



Work and Family Lives:

Preliminary Findings from the 2023–24 Young Lives Survey
(Round 7): India (in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana)

Introduction

For more than 20 years, Young Lives has followed two cohorts, born seven years apart, from infancy into early adulthood in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.¹ This factsheet presents preliminary findings from Round 7 of the Young Lives survey carried out in India in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in 2023–24, when the Younger Cohort was 22 years old and the Older Cohort was 29. It provides an overview of the key labour market, marital and fertility indicators underlining changes over time by comparing the Younger Cohort at age 22 with the Older Cohort at the same age but seven years earlier, in 2016, and documenting the Younger Cohort's progression from age 15 to 22. The factsheet also reflects on the implications of the findings for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Headlines

- The transition from education to the labour market is occurring later for the Younger Cohort than for the Older Cohort born seven years earlier.
- Most young people who are working are engaged in poor-quality jobs, without a written contract and working long hours.
- A smaller proportion of women than men are employed, but women shoulder a larger share of unpaid care work.
- Early marriage and early parenthood, remain a concern, with 13% of Younger Cohort women being married before the legal age of 18 and 18% having a child by age 19.
- Early-life inequalities are reflected in rates of employment, employment with a contract at age 22, and early marriage and parenthood.

¹ Round 7 took place in the Young Lives study sites in Ethiopia, India and Peru. On this occasion, data was not collected in Vietnam due to a change in government procedures on the international transfer of personal data

Key Findings

- **The transition from education to the labour market is occurring later for the Younger Cohort than for the Older Cohort born seven years earlier.** Fewer 22-year-olds were working in 2023 compared to 2016 (63% vs 69%) and more were still studying (29% vs 21%).
- **Young people are typically engaged in poor-quality jobs, measured as jobs without a written contract and jobs demanding long working hours.** About seven out of ten of the Younger Cohort participants in work did not have a written contract and two out of five worked more than 48 hours per week.
- **There is a clear gender difference in the distribution of work, with a smaller proportion of women than men employed, whilst women shoulder a larger share of unpaid care work.** The gender employment gap, observed at least as early as age 15, is 36 percentage points (30% for women, 66% for men) by age 22, with men spending 2.8 hours more per day on paid work than women. In contrast, young women spend 3.8 hours more per day on unpaid care work at age 22, compared to men at the same age.
- **Early marriage and early parenthood remain a concern, with 13% of Younger Cohort women being married before the legal age of 18 and 18% having a child by age 19.** However, the prevalence of early marriage (25% for Older Cohort women) and early parenthood (27% for Older Cohort women) has decreased over time.
- **Early-life inequalities are reflected in rates of employment and employment with a contract at age 22, as well as early marriage and early parenthood.** Participants whose mother had less formal education and those born in the poorest households are more likely to be employed and less likely to have a written contract. They are also more likely to be married and have a child early.

The policy context of work and family lives in India

India is one of the fastest-growing economies worldwide, with an annual GDP growth of 7.6% in 2023 (World Bank 2024). Despite fast economic growth, India's performance towards SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) has been slow due to the lack of growth in quality employment and widespread socio-economic inequalities. For instance, in 2023 the informal sector employed about 88.8% of all workers (ILOSTAT n.d.). Although GDP had recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic by 2022, unemployment levels were still higher than pre-pandemic levels (Dhingra and Kondirulli 2022).

Gender inequality is also a widespread concern with India ranking as low as 127th out of 146 on the Global Gender Gap Index in 2023 (World Economic Forum 2023). Adult women's labour force participation was only 35.1% in 2021, compared to 76.4% for adult men (ILOSTAT 2024). Government initiatives have typically focused on the manufacturing sector and unemployed youth to promote productive and decent work. Mission Shakti, an integrated women's empowerment programme, to be implemented between 2021 and 2026, is designed to strengthen interventions around safety, security, and the empowerment of women, and to contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender equality).

Methods

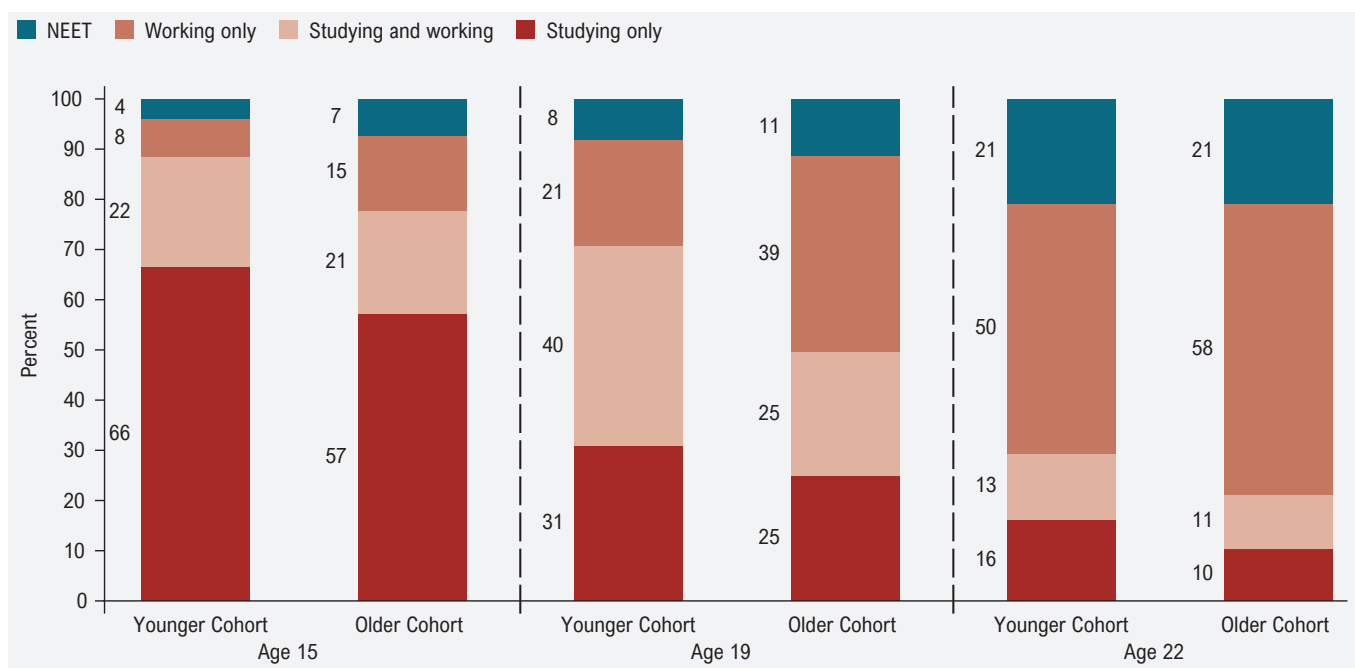
This factsheet uses preliminary data from the Young Lives Round 7 survey, which in India was collected between

August 2023 and January 2024. A total of 2,673 interviews were completed (1,826 with the Younger Cohort and 847 with the Older Cohort), which represents 88.5% of the original sample in Round 1 (Younger Cohort: 84.0%; Older Cohort: 90.8%) (Molina et al. 2025). Participants from previous rounds who were not interviewed in Round 7 were excluded from the analysis. Participants are classified by gender, area of residence (urban or rural) at the time of data collection, household wealth (top, middle or bottom wealth tercile in 2002) (Briones 2017), caste, and mother's level of education. The data are analyzed according to the caste categories Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Classes (BC), and Other Castes (OC). Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are the most historically disadvantaged castes, followed by Backward Classes.

What do Young Lives participants do?

While most of the 22-year-old Younger Cohort in 2023 were working, cross-cohort comparison shows that the shift from education to employment is happening later in life. In 2023, 50% of the Younger Cohort were working only, 13% were working and studying, 16% were studying only, and 21% were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the last year (Figure 1). The Older Cohort at the same age in 2016 had higher rates of working only (58%), and similar rates of studying and working (11%) and not in employment, education or training (21%). At age 19, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, more of the Younger Cohort were studying than working, whereas this trend was the opposite for the Older Cohort at the same age in 2013.²

Figure 1. Working and studying status by age and cohort (%)



Notes: Working status is defined based on at least one hour of work in labour market activities in the last 12 months; studying status is defined based on enrolment in the ongoing academic year (for studying) prior to the interview; NEET refers to those who have not worked, are not in training and are not enrolled in education.

² Studying combines the 'studying only' and 'studying and working' categories, while working combines the 'working only' and 'studying and working' categories.

Most of the 22-year-olds who were not in employment, education or training were women (37%), compared to only 7% of men (Annex 1). This is largely because unpaid care and domestic work are primarily undertaken by women (see Figure 2b). The most common reasons for not working among those not in employment, education or training were being engaged in domestic and childcare responsibilities (80%) and having a disability or being ill (4%).

Employment and types of jobs

In 2023, the proportion of employed young people in the week prior to the interview was 53% and 76% for the Younger Cohort and Older Cohort, respectively. In Round 7 we asked participants about the work they had done in the last week. A higher proportion of those born in less-wealthy households (63%) compared to wealthiest households (47%) were employed. Most of the employed 22-year-olds worked in non-agricultural jobs (99% in urban areas and 58% in rural areas). Agriculture was a more important source of employment for women, with 41% of all employed women engaged in this sector, compared to only 28% of all employed men.

Overall, most young people are working in poor quality jobs, measured as being without a written contract and demanding long working hours, with substantial variation by socio-economic factors. On average, only 7% of employed 22-year-olds had a written contract. They spent an average of 43.5 hours per week in their

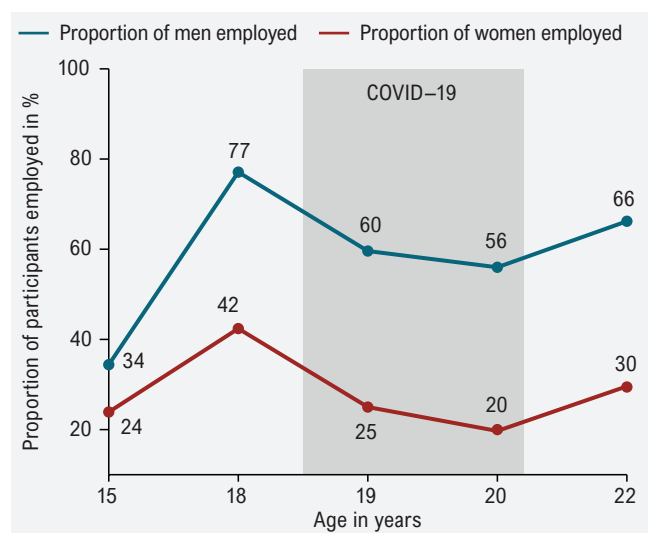
main employment activity, with 36% working long hours (more than 48 hours per week). In addition, 56% said that they were not satisfied with their job. Employment with a contract was less prevalent among those from the poorest households and whose mother had lower levels of education. Only 4% of the Younger Cohort whose mother had no formal education were employed on a written contract, compared to 53% of the Younger Cohort whose mother had ten or more years of formal education. Similarly, only 4% of the Younger Cohort from the poorest households were employed on a written contract, compared to 11% of those from the wealthiest households.

Gender distribution of work

There has been a persistent gender gap in employment, favouring men, since at least age 15 for the Younger Cohort (Figure 2a). This gap widened from 10 percentage points at age 15 to 35 percentage points by age 18 and remained constant at age 22. Both women and men experienced a fall in employment during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a modest recovery, but the gender employment gap has remained unchanged. An employment gap was also noted for the Older Cohort at age 22 in 2016 (Favara, Chang and Sánchez 2018). Gendered differences in employment are mirrored in the number of hours worked (Figure 2b). At age 15, girls and boys spent about the same amount of time on paid work each day.³ However, by age 22, men spend about 2.8 hours more per day on paid work.

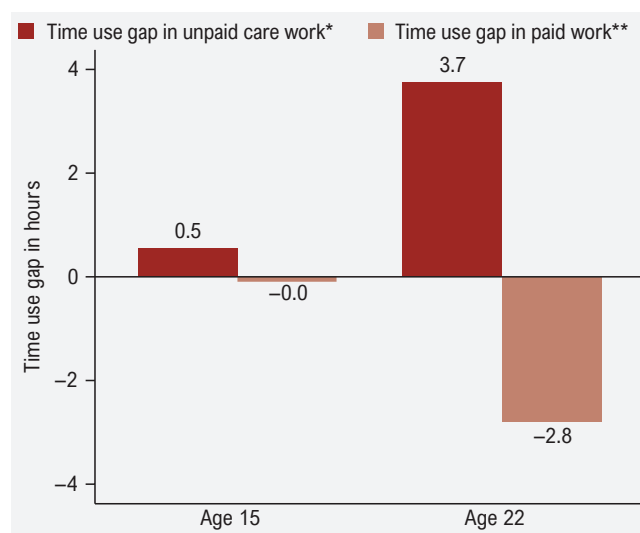
Figure 2. Gender gaps in employment and time use

2a. Proportion of Younger Cohort participants employed



Notes: The proportion of participants employed at age 15 and 18 refers to a recall period of the last year, while the proportion employed at age 19, 20 and 22 refers to a recall period of the last week. The proportion employed here do not include those not working in the recall period but who have a job. This variation is due to differences in data availability.

2b. Time use of Younger Cohort participants



Notes: * Women's time per day in unpaid care work – men's time per day in unpaid care work;
 ** Women's time per day in paid work – men's time per day in paid work.

³ Paid work refers to paid (remunerated) work or activities outside of the household or for someone not in the household.

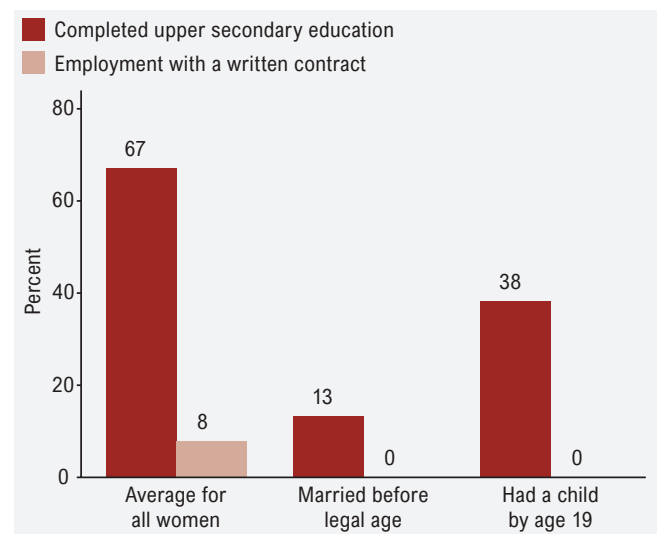
The time-use gap is even more pronounced for unpaid care work, which includes direct care for the elderly, ill people, people with disabilities, and children, as well as indirect care or domestic responsibilities. Although this work is not counted as economic activity, it is important because it supports the functioning of society and enables others to participate in the workforce. By age 15, girls already spent half an hour more per day on unpaid care work, and by age 22, this had increased to 3.7 hours more per day (Figure 2b). A significant time-use gap exists even among employed men and women, with employed women spending 2.9 more hours per day on unpaid care work. In comparison, the gender gap in time spent on unpaid care work per day was larger for the Older Cohort at age 22 (4.3 hours). This is because Younger Cohort men spent more time on unpaid care work than Older Cohort men at age 22 (2 hours for the Younger Cohort, 1.4 hours for the Older Cohort), whereas Older Cohort and Younger Cohort women spent about the same amount of time at age 22 (5.7 hours for the Younger Cohort, 5.6 hours for the Older Cohort). Taken together, this evidence suggests that gender norms and social expectations play an important role in how work is divided both within and outside the household.

Family formation

Young women are far more likely than men to have experienced marriage and parenthood at age 22, and early marriage and early parenthood among women remains a concern. In 2023, at age 22, 47% of Younger Cohort women were married and 32% had a child. In contrast, only 6% of the Younger Cohort men were married and 3% had a child at age 22. Most of those who married early (before the legal age of 18 for women and 21 for men) and had a child early (by age 19) were also women. About 13% of all Younger Cohort women got married early (compared to 3% of men) and 18% of women had a child early (compared to 1% of men).

Early marriage and early motherhood are linked to worse education and labour market outcomes, but their prevalence is declining over time. As shown in Figure 3, women who married before the legal age and women who had a child by age 19 have lower rates of upper secondary school completion and none had a written employment contract at age 22. On a positive note, fewer Younger Cohort women were married early (13%) compared to Older Cohort women (25%) and fewer had a child early (18% vs 27%). Early-life disadvantages are linked to higher rates of early marriage and parenthood. Lower maternal formal education, household wealth at birth and being from disadvantaged castes are strong predictors of early marriage and parenthood.

Figure 3. Employment and education of Younger Cohort women who experienced early marriage and early parenthood (%)



Conclusions and looking forward

Although about two-thirds of the Younger Cohort were engaged in the labour market at age 22, young people are transitioning from education to employment later in their lives. The quality of the jobs that young people undertake is low, with long working hours common and few written contracts. Disparities also exist in employment and job quality along socio-economic lines. To ensure further progress towards SDG 8, employment opportunities and decent work must be accessible to all, especially for disadvantaged groups.

A significant gender employment gap persists, with women often not engaging in the labour market due to unpaid care work responsibilities. Taken together, this evidence suggests that gender norms and social expectations play an important role in how work is divided within and outside the household. Women's early marriage and motherhood are becoming less prevalent but remain a concern. India requires targeted policies to address the structural inequalities faced by women and achieve SDG 5. Women who married early or had a child at a young age had some of the worst labour market outcomes, and the Young Lives Round 7 Education and Skills Factsheet for India, outlines how they also have some of the worst education outcomes. This underscores that progress towards SDG 5 is not only important in and of itself, but also to achieve other SDGs.

Annex 1. Work and family lives outcomes, Younger Cohort and Older Cohort

	Not in employment, education or training (NEET) (%)			Employment in the last week (%)		Employment with a written contract (in the last week) (%)		Hours per day in unpaid care work		Married or has a child (%)			Married before legal age (%)		Had a child by 19 years old (%)	
	OC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 22)	YC (age 22)	OC (age 22)	OC (age 29)	YC (age 22)	OC	YC	OC	YC
Average of full sample	20.8	19.0	20.9	75.6	53.2	8.3	6.7	3.6	3.7	35.8	75.1	24.7	16.1	7.5	14.6	8.7
Gender																
Women	33.6	34.3	36.9	58.1	34.7	8.3	7.9	5.6	5.7	59.0	91.5	47.0	24.9	12.5	27.2	17.9
Men	6.9	2.7	7.2	94.1	68.9	8.3	6.2	1.4	2.0	11.0	57.6	5.8	6.6	3.2	1.2	0.8
Difference (t-test)	-26.74***	-31.64***	-29.76***	36.02***	34.21***	0.02	-1.73	-4.26***	-3.75***	-48.06***	-33.97***	-41.19***	-18.36***	-9.27***	-26.01***	-17.07***
Area of residence (Round 1)																
Urban	31.8	23.7	25.7	71.2	46.9	7.9	13.8	3.7	3.8	23.7	69.5	15.9	5.1	4.3	6.8	4.1
Rural	17.8	17.8	19.4	76.7	55.0	8.4	4.9	3.1	3.4	39.0	76.6	27.3	19.0	8.4	16.7	10.0
Difference (t-test)	-13.98***	-5.97	-6.29**	5.53	8.16**	0.43	-8.95***	-0.60	-0.46	15.23***	7.08	11.44***	13.87***	4.11**	9.94***	5.91***
Current area of residence																
Urban	32.4	20.7	26.0	73.8	46.4	10.5	14.4	3.6	3.4	33.9	70.5	19.1	12.2	5.2	11.0	4.8
Rural	15.9	18.2	18.7	76.4	56.0	7.3	4.0	3.5	3.9	36.0	77.3	27.0	17.5	8.5	15.8	10.3
Difference (t-test)	-16.55***	-2.4	-7.25***	5.53	9.64***	-3.2	-10.38***	-0.02	0.49**	2.16	7.08**	7.93***	5.29	3.27	4.76	5.43***
Wealth index (Round 1)																
Bottom tercile	10.3	16.6	17.2	76.6	63.0	6.0	4.0	3.8	3.8	41.7	77.7	28.0	18.9	9.3	16.6	9.6
Middle tercile	17.8	18.3	20.4	77.9	55.0	7.8	4.6	3.8	4.1	39.2	77.3	30.9	22.4	9.5	19.2	11.4
Top tercile	29.4	21.0	23.2	72.6	46.6	10.1	11.1	3.2	3.3	29.0	71.3	16.6	7.9	4.5	8.8	5.3
Difference (bottom vs top tercile) (t-test)	19.16***	4.47	5.94	-4.01	-16.37***	4.11	7.11**	-0.59	-0.50	-12.75**	-6.37	-11.39***	-10.93***	-4.83**	-7.73**	-4.27**
Caste																
Scheduled Castes	11.1	17.3	21.4	76.4	50.0	8.2	4.2	3.5	4.0	30.9	71.7	28.0	17.3	8.0	16.2	8.3
Scheduled Tribes	15.8	22.8	13.3	70.3	56.7	7.0	5.2	3.4	3.3	37.6	68.3	20.4	18.8	8.5	20.8	9.3
Backward Classes	23.5	17.5	22.9	78.1	53.3	8.0	6.4	3.8	3.9	41.5	78.1	28.8	18.0	8.6	14.9	10.2
Others	28.2	22.1	21.1	72.1	53.1	9.7	10.7	3.2	3.2	27.3	76.2	15.4	8.7	3.8	8.7	4.9
Region after bifurcation in 2014																
Andhra Pradesh	23.1	20.7	24.7	74.1	50.0	11.0	7.3	3.5	3.7	33.5	73.0	24.2	13.9	7.2	14.4	8.1
Telangana	16.7	16.0	13.7	78.2	59.1	3.8	5.8	3.7	3.7	39.7	78.8	25.6	19.9	8.1	15.0	9.7
Difference (t-test)	-6.42	-4.78	-11.00***	4.10	9.17***	-7.25**	-1.46	0.19	-0.01	6.22	5.86	1.37	5.98	0.94	0.54	1.57
Maternal education																
None	15.7	16.5	18.1	79.3	61.2	5.6	3.5	3.8	4.0	41.2	79.1	31.4	20.7	10.7	18.3	12.0
1 to 5 years	27.9	19.1	23.9	74.0	49.0	11.7	4.6	3.5	3.8	33.5	70.5	23.1	12.1	5.6	11.0	7.0
6 to 10 years	30.1	26.1	23.7	67.2	41.5	13.3	10.4	2.8	3.1	18.7	63.4	14.1	4.5	3.6	5.2	3.6
More than 10 years	20.0	25.0	21.3	65.0	42.5	23.1	52.9	2.3	2.5	10.0	70.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3
Difference (none vs more than 10 years) (t-test)	4.31	8.53	3.18	-14.32	-18.68**	17.51**	49.44***	-1.42	-1.52***	-31.16**	-9.12	-27.69***	-20.68	-10.70**	-18.27	-10.73**
Number of participants	843	847	1826	847	1826	640	971	843	1826	847	847	1826	847	1826	847	1826

Notes: Differences are significant at ***1%, **5% and *10%. Differences are percentage points. Information on maternal education was taken from 2006 (Round 2). Area of residence refers to the household location in 2002 (Round 1) as well as 2023 (Round 7). Household wealth terciles were calculated separately for each cohort using the household wealth index of 2002 (Round 1). Caste uses information from 2002 (Round 1). Here, we use the term Backward Classes, which is equivalent to Other Backwards Castes. Five participants have information missing on wealth index in Round 1, 39 participants have information missing on their mother's education in Round 2, while ten participants have information missing for area of location in Round 5.

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The views expressed are those of the author. They are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, Young Lives, the University of Oxford, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) or other funders. Photo credit: © Young Lives/Mudupo Sharath Babu. The images throughout our publications are of young people living in circumstances and communities similar to the young people within our study sample.



Young Lives is a longitudinal study of poverty and inequality, following the lives of 12,000 children into adulthood in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam).

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