

Balancing School and Work with New Opportunities:

Changes in Children's Gendered Time Use
in Ethiopia (2006-2013)

Jo Boyden, Catherine Porter, Ina Zharkevich, and Karin Heissler



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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

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Summary

Focusing on the relationship between children's work and school attendance, this paper explores time use trends among boys and girls in Ethiopia. It does this by comparing the time use of two cohorts of children at the same age, 12 years, but interviewed at two different points in time, 2006 and 2013. In assessing the pattern over this period we have taken four contributory factors into account; gendered norms and aspirations for children's futures; local opportunities for both schooling and work; the characteristics of schools and different kinds of work; and intra-household dynamics. Broad trends are identified through survey data and case studies of two rural communities that have experienced rapid economic and social transformation, with associated increases in gendered opportunities for work. We find that overall there is a small reduction in the hours worked by 12-year-olds over the seven years. However, this trend is mainly in urban areas. Rural boys are found to have increased their working hours. By examining two case-study communities that have experienced increasing economic development and gendered work opportunities we find that, contrary to expectations, the increased returns to work have lowered boys' education aspirations and increased their school drop-out rates relative to girls'.

1. Introduction

This paper explores trends in children's gendered time use in Ethiopia in the period 2006-2013. It focuses on changes in the relationship between education and children's work, and responds to two policy concerns: first, that there is a gender bias in time allocation; and second, that work by children in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) perpetuates poor education outcomes. In doing so, it addresses the widespread perception that girls are consistently disadvantaged in relation to boys, having less access to school while also experiencing a greater burden of work, especially in the domestic sphere. The analysis is based on survey and qualitative data from Young Lives, a 15-year cohort-sequential longitudinal study of childhood poverty that in 2002 began to follow the lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Ethiopia is the poorest country in the Young Lives study and its predominantly rural population has long depended on children's work to sustain livelihoods in extremely precarious economic conditions. The country was caught up in civil war until the early 1990s and during the *Derg* regime (1974-91) off-farm investment, market-based trading, internal mobility and urbanisation were all discouraged, causing decades of economic stagnation. It was only after the collapse of the *Derg* that the current Government introduced economic reform based on market principles, leading to significant growth. Nationally-representative data indicate that poverty fell from 45 per cent in 2005 to 29 per cent in 2012 (Woldehanna and Porter 2013), with the poverty rate among households containing children dropping from 49 per cent in 1996 to 32 per cent in 2011 (Hill and Tsehaye 2015). There were also major improvements in services and infrastructure during this period, reducing the isolation and disadvantage of many rural communities. In particular, access to formal education expanded at primary level, and to a lesser extent also at secondary and tertiary levels. As a result, an increasing number of children in Ethiopia are in school, the proportion to total school-age population varying with age. Between 2000 and 2011 the share of households with a child between 7 and 15 that had a child out of school fell from 83 per cent in rural areas and 26 per cent in urban areas to 58 per cent and 16 per cent respectively, though many children still enrol late, and raising quality and attendance at higher grades remain significant challenges (Hill and Tsehaye 2015: 28-9).

As school enrolment has advanced, so public policy in Ethiopia has become more focused on relaxing constraints to attendance, progression and retention. On the assumption that lack of demand and children's economic responsibilities are two prime challenges, the Government has passed legislation providing 14 years as the minimum age for employment and preventing detrimental work by the young, while local officials frequently apply pressure on families to ensure that their children attend school.¹ Simultaneously, believing girls in Ethiopia to be continuously disadvantaged as compared to boys, there have been a number

1 The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE 2005) specifies in article 36: 'Every child has the right not to be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education health or well-being' (Article 36 (1) (d) (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; 5). A National Action Plan (NAP) on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2015, has been promulgated and the Ethiopian Labour Proclamation of 2003 provides the minimum age for employment to be 14, with special protective measures in place for children over 14 until they reach the age of 18. Young workers (aged 14-18), may not work for more than seven hours per day. Article 90 further prohibits them from working during the night, doing overtime work, and working during rest days or public holidays (ibid; 5).

of 'pro-girl' initiatives focused on school retention and related measures (for example, 'Girl Effect' (Girl Effect 2016)).

This paper builds on a series of studies that use Young Lives Ethiopia data to examine the relationship between schooling and children's work, between children's work and social protection, and children's gendered time use more broadly (Boyden 2009; Camfield and Tafere 2011; Crivello and van der Gaag 2016; Heissler and Porter 2013; Morrow et.al. 2014; Orkin 2012; Pankhurst et.al. 2016; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; Woldehanna et al. 2011). This paper's focus is a little different, in that we are concerned with how children's time use across work and schooling has changed during 2006 to 2013 and explore some of the reasons why by highlighting the impacts of economic developments in two case-study rural communities. The wider aim is to discover whether Government ambitions to achieve universal access to education and bring to an end to work by children under age 14 are being realised in practice and, if not, what the obstacles might be.

2. Data and methodology

The Young Lives sample in Ethiopia comprises roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in two cohorts: 2,000 children who were born around 2001 and 1,000 born around 1994. The sample was arrived at by randomly selecting households with children of the right ages from 20 purposefully-sampled sentinel sites identified on the basis of poverty ranking, together with a mix of rural and urban locations. The sites are distributed across five regions of Ethiopia; Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), and Tigray, as well as Addis Ababa. Though not nationally representative, the sample to a large extent reflects the diversity of the national population in terms of ethnicity, language, religion and other social markers, making it possible to distinguish time use of boys and girls in different socio-economic groups and localities.

The surveys are administered at community, household and child-level, the latter complemented by a series of internationally-recognised child measures. The child instruments record a variety of outcomes, such as physical growth, nutritional status, cognitive development, educational progress, psychosocial well-being, time allocation, aspirations and life-skill development. These outcomes are set against a large number of explanatory variables at the individual, caregiver, household, community and school levels.² School-based surveys were introduced in 2010 to explore the effectiveness of schools attended by Young Lives children and their peers.

Qualitative data are gathered from a nested sub-sample of 60 Young Lives children from both cohorts (30 Older Cohort and 30 Younger Cohort children, equal numbers of boys and girls) located in three rural and two urban sites, one for each of the regions from which the wider set of sites was obtained, plus Addis Ababa. The qualitative research employs individual interviews and focus groups, supplemented by a range of collective methods,³ and complements the survey topics by examining children's attitudes towards and experiences of

2 Relevant variables from survey data include school enrolment, educational aspirations and performance, and numbers of hours worked in different activities, described later in more detail.

3 The qualitative sub-sample is not representative of the full sample; e.g. in Ethiopia orphans and more vulnerable children have been purposively selected.

poverty, their sense of well-being and ill-being, transitions, time use and hopes for the future. To date, four rounds of household surveys and two waves of school surveys have been administered, together with four core qualitative research cycles and three focused sub-studies; a further survey round and school-based research are underway in 2016.

This paper builds on a unique feature of Young Lives, which is that since the inception of the study the two cohorts have been surveyed at the same age but at different points in time, thus allowing for the relative contributions of age, cohort, and historical time to be singled out. Using the second round of survey data (2006) for the Older Cohort and the fourth round (2013) for the Younger Cohort, the paper compares the main activities of the two cohorts when they were aged 12. This is complemented by qualitative data from two rural sites that were purposively selected because they have undergone significant economic change in the relevant period. This latter analysis draws on both survey data and multiple waves of qualitative data, particularly the first wave (when the Older Cohort was 13), and the fourth (when the Younger Cohort was 13).

2.1 Definition of child work

To estimate the number of hours 12-year-olds worked on average in 2006 and 2013 using the survey data we first sum together all activities by children that could be described as 'work'. This includes work for pay outside the household, as well as household chores and caring for others, and work on the household farm or enterprise. Time use is asked of the children themselves, and Heissler and Porter (2013) show that the child self-reports (in 2006) of hours worked are not statistically different to those reported by the caregiver. The time-use questions in the surveys relate to a recent 'typical day' in which school is operating (so, not the weekends or holiday season), whereas the qualitative research also includes time-allocation data for days when children are not at school.

2.2 Limitations

There are a number of methodological limitations that we wish to draw attention to. It is possible that the categories used in the surveys to distinguish different kinds of work may not always be clear to respondents. Further, efforts by the Ethiopian government to place all children in school and eliminate work under age 14 are liable to result in underreporting of children's paid work in particular. Similarly, by focusing on work undertaken on a typical school day the quantitative surveys in particular are likely to underestimate children's work.

Beyond this, time-use information in the surveys and qualitative research is not always consistent, for several reasons. By including work done by children on days when they are not at school and complementing this with observations verifying which children are working and when, the qualitative research provides a more complete picture. Additionally, survey enumerators have less opportunity than qualitative researchers to build trust with respondents, and this is likely to further intensify underreporting of paid work. The surveys and qualitative waves are administered in different years, likely producing divergences due to children's age. In Ethiopia, the surveys are conducted at the beginning of the school year when students are registering, whereas most of the qualitative data are from midway through the cycle, when absenteeism and early departure become more evident. Finally, there is considerable seasonal variation in some of the activities undertaken by children, for example paid farm work. This makes assessment of actual time allocated to work extremely difficult and may account for some inconsistencies between the survey and qualitative research, which are administered in different years and at different times of the year.

2.3 Case study sites⁴

Zeytuni is an ethnically homogeneous, mainly orthodox Christian, community in rural Tigray in the north of Ethiopia. Although just a few kilometres from the capital, Mekelle, the road was until recently only passable in the dry season, so the village has been relatively remote and access to services has generally been lower than in other Young Lives sites (Pells and Woodhead 2014). Zeytuni is prone to seasonal drought and nowadays many households are reliant on the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) (Tefere and Woldehanna 2012). The local school employs a shift system, alternating between mornings and afternoons. As in Leki, a number of new work opportunities for children have arisen recently in Zeytuni. The land is very stony and a series of quarries with stone-crushing plants have been established following a rise in demand for aggregate for use in the construction of roads and houses. More recently the village has become involved in the production of cobbles for surfacing pavements in urban areas.

Leki has a largely Orthodox Christian population, with Muslims a minority. The community is on the shores of a lake in Oromia Region, about four hours by foot from the nearest town and close to an area in the Rift Valley that has seen a recent expansion in private irrigated farms growing vegetables and flowers. An irrigation project in Leki supports five such export-led vegetable farms, the first of which began operations in 2002 (Orkin 2012). Pankhurst, Crivello and Tiemelissan (2016) observe that this development led to an increased demand for teenage boys and girls to work in planting, weeding and harvesting vegetables, and for older girls to work on flower farms and in vineyards. They also note that Leki is close to an expanding town, which offers opportunities for work in construction, transport and services, and its proximity to a lake provides boys with income from fishing, while girls make fishing nets. Younger children in the community collect fish bones to sell to a new factory that produces animal food. Despite the rise in income sources, many inhabitants depend on the PSNP (Tafere and Woldehanna 2012). The school in Leki operates in the mornings only. Tafere and Pankhurst (2015) highlight teacher absenteeism and school quality as significant problems, noting the likely adverse effect on parents' and children's views concerning the value of schooling.

3. Literature review

There is a strong tradition of research into childrearing beliefs and practices in Africa that highlights the roles and responsibilities assumed by boys and girls at different ages, as well as the rites of passage associated with transitioning to adulthood. This research makes clear that decisions about how boys and girls should spend their time respond to a number of imperatives, some of which are overlooked by policies that are focused on eliminating children's work. First and foremost, in poor rural communities and households facing persistent economic insecurity and lack of social insurance, children are co-contributors to the domestic economy, their reproductive and/or productive labour being vital to household maintenance and care regimes (Cockburn and Dostie 2007; Robson et al. 2006; Woldehanna 2010; Woldehanna et al. 2011). Thus, reporting on the mid-1990s, Cockburn and Dostie (2007) find that in rural Ethiopia children's work was overwhelmingly preformed for their own

4 Pseudonyms are used throughout for individuals and locations.

households, with household asset portfolio and composition the principle determinants of demand, and access to productive assets and proximity of resources like wood and water (which children are responsible for collecting) also contributory.

Second, economic hardship is associated with a strong sense of collective responsibility for familial livelihoods and this is articulated through the division of roles and responsibilities by gender and social age (Crivello and van de Gaag 2016; see also Alanen and Mayall 2001). The work accomplished by girls and boys underpins inter-generational mutuality and is also an expression of children's respect for their elders (Bray 2003; Heissler and Porter 2013). In many cases these mutual obligations stretch beyond the natal household to include other households in the extended kin group (Boyden and Howard 2013). In other words, children's work has much more than mere instrumental value; it also has moral worth and, accordingly, is an important means through which children are integrated socially into their households, families and communities (Morrow 2015).

Third, given the centrality of children's economic and social contributions, considerable importance is attached to their learning the life and pro-social skills appropriate for their gender, developmental capacity and generation. Work is understood to be the chief mechanism for this practical learning (Abebe 2007; André and Godin 2014; Bray 2003; Crivello and van de Gaag 2016; Kohler 2012; Lancy 2012; Mahati 2012; Pankhurst, Bourdillon and Crivello 2015; Polak 2012). Lancy (2012: 240) uses the concept 'chore curriculum' to describe the tasks that all girls and all boys should master by a roughly agreed age and carry out 'willingly and efficiently'; in rural populations these tasks commonly entail care of infants, gardening, herding and foraging. His use of the term 'curriculum' is intended to highlight the discernible regularity of the process whereby children 'attach themselves to, learn, master and carry out their chores', often doing so under the tutelage of an older child or adult (ibid: 240).

Fourth, children's tasks are not only gendered but align also with birth order and level of maturity. Many start working before they enter school, often beginning with light chores at around age 3 or 4 (Spittler 2012) and taking up paid work when they are older, for example around age 9 (Morrow et al. 2014). The amount of time boys and girls spend working and the level of responsibility they assume tends to rise at around early adolescence (roughly ages 10 to 12) (Howard 2008; Abebe and Kjørholt 2009; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). Assignments undertaken in adolescence tend to mirror gendered adult roles (Lancy 2012). Nonetheless, there appears to be a lot more flexibility in children's work than there is in adults' and typical patterns in workload, hours worked and type of tasks can be altered depending on the stage in the domestic cycle, birth order, and the gender composition of the sibling group. So, for example, Orkin (2011: 8) finds that while the eldest daughters work significantly longer than their younger sisters (by almost an hour per day), this does not apply to older boys when their work is compared to their younger brothers. In households that lack children of a particular age or gender, children of the opposite sex may act as substitutes; having to undertake tasks not normally associated with their gender sometimes causing embarrassment (Heissler and Porter 2013; Crivello and van de Gaag 2016).

While work remains central to children's lives throughout Africa, the expansion of primary and secondary schooling means that formal education has come to play an ever-increasing role. Decisions around children's time allocation to school or work take account of the resources available to meet immediate economic and social care requirements of the household (Cockburn and Dostie 2007), the longer-term learning and social mobility ambitions of children and their parents, along with the different work and educational opportunities

available to them. Since the opportunities and constraints in households are constantly fluctuating, the weight given to any of these factors may change, resulting in considerable dynamism (Crivello and van de Gaag 2016).

Regardless of the level of enrolment in early grades, erratic attendance, poor progression and early school departure are common. Aurino, James and Rolleston (2014) report that 17 per cent of children in the Young Lives Ethiopia sample had left at some point before reaching Grades 4 and 5. Tafere and Pankhurst (2015) find that by age 15 less than a fifth of the Older Cohort had completed primary school (Grades 1 to 8). That said, better-off children and boys and girls in urban areas are progressively more likely to be at school than at work. And children in urban areas also tend to have higher educational aspirations than do their rural counterparts (Tafere 2014: 6). In the Young Lives sample, children in urban areas were three times more likely to complete primary school than rural children and almost a quarter of children in better-off households had completed primary education, as compared with 15 per cent of those in poorer households (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). Education choices are influenced by gendered norms around the merits of investing in children's futures. In contexts where girls marry young this may be an important factor in early school departure, whereas for boys, leaving is more likely to be due to taking on fulltime work, paid or unpaid (Crivello and van de Gaag 2016). Sometimes hard choices are made between siblings. Thus, academically-able children may be encouraged to remain at school while siblings who show less aptitude may be expected to work to help pay the school costs (James and Woodhead 2014).

The evidence on a causal relationship between school attendance and children's work is mixed. Sometimes children's work undermines their schooling (for example, see Beegle et al. 2008 for the effects of work on boys' schooling in Tanzania). Woldehanna and Hagos (2015) find that children in Young Lives communities in Ethiopia who work are more at risk of not completing primary school than others. Some rural children enrol late because their parents keep them back so they can work, but delayed entry is often simply because children's ages are not known (Camfield and Tafere 2011). Tafere and Pankhurst (2015) highlight the proximity of work sites to schools, school shift systems, together with adjustments made by employers to facilitate children's economic participation, as boosting children's work in rural areas, while Morrow et al. (2014) emphasise the flexibility in children's time use, along with shift schooling. Then again, aside from any other benefits of work, children's paid work can be essential for their school attendance, insofar as it helps cover the direct and indirect costs (Machonachie and Hilson 2016; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). For large numbers of children, possibly the majority, the choice is not between school and work but rather how much time and effort should be given to each activity. Combining school with work of various types can be challenging and often becomes harder as children grow older and expectations of them grow (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015).

In addition to the expansion of education, significant transformations in the structure of African economies in recent decades have provided new incentives around children's time allocation. Hence the continent-wide paradox that development that has brought universal education has also given rise to increased opportunities for children's paid work; this, in turn, introducing new pressures on boys' and girls' time and challenging government policies on both education and child work. In particular, the rise in private sector activity, often encouraged by governments, has acted as a direct stimulus to paid work by children (Abebe 2007 and 2015; André and Godin 2014; Machonachie and Hilson 2016; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). As well, the opening up of adult migration for off-farm employment has increased children's responsibilities and autonomy at work, with girls undertaking more

domestic duties, and boys accessing more income-generating activities (Abebe 2007). Paid work has also become an important driver of independent child migration, including to neighbouring countries (Boyden and Howard 2013; Howard 2008; Hashim and Thorsen 2011; Whitehead, Hashim, and Iversen 2007). Even some of the social protection schemes planned to lift the poorest families out of poverty have unintentionally increased the amount of time children spend at work. This is the case for the PSNP and its predecessor public-works scheme in rural Ethiopia, which have increased children's paid work and reduced the time they spend on child care (Woldehanna 2010, Tafere and Woldehanna 2012). Pankhurst, Crivello and Tiumelissan (2016) report that PSNP participation of both boys and girls under 16 is fairly common, children substituting for their parents when they are sick or have found a more lucrative job.

What is not very clear from the literature on Africa is the extent to which the new opportunities for paid employment among children are gendered, and therefore impact conventional gender norms and practices or wider trends in children's gendered time allocation. These two issues are central to the current analysis and also to policy assumptions about gender disparities and constraints to school education. In assessing changes in gendered time-use among Young Lives children over the period 2006 to 2013, we have taken four factors into account; trends in gendered aspirations for children's futures; local opportunities for both schooling and children's work; the characteristics of schools and work; and intra-household dynamics.

4. Analysis

4.1 Trends in aspirations and time use

Educational aspirations are remarkably high across the Young Lives sample in Ethiopia. Asked when their children were aged 12, around three-quarters of Young Lives caregivers in both 2006 and 2013 hoped that their children would go to university. These ambitions are gendered and while parents of boys had higher aspirations in 2006, by 2013 there was a 5 percentage point increase in the likelihood that parents of a girl would aspire for her to attend university, their aspirations thus edging slightly higher than those of boys' parents. The pattern is similar between urban and rural areas (see Table 1).

Children have slightly more modest aims for their future than do their parents; around 70 per cent aspired to achieve a university education, with slightly fewer holding this ambition in 2013 than in 2006.⁵ However, this average conceals marked differences by location and gender. The proportion of rural boys who aspired to go to university fell from 67 per cent in 2006 to 55 per cent in 2013, representing a 12 percentage point decrease. This is offset in the overall average by the rise in the aspirations of urban girls: 85 per cent expected to reach university in 2013, a seven point increase on 2006.

⁵ These findings may be affected by the fact that in 2006 there were far fewer universities than in 2013; so there would have been more awareness of tertiary education in the latter period.

Table 1. *Aspirations of Young Lives children (aged 12) and their parents.*

	2006		2013	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
ALL				
Parents	75.9%	72.7%	76.4%	77.5%
Child	73.6%	66.5%	67.8%	68.7%
URBAN				
Parents	83.4%	82.6%	90.3%	90.9%
Child	82.5%	78.9%	88.2%	85.6%
RURAL				
Parents	70.8%	65.7%	68.2%	68.3%
Child	67.5%	57.5%	55.0%	57.4%

Note: Table shows the proportion of each group that answered 'university' to the question: 'If you had no constraints and you (your child) could study as much as you liked, what level of education would you hope to reach?' 2006 data from the Older Cohort children aged 12 (n=962); 2013 data from the Younger Cohort children at the same age (n=1861).

Raised educational aspirations have led to an important shift in norms around inter-generational mutuality. Whereas in the past children's primary responsibility towards their families was expressed through their work contribution, performance at school is progressively more implicated in children's familial obligations, largely because education is perceived to be essential to both individual and family social mobility. This view was expressed by several Young Lives children in the qualitative sub-sample, including Haftey, who, since the death of her parents, has been living with her grandmother. At age 13 Haftey was doing well at school and had high hopes for the future: '... when I complete my education I will have a job to support myself and my grandmother and my life will be better [than my parents' lives]'. For her, studying hard is about fulfilling her reciprocal responsibilities towards her grandmother: 'Since my grandmother is working hard to send me to school, I also have to work hard to get a better result'.

Raised educational aspirations notwithstanding, the key question is whether these ambitions reflect children's actual experiences of schooling and hence the time they allocate to school and work. Starting with school enrolment, by matching the two cohorts at both ages 8 and 12 we can trace enrolment trends for each cohort as they age, as well as compare enrolment for the two cohorts at age 12 (in 2006 and 2013). Although we find an increase in enrolment at age 8 when the Younger Cohort is compared with the Older Cohort, by age 12 the levels are effectively the same. Thus, enrolment among 8-year-olds increased from 66 per cent for the Older Cohort in 2002 to 77 per cent for the Younger Cohort in 2009, while a full 95 per cent of 12-year-olds were enrolled in both 2006 and 2013. So, in terms of age of school entry there has been progress in the sample over the seven years, possibly due in part to pressures on families to enrol their children exerted by local officials. The fact that there was effectively no change in the share of 12-year olds enrolled is partly because by this age the vast majority of children were enrolled, with a small but unchanging percentage continuing to face insurmountable obstacles in accessing school (Woldehanna et al. 2011).

But the averages conceal crucial differences in children's access to school associated with gender and location and despite some notable advances, these disparities persist across the survey rounds. Starting with the distinction between urban and rural children, school enrolment among 8-year-olds in urban areas fell between 2002 and 2009, from 92 per cent to 88 per cent, while participation of rural children improved, from 51 per cent to 69 per cent (Morrow, Tafere and Vennam 2014). Even so, this still left rural children 20 per cent shy of

their urban counterparts. Turning to gendered disparities in school access, girls are more advantaged than boys, a trend that is consistent with educational aspirations. Thus, in 2013, boys were 3 per cent less likely than girls to be enrolled at age 12, this being a small but statistically significant difference and one that represents a very slight widening of the gap from 2006.

How children get on at school is likely to influence their time allocation; poor school performance increasing the probability of early departure. There have been improvements in some education-performance indicators during the period 2006 to 2013, the proportion of children over-age for their grade, for example, having declined from 59 per cent in 2006 to 52 per cent in 2013. On the other hand, fewer 12-year-olds in 2013 could answer the same maths question correctly as in 2006 (Young Lives 2014). Moreover, on average, rural children had completed only 2.9 grades by age 12, as compared to 4.2 for urban children. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Younger Cohort in Addis Ababa were faring consistently better than children in other parts of the country, and at age 12 had completed 4.9 grades, as expected for their age, as compared to those in SNNPR, for example, who had completed only 2.3 grades on average. Gender disparities in educational attainment are also evident. Thus, Crivello and van de Gaag (2016) report that when the Older Cohort were age 12, a full 60 per cent of the boys, compared to just 12 per cent of girls, were overage for their grade in school.

Turning to the time children allocate to work, we begin by summarising the general trends. To do this, we added together all time use that could be described as 'work', whether paid, domestic within the household, care for others, or on the family farm or in the household enterprise. Overall, boys and girls in 2013 spent an average of just under 4 hours per day in such work; this is lower than in 2006, by approximately 15 minutes (significant at 5 per cent). Looking beneath the averages, this drop over time is observed mainly in urban areas, where both boys and girls were working significantly fewer hours. However, in rural areas, whereas the time girls spent on work had fallen to a similar degree as urban children, the time boys spent at work had not declined since 2006. Thus, overall, the gap between working hours of rural and urban children has been widening, with rural children spending 5 hours on work per day in 2013, and urban children only 2 hours 45 minutes.

We now explore trends in relation to the time girls and boys allocate to different types of work. The gender composition by work type has remained similar to that documented by Heissler and Porter (2013) based on the 2006 data for the Older Cohort at age 12 (second survey round and first wave of qualitative research). Girls were working longer in domestic tasks and care roles, and boys in paid work, herding, family farms and other enterprises. However, some increases in working hours are seen between 2006 and 2013, especially for rural boys (Table 2A and Table 2B).

Table 2A. *Time use of urban boys and girls aged 12 years.*

Urban	2006		2013	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Caring	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.5
Household chores	2.6	1.9	2.0	1.4
Household farm or enterprise	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.5
Paid work	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1
School	6.1	6.0	6.4	6.2
Sleep	8.9	9.1	9.3	9.4
Play	3.2	3.7	3.5	4.0
Study	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8

Table 2B. *Time use of rural boys and girls aged 12 years.*

Rural	2006		2013	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Caring	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.5
Household chores	3.0	1.6	2.6	1.4
Household farm or enterprise	1.2	2.9	1.3	3.3
Paid work	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
School	5.5	5.1	5.3	5.1
Sleep	9.1	9.0	9.3	9.3
Play	2.4	2.8	3.2	3.2
Study	1.6	1.7	1.3	1.2

Note: 2006 data from the Older Cohort children aged 12 (n=962), 2013 data from the Younger Cohort children at the same age (n=1861).

In urban areas, both boys and girls were working significantly fewer hours at age 12 by 2013. Moreover, gendered disparities in time allocation became more marked in rural areas during this period, since by 2013 the time 12-year-old girls spent working had fallen to a similar degree as urban children, whereas the figure for boys remained constant. This resulted in boys in rural areas spending around 5.2 hours a day working, compared to just under 5 hours for rural girls. These findings highlight that even though individually both gender and location account for important differences in children's time allocation to work, the disparities become far more marked when these two factors are combined.

Work done by rural boys remained highly valued throughout the period 2006 to 2013, more so than girls' work and more so still than the work of urban children. At the same time, boys in rural areas seem to have crossed a threshold whereby the incentives for remaining at school are outweighed by the appeal of work; but rather than merely the time assigned to work, the type of work is key here. Rural children are working significantly longer hours on family farms or enterprises than in the past. But the burden is unequal. As in 2006, boys worked longer on such activities in 2013 than girls, for more than 2 hours per day, compared with less than an hour for girls. Chores and caring also show a significant difference over this period, accounting for 20 minutes less of children's time, down to an average of 2.5 hours in 2013. However, the gender difference remains significant here too, as in 2013 girls worked just over 3 hours per day on such tasks, and boys under 2 hours. That said, the gender gap had slightly narrowed compared with 2006, due to a slightly larger fall in hours spent on

domestic tasks among urban girls, possibly associated with their greater attention to schooling.

In regards to paid work, this has fallen overall, showing a statistically significant difference in both urban and rural areas, though the magnitude of the difference is only 5 minutes on average. This signals the small proportion of children (just under 5 per cent) across the sample who report undertaking any paid work at age 12. Only 3 per cent of urban 12-year-olds reported working for pay in 2013, compared to 8 per cent in rural sites, where paid work seems to be more prevalent.⁶ However, while the reduction is seen for urban boys and girls, as well as for rural girls, it would appear that rural boys worked the same number of hours on paid activities in 2013 as in 2006. In the next section we show that community-level changes in work opportunities for the young are central to these trends.

4.2 Community-level opportunities and constraints in children's gendered time use

So far, we have highlighted broad historical trends in children's gendered aspirations and time use, distinguishing also between those living in rural and urban locations. In this section we examine the influence of location in greater detail by exploring the influence of community-level developments. We do this by analysing the survey and qualitative data from a sub-sample of children, their peers and caregivers in two villages, Zeytuni in Tigray, and Leki in Oromia. This analysis confirms that there is a close association between where children live, and not just which household they live in, and their time use; this association reflecting local opportunities and constraints around education and work.⁷ We have selected these two rural communities because it is in rural Ethiopia that the tension around children's work and schooling is most apparent and also because there has been much economic dynamism in these areas in recent years.

There have long been marked distinctions in gendered roles, responsibilities and time allocation in Leki and Zeytuni. In both communities, girls are directed from a relatively young age towards roles that facilitate marriage, parenthood and domestic proficiency (Boyden et al. 2012; Crivello and van de Gaag 2016). Makeda, a girl from Leki, cited making and selling *farso* (beer), baking *injera* and sourdough bread, making *wot* (sauce), and fetching firewood and water as the most typical female tasks. In contrast, boys are encouraged to develop skills that ensure their economic dependability through early engagement in productive work. Thus, Makeda described farming, herding livestock and fishing as the chief male tasks, with boys starting livestock herding when they are just 5 or 6 years old by shadowing their fathers and accompanying them to camps with the cattle.

Birth order and sibling composition also influence the nature of children's work and their workload. For example, Hadush, from Zeytuni, the youngest of eight siblings, is currently the only boy in his household so must take care of the cattle full-time, whereas his sisters are able attend school. Mihretu, on the other hand, can go to school because his two elder brothers take care of the cattle. Sometimes children's roles are affected by the absence in the household of children of the opposite sex. For example, when the household contains no females of the appropriate age boys may be required to undertake female tasks (Heissler

⁶ As noted in the introduction, there may also be an issue of underreporting of paid work in the survey.

⁷ Indeed Dornan and Ogando Portela (2014) argue that up to 44 per cent of the variation in 8-year-olds' mathematics scores in Ethiopia is related to where children lived, not to their household.

and Porter 2013). While these intra-household dynamics definitely do shape children's time use in both Leki and Zeytuni, the emergence of new income sources has been even more influential, altering children's gendered time allocation both between school and work, and between traditional reproductive and productive roles and paid work.

Starting with Zeytuni, overall the time 12-year-olds in the community devoted to work increased significantly between 2006 and 2013, the survey data showing a rise from an average of 4.6 hours to 5.6 hours a day. Boys reported an average of 6.3 hours work per day in 2013, while girls worked 4.9 hours on average. These trends in children's work are reflected in school enrolment figures. Table 3 shows both the fall in school enrolment over time, and the gender disparity. Fewer boys and girls aged 12 are enrolled in 2013 and girls have seen the largest percentage point fall, but there are still fewer boys enrolled than girls.

Table 3: *School enrolment of 12-year-olds by gender over time in Zeytuni.*

	Male	Female
2006	84.2%	96.7%
2013	69.4%	76.3%

N=49 in 2006; and N=87 in 2013.

This gendered divergence is also evident in children's educational aspirations, which declined overall during this period. Whereas 78 per cent of the 49 Older Cohort children aspired to reach university in 2006, by 2013 this had fallen to only 51 per cent of the 87 Younger Cohort children (Table 4). Again, behind this average is a notable gender divide; in 2013 57 per cent of girls aspired to attend university, compared to only 47 per cent of boys. Unsurprisingly, aspirations were much lower for those who had already dropped out of school.

Table 4: *Aspirations to attend university, Zeytuni.*

	2006	2013
Parents	85.4%	60.5%
Child	78.3%	50.6%

N=49 in 2006; and N=87 in 2013.

The qualitative data help explain these trends in Zeytuni. When the first wave of qualitative research was administered in 2007, Older Cohort boys were mainly engaged in livestock herding; two were combining this with school and the third was working fulltime. Initially herding was also a central activity for the Younger Cohort boys. By the fourth wave in 2013 livestock herding seemed to occupy less of the Older Cohort boys' time, with none of the boys in this cohort in school and all engaged in paid labour of one kind or another. Girls' schooling seems to have been more consistent. At wave three only one of the Younger Cohort girls was involved in paid work, transporting prickly pears on horseback and selling them in town during the school holidays, and all were attending school and taking an active part in the local youth club. However, some of the older children in the village were already working for wages in a stone-crushing plant at a nearby quarry during the first phases of qualitative research, with girls transporting the stones, and boys loading and feeding them into the machines. Since then, employment for children in stone crushing has increased, with different patterns for boys and girls, as five more such plants have been established in the area.

Overall, as the stone crushing has expanded so it has become increasingly dominated by males. The Younger Cohort girls never entered the occupation even when they were old enough to do so and although three of the Older Cohort girls were engaged in stone-crushing at wave three, by the fourth wave they had all left. Haftey worked at the plant for only a few months during a school holiday, while Sessen and Haymanot got married and Fanus, who comes from a slightly better-off family, never worked there. It seems that stone crushing soon lost its appeal for the Older Cohort girls since at the fourth wave Sessen and Haymanot expressed a dislike for the work, seeing marriage as offering a more restful life. The pattern for boys is different because they seldom have the resources to marry young and are under greater obligation to continue contributing to their families than are girls. But the boys also expressed antipathy towards stone-crushing work and described it as a last resort used by the poorest households to mitigate economic shocks. Mesih explained:

They [children] are also worried when they do a job like stone crushing which is very difficult because of their ages. They are forced to do such difficult jobs because of their parents. They don't want to see their parents starved and suffering. As a result, they engage themselves in difficult jobs and become worried. For instance, the parents can be very old and the child goes there to work and feed them.

There were also concerns about the health hazards, as one caregiver indicated:

There are accidents, many are injured on their hands and their legs and the bosses take them for medical treatments ... Yes, there are many children who are injured their body, especially the ones that load stones onto trucks. But they do that because they have to survive.

Mihretu noted that the work was 'bad' due to the health risks; '... some of the children do suffer from health problems caused by dust in the workplace. The doctors told them they have something like dust around their heart and it becomes risky when it is accumulated there.'

Though stone-crushing remained an important fall-back measure for males, by the fourth qualitative wave both boys and girls in Zeytuni had other opportunities for paid work, the demand for paving materials in towns having given rise to the production of cobble stones. The labour in this occupation is differentiated by age and gender. Keen to prevent children's schooling from being undermined by cobble production, the local administration has created a youth employment scheme for the work, restricting membership to those aged 18 and above. The scheme helps young people to form cooperatives, giving them access to training, designated areas for stone collection, assistance with identifying buyers, and other tasks. Although a few girls are registered in the cooperatives, and are encouraged to become trained in carving, this task is almost exclusively confined to boys. Girls prefer roles such as collecting uncarved stones and transferring the finished cobbles (by donkey) to the roadside, where they are collected by intermediaries for delivery to and sale in town.

The Younger Cohort children are excluded from the cooperatives because of their age. But they are able to join the many other children who prefer self-employment and gather stones from their backyards for carving into cobbles. Even though the finished cobbles are sold at a reduced price to the cooperatives, self-employment is attractive because the earnings are higher, as much as 200 Birr per day, whereas cooperative members earn only 1,000 Birr per month. Other children are hired by cooperatives as day labourers. Seemingly, this is a less lucrative option. According to Mihretu, an Older Cohort cooperative member, day labourers undertake the more difficult tasks like loading stones onto trucks: 'we pay the daily labourers who load the stones. We do not load it by ourselves'. Mihretu took up paid work in cobble

production along with his father and brother when the family's cattle died following administration of a poisonous medication. At the fourth wave Mihretu was employed fulltime in this occupation, whereas Mesih left after a while because he found the work too hard and the pay too low. Hadush preferred irrigation farming and livestock rearing and was planning to set up an irrigation cooperative with others.

There were diverse views in Zeytuni on the merits of children's paid work and some caregivers expressed ambivalence. For example, Maregey's mother said, 'I would like him not to do the work but I also wish to get the money' and another voiced a concern that once they acquire a 'taste for money and independence' children lose interest in schooling. On the other hand, for Mesih's mother the impact of children's paid work has been overwhelmingly positive:

Now, children can go and work anywhere where the government provides job and get money. In the past, there was nothing called a job. Now all girls and boys do some kind of work, like, for instance, they are hired in farming as daily labourers to do weeding and earn a lot of money; while boys can get a job in crushing stones. Now our village has been changed so it's good for children at any time; whether it is summer or winter. They can work and change their clothes and wear good shoes. This time is really nice.

Likewise, several respondents highlighted that by working for pay, boys and men were making it possible for their sisters and daughters to stay on at school. Accordingly, households containing mature boys capable of doing this kind of work and families with mixed-gender offspring were said to be better off than those without. Others saw the benefits for boys more in terms of professional training. Desta's caregiver observed:

Yes it is a profession. Look at this great stone, he crushes and then shapes it in a kind of square shape. This is great skill ... It may help him for building houses ... and if he added some knowledge with God he can build homes by taking contracts since he is now professional in crushing and shaping stones.

Masonry and house construction are important male occupations in Ethiopia, so this response aligns with the argument in the literature that children's work is regarded as an opportunity to train the young in skills needed in adulthood, as well as providing early entry into a good occupation. Thus, the qualitative data reveal that for boys in Zeytuni, remaining at school is no longer attractive when working in stone crushing or cobble production offers a direct financial return as well as a grounding for future employment. Girls, on the other hand, have been eased out of stone crushing and have not accessed the most lucrative jobs in the cobble-making cooperatives. So, for them, school and marriage appear to be more viable options.

Turning to Leki, levels of consumption in this community are lower than for Zeytuni, and like Zeytuni, many of its inhabitants depend on the PSNP (Tafere and Woldehanna 2012). Also as in Zeytuni, opportunities locally for children to engage in paid employment have increased substantially over the years, with a rise in irrigated farming for export. Yet in Leki this does not seem to have had as much impact as in Zeytuni: the difference in time allocated to work by the Younger and Older Cohorts at age 12 was negligible and not statistically significant, at just under 5 hours per day, almost an hour less per day than in Zeytuni.⁸ Associated with this trend, and also in contrast with Zeytuni, the educational aspirations of parents and children in

⁸ This may be because irrigated farming was introduced prior to 2006 so the most significant impact on time use likely occurred before the Older Cohort had reached age 12.

Leki rose between 2006 and 2013. As Table 5 shows, there was an increase by around 10 percentage points in the proportion who aspire to reach university during this period.

Table 5. *Aspirations to reach university of parents and children in Leki.*

	2006	2013
Parents	61.2%	70.1%
Child	46.8%	58.6%

N=49 in 2006; and N=87 in 2013

At the same time, the household survey reveals that in Leki raised educational aspirations are mirrored by high levels of school enrolment.⁹ Table 6 shows that in 2013, almost all children were enrolled in school (only 3 out of 87 were not in school), with little change since 2006.

Table 6. *School enrolment by gender in Leki.*

	Male	Female
2006	93.1%	100.0%
2013	95.7%	97.6%

N=49 in 2006; and N=87 in 2013

Nevertheless, even with elevated aspirations and enrolment, this does not mean that children attend school throughout the year or progress well. Indeed, there are marked gender disparities in school progression in Leki, and as in Zeytuni, boys fare worse than girls. The survey data suggest that although boys may be re-enrolling regularly at the beginning of each year, many fail to finish the year or to move to the next grade. Thus, at age 12 in 2013, 18 of the 41 Younger Cohort girls were in Grade 3 or above (7 in Grade 3, 8 in Grade 4, and 3 in Grade 5), compared to only 9 of the 46 same-aged boys, which is a slight worsening for boys since 2006 (when 12 out of 29 boys and 8 out of 19 girls of this age were in Grade 3 or above). In line with this trend, three of the six boys in the qualitative sub-sample reported remaining in the same grade during the second, third and fourth waves of qualitative research.

So, recognising that in Leki boys are not progressing well at school, the question is, how is it that children in this community manage to combine school with household chores, and paid and unpaid work? Orkin (2012) argues that it is because children in Leki are good at planning their work around schooling. Tafere and Pankhurst (2015), on the other hand, hold that parental acceptance of children combining family work, outside paid work and schooling is key, also highlighting that the school only opens in the mornings, leaving children free to

9 However, based on school survey data in 2012 which focus on schools attended by Young Lives Younger Cohort children and their peers, Pankhurst, Crivello and Tiemelissan (2016) report very high rates of early school departure in Leki. The discrepancy in findings between the household and school surveys may be either due to different survey timing or due to differences in the questions asked in the two surveys. The household survey focused on enrolment, while the school survey asked Grade 4 and 5 pupils (of whom most were not in the Young Lives sample): 'Have you ever dropped out?'; 'Have you ever repeated a grade?' How pupils interpreted these questions, particularly the former, which could mean dropping out for 1 month, or 1 year, might vary quite considerably. Also, the household survey asked about pupil enrolment at the start of the school year; households may be more likely to say 'yes' than if they had been asked the question towards the end of the school year, when children may have stopped attending. Furthermore, enrolment does not always translate into attendance, and possibly it is these two factors that the dropout and repetition figures from the school survey reflect.

work in the afternoons. Reinforcing this argument, Kebenga, aged 12, indicated that his typical daily routine included various household chores, assisting his father on the farm before school, from 6 until 7 or 9.30am, and again after school, as well as fishing for domestic consumption:

My father advised me to engage in farming activities. He has helped me to learn how to do farming activities. We sow maize on this plot of land during the summer time. We produce vegetables using irrigation in winter season. This time we are producing onions and cabbages on this land. My parents sell the vegetables to traders and earn income.

Further, it appears that the nature of the tasks on irrigation farms facilitates the combination of school and work, local farm owners having adapted their production regimes so that children can do piece work (for example, maintaining irrigation channels), or work at home when it suits them (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). Moreover, some of the children work on their parents' land, and parents may be concerned to protect their schooling.

Given the complexity of children's labour patterns in Leki what is not clear is whether, or the extent to which, the gendering of tasks in farming affects school participation by either sex. Overall, farm work does seem to be more widely accepted as an appropriate occupation for girls in Leki than it does in Zeytuni, weeding and hoeing vegetables and collecting haricot beans being regarded as largely female tasks, and fishing, maintaining irrigation channels and herding livestock, male tasks. But there appears to be greater flexibility around the gendered division of labour than in Zeytuni, especially in poorer households that face a shortage of female labour. For example, some of the boys undertake responsibilities normally assigned to girls, while others combine male and female tasks. Thus, boys Negassa and Mitiku cook, make bread and sauces, and also fetch water and firewood. During the school vacation they do paid work hoeing and weeding, the money being used to buy educational materials and coffee for the family, among other items. Though this is not born out by the survey findings, during the qualitative research interviewees repeatedly emphasised that there is greater demand locally for paid female labour than for paid male labour, seemingly associated with girls and women doing more paid work overall. For example, Negassa (a boy) argued that:

Most of the time, paid labour is the work of female children and women. The employers prefer women and girls. They do not need men in most cases. They include men and boys in their work only when they face shortage of labour. They believe that women and girls are more effective and efficient.

Consistent with this perception, the larger flower farms employ almost exclusively female labour, although they generally avoid hiring anyone under age 18. When asked how paid work had affected her education Shebeshi, a Younger Cohort girl, replied:

It has no negative impact. I do paid work after school or over the weekend. I have never been absent from school to involve in paid work. I work in irrigation scheme in my free time. I study in school during my free time. I also study in the evening and at night during the exam time.

On the other hand, Beletech, an Older Cohort girl who lives with an aunt, attributed the fact that she was only in Grade 1 at age 13 to frequent absences due to sickness (tuberculosis and malaria) and her workload. Following her elder sister's marriage and departure from the home, Beletech is the only girl in the household. She has taken over many of her sister's responsibilities and does all the cooking for the family, as well as livestock herding, and tending the shop; on non-school days, she also spends up to 6 hours a day doing paid labour

digging and collecting vegetables. Beletech's case may be exceptional, but from the reports of two married Older Cohort girls it would seem that one of the benefits of marriage may be a lightening of workloads. Both of these girls had previously combined work on vegetable farms with schooling, and they explained that marriage relieved them not just from the challenges of studying but also from strenuous farm work. They argued that marriage enabled them to focus exclusively on lighter domestic tasks and caring for their babies.

It is striking that whereas in Zeytuni boys and girls are turning to off-farm employment, the introduction of irrigation in Leki means that farming continues to be regarded as a good option for the future. Indeed, one boy argued that it is a more attractive career choice than white-collar occupations like medicine or teaching. At the same time, enthusiasm for farming does not seem to have detracted from school enrolment. In fact Kebenga regards education as safeguarding future success in agriculture:

I want to become a rich educated farmer. I want to engage in producing vegetables and cereals on the irrigated land. I want to produce crops more than once a year on the same land. As to my education, I want to complete Grade 10 and to start my farm business. I want to rent the irrigated land and work on irrigation activities. I believe that I will achieve this plan. I want to save money and buy livestock which will be an asset for me to start my future business. I want to keep strong attachment with my parents so that they will support my business idea. My father will sell one of his cattle and help me to start the business ... I have no plan to migrate. I will learn and work here.

So if in Leki children's work is not the main constraint to school participation, this raises the possibility that the characteristics of the school itself may be a more decisive factor. The school director appears to be tolerant of children arriving late or missing classes. And the school observations conducted during the third wave of qualitative research in 2011 revealed extremely erratic attendance pattern among children; '... some were attending school, others running through the fences to go to work and a few of them coming late to classrooms after doing some work at the irrigated fields. About 30 students were outside the school compound and were late, apparently having been doing some type of work' (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015: 16). A teacher reinforced this finding: 'Honestly speaking, more than half of the students do not come to school for a day. And the next day, those who were absent will come and others will miss class in turn' (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015: 17).

Several of the children in Leki argued that it is poor education quality rather than work that undermines their schooling. Boys cited violence in school and teacher absenteeism, the latter being corroborated by the school observation, which found four classes to be without teachers at that point (Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). Several respondents highlighted that teachers in Leki generally commute from a nearby town and do not have much understanding of the realities of children's lives in the community or the challenges they confront. This is illustrated by the difficulty many children experience when trying to re-enrol after even short periods of absence. Kebenga related his experience; 'When my father was sick from malaria, I had been absent from school for several days. My grandmother also died during the same time. I was highly disturbed at that time. Later on, my parents begged my teachers to readmit me into the school. I returned to school with warning.' Kebenga's father substantiated his account: 'He dropped out of school. First he was absent from school for a week. Then the teachers prevented him to continue his education. They asked him to bring parents. I could not go there and explain the reason for his absence. Then he dropped out.' Kebenga's older sister also stopped attending school at this time and she too was prevented from returning: 'She was absent from school for many days and the school refused to accept

her. She totally dropped out and started working in Sher flower farm. This made her to repeat grade this year. This was a terrible condition for her.'

Broadly speaking, in urban areas and among rural girls, the time spent working has been declining and school education increasingly accepted as the central activity of childhood. By contrast, in rural communities such as Zeytuni and Leki paid work remains attractive to children. In Zeytuni, this has received impetus from developments in off-farm employment, which involves particular gender dynamics. In 2006 Older Cohort children of both sexes were engaged in waged employment in stone crushing, but by 2013 girls were no longer involved, whereas cobble production, which was offering greater flexibility in the relations of production, had begun to attract growing numbers of children of both sexes. These developments may explain why, at age 12, boys in Zeytuni were working significantly longer hours on enterprises and/or family farms in 2013 than in 2006. Boys' continued inclusion in stone crushing is also significant because it is the kind of inflexible, fulltime, waged work that makes school attendance difficult. By contrast, girls in Zeytuni were not working longer hours in 2013 than they had been in 2006, and had increased their educational aspirations. In Leki, despite growing opportunities for paid work on export-led irrigated farms, children seem to have been better able to combine schooling and work than in Zeytuni. Thus, there was no gender difference in hours worked between 2006 and 2013 and elevated education aspirations for both boys and girls were mirrored by high school enrolment. That said, the value of the education on offer was often questioned and boys in particular were faltering in their progression through school.

5. Conclusion

At one time it was taken for granted across Ethiopia that boys and girls would follow previous generations in the skills they developed in readiness for adulthood; roles and responsibilities during childhood were marked out by domestic tasks, livestock herding, farming, crafts and the like. However, economic growth and the expansion of primary and secondary education have had a dramatic impact on the lives of the current generation of children. With the young fulfilling a complex mix of familial and individual responsibilities and ambitions, and with education and work realising both of these ends, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees, boys' and girls' time use is increasingly the product of multiple, and sometimes competing, interests. Immediate household economic needs, together with children's desire and need to learn varied skills, are set against aspirations for social mobility at both individual and household levels. These choices, in turn, produce diverse pathways through diverse forms of work and/or school education to adulthood. This paper has assessed how these decisions play out in practice by investigating the gendered time use of 12-year-olds in the Young Lives sample. It explores whether children's use of time is coming into alignment with Government policy on education and children's work and if not, why. It does this by highlighting time-use changes that have occurred over the period 2006-2013, taking aspirations for children's futures, opportunities for and characteristics of both education and children's work, and intra-household dynamics to be key determinants.

Overall, the data do not support the policy assumption that weak education outcomes are due to low demand, since the educational aspirations of parents and children in the sample are surprisingly high. However, as in other studies conducted across Africa, the positive valuation of formal education by Young Lives respondents is sometimes tempered by adverse experiences at school. Moreover, while work is on the decline among urban children,

elevated education aspirations do not detract from children's work responsibilities in rural areas, or the perception of work as a significant mechanism of learning for the young. Thus, combining school with work is the norm for many children at age 12, in rural areas at least.

There are many factors at play here. First, in rural Ethiopia particularly, schooling is not about attending continuously and progressing systematically through grades year-on-year. Depending on the kind of work on offer and the perceived returns to education, many children attend as and when possible, balancing education with their productive and reproductive responsibilities. With classes taking up only part of the day, permissive school regimes that allow children to work during school hours and compliant employers who accommodate school schedules, the combination of school and work remains quite feasible. Second, there has been some disillusionment with the quality of education and this, together with economic development in rural areas, has changed the incentive structures for children. The expansion of commercial farming in Leki and off-farm industries in Zeytuni make it possible for children to contribute to household income, while also providing a foothold for a future career. In this sense, work remains an attractive and viable alternative to education as a route towards productive adulthood, especially given that the work available to adults locally does not require high levels of literacy.

Gender is certainly a key determinant in all of this. Yet, allowing for the possibility of some underreporting of children's out-of-school activities, particularly unpaid domestic work by girls, the Young Lives data do not corroborate the policy concern that there is a systematic bias against girls in Ethiopia in either education outcomes or the burden of work. In fact, though they started out higher, boys' educational aspirations fell over the seven years so that they were lower than girls' by 2013. And boys are more likely than girls to fall behind at school and/or leave school early in order to work fulltime. Moreover, gender is not simply a cultural artefact but also reflects political-economic forces. Thus, it is in specific locations where particular economic conditions apply that it becomes especially salient as a source of disparity between children.

But being advantaged by your gender in the labour market can be detrimental to education and entail a high burden of work, as in the case of rural boys. Boys are seemingly more influenced than girls by low-quality education, not just because they generally perform less well in school, but also because the opportunity costs of education are higher for them given the pressures they face to transition early into productive roles. Boys appear to be increasingly distrustful of schooling as guarantee of future employment and social mobility, while the opportunity for lucrative paid work also lowers their educational aspirations and performance, and leads to early school departure. Accordingly, our findings imply that any gendered disadvantages experienced by girls are subtle and complex. Girls seem to have fewer opportunities for (or pressures on them to undertake) fulltime employment and therefore have greater freedom to continue with their education, until marriage at least. Nevertheless, even though their education may be protected, discriminatory gender norms limit their economic advancement.

Overall, this paper finds that despite the general trend away from work and towards schooling in Ethiopia, there are many factors shaping children's circumstances and considerable complexity around their gendered time-use, particularly in rural areas. Educational aspirations and the scheduling and quality of schooling are important determinants, as is the type of work available and, if paid, the levels of remuneration, and all of these need to be taken into account in policy.

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Balancing School and Work with New Opportunities: Changes in Children's Gendered Time Use in Ethiopia (2006-2013)

This paper explores changes in how boys and girls in Ethiopia spend their time, with a particular focus on work and schooling. We compare boys and girls aged 12 in 2006 with another group of the same age, surveyed seven years later, in 2013. Ethiopia is the poorest country in the Young Lives study and its mainly rural population has long depended on children's work to overcome difficult economic conditions. We speak to two policy concerns, first that there is a gender bias in how children spend their time, and second, that work by children undermines their education. The Government of Ethiopia has passed legislation stopping work that harms children's education and stating 14 as the minimum age for employment, and there are several initiatives focused on keeping girls in school.

The survey data show that overall there is a small reduction in the hours 12-year-olds spend in paid or unpaid work (outside or inside the household) over the seven-year period. However, this downward trend holds mainly in urban areas, where both boys and girls spend much less time on work than they did seven years previous. While rural children all work longer hours than urban children, rural girls did see a decline in hours worked over time. However, rural boys have increased their working hours slightly, and by 2013 were working longer hours than girls.

Overall, our analysis does not support the policy assumption that weak education outcomes are due to low demand from parents, since both parents and children state their wish for the children to reach high levels of education. However, this positive outlook is sometimes tempered by adverse experiences at school. Our findings challenge the perception that girls are consistently disadvantaged in relation to boys in school access and work burden. In-depth interviews in two rural communities reveal that a rise in work opportunities means not only that work remains an attractive and viable alternative to education, but that, contrary to expectations, the increased returns to work have lowered boys' education aspirations and increased their school drop-out rates relative to girls'.



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*
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