meet the needs of working children.

Disaggregation of data, including by gender, is essential to inform policies to ensure that services are reaching the poorest children. Disadvantages based on geographic location, ethnicity or caste or poverty levels are larger and more consistent than differences according to gender. However, these factors may compound gender inequalities. Our analysis also suggests that in seeking to improve gender equality, policy interventions, such as improving school quality or social protection programmes, should target broader structural inequalities between urban and rural environments and between households with different levels of consumption, especially the poorest households.

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- Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from Young Lives Policy Briefs in their own publications. In return, Young Lives requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.
- Young Lives is a 15-year study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India, Vietnam and Peru, following the lives of 3,000 children in each country. It is core-funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID) from 2001 to 2017 and by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014. The full text of all Young Lives publications and more information about our work is available on our website. www.younglives.org.uk

Poverty and Gender Inequalities: Evidence from Young Lives



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Tackling gender inequalities has become central to poverty reduction strategies, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, gender dynamics between children growing up in poverty, and how these change over time, are poorly understood, yet a number of assumptions prevail. Young Lives is a study of childhood poverty which is following two cohorts of children over 15 years in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam. Analysis of Young Lives data challenges assumptions and suggests that gender is one source of inequality, alongside poverty, geographical location, ethnicity or caste status, which can intersect to impact negatively on children's life chances and on girls differently from boys. To improve equality of life chances, policy interventions will have most success by targeting absolute poverty and broader structural inequalities.



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Starting with children as the entry point to breaking cycles of poverty and inequalities has become increasingly central to international strategies. This is illustrated by targets on children's education, mortality and health encompassed in the MDGs. Research has shown that girls who stay in school for longer, marry and have children later, thus decreasing the risk of maternal and child mortality and morbidity (UNICEF 2010). However, such research often relies on measures of men and women rather than the current situation of children. Where research does focus on differences between boys and girls, a stereotype is generated of girls facing consistent disadvantage.

This Policy Brief draws together Young Lives data to analyse differences between boys and girls and is focused on education and aspirations, and domestic life and intra-household dynamics. While caution should be taken in generalising from the findings as there are only four study countries, diverse sociocultural, political and economic contexts are included. In addition, due to the pro-poor sampling structure, data are not nationally representative. The findings discussed here show how gender is one of a series of inequalities which can impact negatively on both girls' and boys' life chances. Strategies to reduce gender

inequalities therefore need also to address poverty and broader structural inequalities in order to improve life chances for both poor girls and poor boys.

Gender differences in Young Lives countries

Analysis of Young Lives data offers three principal challenges to assumptions about inequalities between boys and girls.

- Both boys and girls encounter disadvantages relating to their gender, which impact on their life chances. This varies according to age and the socio-economic context.
- Rather than consistent disadvantages against girls, the specific patterning of inequalities varies between countries as well as between different outcomes in education and time use.
- Gender differences often intersect with other larger inequalities, such as poverty, urban or rural environments and belonging to marginalised ethnic or caste groups, compounding the extent of the inequality.

School trajectories: the impact of socio-economic context

Gender parity in primary school enrolment is a central target of the MDGs and the Education For All (EFA) goals. National trends show that this has been achieved in Vietnam and Peru but not Ethiopia and India (UNICEF 2010). Young Lives data show a more positive picture with gender parity within its samples across all four countries. Children's trajectories beyond primary school reveal different patterning across the countries. Table 1 shows that in Vietnam boys in the older cohort are less likely to be in school. This could be due to the higher wage-earning potential of boys, or boys doing less well in exams and then leaving school. This disparity is intensified by poverty, as only 40% of poor boys are in school at age 15.

Table 1: 14–15-year-olds enrolled in school by location, ethnic group and poverty, Vietnam (%)

	Boys	Girls
Overall	72.2	80.0
Urban	86.0	90.6
Rural	69.1	77.7
Above poverty line ¹	73.7	81.6
Below poverty line	40.0	52.0
Majority ethnic group	76.3	83.8
Minority ethnic groups	46.0	54.7

(n. = 976)

In contrast, Table 2 indicates that in the Andhra Pradesh sample more girls leave school than boys at this age, yet poor girls are more likely to be in school than poor boys. This may be a result of policy schemes, such as hostels, aiming to keep girls in school. This illustrates how gender and poverty intersect to disadvantage different groups of children.

Table 2: 14–15-year-olds enrolled in school by location, caste and poverty, Andhra Pradesh (%)

	(n. = 1008)	
	Boys	Girls
Overall	81.0	74.0
Urban	86.4	82.9
Rural	78.8	71.0
Above poverty line	81.9	74.2
Below poverty line	71.8	83.3
Scheduled Castes	82.5	67.3
Scheduled Tribes	74.4	76.9
Backward Castes	79.4	71.7
Other ²	85.4	84.7

(n. = 1008)

¹ The poverty line is 50% of the median household consumption level within Young Lives sample, calculated separately for each country.

² 'Other' refers to children from higher castes or other religions.

³ Recognising the cultural specificity of the PPVT as a test developed in English for US populations, Young Lives adapted and translated the test and local teams replaced unfamiliar items.

Why Latha left school

Latha aged 15 lives in rural Andhra Pradesh and is from the Backward Caste. She studied until two years ago when she left school. Her mother explains: "our position was not good, our son passed away. We were in sorrow," and so Latha was required to work in the fields on a groundnut plantation. Studying beyond seventh grade would have meant Latha travelling to school in another village and her mother was concerned about her daughter's reputation:

"It would have been better if she had continued her studies but again this is ...alright. If she studies here and there, goes to towns, friendships are formed [with boys]. That may happen. So, we stopped."

Latha's mother also stressed the importance of teaching her daughter both domestic and field work in preparation for marriage:

"If we give her away to another's house, there they will scold her if she does not do the work saying 'who taught you the work? Did your mother and father not teach you?'"

She feels proud that other community members have commented that Latha is being taught well by her parents. Although she is keen for her daughter to be married she will not force her: "We cannot pressurise. We cannot say you should marry, only if they like."

Quality of education: from parity to equality

While there is a positive story of increasing enrolment, this does not necessarily mean that this translates into girls receiving a good education. The fifth EFA goal urges a shift from gender parity in enrolment to gender equality in the quality of education. Using two educational outcome measures (tests of receptive vocabulary³ and maths) as a proxy for quality, we found that Young Lives boys are performing better in Andhra Pradesh and Ethiopia while Young Lives girls are performing better in Vietnam. There are gender-specific factors which may affect children's learning outcomes, such as teachers treating girls and boys differently. In Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh girls may be absent each month because of menstruation and the lack of adequate sanitation facilities at school.

Gender is not the only factor associated with differing learning outcomes. Within Young Lives data the gap in achievement between children from the poorest (lowest) and richest (highest) quintile of household consumption

level is larger than differences in achievement between boys and girls. This is indicative of an 'inverse care law' whereby poorer children often attend schools with fewer resources and receive a poorer-quality education (UNESCO 2010: 23). Another reason for the association between household consumption and test scores is that enrolment figures mask absence from school because of caring responsibilities and the need to support the household's livelihoods.

High aspirations shared by children and parents

Contrary to claims that parents with low levels of schooling have low aspirations for their children, caregivers report high aspirations for their children. Women in particular were keen for daughters to have opportunities denied or unavailable to them:

"In the past girls married at the age of 15 but now things have changed. Girls can marry at the age of 20 and even 30 years. My wish about my granddaughter is that she should marry after she has become self-reliant; I wish her to complete her education, then to have her own work and then to marry a person whom she loves and with whom she wants to live." (Grandmother, age 70, rural Ethiopia)

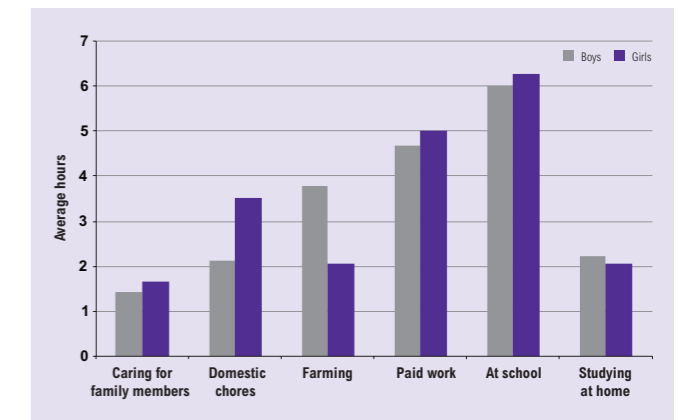
Despite this optimism, children and parents describe many obstacles. Caregivers face tough decisions concerning their household's livelihood and social standing, which may be at risk if the decisions they make for their children are out of step with the wider community, particularly for girls. In Ethiopia poverty may lead families to marry daughters in order to receive bride wealth. In India, dowries (although legally prohibited) are frequently paid by the bride's family and some caregivers fear that educated girls may entail a higher dowry. Interlinked with this are caregivers' fears that others will doubt their daughters' reputations if they have studied away from home due to the potential for interaction with boys, as illustrated by Latha's mother.

Boys also face obstacles, including the need to earn wages to support the household and to enable their sisters to marry. The lack of training opportunities and suitable jobs available after school leads some parents to question the value of keeping children in school. At present it is not certain how these processes of social change will play out, whether girls will be able to build on increased access to primary education and make successful transitions to secondary school and beyond.

Children's time use and work

Children's time use is gendered in terms of tasks allocated to boys and girls and the amount of time spent on those tasks. Typically girls spend longer caring for others and domestic tasks whereas boys spend more time in unpaid work for family farms or businesses, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Daily time use, 14–15-year-olds, Ethiopia (for children engaged in each activity)



While the tasks undertaken are gendered, the amount of time spent in paid and unpaid work is similar between boys and girls. They spend a similar amount of time in school, but girls have less time for studying – a factor which may impede progress at school. Time use data from Andhra Pradesh tell a different story, with the burden of paid and unpaid work falling disproportionately on girls who spend nearly an hour and a half more working per day.

Gender is not the only factor shaping children's time use. Children living in rural areas spend more time on household work, caring responsibilities, and unpaid and paid work, with less time in school or studying. The difference in time spent in school and studying, and in paid work, is larger between children in urban and rural environments than between boys and girls.

Household composition, birth order and sibling composition also shape the allocation of tasks. In Ethiopia eldest girls typically have a heavier burden of tasks than brothers or younger sisters (Heissler and Porter 2010). Shocks and adverse events also impact on children's time use and the increased burden may fall disproportionately on children, particular girls (Krutikova 2009). Differences in household composition or adverse events can also result in children having to perform atypical tasks, such as boys caring for others. In contrast other caregivers reported boys refusing to carry out tasks which they believed are 'the work of women'. This suggests that the gendered nature of household tasks is a way in which gendered roles are reproduced.

Intra-household decision-making: poverty exacerbates differences

Many caregivers feel that they treat their children equally but due to limited resources feel forced to choose between sons and daughters in educational expenditure. Rather than discrimination *per se* parents stressed the current realities of the labour market, as well as sociocultural norms, where sons look after their parents in old age.