

This fact sheet presents preliminary findings from Round 4 of the Young Lives survey of children in 2013. It reports on children's learning and some of the changes in key education indicators that have taken place over the eleven years since the earlier rounds of data collection in 2002, 2006 and 2009. We found that school enrolment is high for both urban and rural children, but gaps exist in enrolment levels and in learning outcomes (measured by math test scores) between children in rural and urban areas, between sites located in different regions of the country, and between children according to household wealth and levels of parental education. Surprisingly, the maths and literacy test scores of 12-year-olds were lower in 2013 than those of children in 2006, which raises concerns about quality of education that warrants further attention. Almost all the Young Lives children attend government schools, although a sizeable minority of children in urban areas are now attending private schools.

Context: Recent education policy in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has made significant strides in terms of access to primary education over recent years. The number of primary schools has increased from 25,000 in 2008/9 to 30,500 in 2012/13, and combined with the campaign to ensure that all school-age children are enrolled, has led to an increase in net enrolment from 83% in the school-year 2008/09 to 96% in 2012/13 for the first cycle of primary education (Grades 1 to 4), and from 83% to 86% for the full cycle of primary education (Grades 1 to 8) over the same period (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Building on this successful expansion of primary schooling, the Government has drafted and implemented various policies and programmes focusing on children's development. An integrated national Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy and Strategic Framework was launched in 2010 in order to introduce a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to seven years of age. The policy calls for a collective effort by all sectors in achieving the overall goal of promoting early stimulation, health care and early education for all children.

Based on the 20-year Education and Training Policy prepared in 1994, successive 5-year Education Sector Development Programmes have been implemented. Each of these programmes accorded high priority to the expansion of basic/primary education which has also been reflected in successive national plans, the latest being the Growth and Transformation Plan launched in 2010/11.

The GTP aims to address regional as well as rural-urban inequalities in access to education and focuses on the emerging regions and pastoralist children as well as early primary education. Since access to pre-school education is very low (just 4.2%) and mainly concentrated in urban areas, the GTP promised to make the early childhood care and education system more cost-effective and participatory and to expand both the formal and non-formal delivery mechanisms, with the target for reaching a pre-primary gross enrolment rate of 20% by the end of the current GTP period in 2015.

Key findings

- 95% of all 12-year-olds were enrolled in school in 2013 – with girls slightly more likely to be in school (96%) than boys (93%).
- Only 92% of children in rural areas are attending school, compared with 98% in urban areas. Similarly, children whose parents had received little or no education themselves were much less likely to be in school (92%) than children whose parents had attained Grade 8 (100%).
- The percentage of children over-age for grade declined from 59% in 2006 to 52% in 2013. There is a slight improvement for both boys and girls but in SNNPR, Oromia and Amhara the percentage of children over-age for grade in school is still high.
- There is a small improvement in grade completion since 2006, with 12-year-olds now having completed 3.5 grades on average, although there are considerable differences between regions, with children in Addis Ababa having completed 4.9 grades (as should be expected for their age) but children in SNNPR on average only having completed 2.3 grades.
- However, we also see signs that learning levels may be falling, with fewer children able to answer the same maths questions correctly than 12-year-olds in 2006.
- Despite the international trend of increasing private education, most children in Ethiopia attend government schools. However, there is a small but increasing minority (15%) of children in urban areas from better-off families who are now attending private schools.

School enrolment, school type and grade completion

Enrolment

95% of the Young Lives children were enrolled in school in 2013 at age 12, just above the national target of 94% for 2012/13 and marginally lower than the national average figure reported by the Ministry of Education for the first cycle primary education (96%). However, there are some differences between urban areas where 98% of the children are enrolled and rural areas where only 92% are attending school. Furthermore, although enrolment is high for both urban and rural areas, there are some gaps between the regions. Sites in Addis Ababa achieved an enrolment rate of 100%, followed by sites in Oromia (97%) and sites in SNNPR (95%) but enrolment is lower in our study sites in Tigray (91%) and Amhara (90%) (see Table 3). This requires further investigation, but one explanation might be that the sites in Tigray and Amhara are very poor compared to sites in other regions.

Parental education was found to have a positive association with enrolment, i.e. children born into educated households were more likely to be in school than children whose parents had had little formal education. Enrolment among children from better-off households was almost universal (99%) but lower among children from poor households (92%). Almost 96% of girls were attending school compared with 93% of boys, implying the existence of slight gender bias in favour of girls.

It is encouraging that enrolment of 12-year-olds remains high and has not fallen since 2006 when we found that 95% of the Older Cohort children were enrolled in school at age 12. It should be noted, however, that the Young Lives school survey conducted in the 2012 found that only 87% of enrolled children were in school on the day we visited. Attendance fluctuates throughout the year according to children's other roles and responsibilities (e.g. market days or harvest).

Access to private school

Families often invest their scarce resources in sending their children to school and in seeking the best possible schooling that they can access. Within many low- and middle-income countries, rapid economic growth, increased opportunities for social mobility, and high aspirations for education combined with disenchantment with the quality and effectiveness of government schools have all fuelled the demand for low-fee private schooling, even among poor families (Pells and Woodhead, 2014). Although the Government of Ethiopia has been encouraging the founding of private schools over the last 20 years, access to private schools remains limited to urban areas and the overall national share of enrolment of children in private primary education is very small – just 4%.

The numbers of Young Lives children attending private school are also low (up from 4% in 2006 to 6% in 2013), but this is almost entirely confined to urban areas (where 15% of the Young Lives children are now attending private schools).

Grade completion

The Round 4 survey data show that the highest grade completed by 12-year-old children lies on average between Grades 3 and 4 at the end of the previous school year, although they should all have completed Grade 4 (or Grade 5) if they started school at the official starting age of 7 (see Table 3). There is no difference between boys and girls with respect to the highest grade completed, but children in rural areas have on average completed only 2.9 grades compared with 4.2 for children in urban areas. Regional differences are also observed with the highest average grade completion being in Addis Ababa (4.9) and Tigray (4.5) but much lower in SNNPR where the average is just 2.3.

We also see that children in the poorest third of households have only completed on average 2.5 grades, and children with less-educated parents have completed 3.2 grades compared with an average of 4.5 for children whose parents completed full primary school, which suggests that poverty is reinforcing inequalities.

However, when we compared grade completion of 12-year-olds in 2013 with children of the same age in 2006, we do see a small improvement across all groups. The sample average increased from 3.2 in 2006 to 3.5 in 2013, with boys on average increasing from 3.1 to 3.4 grades completed and girls from 3.2 to 3.5.

Table 1 shows the percentage of children over-age for grade in school (i.e. if they have not completed Grade 4 at age 10 or Grade 5 at age 11). The percentage of over-age for grade declined from 59% in 2006 to 52% in 2013, with a small improvement for boys and for girls, and in both urban and rural areas. However, the rates of over-age for grade remain extremely high in Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR. Of course, one possible explanation for children not having completed the expected grade is that they started school later than would be expected. Indeed, during our Round 3 survey in 2009 we did find that 22% of children had not started school (when they were aged 7 to 8), with quite notable variation between regions, with only 4% of children not yet enrolled in school in Addis Ababa but 46% in SNNPR.

Table 1. Children over-age for grade in school (%)

	Older Cohort (age 12 in 2006)	Younger Cohort (age 12 in 2013)
Average Total	58.6	52.3
Gender		
Boys	58.6	52.3
Girls	11.3	12.6
Region		
Addis Ababa	31.3	20.2
Amhara	52.4	54.2
Oromia	67.5	70.1
SNNPR	75.2	80.4
Tigray	55.3	20.6
Location		
Urban	41.2	34.6
Rural	70.4	64.5

Note: Total number of over-age children: 336 (18.2%) in R4 (2013).

Schooling and learning outcomes of 12-year-olds

Young Lives gathers information about children's learning achievement through language and maths test conducted in each survey round.

The unique design of Young Lives with two cohorts of children seven years apart in age allows comparisons of how children were doing at the same age, allowing us to see the impact of changes in the environment around them between 2006 and 2013.

There is little difference in school enrolment among 12-year-olds in 2013 than in 2006, irrespective of gender, socio-economic group or rural–urban location. However, we do see a small improvement in average grade completion and over-age for grade as shown above.

However, when we compared Maths test scores (comparing similar questions asked in 2006 and 2013), fewer children were able to answer the same maths questions correctly (see Table 3). On average, only 71% of 12-year-olds in 2013 were able to answer the question “ $2 \times 4 = ?$ ” (compared with 83% in 2006), and only 56% were able to answer the question “Which of these is equal to 342?” (compared with 64% in 2006). This needs further investigation, but one possible explanation for the poorer learning outcomes in maths could be the increased enrolment and numbers of children in school without associated expansion of qualified teachers and resources.

At first glance it seems that a similar pattern can be observed in the literacy tests: 10% of the 12-year-old children were unable to read even single words (not in a phrase or sentence) in their mother tongue when we tested them in 2006, which had increased to 14% although the total number who could not read a full sentence had fallen from 39% to 35%. After three years of schooling, just 50% of children could read multiple sentences in their mother tongue and only 28% could also read full sentences in Amharic if it was not their mother tongue. However 30% of children were unable to read anything at all in Amharic if it was not their mother tongue. We have yet to do further analysis of the data to review which children are doing so poorly in school, but the forthcoming school survey report will give much more complete data on this and the classroom environment.

Table 2. Reading levels: percentage of 12-year-olds who can read words or sentences

	Reading in mother tongue (2006)	Reading in mother tongue (2013)	Reading in English (2013)	Reading in Amharic* (2013)
Can't read anything	10.1	14.0	33.5	46.3
Can read letters only	14.6	9.9	25.2	10.2
Can read words only	14.6	10.9	10.9	6.7
Can read full sentence	60.7	14.9	14.4	9.3
Can reads multiple sentences	-	50.4	16.0	27.6
Number of children tested	968	1857	1,847	972

Note: Data from the Older Cohort in 2006 and the Younger Cohort in 2013.

*Children whose mother tongue is not Amharic (i.e. for whom it is a second language)

Conclusions: from access to learning

Undoubtedly there has been considerable progress made in addressing the issue of enrolment in the past few years, although full enrolment has only been reached in urban areas. For the Younger Cohort, 95% are now in school, and have completed on average 3.5 grades (although they should have completed 4 grades if they started school at age 7). However, the low learning outcomes of children from poorer backgrounds and children from rural areas are a cause for concern, as are the indications that children seem to be doing worse on our tests than children of the same age in 2006.

Table 3: Schooling and learning outcomes of 12-year-old children in Ethiopia

	Percentage of children enrolled in school		Highest grade completed		Average raw score in Maths test (%)		Percentage of children who can correctly solve "2 x 4 = "		Percentage of children who can correctly solve "Which of these is equal to 342?"		Number of children	
	2006	2013	2006	2013	2006	2013	2006	2013	2013	2013	OC in 2006	YC in 2013
Gender												
Male	93.6	93.0	3.1	3.4	57.9	37.1	83.8	72.2	66.2	56.1	500	989
Female	96	96.3	3.2	3.5	55.1	37.3	82.9	69.3	62.3	55.9	480	884
Urban or rural location												
Urban	97.7	98.2	4.0	4.2	64.1	48.4	87.2	83.6	74.4	68.4	396	764
Rural	92.8	92.1	2.6	2.9	51.0	28.4	80.5	60.8	56.8	46.3	584	1,108
Household wealth level (using Young Lives wealth index)												
Bottom tercile	89.4	92.1	2.3	2.5	48.2	26.4	74.1	59.8	55.3	42.5	303	620
Top tercile	98.8	99.2	4.1	4.5	67.5	50.1	89.7	84.6	78.1	71.6	302	614
Regions												
Addis Ababa	100	100	4.4	4.9	69.9	56.2	91.0	88.8	81.9	79.4	144	272
Amhara	92.8	90.0	3.4	3.4	48.5	34.8	81.9	70.2	58.2	51.6	195	372
Oromia	93.8	97.1	2.8	2.9	47.7	33.7	75.7	67.6	47.1	53.3	195	378
SNNP	93.1	95.5	2.5	2.3	55.5	32.3	80.7	64.8	68.4	53.6	246	472
Tigray	96.0	91.3	3.2	4.5	63.7	33.2	89.3	66.9	68.9	47.6	200	379
Caregiver's education level												
No education	94.1	91.8	2.9	3.2	52.4	30.9	81.5	62.6	59.5	47.4	474	968
Lower primary (Grades 1-4)	94.4	96.1	3.2	3.4	56.7	36.7	82.7	72.8	65.4	56.8	303	433
Upper primary (Grades 5-8)	96.1	97.9	3.7	3.9	63.9	43.9	89.3	79.4	73.8	63.2	128	289
More than Grade 8	98.7	100	4.2	4.5	67.6	56.3	86.7	91.1	72.0	82.1	75	183
Average of full sample	94.8	94.5	3.2	3.5	56.5	37.2	83.3	70.9	64.2	56.0		
Number of children	979	1871	978	1868	923	1637	923	1637	923	1637		

Note: Data are from the Older Cohort aged 12 in Round 2 of the Young Lives survey (2006) and the Younger Cohort aged 12 in Round 4 (2013).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Ministry of Education (2013) *Education Statistics: Annual Abstract for 2005 EC (2012/13 GC)*, Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.

Melanie Frost and Caine Rolleston (2013) *Improving Education Quality, Equity and Access A Report on Findings from the Young Lives School Survey (Round 1) in Ethiopia*, Young Lives Working Paper 96, Oxford: Young Lives.

Zoe James and Caine Rolleston (2014, forthcoming) *Young Lives Ethiopia School Survey 2012-13: Data Overview Report*, Young Lives Working Paper.

Kirriy Pells and Martin Woodhead (2014) *Changing Children's Lives: Risks and Opportunities*, Oxford: Young Lives.

Daniel Vujich (2013) *Policy and Practice on Language of Instruction in Ethiopian Schools: Findings from the Young Lives School Survey*, Working Paper 108, Oxford: Young Lives.

Tassew Woldehanna, Retta Gudisa, Yisak Tafere and Alula Pankhurst (2011) *Understanding Changes in the Lives of Poor Children: Initial Findings from Ethiopia*, Round 3 Survey Report, Oxford: Young Lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

This is the second in a series of fact sheets giving a preliminary overview of some of the key dates emerging from Round 4 of the Young Lives household and child survey carried out in Ethiopia between October 2013 and February 2014. The fact sheets – which cover *Survey Design and Sampling; Education and Learning; Health and Nutrition; and Youth and Development* – were written by Tassew Woldehanna and Alula Pankhurst. We would like to thank our fieldwork teams and Chanie Ejigu who coordinated the survey fieldwork, Tirsit Asresse, the Young Lives Data Manager, and Maria Ogando Portela for support with initial data analysis. In particular, we thank the Young Lives children and their families for their willingness to be part of our sample and answer our many questions.

In Ethiopia, Young Lives is a partnership between the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), Pankhurst Development Research and Consulting plc, and Save the Children. Young Lives is funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID) and co-funded from 2010 to 2014 by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from 2014 to 2015 by Irish Aid. In Ethiopia, the Oak Foundation is funding a sub-study of research into practice. The views expressed are those of the author(s). They are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, Young Lives, the University of Oxford, DFID or other funders.

Funded by



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands



Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

© Young Lives November 2014