



# Ravi's story

A profile from  
Young Lives in India

*"After work is over, we come back ...  
happily together. On our way home  
we talk about our lives."*

# Ravi's story

**Ravi is now 16 and is working in the fields. There is no discussion of school for him now. He says he is proud to earn money and help his parents out. Although he no longer talks about violence between his parents, he describes how he was drawn into fighting his brother-in-law to protect his sister and nephew. He says there is no place in his own future for the alcohol and violence that have blighted his family's life.**

According to his parents, Ravi was never motivated to go to school. But he says that people laughed at him when he reached a certain age and said that he was too old to go. In fact, we know from last time that he left school in order to help pay family debts. He says he prefers to work. In this way he can contribute to the household.

Neither of Ravi's parents went to school. But they say that the increasing opportunities for education is one of the positive changes they have seen since they were young. However, only Ravi's older brother continued with school beyond 4th grade, and he has now failed his exams and gone to Bangalore to work. Ravi's parents still hope that he might take his exams again so that there is one educated person in the family.

Recently, when there was no work in the village, Ravi was sent to work in a neighbouring town where one of his sisters lives. He was very lonely because there was no-one his own age there. But he helped to pay for a television and now spends a lot of his spare time watching it. He is keen on films and was very excited when at a religious festival his father bought a photo taken of the family.

Ravi says he likes working in the groundnut fields near his village. He can be with his parents. He earns money. And he has a daily routine.

Time	Activities
6.30am	Wake up and go to work
9.00am	Have breakfast
2.00pm	Come home, have lunch and sleep
3.30pm	Go out
4.30pm	Come back, watch television
8.00pm	Go to bed

Ravi was 13 years old last time we interviewed him. He comes from a Scheduled Caste family (also known as *Dalits*). He had dropped out of school to pay a family debt and was working on a farm but said he hoped to go back one day. He was distressed about the violence his father inflicted on his mother but didn't know what to do about it.

He likes the fact that everyone works together:

*“We children, the older people and the married ones, all of us, we become very enthusiastic and competitive and rush to be the first to go to work. After work is over, we come back with the same spirit, happily together. On our way home we talk about our lives. We ask each other: ‘Look, man, how is life? How are things going?’ and so on.”*

But he says that no-one talks about the difficult things in their lives: “Even if we have difficulties, we don’t like to share them. We prefer to share only our happiness.”

Ravi has plenty of difficult things in his life, though he finds it hard to talk about them. Last time we came, he was concerned about his father beating his mother. This is no longer mentioned, but Ravi’s mother says she is very worried about both his married sisters, whose husbands beat them. During his recent stay with his sister he came home one day to find his brother-in-law hitting her. He intervened and was caught up in the violence.

*“I was provoked and angry. I hit him back. I beat him with my bare hands. He fell down flat. He was in bed for three days. We thought that he wouldn’t come back. We moved out and rented another room but he turned up, saying, ‘How dare you hit me?’ And again he picked on me.”*

What happened then?

*My sister intervened and told me to calm down. She told me not to get involved and to go inside. He pulled me out and started hitting me. Then he started hitting my sister. I had to free her.*

What happened after that?

*He went away and did not come back home for a week. But then he came and caught hold of my nephew’s neck and held him against the wall. I tried to stop him. I said, ‘Take your hands off him.’ Then he said, ‘This is my son and I’ll do as I please.’ But he released him anyway. And after that he never came back. He hasn’t turned into a good man. Whenever he came he fought with my sister and he would go away for a few days and come back again only to hit her again.”*

Not surprisingly, Ravi says he hates people who drink and that his own future will be different. He wants to earn money, get married to a good-looking woman from the same background, chosen by his parents. He says he wants one child. If he has a daughter he will only pay a small dowry, as he does not believe in large dowries.

He would like to learn to be a mason so that if something happens to his house he can repair it. He would also like to learn to drive a tractor and maybe buy some bullocks. He wants to work and be able to support himself and his family and no longer to ask his father for money. In fact, neither of his parents are very well and he would like to be able to support them as they grow older. “In future I shall put on weight and have a beard or moustache. I shall be well dressed. I shall wear trousers and a shirt and new and trendy clothes during festivals and on other occasions.”

But he feels the weight of responsibility; he says when he is older he will no longer be able to play: “If I still play people will laugh at me and say ‘Look, you have grown up and look like a donkey. Do you still want to play?’ That’s why I ought to work.”

## The extent of domestic violence against women in India

A research study in five Indian States, including Andhra Pradesh, found that the incidence of violence against women was extremely high. Physical violence was defined as 'any action of the perpetrator used against a woman with the intention of causing her physical injury'.

Of the 1,250 respondents, a shocking 84 per cent had experienced physical violence in one form or another. About 59 per cent had been beaten, slapped, pushed and kicked; about 14 per cent had been beaten with canes, burnt with rods or had objects thrown at them; about 5 per cent had been assaulted with weapons; and about 10 per cent were the victims of sexual coercion and abuse.

- In 15 per cent of cases the violence took place practically every day.
- Around 90 per cent were victims of emotional abuse. This was higher in lower middle class and middle class families than in upper class, higher middle class and lower class families and families below the poverty line.
- About 89 per cent were victims of economic abuse. This includes 'preventing a woman from taking a job, forcing her to leave the existing job, collecting full amount of her salary under force, pressurising her to bring money from her parents' family, and prohibiting her from making purchases of her choice.'
- The husband's alcoholism was reported as a major cause of violence by victims from rural areas and those belonging to lower class families in urban areas.
- Nearly half the respondents were either illiterate or had only been educated to primary school level.
- About 39 per cent identified the husband as the principal instigator of violence. Thirty per cent said it was their mother-in-law; 12 per cent, their sister-in-law; 7 per cent, their brother-in-law, and 8 per cent, their father-in-law.
- A significantly large number of women in all five states were totally unaware of the laws providing protection and relief to women in distress.

---

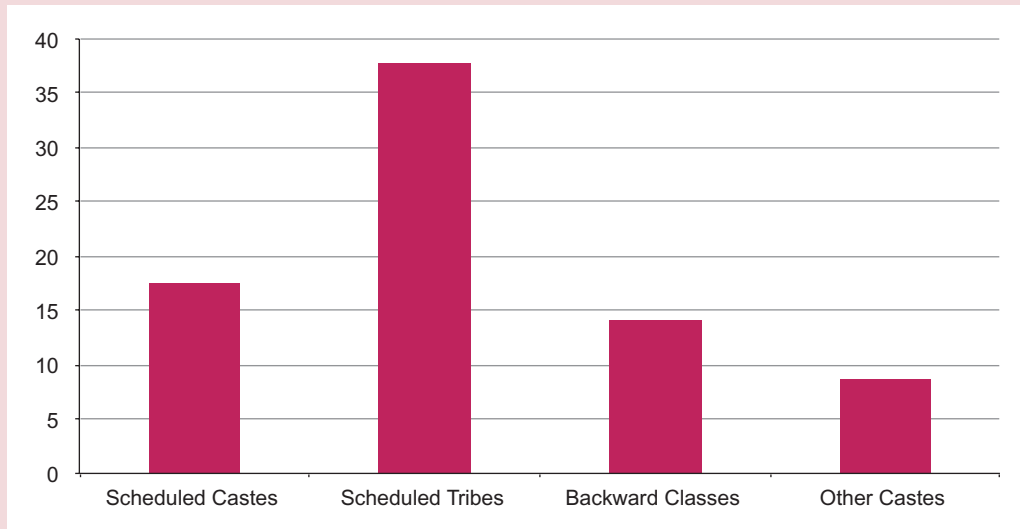
**Source:** Yugantar Education Society (2003) 'The Nature, Extent, Incidence and Impact of Domestic Violence Against Women in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra', study report submitted to the Planning Commission, Government of India.

*“Even if we have difficulties, we don’t like to share them.  
We prefer to share only our happiness.”*

## Tribal and Scheduled Caste children are still disadvantaged

Ravi's family come from a Scheduled Caste group (see Country context page). Young Lives children from Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes fare worse than other children on almost all indicators. In rural areas 16 per cent of households from these groups are living below the national poverty line and 41 per cent in urban areas, a higher rate than for all other groups.

### Young Lives children living in households below the poverty line (%)



- They also have high levels of malnutrition relative to other groups. Between 2002 and 2009, stunting rates went down for the Other Caste group and for the Backward Classes, but hardly moved for the Scheduled Castes and actually increased for children from Scheduled Tribes.
- Fewer than one in five Scheduled Tribe households reported access to improved sanitation, compared to around two-thirds of Other Caste households.
- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children were also more likely to be working.
- They were less likely than other groups to describe themselves as having a 'good' life.

**Sources:** S. Galab et al. (2011) *The Impact of Growth on Childhood Poverty in Andhra Pradesh: Initial Findings from India*, Young Lives Round 3 Survey Report; Kिरिली Pells (2011) *Poverty and Gender Inequalities: Evidence from Young Lives*, Young Lives Policy Paper 3.



## Country context: India

India has a population of more than 1.2 billion people. It is a country of huge inequalities, with the second-largest number of billionaires in the world but also 25 per cent of the world's poor. It ranks 134 out of 187 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index.

Over the last five years, India has seen impressive economic growth. Even during the global recession in 2009, the economy grew at a rate of 7 per cent of GDP. But inflation is a big problem, especially for poor people.

- 76 per cent of the population lives on less than two dollars per day.
- Malnutrition is more common in India than in sub-Saharan Africa.
- More children under 5 die from preventable and treatable diseases than in any other country.

Many of India's inequalities are tied to gender and caste: women and girls still face multiple discrimination and India ranks 129th out of 187 in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index. The caste system, which dates back many thousands of years, is still extremely important in everyday life, with what the Government calls Scheduled Castes (otherwise known as *Dalits* or formerly 'untouchables') and Scheduled Tribes (otherwise known as *adivasis*, India's indigenous peoples) the most disadvantaged communities. This is despite the fact that discrimination on the basis of caste is now illegal, and various measures have been introduced to empower disadvantaged groups and give them better access to opportunities.

Andhra Pradesh, in south India, is its fifth-largest state and has a population of 84.6 million. It is still largely agricultural, although its capital, Hyderabad, is one of the leading centres of the technology revolution. The state was the role model for several new government initiatives during the 1990s to eliminate poverty and has made considerable progress on child development indicators since the mid-1990s.

- Rural poverty went down from 48 per cent in 1973/4 to 11 per cent in 2004/5.
- Unlike in the other Young Lives countries, poverty is higher in urban than in rural areas.
- Adult literacy went up from 61 per cent in 2001 to 67 per cent in 2011.
- But 76 per cent of men were literate compared with 60 per cent of women. And only 66 per cent of girls aged 6 to 17 attend school, compared with 77 per cent of boys.

**Sources:** [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk); UNDP (2011) *Human Development Report*; S. Galab et al. (2011) *Impact of Growth on Childhood Poverty in Andhra Pradesh: Initial Findings from India*, Young Lives Round 3 Survey Report; UNICEF (2012) *State of the World's Children*.

Young Lives is a unique international study investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. By following the lives of 12,000 children and young people over 15 years, we aim to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and provide evidence to support effective policies for children.

The profile presented here is one of 24 taken from the interviews we did with the children individually and in groups. Each one is accompanied by a theme of some kind that emerged from the material and which illustrates the issues that children are having to contend with, but also gives a sense of the wider context of their lives. These range from education and schooling, to inequality, health and illness, violence in school and at home, early marriage, the effects of migration, families' experiences of crises, government schemes to help poor people, and children's views and experiences of what it is to be rich or poor.

The children and their families who are participating in the Young Lives study willingly share with us a great deal of detailed personal information about their daily lives, and we have a responsibility to protect their confidentiality and ensure their identities remain protected. For this reason, the children's names have been changed here. The accompanying photos are of children in similar situations to the children within our study sample.

Young Lives is core-funded by UK aid from the Department of International Development (DFID) from 2001 to 2017, and co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014. Sub-studies are funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Oak Foundation.

**Young Lives, Department of International Development  
University of Oxford, 3 Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK**  
[www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)

**Young Lives**   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty