



Salman's story

A profile from
Young Lives in India

"... now I am bit cleverer. I learn well. I have become aware of many things. I was childish and I used to do stupid things. Now I don't do those things any more."

Salman's story

Salman is now 15 years old. He still lives in the city and is now working as a driver. Today, although the family still struggles to make ends meet, he says he is doing much better and he has high hopes for the future.

Salman is currently working as a driver for a building company. His grandmother works in the company's office and got him the job. He drives his boss to and from work every day. He has been doing this for three months. He enjoys his work and says: "By the grace of Allah everyone is fine. I started working and my younger brother and sister are studying."

Because he is under 18, he is not legally allowed to drive so he had to pay a bribe to get a licence. He borrowed the money from the man who owns the hotel where his father used to work. He has now paid this back. He says he learns fast and learned to drive in two months, although he was nervous. "I was scared of hitting somebody. But later when I saw brake pedals at the teacher's feet, I felt all right."

In his new job, he earns 3,000 rupees a month (about 56 dollars). He gives 2,500 to his mother and keeps 500 for himself. They were able to buy a DVD player and he says he enjoys watching films. He also bought an expensive mobile phone but had to sell it because they were short of money. He then bought a cheap one but that was stolen – or possibly it fell out of his pocket, he admits.

He uses his own money to bet on cricket games that he plays with local college boys on Sundays. He has won up to 1,500 rupees (28 dollars) this way. He gets up at 8 and plays cricket until 3 or 4 in the afternoon. "After the game I come home, take a shower and sleep. Sometimes I play volleyball at night."

Salman says his best friend is his childhood friend, Ahmed. "He failed his exams so he did not go to college. Right now he just sits at home. We talk every night."

He says his mother works as a domestic servant for rich people. Her boss is a doctor. She earns between 1,500 and 2,000 rupees a month. His brother lost his job and is not working at the moment, though sometimes he does the driving instead of Salman.

The family had to leave their previous house because the landlord put the rent up. The rent in the new place is 3,000 rupees a month. They only have two rooms but to make ends meet they rent one of the rooms to a married couple for 2,000 rupees.

Salman's four uncles are living abroad. One is in Saudi Arabia, one is in Qatar, one is in Kuwait and

Last time we visited, Salman was 12 years old. He came from a Muslim family and had four siblings. His father died when he was 6. The family lived in a city. Salman had left school and was working in a shoe shop. His mother had found him the work to get him out of what she called "bad company".

one, he says, is in Africa. Salman says he likes it when they come to visit because they bring chocolates, crisps and clothes.

His sister, who lives nearby with their grandmother, is engaged to someone who is working in Saudi Arabia and plans are going ahead for her wedding, which their uncle says he will finance.

Salman's mother is really pleased with him now. She used to worry about him but she feels that in the past months he has grown up a lot.

“He is becoming aware. He understands everything now. He is more intelligent and caring. The children have seen me working hard since their childhood. They understand that their mother goes out and works hard to pay the rent and to feed them. Naturally they have sympathy for me.”

She says he is a caring son.

“He worries a lot about me. If I lie down, he asks if I am OK and offers to make me tea and get something to eat.”

When you see all this, how do you feel about Salman?

I am happy that Allah has given him intelligence. And he takes care of his mother. What else can a mother want, when she gets happiness through her children? To a mother, her children are more precious than the wealth of the whole world.”

Salman says that looking after his family is his main preoccupation at the moment, but he would like to go and work as a driver abroad where he can earn a lot more money. He has applied for a passport and says that his uncle will find him work. He says he knows that he will have to learn to drive on the left side of the road rather than the right and to get a new driving licence and take a test:

“They will see if I can drive or not. They drive very fast in that country. There are no small streets. To turn right, you have to indicate. You can't turn suddenly like we do here. If you do that, there will be accidents.”

But once this is sorted he has many plans. He thinks his brother will also work abroad: “Me and my brother will save money and build a house. I will educate my younger brother. I want to send my mother on the *Haj* [Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca].”

Salman says he will get married when he is around 25, and that he already has someone in mind. He has a girlfriend (although he hasn't told his mother yet). She wants to continue studying. Her parents both work in an office.

“Once she called me by my name and asked me to come up. So I went up to her house. She said, ‘I love you.’ I said, ‘I love you too.’”

When your mother comes to know about this, what will she say?

Salman laughs: *“She will beat me!”*

He says he only wants two or three children. He wants to send them to school and college and for them to become engineers or something similar. He knows he will have to leave his wife and children in India when he goes abroad to work.

In general, Salman seems happy with his life and feels that it has improved a lot since last time.

“I was crazy then. But now I am bit cleverer. I learn well. I have become aware of many things. I was childish. I did not know many things. I used to do stupid things. Now I don’t do those things any more.”

Children and work

Most children in India do some kind of work, paid or unpaid, including caring for siblings or doing chores around the house. We found that work among Young Lives children often increased in response to drops in household income, and was very sensitive to children’s gender and their age, and that in urban areas it varied according to women’s position in the family.

The younger children, who are 8 years old, are almost all in school for most of the day. But even at this young age, girls and boys both help out around the home – about 20 per cent of girls say they look after other family members and more than a third say they help with domestic chores. Fewer boys help care for other family members, but a fifth of them help with chores. Very few of the children are helping on the land or in the family business at this age, and only a handful work for pay outside the household.

Among the older children, the percentage working for pay has risen from 6 per cent in 2002 when they were aged 8, to 22 per cent in 2006 when they were 12, to 28 per cent by 2009 when they were 15.

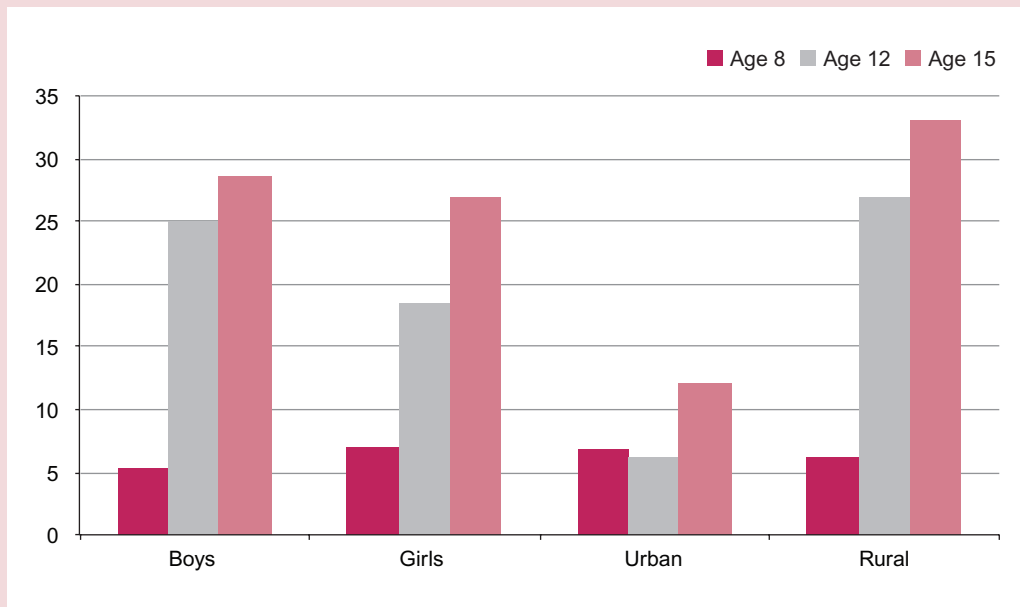
As the chart on the next page shows, slightly more boys than girls were working for pay. More children were working in rural areas (33 per cent) than in urban ones (12 per cent). Children from poor households were more likely to work than those from households that are not so poor. We also found that children from the disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were more likely to be working than children from the other castes.

“What else can a mother want, when she gets happiness through her children? To a mother, her children are more precious than the wealth of the whole world.”

Salman’s mother

Children and work *continued*

Children working for pay by age, gender and location (%)



As we see in a number of the children's and young people's stories, children from households with land often work on the family farm during the peak agricultural season, which affects time spent in school. Not only does this show the seasonal pressures on children, but it means that they may be formally enrolled in school and still miss class.

Work can be a way for children to learn new skills that equip them for adult life and build their feelings of self-reliance and self-esteem. However, work for pay under the age of 14, and work in hazardous situations, is illegal under international treaties governed by the International Labour Organization. We will be continuing to study child work and its effects as part of our research.

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; Kirrily Pells (2011) *Poverty and Gender Inequalities: Evidence from Young Lives*, Young Lives Policy Paper 3; Sofya Krutikova (2009) *Determinants of Child Labour: The Case of Andhra Pradesh*, Young Lives Working Paper 48.

“By the grace of Allah everyone is fine. I started working and my younger brother and sister are studying.”



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; 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**

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty