



# Towards a Better Future?

Hopes and Fears  
from Young Lives



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# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Country context: Ethiopia</b>	<b>13</b>
Afework's story: Orphanhood	15
Hadush's story: What about the boys?	19
Louam's story: Aspirations	23
Tufa's story: Economic 'shocks' and children's agency	27
Seble's story: Early marriage and FGM	31
Teje's story: Progress in education	35
<b>Country context: India, (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana)</b>	<b>39</b>
Deepak's story: Scheduled Castes and Tribes	41
Salman's story: Access to technology	45
Sarada's story: The importance of self-help groups	49
Ravi's story: The intergenerational cycle of violence	53
Harika's story: Early marriage and maternal education	57
Shanmuka Priya's story: The growth of private schooling	61
<b>Country context: Peru</b>	<b>65</b>
Elmer's story: Migration	67
Lupe's story: Private and state education in Peru	71
Manuel's story: Sex and becoming a parent	75
Luz's story: Improvements in infrastructure and wealth	79
Fabricio's story: Indigenous children in Peru	83
Cecilia's story: Finishing school and finding work	87
<b>Country context: Vietnam</b>	<b>91</b>
Lien's story: Youth employment	93
Hung's story: Improvements in infrastructure	97
Duy's story: Corporal punishment	101
H'Mai's story: Early marriage	105
Dao's story: Nutrition and stunting	109
Y Sinh's story: Inequalities and ethnic minority families	113
<b>References and further reading</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Acknowledgments and photo credits</b>	<b>118</b>



# Towards a Better Future?

## Hopes and Fears from Young Lives

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The Young Lives study was designed to track the lives of children in developing countries over the course of the Millennium Development Goals. As the world now moves on to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, attention has been drawn to the need for evidence and robust data to monitor progress at national level. The kind of data that Young Lives collects – for example on the mathematics or reading abilities of 15-year-olds in Ethiopia – is rare in developing countries and so can be very useful for governments and international donors. The data build a story – and, more importantly, build evidence for change.

Young Lives has been following 12,000 children in four countries since 2002. We have watched them grow up, and followed their lives as they started primary and then secondary school. We have seen many of them grow into young adults. They have shared their hopes and their fears; their ideas about themselves, their families and their communities. We have learned much about what it means to be a child living in poverty. We have been able to share this with policymakers.

It is now time to say goodbye. This is the third book following the same 24 children and young people as they grow up in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. It is also the last, as we complete our final interviews with them at the end of 15 years. We believe that the views and experiences of the children in our study are key to understanding childhood poverty and in helping to identify effective policies and practices to tackle it. As the mother of Teje, who is 13 and from Ethiopia, said: “I want development for all human beings and I want everyone to have a comfortable life. I want this research to contribute to that.”

### Young Lives children grow up

When the study began, the children in the ‘Older Cohort’ were 8 and those in the ‘Younger Cohort’ were babies. By the time of the interviews for this book, the youngest children were 13 and the older ones 19 or 20. We have seen them grow from small children into adolescents, and from children into young adults. In Peru, Elmer, aged 19, says that he now sees himself as more mature:

*“When I was younger and someone told me to do something, I didn’t always do it. I have started thinking about the future, like buying a house or a car. I didn’t think about this before because my parents gave me everything and I was focused on playing and having fun.”*

Growing up has meant more independence – and more responsibility. There is pressure to conform to wider social norms and expectations. Gender has become more important as the children move into adolescence and beyond, and decisions about school, work, marriage and fertility are made within families and communities. There is pressure on boys to provide for their families financially, which may lead to early departure from school, although many young men are also struggling to find work and are therefore delaying marriage. Of the young men, only Ravi and Manuel are married or have permanent partners.

Young women believe it is better for them to marry later, but economic and social pressures mean that a significant number have left school and are married by the time they are 19 – this includes 36 per cent of the Young Lives sample in India, although in Ethiopia the practice is in decline. Some, like Harika, Seble and H’Mai, already have a child. When Seble was younger, she and her mother both said they didn’t want her to marry young, but she married at 15, after repeated bouts of illness and the need to work forced her to leave school having completed only two grades. Now she says: “At the age

of 15, we don't know enough. It may create complexities during labour and delivery. So, it is better to be a bit older."

These social pressures highlight the importance of seeing individual decision-making within a wider context, which means engaging with household dynamics, social norms and the economic context to determine why young people make the decisions that they do.

### Changes in the community

The children and young people have witnessed many changes in their communities and in their countries in the years that we have been following them. Economic growth during the period of the Young Lives study has led to improvements in infrastructure, from new schools and health centres, and paved roads linking remote communities to larger towns, to piped water and sewage, electricity, the internet, mobile phones and even cable TV, which brings the world into many homes.

These changes have made the children's lives very different – and often better – than those of their parents. As Hadush's father notes, the differences between when he was a boy and today in Ethiopia are:

*"Incomparable! Children now have clothes to cover their body, shoes to protect their feet, glasses to protect their eyes. This is a really good time to raise children. They have proper food and are sent to school. We can now drink clean water. If we are sick, we can be treated at the health centre. In the past, many people died due to a lack of health services. I am happy because of all these changes. The Government is doing well."*

Some parents, however, while noting the positive changes, especially for women and girls, feel that there is less respect for older people, and less cohesion in the community. They also note problems with rising prices for basic foodstuffs, and see technology as a mixed blessing. In Vietnam, for example, parents express significant anxieties about the internet – both because it exposes young people to values and norms that are very different from those predominating within their homes and also because it detracts from their schooling.

### Persistent inequalities

Despite economic growth in the four countries, Young Lives has found that significant inequalities persist. Children from poor families, from rural areas and from ethnic minority families continue to fare much worse than their peers, in all four Young Lives countries.

Children in rural areas and from socially disadvantaged groups continue to have less access to clean water and sanitation than their better-off peers. For example, in India in 2013, 75 per cent of Other Castes (the higher castes) but only 22 per cent of Scheduled Tribes (India's indigenous people) had access to improved sanitation. The urban/rural gap is even greater – 93 per cent compared with 21 per cent.

The poorest children in all four countries are as likely as ever to be stunted (have a low height for their age, a condition which usually indicates malnutrition) from an early age. In India, the poorest 40 per cent of children have seen no improvement in levels of stunting since 2000, despite a doubling of GDP in the country. Even in Peru and Vietnam, where the proportion of stunted 12-year-olds dropped by one-half and one-third respectively, children in rural areas, and those in poorer and less educated households continued to be most vulnerable.

The disadvantages persist into education: in Vietnam, for example, only half the young people from the poorest households were still in education aged 19 compared with almost three-quarters of

those from wealthier households. And at 15, four out of five children from the Kinh ethnic majority were still in school, but only half of ethnic minority children. In Peru, 35 per cent of children from better-off households go to university, compared with only 3 per cent of children from the poorest families.

Inequality means that these same children are also falling behind before they have even started school. This continues through to later childhood. Early stunting affects children's cognitive development and is related to lower school achievement later on and can even affect children's psychosocial well-being.

Across the board, the poorest children are the least likely to do well in school and the most likely to drop out of school early, and girls from poor and rural families are the most likely to marry and have their first child while still in their teens. Despite their best efforts, achieving their childhood dreams is simply not possible.

### **Education – a way out of poverty?**

The Millennium Development Goals had a major focus on education, which is also reflected in the four countries of the Young Lives study. Many of our children's parents never went to school or had only minimal education. But they and their children now see education as a priority – and a route to a better life. As Tufa's father says "We understand the value of educating our children. In today's world, an educated person is better than an uneducated one."

Education has brought many benefits. Children have learned to read and write, have gained new skills and increased their confidence. They also know their rights in a way that their parents did not. This, thinks Seble's mother, is particularly important for girls as they grow into women:

*"One good thing we observe today is that the Government pays attention to the rights of women. A woman has the right to choose her partner, unlike in older times. In those days when I was a child, young men dominated women and they could not exercise their rights. But today, there is mutual agreement and respect between partners."*

Knowing your rights and exercising them, however, are two very different things, as we see from the widespread use of violence. Seble's mother adds that despite the changes for the better, violence against women continue to be major problems. And as Ravi's story shows, boys who witness violence in the home are more likely to grow up using violence themselves. Many of the Young Lives children experience high levels of violence at home and at school; 78 per cent of 8-year-old children in India, 38 per cent in Ethiopia, 30 per cent in Peru and 20 per cent in Vietnam said they had been hit by teachers. Boys are much more likely than girls to say they have experienced corporal punishment, although girls say they are at greater risk of other forms of humiliating treatment and sexual violence. In India, Peru and Vietnam, the violence is also more likely to be directed at children from disadvantaged households.

Young Lives has also found that in some countries, the quality of education has declined between the two cohorts. For example, although in Peru and Vietnam, younger children performed better than their older peers in a vocabulary test, in Ethiopia and India, the scores declined. Parents complain that teachers are absent or not qualified and that the quality of teaching is poor. An increase in private education has also led to increased inequality. In India this is apparent even within families as boys are far more likely than their sisters to be sent to private schools, which offer English-medium teaching and marginally better-quality education than do government schools.

Even just staying at school or in education has proved problematic for many. Ten of the 24 children and young people in this book are no longer in education. Deepak is still at school but not attending regularly much to his stepmother's despair. Hadush and Y Sinh have never been to school. Many of the children find themselves repeating grades so that they are behind the appropriate grade for their age, sometimes very far behind. In Ethiopia, for example, in 2013, 52 per cent of 12-year-old children were over-age for their grade, and in Peru 33 per cent

By the age of 19, 15 per cent of those who were enrolled were still in upper primary school. Part of the problem is that children in Ethiopia start school late – especially in rural areas where they work before commencing school -- but it is also down to intermittent attendance and to the poor quality of the education they receive.

### **Aspirations for a better life**

Despite these problems, parents and children continue to believe that education will lead to gainful employment. At the age of 15, 94 per cent of Young Lives Older Cohort agreed with the statement: 'If I study hard at school, I will be rewarded with a better job in the future.' At 12 and 15, children whose parents were farmers or day labourers said they wanted not just to go to school but to university or college as well.

As the young people move into adulthood, however, they often have to revise their earlier high expectations. Only three of the 24 in this book – Lien, Sarada and Cecilia, all young women – are at university or college. By 19, many are juggling education and paid work. Others have had to migrate for work or, like Salman, are thinking of migrating. In our wider study in Peru, almost 40 per cent of 19 year olds, mostly from poor backgrounds, say they have been involved in paid work in the past 12 months and are no longer in education.

Few of the young people in any country are heading for the types of employment – as teachers, doctors and even airline pilots and football stars – that they aspired to when they were young. So why is this?

### **Building evidence for change**

Young Lives research was always intended to be relevant to policy. Which is why in each country, we have clear lines of research that address policy concerns – for example, inequalities in early-childhood programmes in Peru; the effectiveness of school systems in delivering high-quality education to the poorest children in Ethiopia, India and Vietnam; child marriage in Ethiopia and India; and the factors that in all four countries lead to recovery or faltering in growth during middle childhood.

Our findings on the impact of violence on children are being used extensively by UNICEF in its advocacy work. And in Peru this evidence assisted with deliberations over a new law to ban corporal punishment – which was passed in late 2015.

In India, Young Lives representatives have sat on a number of national committees, including the review of the curricula for B.Ed. and M.Ed. teaching qualifications by the National Council of Teacher Education and the Rehabilitation Council of India and the working committee on the Policy of Early Childhood Care and Education.

In Ethiopia, Young Lives was instrumental in setting up the Child Research and Practice Forum, which became a monthly meeting for policymakers, practitioners and researchers held at the Ministry of Women and Children. We have also been able to provide evidence on specific areas of early childhood education in order to assist the Government in its plans to expand pre-school provision from 34 per cent to 80 per cent by 2020.

In Vietnam, the Young Lives team works closely with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Committee on Education and Culture of Children and Youth in the National Assembly. Young Lives evidence has been fed into policy briefs sent to the Ministry and the Committee on selected topics.

Young Lives evidence on inequalities contributed to the Sustainable Development Goal on the same topic, as Richard Morgan, Director of the Child Poverty Global Initiative at Save the Children, noted:

*“The Young Lives publication on inequalities and children was one of the top five submissions to UNICEF’s global thematic consultations on the SDGs. It meant that we were able to offer some solid evidence of the damage done to children by inequalities. It is a significant part of the process that helped the goal on inequalities come into being.”*

Many Young Lives children and their families are assisted by government social protection schemes, which are becoming increasingly common as a way of trying to tackle chronic poverty and vulnerability. These often provide cash, paid work or food. Cash transfers alone are reaching 110 million families in 45 of the world’s poorest countries, often linked to a child, especially a girl, going to school or having access to health services.

Our evidence in Peru has helped to inform the Government’s Juntos (‘Together’) cash transfer programme. Aurea Cadillo, Head of Planning and Budget at Juntos, explained:

*“Thanks to the Young Lives study, Juntos have had a source of knowledge on the poverty impact in children. Their advice and technical assistance has helped us to clarify issues, and provide evidence to show how a cash transfer programme should function. Juntos has taken on board reflections and recommendations from some of the Young Lives findings in the revision of its annual strategic plan.”*

Young Lives is able to see which children and families are benefiting from these social protection schemes and whether they are helpful or not. We have found that they have both intended and unintended consequences for children. Some can provide poor households with a buffer against shocks and boost their livelihoods. They can also increase children’s likelihood of attending schools and clinics, and improve their nutritional status. For example, when a mother in India takes part in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, this can increase the school attendance and grade attainment of her children, particularly the girls. Qualitative evidence also suggests that having the option of work from the scheme had enabled some labourers (including women) to turn down very low-paid work. But by taking adult labour away from the household, they can increase the domestic work burden for children. And while more children may end up in school, increased pupil numbers means more pressure on class size and teachers.

**Conclusion – no-one left behind?**

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals focus clearly on the eradication of poverty as 'the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development'. They also pledge that 'no-one should be left behind'. And yet now that the Young Lives cohorts are in their teens and early adulthood, we have clear evidence that thousands of children are being left behind. This was something that the Millennium Development Goals, which were based on national averages, failed to highlight. Children and young people are now the largest youth cohort the world has ever seen, and yet they still make up 47 per cent of those living in extreme poverty.

Young Lives research has revealed the benefits of economic growth for the daily lives of children and young people: the Millennium Development Goals were implemented at a time of unprecedented growth for many low- and middle-income countries. However, this is unlikely to be the case during the life of the Sustainable Development Goals. If, as we have found, growth was unable to deliver equitable access to high-quality services for the poorest, what does the future hold for the children and young people in this book – and the millions like them? Where does our responsibility to these young people lie? How can we help them to meet their childhood aspirations?

It remains to be seen if the Sustainable Development Goals can live up to these challenges. If we are to deliver on the promise of 'no-one left behind', evidence like that provided by Young Lives will be key to making the real difference that is still clearly needed.

## **“I will remember you all my life” – what young people say about being a part of Young Lives**

We asked young people and their caregivers about their involvement with Young Lives. Many felt that their participation has helped them to understand themselves better. For example, Addisu said: “It gives me hope in my everyday life when you come every three years. It helps me to know what I didn’t know; it helps me to have a good future.” Hadush said: “The interview has helped me to think back about myself, the things I should consider in my life and how to prepare for next interview.” Manuel explained: “It is not just that I have enjoyed the interviews, it is also that your questions have made me think.”

Afework was asked by the Young Lives researcher: “What was your attitude when you first started to participate in this study?” He said:

*“I considered myself as nothing. I would study and come back and play football and so on ... But now I have a position in society and we call meetings and do other activities. [Young Lives] has helped me to know what is good and what is bad.”*

Sarada, always chatty, talked in great detail about what Young Lives meant to her:

*“I have taken part for the last seven years. I am able to share my feelings with you. You asked me about my family, friends, my happiness and sadness and my sufferings. I felt good expressing myself about all these. You always talked to me like a friend. At first, I hesitated to tell you everything in detail. I thought: ‘Maybe they will misunderstand me if I talk openly.’ Then I thought that you have come from far away to talk to me. I am happy about you coming to talk to me. I never felt uncomfortable and I will remember you all my life. Even if I write a diary it won’t be this memorable. It is a very nice memory for me.”*

Some of the young people also understand that they are part of something that will have an impact beyond their own lives, as Addisu put it “how you can be of use to your country”. Teje explained:

*“My participation helped me understand about the research. It is to improve policies about children’s lives. In the past, I did not know the objective of the research project but now I am well aware that the research in which I am involved helps to change government policies and programmes.”*

Afework noted: “Since the information I give you will be important to understand the social situation here, I am happy to participate and I know it will help you to understand us very well.”

Finally, the parents and caregivers were also asked their opinions: Dao’s father said: “I think that what your team is doing – caring about children, following them from when they are small until they are grown up, to understand the experience of children in Vietnam – it is good.”

The 200 children in the qualitative study have been given a book of the photographs of them taken during the course of the Young Lives study. A short version of this book will be presented to each of the 12,000 children and young people as a final thank you for their involvement.



# Country Context: Ethiopia

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Ethiopia is the second most-populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of 96.5 million in 2014. It is also one of the world's poorest countries. Since 2004, however, it has experienced strong and broad-based economic growth, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. This has brought with it positive trends. Poverty has been reduced, in both urban and rural areas, from 39 per cent in 2005 to 30 per cent in 2015.

There has been significant progress in the past 20 years. Primary school enrolment has quadrupled, child mortality has been cut in half, and the number of people with access to clean water has more than doubled. Gender parity in primary education has also improved.

The main challenge now is to continue and accelerate the progress made in recent years towards the Millennium Development Goals and to address the causes of poverty among the country's population. The Government is already devoting a very high share of its budget to pro-poor programmes and investments. To continue these improvements, Ethiopia will need considerable investment and improved policies.\*

The Young Lives children in Ethiopia come from very different parts of the country. **Afewerk** lives in the capital, Addis Ababa, in Bertukan, a densely populated area close to a market. **Louam** lives in Tach-Meret, a kebele or neighbourhood in the Amhara region, with around 10,000 people, most of whom depend on farming for a living. **Seble** and **Tufa** live in the village of Leki, a rural area near Lake Ziway in the Oromia region, where most people work in agriculture, irrigation or in fishing. **Teje** lives in Leku, a fast-growing, densely populated business and tourist town of some 20,000 people in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples region. Most people here work in the informal sector and many are migrants from surrounding areas. **Hadush** lives in Zeytuni, a drought-prone rural area of more than 10,000 people.

Since 2008, there have been changes in all the children's communities. Many have been positive: in terms of education, all communities now have some form of primary provision, and by 2011, government

programmes had brought new pre-schools to Tach-Meret and Leku. Although Leki, Tach-Meret and Zeytuni still have no secondary schools, there is a new one in Bertukan.

Health facilities, too, have improved: in Tach-Meret, there are now two health centres and a pharmacy, although they lack many facilities. In Leki, a new hospital means that sick people no longer have to cross the lake, but there only two health workers in the community itself. In Leku and Zeytuni, government health services have also been upgraded and provided closer to home – in Zeytuni, the mother of one Young Lives child died during labour in 2008 while trying to reach the nearest hospital.

Improved infrastructure has meant that new roads, electricity and mobile phone coverage have come to all the areas in the past few years, making transport connections and connectivity possible for those who can afford it – although in Tach-Meret, for example, by 2011, only one school, one church and a small number of houses were connected to the electrical network.

In Bertukan and Leku, the Government has built new housing, distributed via a lottery system, to ease pressure on the housing system. In Bertukan, however, by 2014 the remaining areas were among those due for demolition and urban regeneration. A large majority of residents will be unable to afford to live in the new developments and have been told to leave the area.

Private companies have brought opportunities for paid work, but also their own problems – in Leki, where there is a large flower farm, the community is concerned that the chemical waste is polluting the lake, affecting fishing, washing and drinking water for cattle. In Leku, the fast-paced growth of the town as a tourist destination is exacerbating the high prices of consumer goods. In Zeytuni, the main road has been damaged by large construction vehicles belonging to a nearby private quarry, but local people hesitate to complain as the company also provides employment.

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\* <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview>



# Afework's story

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**Afework's mother died when he was 7 and his father when he was 10. Since then, he and his older brother, Bekele, have been brought up by their cousin in a densely populated area of the capital, Addis Ababa. Afework had a scholarship to go to a private school because he was an orphan, and was also supported by his sister, who was working in the Middle East. He has now started at a new private school and is still mad about football...**

Afework is 19 and is still living with his cousin Addisu and his older brother, Bekele, who has left school and runs a small business renting videos. His older sister has returned from working in the Middle East. Afework is happy about this and says the family's material situation has improved:

*"In our home, thank God, everything is good. We are living well. We have a bigger TV, and an additional room has been built, so that we now have a kitchen. The other new thing is that we have hired a housemaid. So I don't have to do jobs at home, except occasionally helping her, for example, with the washing."*

He says that he is happy. He has lots of friends, and says that "people trust me and my friends respect me".

Asked if he considers himself to be a child or an adult, he says:

*"I am a youth. I am not a child and I am not an adult. I may sometimes think like a child but I am no longer a child. I don't have much pressure from others. Now nobody tells me to cut my nails. And nobody punishes me for simple reasons."*

He has moved to another private school where he feels the quality of education is better than at his last one and he is able to have religious education classes. His sister pays, after Addisu persuaded her.

Afework hasn't joined any clubs but he is the coordinator of cultural affairs in the local *mahber*, a Christian community-based association: "We have a committee; there is a cashier, a coordinator and a singing group. I take part in many things. We celebrate holidays and we learn new songs together using a *kebero* [drum]."

The one sad thing that has happened is that a cousin who was living with them committed suicide at the age of 26. Afework says this might have been because he was having rows with his girlfriend. Afework didn't go to school for two months when this happened, but says he was supported by neighbours and tried to put on a brave face: "I was laughing even if I was sad inside. Sometimes it makes you happy if your face smiles."

He is concerned that neither his sister nor his cousin is married, although they are in their late 20s:

*"They are not married yet because of [me and my brother]. They have to live their own lives. They have done their best and helped us from the moment my mother died. I am the fruit of their hard work and will be happy to see them get married."*

Addisu is happy with his role in Afework's life:

*"I advised him when he was a child; but it is [Afework ] who advises me now. He seems older than his age. He has changed in many ways – he is even taller than me. It is no exaggeration to say that he is a role model even for those with parents. He is sociable. He is a model student. He helps others to study, and he asks other people if he doesn't understand anything. He helps little children from the neighbourhood to study twice a week. And through his association he helps disabled and helpless people. To have such a disciplined and clever student is a great satisfaction for the family. I am like his father and I am happy about this. There is a saying that 'even an uneducated mother can give birth to a president'. I feel I have done the same thing."*

Addisu is particularly proud of Afework because he too was an orphan, and he remembers how hard it was to be an adolescent boy:

*"When I was [Afework's] age, I had many problems. I worried about my identity – Who was I? My mind was full of such questions. I know it is a difficult age. There are children younger than [Afework] who spend their time doing bad things. So I don't want him be influenced by others. He should be in charge of himself. He should continue his education."*

Afework says he wants to go to university. He has always said that he wants to be an engineer or a football player, or if he does well enough in mathematics and physics, a pilot. But he says he "likes playing football very much" and this can distract him from his studies: "Sometimes I come late to class and am tired and so I argue with the teachers."

He would like to have a girlfriend one day but he says there are things he needs to do first:

*"You have to have your own income. When you finish your education, you get a job; when you decide to have a girlfriend you think about having children. You need to have your own life, your own house and a car before you start such a relationship."*

Addisu has high hopes for Afework. "After 20 years, I want him to be a good citizen who helps others. I wish him all the best in his life but he also has to work hard. The result of today's work is for tomorrow."

## Orphanhood

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Addisu and Bereket are not unusual in being brought up by a relative because they have lost their parents. In Ethiopia, around 18 per cent of households include at least one child who is an orphan. In the Young Lives study, around 21 per cent of the older children had lost one or both parents by the time they were 15, and among the younger group, aged 8, the figure was 10 per cent. More fathers than mothers had died, and fathers were also more likely to be absent or missing: 19 per cent of the Younger Cohort and 22 per cent of the Older Cohort had fathers who were not around.

What does it mean to be an orphan in Ethiopia? Young Lives found that losing a parent between the ages of 8 and 12, as Addisu and Bereket did, means that they are less likely to be enrolled in school and also affected children's scores in a literacy test. This then influences their chances of doing well in school. Losing a father means that families frequently face financial hardship.

Afework and Bereket are lucky to have such a caring father figure in Addisu, and to be supported by their older sister. With the Young Lives sample generally, children who have lost parents are most likely to be living with relatives: less than 2 per cent were living with non-relatives. This was likely to be the mother if the father had died, and vice versa, or a grandparent. Ethiopia's Demographic Health Surveys of 2000 and 2005 also show that 83 per cent of paternal orphans lived with their mothers, while 70 per cent of maternal orphans lived with their fathers, and 51 per cent of double orphans lived with a grandparent.

However, contrary to the assumption that orphanhood always negatively influences children's lives, Young Lives has found that inequalities in schooling and health outcomes are much more strongly related to location (rural or urban) and material circumstances than orphanhood. Many orphans, like Afework, benefit from programmes run by the Government or by NGOs, which, as Addisu points out, were not available when he was young and an orphan himself: "Today [things are] better because the Government helps children who have no parents in different ways and sometimes give them food to eat ... Now education is for all but at that time there was payment for school."

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**Sources:** Gina Crivello and Nardos Chuta (2012) 'Rethinking Orphanhood and Vulnerability in Ethiopia', *Development in Practice* 22.4: 536–548; Martin Woodhead et al. (2013) *What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives*, Young Lives Policy Paper.



# Hadush's story

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**Hadush lives in a rural area. His mother died when he was 7 and his father married again. He is the youngest of eight siblings. He is the only one in who has never been to school. As the youngest he was needed to look after the family cattle. He was proud that he did this well though he regrets not being able to read and write.**

Hadush is the only one still living at home with his father and stepmother. He thinks he is about 20 years old. Hadush's father says that his son has grown up a lot in the last three years:

*"In the past, he only looked after the livestock. Now that he has grown up, he can do anything. He can plough the land, harvest the crops, load the straw and do whatever he is told. He also helps with irrigation. He can do as much as me. Besides, you can see how tall he is. He is mature. He is almost a young man. He thinks about how he can help me, how he can make me feel happy. He thinks like an adult."*

Hadush's four older sisters all went to school and one is now at university. His three brothers also went to school but dropped out: one is now in the army.

When he was 15, the teachers asked his father to send Hadush to school and he tried it for a few days but then he left, feeling embarrassed that he did not know how to read or write. "They [my parents] sent me to school because they were afraid of the officials' warnings. My father didn't want to send me to school, because he is illiterate."

Hadush's father, however, tells a different story.

*"I told him to go but he refused. When the teachers came to ask me, I told them to talk to him not to me, because he didn't want to learn. Now he asks me why I didn't send him to school. But it wasn't me; it was Hadush who refused to go."*

Hadush's father says that if a literacy programme starts up he will allow Hadush to attend, but otherwise he needs his help in the fields.

*"To be frank, he is mature enough to work and I am at the stage where I need his help. His time to go to school is past ... All children go to school; that is why he regrets [not going]."*

Hadush says he now wishes that he could read, and would at least like to attend evening classes to learn business skills, but this is impossible as his village still has no electricity.

Otherwise he likes his life. The Government has introduced an irrigation scheme, which has improved the family's land and they grow maize or salad and onions to sell in the neighbouring village or the regional capital.

He gives most of the money he earns to his parents, but keeps some to play billiards with his friends: "I drink tea, watch TV with my friends, and buy my clothes and other necessities."

He has a good relationship with both his father and his stepmother and feels responsible for them now they are growing old: "They encourage me to work hard. They don't expect [anything] from me; they just want to see me work."

He says his father has taught him "how to spray pesticides, to use fertilizer and sow seeds". He enjoys farming: "I like everything; ploughing, sowing and taking care of the plants."

Hadush says the only hard times are when there isn't enough money. Young people especially "want to buy what they see in the market".

But he feels he has "good plans" for the future. He doesn't want to marry yet "because I have to be mature enough to lead a family". But he wants to "work hard and live like a better-off person ... expanding my farm and hiring more labourers ... I would like to be a rich man."

His father says the same thing:

*"I want him to be a rich man through doing some trade or being a hard-working farmer who leads his family well. I want him to be a good person with a smart mind. I hope he will acquire the skills to help himself and to help me as well."*

Asked where he wanted to be in five years, Hadush said: "It depends on God's will. I would like to get stones to be able to build my own house."

The interview with Hadush ended because he was in a hurry. He hadn't eaten any breakfast and was hungry.

## What about the boys?

Like Tufa and many of the other Older Cohort boys, Hadush is thinking about his future, and in particular about how he can earn enough money to get married and start a family. Both Hadush and Tufa dropped out of school to help their parents with agricultural work and now feel it is too late to go back and learn to read and write. They fear that this may limit their opportunities in life.

Many of the boys in the Older Cohort talk about getting married. A few have girlfriends. But most, like Hadush and Tufa, are clear that they need to have a steady income and, ideally, somewhere of their own to live before getting married or having children. The idea of the man as the provider of the family is still very strong – as Hadush’s father says, he wants his son to be a “rich man” and “lead his family well”.

These aspirations also mean that young men are likely to marry later than young women. They also lead to pressures on young men that may lead them to migrate, or to do paid work rather than study, or, where there is no work, to become unemployed. Some of the Young Lives caregivers are concerned that their boys might fall into bad company, leading to gambling, alcoholism and addictions. In Ethiopia, there is a term that expresses this fear – *adegenya bozene*, an Amharic phrase which translates literally as ‘dangerous individuals without work’.

The reality for the Young Lives Older Cohort is that roughly a third are still in full-time education, another third combining paid work and education and a third are in paid work and no longer at school. If this is broken down by gender, 37 per cent of boys and 18 per cent of girls are in paid work, while the proportion of those who are still at school full time or doing further or higher education is the exact opposite.

Of those who were in paid work, 65 per cent were self-employed, and 42 per cent were working in agriculture, like Hadush and Tufa, which meant they were likely to be working for their parents or doing casual day labour. Only 14 per cent earned a regular wage. In rural areas, this rose to two-thirds working in agriculture.

In rural areas like Hadush and Tufa’s, where poor families may no longer own land, young men may find it even harder to find a livelihood that enables them to start a family and ‘have enough stones’ to build their own houses.

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**Sources:** Gina Crivello and Nikki van der Gaag (2016, forthcoming) *Between Hope and a Hard Place: Boys and Young Men Negotiating Gender, Poverty and Social Worth in Ethiopia*, Young Lives Working Paper; Alula Pankhurst and Tassew Woldehanna (2014) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from Round 4 in Ethiopia*.



# Louam's story

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**Louam is the youngest of seven children, who have all been educated. A brother and sister are still at school; the others have left home to marry, study or work. Her parents are relatively well off, although bad harvests and the cost of weddings have seriously affected the family's finances at various times in Louam's life.**

At 13, Louam is a bright and lively child. She thinks her family's situation has improved since the last time Young Lives researchers visited, three years ago. They have had good harvests for the past two years and electricity has now come to the village, though they still don't have a proper road. She says that when her house first got electricity she got an electric shock: "My family was in the other room drinking coffee. I didn't know that touching it was dangerous."

Louam was desperate to go to school even before she was officially allowed and has always liked school. She says that although she helps with herding the family's cows, she has never missed a day. Her mother says: "I tell her to study. I tell her that education can change [her] life. You can only help others if you improve your own life."

Louam's mother says that neither she nor Louam's father had any formal education, which she regrets. She was married by the time she was 12. Later, they both attended adult education classes, where they learned to read a little, write, and sign their names. She says times have changed a lot since then and all her children have been educated, including the girls. "Boys used to be clever. Now the girls are catching up by studying."

She says that one of Louam's brothers is in Grade 6 with her because "he was expelled from school for a year because he quarrelled with another child. He should be in Grade 7." This pattern of boys leaving school, temporarily or permanently, because of a dispute, is one that is repeated for other Young Lives boys in Ethiopia. But Louam also has an older brother who is now at university.

Louam's favourite subjects are Amharic and social sciences. She says she likes her English teacher but struggles with mathematics "because it is very difficult and I don't understand it". She doesn't like her science teacher: "All he does is ask about our ethnic background and who our families are; he doesn't teach us well. And he spansks us."

There are other things she doesn't like about her school:

*"There are no materials like footballs, or a handball net. There are not enough teachers. For example, in other schools one teacher teaches one subject even in Grade 4, but here one teacher teaches all the subjects for one class. [Teachers] are not knowledgeable. When we ask them questions, they tell us to work at home, and they get tired."*

She would like the school to have its own income so that it can buy all the educational equipment that it needs. She says her school is not in good condition compared with other schools: "I want our school to look beautiful and nice, [with] flowers and trees."

During the break she plays football with her girlfriends, using a football they made themselves from bits of material.

At the interview she had a long scratch on her face and says that she got into a fight with another girl at school: "I have two friends who are relatives. While we were playing, one of them told the other one that I insulted her, but I didn't. Then the other girl came over and we fought." She says they have still not made it up.

Asked what makes her sad and what makes her happy, Louam says she doesn't like the rainy season: "Because it is muddy and it rains [and I have to] stay outside when I am herding; especially if there are no other children there and I am alone." She said that last year it even snowed. Also her married sister lost a baby in childbirth, which was very sad for everyone.

What makes her happy is having the same things as her friends, and when her older sister and brother came home for a visit.

As well as her individual interview, Louam took part in a group discussion with three other girls, who all said they believed that girls faced more problems than boys. Boys their age may be injured or beaten up, they said, but girls face rape, being kidnapped to work as housemaids, or being beaten up by boys.

Louam thinks she has grown up in the past two years. She says she has grown physically but also worries that her skin has become darker because she goes outside in cold weather.

Louam's mother says:

*"She has grown. She has become mature. She is keen to go to school. She says that she is improving in maths, English, Amharic, and music. She herds the cows. She prepares coffee. She studies in the evenings. If you study well, you can improve. I want [my children] to reach a better place through their education. If they [do] they can support me. Uneducated people are not valued. Educated people have opportunities everywhere."*

Asked about her hopes for the future, Louam's mother says:

*"We hope our children will learn and change their lives. Louam says she wants to finish school, go to university and train to become a nurse. She knows a girl whose brother is a nurse and she wants to be like him."*

## Aspirations

Louam's mother's belief that her children "will reach a better place through their education" is one that Young Lives has found repeated by many parents, especially those who have had no education themselves. Many families have made sacrifices in order to send their children, girls as well as boys, to school and even on to university, like Louam's brother, in the belief that this will mean the next generation have a better life.

Children and young people also believe that education will mean they have a better life than their parents – and that they will be more able to help their parents in their old age. At the age of 15, about 94 per cent of Young Lives Older Cohort in Ethiopia agreed with the statement: ‘If I study hard at school, I will be rewarded with a better job in the future.’

The increase in the number of children going to school has been made possible because the Ethiopian Government has expanded formal education, particularly at primary level.

Young Lives caregivers and children have aspirations far beyond this. At the ages of 12 and 15, children were asked: ‘If you could study as long you would like, what level of formal education would you like to complete?’ The table below shows that a large majority of children said at both ages that they wanted to go to university. There is a marked difference between urban and rural children, and also a difference between girls and boys, though the latter is less strong than the differences by location.

**If you could study as long you would like, what level of formal education would you like to complete?**

	Aspiration at age 12				Aspiration at 15			
	Urban	Rural	Boys	Girls	Urban	Rural	Boys	Girls
%								
Some primary	1.1	2	2.3	0.6	1.1	6.1	4.4	4
Some secondary	2.5	7.9	5.1	6.4	1.8	7.4	4.5	5.9
Grade 12 complete	11.5	22.7	15.4	20.8	5.1	18.2	8.5	17.1
Vocational training	4.2	4.8	3.6	5.5	3.3	4.2	4.1	3.6
University	80.6	62.6	73.6	66.7	88.2	64.1	78	69.5

Looking at all four countries, however, Young Lives has found that in Ethiopia and India, girls have lower expectations than boys, while in Peru and Vietnam, the opposite is true. India is the only place where caregivers have lower aspirations for their daughters than their sons at the age of 12, and by the age of 15, girls have lower ambitions for themselves.

In Ethiopia, the most common reason for girls to drop out of school was to look after their siblings; the second most common was that the costs of schooling (for example, uniforms and school materials) were considered to be too high, a reason that was much more often given for girls than for boys.

In Ethiopia, at the age of 19, almost 60 per cent of the Older Cohort were still in education, although one in ten had left school with only lower primary education (or less) and many were combining work with school or higher education. Boys, and young people in rural areas, from certain regions, or from marginalised households were most likely to have left school.

**Sources:** Yisak Tafere (2015) ‘Educational Aspirations of Students in Developing World: Evidence from Ethiopia’, *Aspirations in Action*, Winter 2015; Gina Crivello and Emma Feeny (2015) *How Gender Shapes Adolescence: Diverging Paths and Opportunities*, Young Lives Policy Brief 22.



# Tufa's story

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**Tufa's family lives in a rural area and is poor. His has eight siblings, the latest a baby girl. He dropped out of school the first time at 10 because the family home burned down, and the second time when his father was sent to prison. Now he helps his father to farm, and earns some money working on an irrigation project and fishing. Although he has grown up a lot, life is still not easy. But he has a secret...**

Now that Tufa is now 20, the Young Lives researcher feels he has grown up a lot:

*"There is a big change in his personality and maturity. The way he has his hair cut and the neatness of his clothes are clear indications that he has grown up. In the past, he came dressed in dirty and shabby clothes and barefoot. This time, he was wearing jeans and a beautiful shirt."*

His father too, says he sees the improvement in his son:

*"When he was a child, he didn't always behave well. But he has grown up. We think he will be better than the rest of us. He has a bright future as he is now able to work. He is doing well."*

Although his parents have both had typhoid in the last few years, Tufa says that otherwise things are much better at home. His elder brother has got married, and his parents have just had another baby, a little girl.

Tufa's father, however, says that for the past two years, the rain has flooded their farm and all the crops were wiped out. To cope with this, he had to share-crop part of his land and rent out the rest. Tufa's income really helped the family during this time.

Tufa is sad about the death of his grandfather, whom he was very fond of: "We all miss him. He treated us all equally. I used to spend my time with him. He visited us in the evenings. How terrible it is to miss someone after they die! I can't forget him."

Tufa now lives for some of the time with his grandmother, to help her out, and for the rest with either his parents or his uncle.

Tufa's father is worried about one of Tufa's sisters. Two of his daughters have gone to live with his brother because both he and his wife work long hours. The younger girl had mental health issues, which seem to have worsened since she left home. She had already left school and fought with her parents and often used to stay with her aunts. But after she went to her uncle's, which is quite far away, she became very ill and was sent to a convent "to get help from spiritual persons". Tufa's parents are worried but have not been well enough to visit. Another relative was sent to visit her and reported: "Her hands and legs are tied together as her illness is serious."

Tufa doesn't mention this; perhaps he doesn't know.

He does, however, tell us something that his parents don't know about: that he has a girlfriend. She is about 15, lives with her grandmother and is still at school. Tufa says that they plan to marry one day, when he can afford it: "She asked me at the very beginning whether I want to marry her. I said yes. If I wasn't willing to marry her, we shouldn't start a relationship."

They meet secretly in a friend's house, where they can stay overnight. Tufa says they use condoms. He knows that his parents would think he was too young to marry and have a relationship but it makes him happy. He says they will not marry for a few years, until he has enough money to build a house.

It has been seven years since Tufa stopped going to school and most of his peers are now in Grade 9. Tufa says when he did go to school he learned to read a little but not to write. He recognises the value of education, however, even for irrigation work: "If you learn, mathematics or arithmetic, [it is useful] for your work."

But if he went to school or even to night school, he would have to learn with children much younger than him, which he would find difficult. He says: "I regret leaving school. If I was educated, I would be happy. [But] now I want to work on irrigation."

His father never went to school at all, but says:

*"We understand the value of educating our children. In today's world, an educated person is better than an uneducated one. For example, if there is an opportunity, he may not be selected because he has no education. There is a clear difference between an educated and illiterate person. Education would have helped him and helped us."*

On the other hand, "it is not easy to send children to school, because we are poor. Our family is growing. Children have to eat and wear clothes, and they need things to go to school."

Tufa says his parents told him how borrowing money had a negative effect on their life and how they want him to do better than them: "My parents encouraged me to work hard and to attend to my education properly in order to escape the problems they have encountered."

His father says: "Now he is getting an income and helping himself. For example, he can buy his own clothes. Though he may not change them as frequently as children in rich families, he can work independently and earn a living."

Tufa had wanted to get a loan but was unable to get an ID card. Instead, he and his friends borrow from one another. He tried to join a youth work cooperative (transporting onions) but was told that he was too old. So as well as doing unpaid work on the family's land, growing onions and cabbages, Tufa works on an irrigated farm, guarding the pumps, and he also fishes. This gives him enough money to help his parents and family and spend some on himself. Tufa says his uncle is his role model as he went from nothing to become a successful farmer: "Now he has bought land and has a job. I want to be like that."

Tufa's father says:

*"We cannot interfere with what God has planned for him. Since we were not lucky, we have been working on the land. We do not want him to be like us. As parents, we just wish him all the best. If he is lucky he may do better things. But we cannot know what he will do in future."*

## 'Shocks' and children's agency

Tufa's family is poor, and this means that adverse weather conditions, illness, death and accidents have had a major effect on his family's well-being and income.

These kinds of 'shocks' can be environmental – for example, drought or too much rain, frost and storms, or pests and diseases that affect the crops or livestock. They can be economic – for example, increases in the prices of basic goods or food, the loss of a job or income, or the death of livestock. Or they can be those that affect the family – for example, the death or illness of a family member, divorce or separation, or imprisonment.

These shocks tend to have the largest effects on poorer households, who have the fewest resources to deal with them. For example, at the height of the economic crisis in 2009, 88 per cent of the Younger Cohort in Ethiopia lived in families that had been affected by the huge rises in the price of basic foodstuffs.

More than half the Young Lives households have experienced serious illness or death in the family, and many, like Tufa's family, have experienced multiple shocks. Tufa had a sister who died of malaria when he was quite small, his father has been in prison, their house burned down when he was 11, and crop failure meant they had to sell most of their land to make ends meet and are constantly in debt. One consequence for him, as for many other Young Lives children, is that he never completed his education, something he now regrets, saying: "I have left school and it is not going to be possible to achieve my childhood ambitions." At 13, Tufa had said he wanted to be a teacher.

Shocks are experienced differently by children than they are by adults, and they have different consequences. For example, as in Tufa's case, children may have to leave school to help at home with herding cattle. When Teje's father became ill, she said that although she continued to go to school, she could only afford one exercise book for all her work, and that she was short of clothes, which made her lonely because she was embarrassed to play with her friends.

But Young Lives has also seen that children are not just passive recipients of these negative experiences; they often show considerable resilience and play an active role in helping their families to manage the impact of these shocks, often by taking on paid work. In this way they feel they can support their families, which may give them new confidence.

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**Sources:** Nardos Chuta (2014) *Children's Agency in Responding to Shocks and Adverse Events in Ethiopia*, Young Lives Working Paper 128; Emma Feeny and Caroline Knowles (2015) *Children of the Millennium: Growing Up with the MDGs*.



# Seble's story

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**Seble is an outspoken young woman. Despite her and her mother saying that it is important for girls to be educated, Seble was married at 15. She is now 20. She seems happy and well. She has moved to the next village with her husband but says that she still visits her mother every two weeks and talks to her on her brother's mobile phone.**

Last time the Young Lives interviewer came she asked Seble: "What will we find when we come in three years' time?" She answered: "You will find me with a baby."

Her prediction has come true. She now has a 2-year-old daughter, whom she clearly adores. "I spend most of my time with her. I prepare her food. I give her a bath every day. I am happy because I have a child."

Seble's mother thinks that having a child has made Seble grow up:

*"She has changed. She is now a mother and she has matured. She takes care of me too. She often calls me. She says she now realises how much I suffered to raise them [Seble and her siblings]. She has become a responsible mother. She loves her child more than anything else. One day I had my granddaughter to stay for the night. The next day Seble came and took her child back. She said she couldn't bear to be away from her, even for a single night. She takes care of her child better than I did of my children."*

However, she also says: "Mothers usually consider their daughter to be young even when they become mothers themselves. I am like that too. I think [Seble's] golden time is still to come."

Despite her joy at being a mother, Seble says that the pregnancy was not planned and that she would have preferred to wait. However, she was using a three-monthly injection for birth control:

*"My husband and I went to my in-laws. Before I left home, I had the injection but we stayed with my in-laws for eight months and so I got pregnant. I didn't want it to happen. But there was nothing I could do. He [my husband] told me that we would be back home after three months."*

She says she and her husband would like one more child, preferably a boy, but not for a couple of years. When Seble was first married, she says she was lonely, but she managed to keep in secret contact with her mother. Because she was so young and it was an 'abduction' (see box), she had not been prepared for marriage but had to learn "how to give priority to my husband. For example, I used to make coffee with salt, but my husband drinks coffee with sugar. So now I make coffee how he likes it." She also says that although she sees some of her old friends from time to time, once a girl or woman is married,

*"it is not possible for her to meet people like she used to. Because she has a husband and she is in a marriage, she is not free to meet anyone at any time. I never wander around like I used to when I was young and single. I just stay at home and wait for him."*

She thinks it would benefit them both if she had paid work, and illustrates this with the story of the time her husband was injured in a fight and couldn't work for a month. This meant they were short of money for food and couldn't pay the rent. Her parents had to help them out.

Seble's mother says that when her cow died recently they were short of milk, which meant drinking black coffee. "Traditionally milk is an integral part of our food. But I only had milk then when I visited my parents or relatives." Both stories show how something like illness or the death of a cow can have an impact on lives that are already close to the breadline, and how the support of relatives can make the difference between having enough to eat and going hungry.

Seble says she can write her name but she dropped out of school in Grade 2. Most of her female friends also dropped out, she says, and all her siblings too, although one continued until Grade 10.

Seble's mother has always been clear that education is important for girls. She still says:

*"If she had continued with her education she would have benefited. Her husband went to school up to Grade 9. I believe that educating a girl is preferable [to educating a boy] because girls or women can find jobs. For instance, my eldest son's wife works in a local business because she is educated. Seble could have done the same thing. But because she is not educated she can't do that. Education has lots of advantages."*

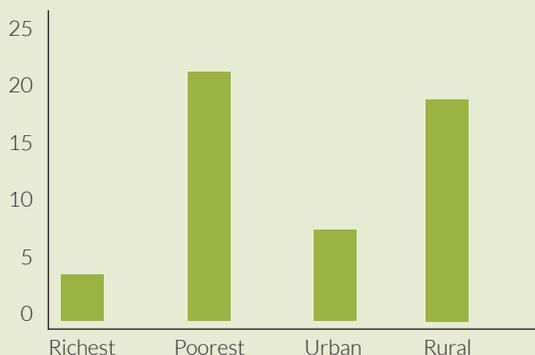
Seble says: "I plan to go back to school next year if [my husband] allows it." She says she also wants to work: "I want to create my own job. For example, my husband promised me that I could open a shop. I don't want to stay at home and rely entirely on him."

Seble's mother says: "Whatever has happened, I feel good now. We pray for them to live safely and peacefully."

## Early marriage and FGM

Although 18 is the legal minimum age for marriage in Ethiopia, many girls are married before they are 15, and the median age is 16. Among the Young Lives sample, 13 per cent of the girls are married by age 19 compared to only 0.6 per cent of the boys. Early marriage is most common for women in rural areas and in poorer households. Seble comes from Oromiya, a rural area where the largest percentage of girls (24 per cent) are married by this age, compared with only 3 per cent of girls in Addis Ababa.

### Young Lives girls married by the age of 19, by location and poverty level (%)



In some parts of Ethiopia, there is still a tradition of what is known as ‘voluntary abduction’, where a young woman or a girl is kidnapped by her husband-to-be. Seble explains that she was married in this way:

*“My husband was working in our neighbourhood. My siblings were working with him. Every day I brought my siblings lunch. He was watching me. His sister was living nearby. One day his sister invited me over and introduced me to her brother. That was how we came to know each other. I refused [his offer of marriage] in the beginning. I told him that I wanted to continue with my education.”*

She says she resisted for nearly a year but then he came with his friends and took her to their village. She says she was too afraid to resist, but that she still thinks girls should not get married at 15: “It is not good. At the age of 15, we don’t know enough. It may create complexities during labour and delivery. So, it is better to be a bit older.”

Seble is not alone in her belief that early marriage is “not good”. The practice is declining nationally. A combination of legislation, enforced in some cases by fines and, occasionally, imprisonment, has helped. The decline is also due to the rapidly changing social and economic environment. Young people have greater access to education and to radio, satellite TV and mobile phones, which means they can find out about the world and question prevailing norms.

As long as people are poor, early marriage may continue to be seen as the rational option by many parents, who feel that girls have few other choices. Marriage is seen as a way of protecting their daughters from pre-marital sex and the stigma of pregnancy while unmarried, as well as making family alliances and providing financial support through bride wealth payments, which can enable them to marry off their sons. Parents also know they may not live long and they want to see their daughters settled before they die.

Another practice that continues despite being illegal in Ethiopia is female genital mutilation (FGM). Seble tells the Young Lives interviewer that in 2009, when she was 12, she was “circumcised”, as she calls it. She explains: “Many girls in my village thought circumcision was fashionable. A number were circumcised. They were working as daily labourers and decided to invite the local circumciser.” She says it was not in order to get married but “to avoid the insults. For example, people have the attitude that if a girl is not circumcised, she may become undisciplined after marriage.”

Many of the campaigns against early marriage and FGM focus on girls themselves, and girls’ education and empowerment are clearly vital. But marriage may seem like a reasonable option if they have few others. So ensuring that they have opportunities for livelihoods is also essential, as is working with the communities in which they live, including their fathers, brothers, uncles and future husbands and religious leaders.

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**Sources:** Alula Pankhurst (2014) *Child Marriage and Female Circumcision: Evidence from Ethiopia*, Young Lives Policy Brief 21; Kirrily Pells (2014) ‘Beyond Zero Tolerance of FGM: Transforming Traditional Practices’, Young Lives blog, 6 February 2014; Alula Pankhurst and Tassew Woldehanna (2014) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from Round 4 in Ethiopia*, Round 4 Factsheet.



# Teje's story

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**Teje has three sisters and a brother. Her father suffers from diabetes and other illnesses, and cannot walk, so Teje's mother has been the main breadwinner for the family for a number of years. But Teje is still determined to stay in school and go to university.**

Teje is a lively and mature 13-year-old. Her mother is proud of her: "She talks and behaves like a grown-up. She is different from her friends although she is younger than them. She is good at school. She studies and does her homework. I am very pleased with her."

Teje, too, thinks she has grown up: "My thinking has improved and I am able to explain things better. In the past, I thought slowly. I was not critical. Now I am. I respond quickly to things. I am good at establishing relationships with other people."

Life is not easy for her mother, who works in the university café. She has to look after her husband, do her job and take care of the family. She says she is tired all the time and sometimes does not have enough money to put food on the table. Last year, Teje says, her parents quarrelled and her mother left for about two weeks. But she came back.

Teje's older sister recently went to the Middle East to work as a domestic worker, just before the Government brought in a law prohibiting such migration. She now sends money back to the family, which has allowed them to buy some new things for the household, including a sofa.

With the departure of her sister, Teje's tasks at home have increased:

*"I have started to clean the house. I fetch water. I can make wot [stew]. I wash my clothes. I care for my younger brother and my father. I wash my brother's clothes and bath him. I give my father food, so that he can take his medicine."*

She adds: "I love my father and he loves me."

Teje is in Grade 6 in the government school. Of the four girls her age in the Young Lives discussion group, she is the only one in this grade. Two are in Grade 5 and one is in Grade 3. She is also clearly the most outspoken of the group.

Teje says she has not repeated a year or dropped out of school, although she has an ongoing ear problem that causes her a lot of pain from time to time. She says she likes her school because "different teachers teach different subjects". She believes she actively participates in class and has a good relationship with her teachers. "Teachers are keen to help the students. The school protects students' rights and listens to them."

Teje says she enjoys football, where she plays midfield. She is part of the sports club.

*"We contribute money to play against other clubs in other schools. Once we had a big match against another girls' club. I played in defence. We won, and we were so happy. I defended well and contributed to our success."*

She says there is one big problem in school and that is the shortage of water, both for drinking and for the toilets.

She explains that she tries to work with students who have “bad behaviour” or are orphans:

*“There are many orphans or children who have lost one parent in the school. We collect money to support them. We put the money in a gift box, to buy them food and clothes during the holidays. If I get the chance to become head girl, I will organise these things and help these students to improve their education.”*

She believes firmly in the power of education:

*“Education helps people move out of illiteracy. Sometimes, uneducated people do not prioritise their children's health. People may be exposed to HIV/AIDS because of a lack of awareness about how the disease is transmitted from one person to another. I want to educate people to take care of their health.”*

She says she has learned about this and many other things in sessions on children's rights at school:

*“Health professionals come from other organisations and teach us about child health, children's rights, family planning, HIV/AIDS, and that sort of thing. Sometimes our teachers also teach us about these things. They read from a book and ask students to repeat all the ideas. Those who do this well are given the book. So students are keen to listen.”*

Teje thinks her community has improved in recent years:

*“Young people without work are being organised into small-scale enterprises and have started businesses. Housing is improving. Roads are being built. People's income is increasing. In the past, it was only men who generated income but now women are actively involved, which means that household income has increased.”*

She also thinks that the area has become safer for children, especially girls:

*“Young men don't harass girls. They protect them. In addition, the community cooperates to protect girls' rights. They report [any problems] to the police. The police presence in the area has contributed to the reduction of rape and other kinds of crimes.”*

Teje says she may move in with her grandfather, who needs someone to help him. But whatever happens, she will continue with her education. She tells us about her other hopes and plans for the future:

*“I believe that in the future I will no longer be poor. I will use family planning and have fewer children [than my parents]. My parents have five children, which may be a reason why we are poor. I want to continue my education to university.”*

Her mother also wants Teje to go to university: “If she does a bachelor's degree and then gets her master's degree and if she learns everything, I will be happy. If she becomes a doctor or an engineer, I will be happy.”

## Progress in education

All four Young Lives study countries have made good progress in school enrolment, particularly at primary level, but this masks inequalities between children in different locations and from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as between boys and girls.

### Children aged 12 in primary school, 2013

- In Ethiopia, 95 per cent of the Younger Cohort children were enrolled in school in 2013, though this fell to 92 per cent in rural areas. All the children whose parents had been to school up to Grade 8 were still at school, but only 92 per cent of children whose parents had received little or no education. However, 52 per cent of the 12-year-olds were over-age for their grade and 15 per cent of the 19-year-olds who were enrolled were still in upper primary school. Part of the problem is that children in Ethiopia start school at age 8 or later, but it is also due to the poor quality of the education they receive.
- In Peru, 99 per cent of the Younger Cohort were enrolled in school – but almost a third were over-age for the grade they were in.
- In India, 97 per cent of the Younger Cohort were enrolled in school. This was up from 89 per cent of the Older Cohort when they were aged 12 in 2006. The increase was particularly significant for girls and children from the Scheduled Castes.
- In Vietnam, most of the Younger Cohort children completed primary school and entered lower secondary school, regardless of socio-economic background. However, 13 per cent of children whose mothers had little education had already left school by the aged 12.

### Levels of learning

In Ethiopia, and India levels of learning appear to be falling, judging by the test results of the two Young Lives cohorts. In Ethiopia in 2013, fewer 12-year-old children were able to answer the same maths questions correctly than 12-year-olds in 2006. In India, a comparison of scores in maths tests showed that that learning levels had also declined by 14 percentage points for 12-year-olds in 2013 compared with the scores achieved by children aged 12 in 2006.

In Peru and Vietnam, however, children's achievement is continuing to improve. In Peru, the Younger Cohort children had a larger vocabulary at the age of 12 than the Older Cohort at the same age, by almost 4 percentage points, although children from disadvantaged groups still did significantly worse than children from better-off families. In Vietnam, the gap between children from ethnic minority groups and those from the Kinh ethnic majority in maths tests is narrowing. Increasing numbers of children, as we see from the children in this book, are taking extra classes, but this is very dependent on family income: 86 per cent of children from better-off families compared with 38 per cent from the poorest ones.

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**Source:** Round 4 Preliminary Findings on Education and Learning.



# Country Context: India

India is home to 1.2 billion people, of whom 30 per cent are children. The country is fast becoming an economic superpower, predicted to become the world's third-largest economy by 2035. Life expectancy has more than doubled, literacy rates have quadrupled, and health conditions have improved. But huge disparities remain.

The caste system still affects everyday life, despite quota systems for those whom the Government calls Scheduled Castes (otherwise known as *Dalits* or formerly 'Untouchables') and Scheduled Tribes (otherwise known as *adivasis*, India's indigenous peoples). More than 400 million people still live in poverty. And many of those who have recently escaped poverty are still highly vulnerable to falling back into it. Maternal and child mortality rates remain very high and millions of children are malnourished. While most children now go to primary school, the quality of education remains low. At secondary level, many school leavers do not have the knowledge and skills to compete in labour markets.

India will soon have the largest and youngest workforce the world has ever seen. At the same time, the country is in the midst of a massive wave of urbanisation, as some 10 million people, most of them young people, move to towns and cities each year in search of jobs and opportunity. Massive investments will be needed to create the jobs, housing, and infrastructure.\*

Young Lives children come from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in south-western India.

**Salman** lives in Polur, a densely populated slum area in Hyderabad. Most of his community are Muslims and work as drivers, small shopkeepers, domestic helpers, shop assistants or construction workers.

**Ravi** lives in Katur, a poor, drought-prone rural area in the Rayalaseema region, affected by Naxalite (communist guerrilla) movements. People mostly work in agriculture, growing sunflowers, groundnut, lentils and peas, as well as rearing livestock. **Harika,**

**Sarada** and **Shanmuka Priya** live in Poompuhar, a very poor community of around 2,000 people in southern Telangana. The majority are Hindu and

from other Backward Classes or Scheduled Castes.\*\*

**Deepak** lives in Manipur, in a coastal region with a population of around 5,000. Agriculture, horticulture and non-timber products are the prime sources of income.

In urban areas like Polur, although many people are poor, there is good access to health and education services. Polur has eight schools – a mixture of private and government – and one pre-school. In 2007 there was stagnant water and litter lying in the streets, but by 2014 these were much cleaner and rubbish was being cleared away regularly.

Katur often suffers from shortages of water in the summer. The nearest town is around ten kilometres away and can be reached by bus. In 2008, new houses were built as a result of a loan facility provided by a government housing scheme and by 2014, a new cement road had also been built. There are two pre-schools and two primary schools. The nearest secondary school is around three kilometres away.

Poompuhar has access to most services, including a health centre and veterinary services. There are two pre-schools and primary and secondary school facilities up to Grade 10 (the end of secondary school). In 2014, new cement roads and a railway track enabled people to commute to nearby towns and cities. Many adults migrate for seasonal work, leaving children behind, often on their own. An irrigation canal has also been completed, though not all farmers have access. There is a new bore hole, and new houses built under a government scheme – although the poorest part of the community benefits the least.

Manipur has access to basic services such as the internet, roads, drinking water, electricity, government and private schools, and pre-schools. There is a government-run primary health centre and a pharmacy, but people also access private healthcare. In 2010, almost all the households reported illnesses affecting more than one member of the family. The community is often affected by cyclones, as well as pollution from garbage, animal excrement, vehicles and open drains.

\* <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview>

\*\* Other Backward Class (OBC) is a collective term used to classify castes which are socially and educationally disadvantaged. It is one of several official classifications of the population of India, along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



# Deepak's story

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**Deepak belongs to one of India's indigenous groups, known as *adivasi* or Scheduled Tribes. He lives in a remote rural area with his father, stepmother and three siblings. His mother died in childbirth. The family are poor and life is not easy for them. Deepak is now boarding in a hostel so that he can go to school in another village, but he is struggling.**

Deepak is now 13. He says very little and answers the interviewer mostly by saying "Yes" or "No" or "Nothing". Life has been hard for his family in the past three years. His stepmother says there was a cyclone, which caused many trees to come down and one destroyed the family's small hut. They now live in a bamboo house belonging to her brother. They are trying to build a new home with money given by the Government, but do not have enough money to finish it: "The walls are not plastered ... there is no floor or door frames or doors ... it is difficult."

The family gets free rice from the Public Distribution System. Three years ago, when they had a little money, they bought two acres of land and planted 70 mango trees and a turmeric crop. But 30 of the trees died and though the Government replaced them, the family no longer have the land.

Deepak's stepmother is a member of a self-help group and has taken out four loans. She bought four goats but one has died.

On top of this, Deepak's younger brother has been ill with scabies, and has also had typhoid and malaria. His father has also had malaria and typhoid. His stepmother worries about how to find enough money to feed her family and keep them healthy, especially when his father, who is the only wage-earner, is sick. His father has also had mental health problems recently and sometimes gets drunk and beats his wife and the children.

Deepak's stepmother says that for the last four months, since his father has not been earning, things have been particularly difficult, especially with his younger brother's illness.

Her own brother gave her money to get medicines. Without his financial support, she says, the family would be in even more difficulty: "Where would we be, if my brother had not helped? ... our salaries have not come for four months. We buy vegetables and other things ... on loan."

One of her stepdaughters lives with her brother:

*"They have raised her since she was little ... We are destitute ... so they have taken her. She comes home, but she goes back after she has eaten ... We might buy some clothes for her during festivals ... but they take care of her ... they are well off ... both my elder and younger brothers. What is there in our house? It is just enough to take care of the children."*

Deepak boards at a hostel in another village. He is now in Grade 8 at school. He says he has moved to a new school hostel, which he prefers to the old one because it is bigger and they have sleeping benches and good bathrooms and provide clothes and food. The warden in the old hostel beat the children, he says, while the one in the new hostel does not. Other children from his village also go to the school. He says he finds many subjects difficult, though he likes his teachers. He likes playing cricket.

He says his younger brother is also at the school and his sister is in a girls' hostel. One little brother is still at home.

Deepak says that he often goes home from school, travelling by bus and then tractor. What he doesn't say is that because he doesn't get permission from his teacher, his parents have to pay a fine each time. His stepmother is really worried about his absenteeism: "[He] is creating trouble not going to school ... when we ask him to go, he says, 'I won't'... the school tells us off."

Deepak says he has come back to see if his brother is better, but his stepmother says that he has been skipping school since Grade 6. It was better in Grade 7, she says, but now in Grade 8: "He is creating trouble again ... If he stays at home, how can we feel happy? ... when all the other children are going to school?"

She would like him to stay in education for as long as possible:

*"If he is educated at least up to Grade 10 ... [he] will have the capacity to earn some rupees. ... if he joins a private company, if he gets some 5,000 or 6,000 rupees [about 75 or 90 US dollars], he will survive ... If we can afford it, it would be better to educate him up to degree level ... or even B.Ed [teaching qualification]."*

She says everyone tells Deepak about the importance of education: "Our neighbours ... my brother's children, my brothers-in-law say: 'We are all educated ... see how nice we are. If you study, you would also be nice.' He won't answer ... what will we do with a boy who is not studying?"

She says she doesn't like to scold or beat him because people will say it is because she is not his real mother. But she is clearly worried about him. When he does come home, she says, he doesn't help around the house but just hangs about. And they can't afford to feed him as well as he is fed in the hostel. She wonders if he is running away because he doesn't understand what he is taught. She says he won't tell them anything. She is concerned that if he doesn't stay on at school he will be as poor as his parents when he grows up: "We experience all these troubles because we don't have money ... we don't want our children to suffer like us ... they have to study ... that is our feeling."

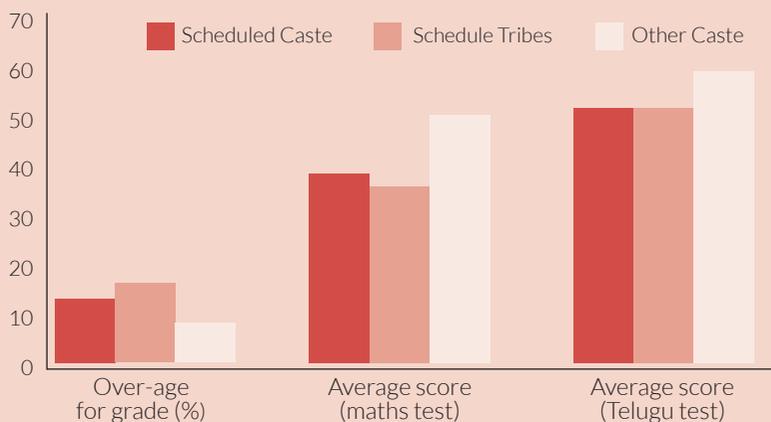
## Scheduled Castes and Tribes

The caste system, which dates back thousands of years, is still very important in Indian society. Despite the fact that discrimination on the grounds of caste is now illegal, and a number of measures have been in place for some time now to improve the lives of those considered most disadvantaged, the country's 'Scheduled Castes' (otherwise known as *Dalits* or, formerly, 'Untouchables') and 'Scheduled Tribes' (otherwise known as *adivasis* or indigenous peoples), still fare worst on all measures of well-being.

Deepak's family come from an adivasi tribe, and are very poor. They have suffered from a number of different 'shocks', such as bad weather, crop failure, illness and maternal death.

Young Lives has found that children from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes still do significantly less well than other children, whether this is in maths and Telugu tests, attendance at private school, or being over-age for their grade.

### Schooling and learning outcomes of 12-year-olds in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2013



However, some things are improving. Between 2006 and 2013, the enrolment in school of Dalit children in the Young Lives cohorts at the age of 12 rose from 85 per cent to 97 per cent, while *adivasi* children's enrolment rose from 82 per cent to 96 per cent, meaning that they had almost caught up with other children, 98 per cent of whom were enrolled at the age of 12 in 2013.

**Source:** S. Galab, P Prudhvikar Reddy and Renu Singh (2014) *Education and Learning: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in India*.



# Salman's story

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**Salman is a young man from a Muslim family who live in an urban area. He has two sisters and three brothers. His father died of a heart attack when he was 6. His mother used to be a domestic worker but is now unwell, and they have been forced to move six times in the last four years, the last time only a month ago. Salman left school in Grade 1. At the moment he is unable to find work, which is creating stress for him and his family. But he has four uncles who all work abroad and now he has a new plan...**

Salman is 19. He says that in the last four years he has “seen both good things and bad things. The good things were going to work, my home, and [the fact that] my family members were happy.” Good things also included his elder sister’s marriage to a tailor and the birth of their baby four years ago. But the situation at home is difficult. Salman says rents have gone up because new families from Bihar have come and settled in the area and are able to pay a higher price than the locals. A room now costs 2,000 rupees (about 30 US dollars).

For two years Salman hasn’t been able to find any work, so he has been “just roaming around with lots of tension”. He used to hang around with his friends and often stay with them because he and his family were not getting on well. “They would say, ‘Leave the house, take your clothes and go. Don’t come back.’ I stayed at my friend’s house.”

He says he has tried very hard to find work; he knows he needs to earn money.

*“In life, we have both good days and bad days. When we get up in the morning, we need 100 rupees in our pocket and when we sleep and get up again, 100 rupees should be there again. We have to think about that. What should I do with my family? There is lots of tension. If you think for today and do not think for tomorrow then it is a waste.”*

He says some of his friends have work – one owns an ice cream company, one has a clothes shop, one is a butcher and one works with cars. He and his friends hang out, smoke cigarettes and go around on their motorbikes.

His mother says:

*“I used to scold him, beat him, and I asked him to leave the house, to frighten him. I would say that as his father was not there, he had to work hard and become good. I would say: ‘Your mother has been working since she was young and when she gets old and her hands and legs don’t work, then what will you eat? You have to grow up, work hard and stand on your own two feet. We weren’t able to educate you [but] I have worked hard for your sake and now you are grown, it’s your responsibility to look after me.’”*

Salman says: “When I’m with my family I feel tense and when I’m with friends I am free and happy, even if I don’t have anything in my pocket.” He says: “I like having some time with friends and some with family. It is not like I have to be happy always. Humans need some tension. It is good for our health.”

He was worried because his sister was being beaten by her husband, encouraged, says Salman's mother, by her sister-in-law. "My son-in-law and his relatives harassed the girl a lot. They used to stop her eating. I started asking: 'Why should I leave my child [with you]? Did you marry her to beat her?'" She says that the couple has now left his family's house and he hasn't beaten her since.

For the last six months Salman has been driving a bus, taking children to school and students to college.

*"I go at 6am and by 9am I am free to come back home and sleep. At midday I take the college students. After dropping them off, I take the bus to school. When school is over, at 3.30pm, I take students and drop them off by 4.30pm. After that I'm free. I get 8,000 rupees [about 120 US dollars]. I keep some of this because I have to pay money for the vehicle. If I [borrowed] money from others on earlier occasions, I pay it back ... because I don't want to have debts. I give my mother 2,000 to 5,000 rupees [30 to 75 US dollars] and keep the rest for myself."*

Now his uncle in Saudi Arabia has found him work as a bus driver there. He has a passport and is waiting for his papers and hopes to leave in the next two months. His girlfriend went to Dubai a year ago as a domestic worker and he hopes to be able to pay her a surprise visit. "She went to Dubai. I have a photo of her but I don't have her number; my friend's phone has her number. We talk, on WhatsApp, Viber or Facebook."

He says that when he thinks back on his life it makes him feel like crying:

*"That life should come again. Earlier we were small but now we are grown up [and] we don't even have time to earn, [so] how can we play cricket? Now we are grown up, our minds are set on money. In childhood we don't know anything. There are no tensions, nothing to do except play. Then by the age of 10 we have to study and learn, [and] at 15 years, we have to leave our studies and find a job. While working on the job we must think about getting married. If I look back on the past, I get tears in my eyes."*

*"In bachelor life I have seen a lot. I have seen good and bad: giving support to a friend in a bad situation, telling him not to do bad things and to take the right path, to earn and to do something, not to accept defeat. When we grow up and our family members get us married, then we get busy with children, and we forget the past. If we come across a friend and he asks us to sit [with him], then we will say: 'No, I have to go home. My wife is waiting.' So when we sit back and think then we feel that we should not have married; otherwise we would have been with friends."*

His mother says:

*"If Allah is willing, then everything will be good. Whatever my son has wished for will be fulfilled. If one son goes then the situation at home will improve. I can marry my daughter. He will work hard, face any troubles. He will learn that money comes with struggle. He will realise: 'This is what my mother used to do.'"*

Salman says he is likely to stay in Saudi Arabia for up to five years.

*"Only after five years, with a good income in my pocket and being independent, I will marry. My family will be happy and my wife will be happy. I have to keep up my name in my in-laws' house. They should think: 'My son-in-law is like this.' I will have sons and daughters, they will grow, they will go to school, then we will get them married. This is what life will be like."*

## Access to technology

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Like many Young Lives children, even some of those in the most difficult of circumstances, Salman has access to the internet and to his friend's mobile phone. Improvements in infrastructure, particularly in towns and cities, have meant that there are internet cabins and mobile phone access, and, in Peru, there is even cable TV, which came to Rioja, Elmer's home area, and San Román, where Cecilia and Luz live, in 2014. In Vietnam, the Government has made an effort to bring technology to even the most remote areas, so even Van Lam, a poor mountainous community where H'Mai and Y Sinh live, has internet cabins.

In Ethiopia, however, many rural communities still have no or little access. Afework, who has his own laptop and mobile phone, says he knows he is lucky: "Those who live in remote rural areas can't get such information. Some of them don't even have electricity so they don't watch television." In general, it is still those children living in the poorest communities, many of which are in remote locations in rural areas with weak infrastructure and services and poor-quality education, who also have the least access to modern technology.

The children and young people who do have access, say they use technology mainly to communicate with their friends, like Salman does with his girlfriend in Dubai. They also use the internet to do their homework. Afework says he uses it to follow the football results. Many of them are on Facebook, although Cecilia says she doesn't have the internet at home and that her mother won't let her use Facebook, because it can be dangerous. For example, she says you might talk to a stranger who could kidnap you.

Other Young Lives parents also worry that mobile phones and the internet may put children at risk of cyber-bullying or distract them from studying. Lupe says her family have the internet at home through a neighbour who pays for the service. She uses it to do her homework and talk to her Facebook friends. She knows that there is a danger of attracting paedophiles, because it happened to her sister's friend, but she realised in time and reported it. Elmer says he is not sure that the internet is a good source of information because "there are good things and bad".

In Vietnam, parents express significant anxieties about the internet – both because it exposes young people to values and norms that are very different from those within their homes and also because it detracts from their schooling. They say that some children pretend to be going to school when they are actually spending the time in internet cafés, and some even steal money to pay for internet access in cafés.



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# Sarada's story

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**Sarada lives in a village with her mother, sister and stepbrother. Her father lives in Mumbai with his second wife. Sarada belongs to a low-caste community. When she was in her early teens the family fell into debt and the children had to leave school to work in the cotton fields. Sarada has been disabled since birth, which makes it hard for her to walk more than short distances. She used to say that she wanted to be a lawyer or a judge when she grew up, but is now happy studying and teaching in the local school.**

Sarada is now 19 and at senior secondary school. She is as talkative and determined as ever. Her father wanted her to go to a private college but she said that she preferred the government college because it was cheaper, she could get a scholarship and she had heard it had a good reputation. She even did her own research: she went along to some classes to see if she liked them.

She has to take the bus early in the morning with other female students. She says that the teachers work them even harder than the students at the private college. But she has passed the exams in both years.

At the same time, she is teaching in her village in the night school. This came about because:

*“They were looking to hire a person who had completed 10th grade. I was a little nervous ... Our sarpanch [council leader] told me that I didn't have to be afraid. He also said that as we are poor the salary would be useful. He asked me to go once and check it out. That's how I started teaching.*

In the beginning there were 50 children. Even though they were very noisy, I learnt how to teach them so they could learn better. I also learnt that we should not beat them. I like working there. I teach very well and I am popular.”

Both Sarada and her mother say she has grown up a lot in the past few years:

*“Now if anybody says anything I just let it go in one ear and out the other. Before, I used to become very angry and would try and fight ... Our sarpanch and other villagers have also commented that I have become very decent and quiet. Lots of people have started addressing me as 'madam' or 'teacher'. I feel happy that they think I am a good girl. I want to retain my good name forever.”*

She has one worry:

*“Lots of people say that I am very fat and ask why I don't try to lose weight. That is why I don't feel like eating. My mother says I should not stop eating because of other people's comments. I went to the doctor. He said I look all right even if I am fat. He said growing children have to be healthy.”*

Otherwise, life is good. She says that her family's financial situation has improved:

*"Now everybody in the family is working. Father cleared two or three loans. I think we have a debt of only 50,000 rupees [about 750 US dollars]. Financially we are in a better position. We went through hard times. We used to eat only chili powder with curry. Sometimes we didn't have anything to eat in the evening. Now we have no problem buying food or clothes. We have planted commercial cotton and millet in our field. I bought a TV ... we all stay home and watch TV together. Neighbours come to our house and chat."*

Earlier Sarada used to go to the neighbours' to watch TV, which her mother did not like.

She says that she buys slippers or bangles or clothes for her mother and sister with the money she earns. She doesn't give her family the money directly because they will not give it back to her when she needs it. She has learned about managing her money from her classes and her membership of a group called the Disabled People's Association:

*"Before I did not know that loans have to be repaid and that there is interest. Now I know the details. Suppose you take 40,000 rupees [580 US dollars] as a loan from the bank? I know what the interest would be, how much you have to pay per month, how the interest is calculated, and how much has to be collected to repay the loan."*

She puts her earnings into a bank account. She also deposits 100 rupees (about 1.5 US dollars) a month with the Association. There are ten members and they have saved 5,000 rupees, which they then lend to each other or outside.

She has resisted pressure to get married:

*"My parents asked to me to get married, but I told them that I want to pursue my education and I am not going to marry now ... I want to live my life as a single woman. I like going to college and teaching at the night school. My mother keeps saying that I should get married as I am 20 years old. Whenever she talks about marriage, I tell her that if she insists I will commit suicide."*

*"When I see my older sister and my parents, I wonder what kind of husband I would end up with. When I compare their life with mine I think my life is better than theirs and I want it to stay like this. Did you see the lady sitting here a little while ago? When her husband beat her, I was shocked. He beat her up horribly."*

Sarada's father lives with his second wife in Mumbai, so only visits from time to time. She and her mother are very close. Her mother says:

*"Because she has a disability, I worry about her a lot. If she works for long periods of time at the farm, at night she says that her leg is painful. Apart from that she is equal to my other children. I feel sad for her. If both of her legs were normal, I would have sent her to work, putting a sickle in her hand just like the rest of us."*

Sarada's disability is also the reason why her mother thinks it is important for her to be educated: "I feel with my whole heart, that she should complete university and find a job so that she can live her life." But she also says:

*"All the girls of Sarada's age are married now. People start asking the parents, as soon as a girl reaches 10 years of age, about her marriage. She will be all alone in life. I don't have peace of mind because of that."*

Sarada has no such worries:

*“I want to study for a degree to be a teacher. I will have a good future if I can do this. I will not agree if my parents insist that I get married. Even if I don’t get a place, I will do something, but I won’t give up. I will give tuition and I will go to the school and tell them that I have completed the degree and ask them to give me a job. I will do the degree privately. If I fail the first time, I will do it again.”*

She says she had originally wanted to become a lawyer or a judge:

*“But now I feel that there is no guarantee that all our wishes will come true. I wished for something but ended up with something else. This opportunity of teaching came to me all of a sudden. Now I like being a teacher. I can teach others whatever I have learnt and it makes me feel good.”*

## The importance of self-help groups

Sarada belongs to a self-help group called the Disabled People’s Association, which has helped her to build her confidence, to learn about finances and save money, and to successfully challenge her parents’ decision to take her out of school and send her to work.

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there are over 700,000 groups, organised under the state government’s poverty alleviation programme, Indira Kranti Patham, which focuses on women’s empowerment through access to credit.

In Ethiopia, most of the Young Lives research sites have some informal community groups, such as iddirs (funeral associations), religious groups or credit associations (iqqub). Afework, for example, belongs to a group associated with his church.

Young Lives has found that if children or their families belong to groups like this, they seem to benefit on a number of levels. Children and young people are more likely to be enrolled in school than peers whose families do not belong to such groups, and to have a healthy body mass index (BMI) for their age. In Ethiopia, children who live in households that belong to self-help groups are 2.2 times more likely to be enrolled in school. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, children living in families that have little or no access to such groups are 40 per cent less likely to have a healthy BMI for their age, and in Ethiopia and Peru they are 40 per cent less likely to be the right height for their age.

However, some women in Andhra Pradesh said they felt that self-help groups were a “big headache” as they worried about loan repayments when they did not have paid work. They pointed out that not all community members can obtain loans. As one woman explained:

*“If a household has more sons then there is more inclination to lend money as the family can send the sons to work and repay the amount without fail. As is the case with households who own individual assets like land, there are more chances for recovery of the money.”*

This still means that the poorest of the poor are once again the ones who lose out.

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**Source:** Emma Feeny and Caroline Knowles (2015) *Children of the Millennium: Growing Up with the MDGs*; Kिरrily Pells and Martin Woodhead (2014) *Changing Children’s Lives: Risks and Opportunities*, Young Lives Policy Paper.



# Ravi's story

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**Ravi comes from a lower-caste family and has had to leave school and work from a young age as a bonded labourer. His life has been a constant struggle to eat, to live and to clear the family debts. It has also been marred by violence. But now Ravi, too, is married and it seems the pattern of violence is continuing.**

Ravi went to school until he was 9, when he had to leave to help pay off a family debt. His older brother is the only one in the family who is being educated. He is now at college. His father never went to school: "Even to this day I can't sign my name; I still give my fingerprint."

It was Ravi's parents who decided that he should marry. They found a suitable wife but she wanted to continue with her education rather than marry. So they found another. His new wife has been to school up to Grade 9.

Ravi, who is now 20, says he didn't know that he was getting married, even on the day itself, and had not changed his clothes: "I just went there casually, I didn't take time to dress. If they had told me [what was happening], I would have gone well dressed. After my marriage my wife told me that I looked like a mad person."

The family didn't ask for a dowry but his bride's family gave them a gold chain – which his mother reveals has now been pawned to pay off debts from the wedding.

Ravi's mother is positive about his new wife: "She is hard-working and does everything efficiently ... Before I used to clean, wash and do other jobs and now she is doing all my work."

Ravi's life has been dominated by violence. When he was 13, he often witnessed his father beating his mother, and said: "When my mum and dad fight I feel very bad. When my dad beats my mum we try and stop him."

As he grew up, he found himself intervening in the violence committed by his brother-in-law on his sister and his nephew. This is still continuing, and in the past six months his sister and nephew have come to live with Ravi and the family, to escape her husband's violence. His mother says:

*"For the first six months of marriage it was OK, then they started quarrelling. Her husband blames her for everything and keeps accusing her. Whenever she goes to work he is suspicious. He is very cruel. Unable to bear both the physical and verbal abuse, she came to our house."*

But then her husband came and took their son away, and Ravi's mother thinks her daughter may have to go back to him:

*"He will entice her and take her back. Everything will be OK for a couple of months. Then he will start verbally and physically abusing her again ... We wanted him to mend his ways and so we kept her here thinking that he might change. But it was of no use. He will never change. We asked some elders to mediate. We went to the police station. And finally they even thought of going for a divorce. What [else] could we do?"*

Although Ravi said when he was younger that he would never beat his wife, now that he is married himself, he says: "When she tells lies she gets a beating."

"Do you shout at her?"

*Every day. She won't keep quiet. I get angry. If I go out somewhere, she will say: 'Why did you take so long?'"*

He says that they make it up in the end: "We can't live without each other, so we talk."

His mother says:

*"Whenever there is a disagreement between them, I tell my son, 'Look, getting married is not a joke and taking care of one's wife is also not a joke. You have sisters; if they are beaten we feel very sad ... And she too is like our daughter and so we should not physically abuse her by beating her nor verbally abuse her by cursing her and using foul language. How can one talk like that? It is really disgusting.' That is what I tell them. I tell them to lead a decent life; I tell them to behave in a nice manner."*

Otherwise, she says, her son "is really good and hospitable towards others. He respects elders and listens to them. He is hard-working and wins people's confidence. Everyone wants to offer him work because he works well. He is very caring and understanding."

One good thing that has happened, says Ravi's mother, is that alcohol has been banned in the village.

*"Earlier there were frequent quarrels due to heavy drinking that would lead to violent exchanges of words and force ... Now drinking alcohol has been banned... if someone drinks, then the children, especially the college students, tell the police and they come and take them away. It is the children who go to college, the educated ones. They started this."*

Ravi would like to get onto the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), which provides at least 100 days of waged employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, but he can't seem to get the right papers.

*"We need to get some work from the Government ... [even] the illiterate people like me can work. They can drill bore wells. Those who are literate get a monthly salary, but people like me have to work hard to take care of our parents."*

In the future, Ravi says, he only wants two children, and his mother agrees. She says:

*"If he wants his son or daughter to have a bright future then he will educate them ... If we are still alive, we will be able to tell them that it is only when children are educated that they have a bright future. It is better to study and improve yourself than to toil and suffer. We will tell him that it is better to have an education than to suffer without it."*

## The intergenerational cycle of violence

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As a small child, Ravi used to witness his father beating his mother and try to intervene, and then went on to try and protect his sister from her husband. At 13, he said that he would never beat his wife when he got married. But now that he is married, his brother-in-law is still beating his sister, and Ravi is resorting to violence against his own wife.

Sadly, this intergenerational cycle of violence, where children who witness violence find themselves using it themselves when they are adults, like Ravi, is all too common. It affects people across all socio-economic levels, suggesting that it is on some level seen as acceptable, and also that it is rarely discussed.

A 2007 study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 13 states in India found that almost 70 per cent of children aged 5 to 18 reported experiencing physical abuse.

Young Lives has found that boys are more likely to experience physical abuse, both in the home and at school. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, nearly 60 per cent of boys and just over 25 per cent of girls reported experiencing physical violence from family members.

At community level, gender norms about what it means to be a man can generate a cycle of violence towards women, whether domestic violence or 'eve-teasing', as sexual harassment of women and girls is known in India. Women, too, may collude in such violence.

Children may adopt a range of strategies to try and deal with violent situations, though their options are often limited. They may remove themselves from the situation if they can. They may intervene to protect others, often using violence themselves. They may seek community support, or help from trusted adults, though it is unclear how useful this is.

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**Source:** Virginia Morrow and Renu Singh (2016, forthcoming) *Understanding Children's Experiences of Violence in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India: Evidence from Young Lives*.



# Harika's story

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**Harika has an older and a younger brother. Her older brother has been informally adopted by an aunt who has no children, so she has effectively been the oldest child in the family for many years. She is a clever girl, and when she was 13 was selected for a national scholarship. But she also missed school a lot because she was needed to help her family in the cotton fields. She was educated up to Grade 12 in a government college, where she and a friend stayed in a hostel because there was no senior secondary school in the village. But now she is married and pregnant with her first child.**

When Young Lives last met Harika she was staying in a girls' hostel in order to go to senior secondary school and had hopes of doing a degree to become a teacher or a doctor. But she didn't achieve high enough marks to continue to university. In addition, the college she had applied to was a long way from home and didn't have a hostel. So Harika would have had to take a bus every day or rent a room.

Neither of her parents are educated but her mother wanted her to continue her education because "the life of an educated person is always better than others. An uneducated person's life stagnates in one place, while an educated person keeps growing and developing." Although she also adds: "It all depends on their luck. Whatever is written in their destiny will happen. Aren't there people who are well educated but clearing rubbish to survive in life?"

Her older brother was the one who put his foot down and said she couldn't go. He had done the same degree that she had wanted to do and is now working in the cotton business. Harika's mother said:

*"He knows about these things because he goes out and about. We don't go anywhere and so we don't know anything. He said it was not good for girls to come and go every day in the bus, and she had had enough education. So she stayed home and learned to use a sewing machine."*

Harika's mother explains that it is different for boys and girls.

*"If there is no bus [boys] can come home in somebody's vehicle. If they miss the bus they can stay where they are. What can a girl do in such situations? How will she come back? Where would she stay? Because she is a girl, we have to be scared of these things ... If our younger son doesn't come home, even for three days, we don't worry. We say: 'Let him stay. He will come when he can.'"*

She adds that girls are now going to school, which was not the case when she was young herself. She says she never had the chance to be educated because she didn't come from an educated household: "Since no-one was interested, who would allow me to go to school? If somebody in the family was educated, they would have sent me too." But even now, she says, most girls "stop after completing school in the village, because of finances, or because of the distance."

Harika says: "I felt very sad. If I had been admitted to university I would not have married. I would have continued my education. Since I could not get admission, I stopped my studies and my parents arranged for me to marry."

Harika's mother knows her daughter was very upset at the decision: "What could she do? She got angry and cried. How can she continue when she is not allowed? She cried and cried and then kept quiet."

A year later, her brother wanted to get married because his uncle, who had effectively brought him up, was dying. He could not get married before his sister, so in the end a wife and a husband were found and they both got married on the same day. Harika says she had no choice in the matter:

*"The family members decided. My mother, father, paternal uncle and maternal aunt discussed my wedding. They did not tell me anything in the beginning. I saw him only after the marriage had been fixed. Even though he is from the same village, I don't know him ... I don't think it is right but that's what happened. Nowadays people get married only when they have got to know the person well. But my marriage didn't happen that way."*

Harika is now 21. She has been married for about 18 months and is about to have a baby. She says she and her husband hadn't planned the pregnancy: "We thought we would not have a baby so soon. But once it happened, we wanted to keep it."

The pregnancy has not been easy; she was extremely sick for five months and then started having stomach pains and was told by the hospital that she might deliver the baby early unless she took complete bed rest. She is now nearly in her final month and she says: "I feel nervous about how it will turn out. If everything had been normal from the beginning, I wouldn't have felt nervous. But because of the stomach ache and other problems, I am worried."

Otherwise, Harika feels that things have turned out quite well: she still lives close to her parents and her husband is an educated man.

*'Everybody in my in-laws' house is very nice. They try to make me comfortable. My husband is also very nice. If they see me feeling down, they cheer me up by making conversation. If I can't cook curry properly they cook it for me. I never cooked mutton or chicken till now. My father-in-law cooks very well. My husband also cooks. They all help with cooking.'*

She compares her new household to her own home, and concludes that the difference is education:

*"I have seen how my father and my paternal uncle behave. They never help their women with anything. They just go to the farm and come home and sit around. But in my house, the men help. When the women wash clothes the men hang them out to dry. They all help the women, because they are all educated. They understand that one person cannot do everything. But in my parents' house it is not like that."*

Harika says that she still wants to continue with her education and become a teacher. Her husband supports her in this, although the fact that she would have to commute is still a problem.

After she was married she took an exam to enter teacher training college: “My husband encouraged me. He submitted the application. But because I did the exam just after my marriage, I did not prepare at all. I only got 25 marks.”

She thinks that after the baby is born she will try again. Harika’s mother says: “If she goes to further education, we will take care of the baby. We want her to be happy. If she studies, her life will improve.”

## Early marriage and maternal education

Harika had been clear that she did not want to leave school and get married. She says:

*“I was 19 when I got married. I don't think it is the right age. There are well-educated ladies who are 25 to 30 years old but not married yet. The people who do hard labour get their children married at 16 or 19. I feel that it would have been good if had I waited for a few more years.”*

In India, however, Harika was not that young; the average age of marriage for a girl in the Young Lives Older Cohort was 16.6. A total of 36 per cent of the girls were married by the time they were 19 but only 2 per cent of the boys. Early marriage is more common in rural areas and in disadvantaged households. The girls and young women who are married tend to have dropped out of school first and then married, rather than the other way around.

It may well be that Harika gets to fulfil her dream of becoming a teacher, and, with the support of her husband, her in-laws and her mother, goes to college after all. She clearly feels that marrying into an educated household will not only allow her to continue her education, but will also mean that there is more gender equality in the home:

*“The people who are educated often have to go away from home to pursue their studies. So they end up cooking and cleaning for themselves. They know how hard the work is. But men who work in farms think it is wrong to cook as it is a woman's chore. Educated people don't feel like that. They don't mind doing everything.”*

The fact that Harika’s mother-in-law is educated is likely to have had an effect on her son’s behaviour, as Harika points out. Harika’s own education will influence her children too: Young Lives has found that having a mother who is educated has positive effects on stunting and thinness, school attendance and achievement, as well as on a child’s subjective well-being. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, only 44 per cent of children whose mothers had had no education attended pre-school, compared to 72 per cent of children whose mothers had had ten or more years of education. The former were also four times more likely to have repeated a grade by the age of 8 (16 per cent compared with 4 per cent). There is a gap of 33 per cent in average scores for maths tests and 19 per cent in average test scores in Telugu between children whose mothers did not go to school and those whose mothers had had more than ten years of education.

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**Source:** S. Galab, P. Prudhvikar Reddy and Renu Singh (2014) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in India.*



# Shanmuka Priya's story

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**Shanmuka Priya lives in a village with her parents and her little brother, Prashant. She is 13 and in Grade 8. Her family has moved to a new house and she has recently started at high school, which she much prefers to her previous school. Her mother cannot read or write and her father left school when he was 10. Shanmuka Priya says she wants to become a teacher.**

Shanmuka Priya feels that she has grown up a lot since last time Young Lives researchers visited.

*“When I was a child, I used to play a lot, dance, not study properly. I didn’t eat well, I used to fall ill frequently. I had only two or three friends. That has all changed now I have grown up. We all play together, study together and sing together. I eat regularly. It’s more about studying now I am in high school.”*

She is particularly happy because “the teachers do not beat the students like they did in the old school. Those [teachers] who come from other places don’t beat us because they know that the Government would punish them.”

She says the old school

*“was small and untidy but the high school is peaceful and good. We had no kitchen in [the old] school. They used to cook outside and so when it rained, we got no food. We’d have to go home. Now that we have a kitchen, there is no need to go home because we can eat here.”*

Despite the new kitchen, her one complaint about the school is the food:

*“They don’t cook properly: the rice is watery and full of stones. They don’t remove the egg shells. One day, they didn’t wash the rice and it smelt awful. We all went home for lunch and the rice was left untouched.”*

She doesn’t think that the problem has been solved, despite the boys complaining to a number of the adults.

Another thing she likes about the new school is that there are no noisy small children. Also, the school has just built separate latrines for girls and boys. They haven’t used them yet but this will mean the girls don’t have to go home when they want to use the toilet. The school bought some computers but they were stolen and have not been replaced.

Shanmuka Priya says there have been improvements in the village too. There is a new road, a new canal and a railway line and the Government sends a tanker of water and has provided a tap for each street, although they still don’t get water regularly.

*“When we call the authorities, they say ‘We will do it now,’ but they provide water for less than half an hour and [then] stop. We get enough water to drink but some families cannot manage all their domestic needs, like washing clothes.”*

The most significant thing that has happened to her personally is that a month ago she had her first period: "I told my mother, then she told me that I had reached puberty. I was scared. Only two or three girls from my class have [had their period]."

Her mother said that she should stay at home for nine days and throw a party to celebrate. "I was given a separate plate, glass and a separate one of everything. They prepared *bakshalu* [sweets], and invited people, who brought dresses and other things." She was taken to the temple but otherwise was not allowed out of the house. She soon got fed up with staying in and she had exams, so she persuaded her mother to let her out after five days.

Shanmuka Priya complained that she had also missed school because her parents wanted her to work in the cotton fields during the harvest. In Grade 6 she missed school for more than two months. She didn't like this at all:

*"I hate the cotton fields. We have to go early in the morning and get back home only at 8 o'clock. It would be better to study. I wish there were no cotton farms and so no need for me to work. I miss lessons. I forget what I learnt."*

She is very clear about the importance of education:

*"We don't know what is going on around us if we aren't educated. Unless teachers tell us, we don't even know what's happening in the next village. Education is useful. Suppose an uneducated friend doesn't understand something and comes to me? If I am educated I can explain."*

She believes it is just as important for girls to be educated as boys:

*"Girls should study. Because after a girl gets married, her husband may say that she doesn't do household work properly and abuse her and beat her. If a girl's parents say that she shouldn't study then they're committing a mistake and a crime. Education is important."*

She complains that at her brother's age, "I used to sweep and do other small chores. My brother doesn't do those things. When I ask why, they say that he's a boy and because I am a girl, I have to do those things." She says it is the same for all her girlfriends.

Shanmuka Priya takes part in a number of group discussions, and in one of them the girls became very animated about how much they were harassed by the boys:

*"The girls study well in our village but their minds are full of the threat they see from boys. They are tormented and their spirits are dampened and they suffer a lot. This means they do not have self-confidence and are not able to do well. And this is why they give up their studies and drop out of school."*

She thinks that for this reason there should perhaps be separate boys' and girls' schools.

Despite her evident brightness and her enthusiasm for learning, when her parents had to choose whether she or her younger brother went to private school, they chose her brother. Her mother, who had no education herself and was married at 13, says:

*"Everyone around me said: 'Why educate a girl? It is a waste. It is better that you send your son. She is studying well where she is.' I wanted her to study but at that time we had financial problems. So we thought: 'At least educate one person.' It was difficult to educate both of them in an English-medium [school]."*

Will Shanmuka Priya continue with her education? "We will decide after Grade 10, based on her performance. After that we will do what [God] wishes. If she studies well then we will educate

her till she says ‘Enough.’”

Shanmuka Priya says she wants to be a teacher: “If I’m educated, I can get a job, go to different places and teach others.”

## The growth of private education

Shanmuka Priya is not the only bright girl in Andhra Pradesh whose family, when forced to choose, decided to send their son rather than their daughter to private school. The number of ‘low-fee’ private schools in India as a whole continues to rise, starting with kindergarten for 3-year-olds. It is not just the better-off who are opting for private education; many poor urban families and an increasing number of rural families are also choosing it.

The attraction of private schools for poor parents is directly related to aspirations. They hope that a child in private school will have a better education, higher social status and a better chance to have decent employment. The private schools offer English-medium teaching, which is not traditionally available in government schools. Parents are also voting with their feet, believing that government schools offer inferior education, and that teachers are frequently absent. This is despite the fact that often, teachers in government schools are better qualified and better paid than those in private schools.

In the Young Lives Older Cohort, attendance at government schools dropped from 72.4 per cent to 49.1 per cent between 2001 and 2009, while attendance at private schools increased from 22.6 per cent to 27.7 per cent. The figure for the Younger Cohort was much higher, with 44 per cent attending private school. These figures also show a widening gender gap. For the Older Cohort, it was only at the end of primary school that there were more boys than girls attending private schools, while for the Younger Cohort, a 9 per cent gap already existed by the age of 8 for the poorest rural children.

In Ethiopia, too, there is a small but increasing minority (15 per cent) of children from better-off families in urban areas attending private schools. Afework is one of these. In Peru, in 2006, only 4 per cent of the Older Cohort children were enrolled in private schools at the age of 12, but by 2013, when Younger Cohort children had reached the same age, it had risen to 12.5 per cent. Lupe goes to private school in Peru.

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**Sources:** *Education and Learning: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey*; Emma Feeney with Gina Crivello (2015) *How Gender Shapes Adolescence: Diverging Paths and Opportunities*, Young Lives Policy Brief 22; Martin Woodhead et al. (2013) *What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives*, Young Lives Policy Paper; Martin Woodhead et al. (2012) ‘Does Growth in Private Schooling Contribute to Education for All? Evidence from a Longitudinal, Two-cohort Study in Andhra Pradesh, India’, *International Journal of Educational Development*. 33.1: 65-73.



# Country Context:

## Peru

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Peru is one of Latin America's fastest-growing economies. It is rich in resources, with good access to basic services such as water, sanitation and maternal health. Between 2005 and 2014, poverty rates fell by more than half, from approximately 56 per cent to 23 per cent of the population. The numbers living in extreme poverty have also declined, but are concentrated in rural areas, where many of the country's indigenous people live.

Nearly 90 per cent of adults are considered literate and over 93 per cent of children under 12 are enrolled in primary school. Although social expenditure has been low, welfare initiatives such as cash transfers and child care programmes are beginning to provide assistance to some of Peru's 29 million inhabitants.

To ensure future economic growth while also reducing inequality, the Government of Peru has identified priority areas including closing infrastructure gaps, increasing the quality of basic services such as education and health, and expanding access to markets for poor and vulnerable communities.

**Elmer** lives in a Rioja, a poor rural area of around 2,000 people in the San Martín region of northern Peru. A main road connects the village to the district, provincial and regional capitals. People work mostly in agriculture and cattle-raising. They grow coffee, tropical fruits, cassava and corn. Since 2013, a plague has destroyed many of the coffee plants and led many young people to move to the cities. **Cecilia** and **Luz** live in San Román, a poor city in the southern Andean highlands. The neighbourhood is home to around 15,000 people of both Spanish and indigenous descent. They work mostly in formal and informal trade, commerce and the textile industry.

Some inhabitants are also involved in drug dealing and smuggling. **Lupe** lives in Villa María del Triunfo, a large district of around 10,000 people in the south of Lima, Peru's capital. **Fabricio** and **Manuel** live in Andahuaylas, a poor rural area in the southern Andean highlands, home to around 2,000 Quechua indigenous people, working mostly in agriculture and cattle-raising. They grow potatoes and corn for sale on the market alongside other produce for their own consumption. Hurricanes, heavy rains, winds and frosts cause crop damage and local authorities feel that climate change is causing harsher winters.

Most cities and towns in Peru have electricity, piped water, sewage, telephone lines and internet cabins, and some, like San Román, have recently acquired cable TV and mobile phone coverage. They are also likely to have paved roads, at least in some areas, although in San Román this is not the case, causing problems with flooding during the rainy season and hindering rubbish collection.

In rural areas, piped water and electricity are available, but, in some places, for example in Rioja and Andahuaylas, there is no sewage system and no rubbish collection service. In 2008 community members in Rioja were worried that this was causing pollution and endangering children's health. By 2014, they were also worried that water provision might fail, as the pipes are old and at risk of collapse.

Most towns and villages in Peru have schools, including private and government schools and pre-schools. Most children are taught in Spanish, even if it is not their mother tongue. They also have health clinics and hospitals within a reasonable distance. In Andahuaylas, a new road has meant the nearest hospital is now only a 15-minute drive away. There are also government social protection programmes that focus on child health and nutrition, as well as health insurance subsidies and Juntos, a conditional cash transfer scheme that gives money to poor families with children, providing they meet certain conditions.



# Elmer's story

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**When he was younger, Elmer lived with his sister in Lima for a year, helping out with her two children. In 2009, his parents moved from his home village in Rioja to another village near the regional capital. But Elmer and his sister had to live apart from their parents until 2013 in order to go to school because there was no secondary school in the rural area where they lived. When he finished school, Elmer decided to work for a year in the fields supporting his parents. After that, he enrolled in an institute to study administration, but dropped out. In the meantime, his parents' coffee crop failed and they moved to Lima, so he decided to join them there. But life is not easy for him in the capital...**

Elmer is now 19 and the big difference in his life in the past three years is that his whole family, apart from his older brother, has moved to Lima, the capital of Peru, from the countryside. He is happy to be living with his mother, father and younger brother and his sister, who is expecting a child.

The decision to move to Lima seems to have been prompted by the failure of the family's coffee crop. His father sold the land and the family decided to move. Elmer was not sure at first whether he would move too as he was studying business administration where they lived. But he says his mother said it was better to study in Lima because it would be easier for them to support him. In their previous home they were sometimes short of food. She also said that he could apply to study mechanical engineering.

He agreed because he wanted to be with his family rather than living alone and had not really been enjoying the course in business administration. He has his own room for the first time in his life, but he found Lima noisy and confusing at first. He used to get lost when he took a bus and he still worries that they don't live in a very safe area.

When he first arrived he had no paid work, and so sometimes at the weekend he worked on a building site, which was well paid but very tiring. He now has a job in a petrol station. He works from 10pm to 6am and then sleeps in the day and goes to college in the evenings. The work schedule suits him because he has time to study.

Another thing he likes about his current job is that people who work there understand his situation and say they will help him. He thinks there is a good working environment. He has never had a problem with any customers although sometimes he thinks working at night makes you vulnerable to the cold and he is afraid of being robbed.

He is happy studying but says that he thinks some of the classes are a waste of time. Otherwise he is enjoying the courses and they are not too difficult. During the first two weeks he kept falling asleep in class and thinking about leaving his job but now he has got used to the routine.

He feels he has undergone physical changes too. Although he has always been thin, he has put on a few kilos. His dad told him that his voice had changed and he now sounded like a man. He has also grown a moustache.

He thinks his behaviour has changed too. He used to spend a lot of time on video games and playing basketball and football, but work and studying take up most of his time these days. He feels that he is also more mature. For example, when he was younger and someone told him to do something, he didn't always do it. Now he does. He has also started thinking about the future. He had not thought about it before because his parents gave him everything and he was focused on playing and having fun.

He doesn't consider himself a particularly sociable person, so it took time to make friends in Lima. But now he has met people at work and in college. He likes some of them and does not like others. He says that he has had problems with some people and that he had to fight with them.

But overall he is pleased with the move, which he says has allowed him to learn new things and meet new people. He has started saving money in order to buy land on which to build his own home. His parents are still supporting his studies, but he buys his own tools. Sometimes he also gives his mother money.

Elmer says that he has a girlfriend, whom he has known for two years. Some people start much earlier: "Some people start at 13 or 14. But I didn't have a girlfriend until I was 16 because I was very shy."

He says he met her at a local dance. But now he sees her only at weekends, when they go for a walk or eat together. He says that he thinks people can only really be mature and fall in love after they are 18. If a girl became pregnant at 15, for example, her boyfriend would be too young to know what to do. Also parents tend to control their daughters, giving them a time to come home, whereas they don't do the same with their sons. "This is because they are worried about their daughters becoming pregnant and having to stop their studies."

He says young people his age do not have much information about topics such as sexuality, relationships or contraception, apart from minimal information from teachers in schools. He thinks the ideal time to have children will be when he is about 25, when he hopes he will have a steady job and a house. He believes he is still a young man.

*"I consider myself a young man because I am still learning things in life. Adults have more responsibilities. If you are married you have to work for your children and your wife, while a young person can meet friends and can do what they like without any pressure."*

On the other hand, when you're an adult, he says, you think more and invest your money in something that bears fruit. He believes it is important to have higher education, as it is easier to get a job if you have a degree. He hopes one day to work doing something he likes, perhaps running his own machine shop. But he thinks he would like to live somewhere quieter.

## Migration

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More than half of the Young Lives children in Peru have moved and are now living away from their original community (and in the other countries, almost 20 per cent of families have migrated). In Elmer's case it has meant uprooting himself four times, and at least two long periods away from his parents. He struggles now with life in Lima and says he would prefer to live in a more rural area.

But the city, and in particular Lima, offers opportunities for young people that are not found in rural areas. This is why a third of the country's population lives in the capital, including 27 per cent of its adolescents.

Children move with or without their families for a number of reasons. This might be for education, or if a parent dies, or there is violence in the family or simply through poverty. Elmer moved first to help his sister with her children in Lima, and then again so that he could continue his secondary education, because none was available in his home village or in the rural area where his parents had migrated. Living with another relative is common in Peru and Ethiopia, but it leaves families back home with less help in the fields and around the house.

Elmer's own mother also migrated as a child, as did 34 out of 48 mothers in the Young Lives qualitative study. For girls, migration may present a reputational risk if they are not living with their families and may undermine their marriageability. Lupe's grandmother, now aged 61, was taken by her aunt to Lima to work as a maid when she was only 11, and in her teens was raped and made pregnant by her employer's son. Unusually, she eventually took her employers to court and received compensation.

Ultimately, migration reflects a family's, and a child's, hope for a better life. Esteban lives in Rioja, the province where Elmer used to live. His six older siblings all live elsewhere. His mother says:

*"In the city, I see how they progress more ... [I] want my son to move forward ... that he becomes a professional ... an example to others ... I have to be strong and tell him 'You go.' Because if I tell him, 'No, no, don't go,' ... I'm going to hold him back. I don't want that. I want him to carry on."*

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**Source:** Gina Crivello (2015) 'There's No Future Here: The Time and Place of Children's Migration Aspirations in Peru', *Geoforum*. 62: 38-42.



# Lupe's story

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**Lupe lives in Lima with her father, sister and grandmother. Her mother moved out when she was 10 and that was hard for Lupe, but she has had more contact with her recently. Her father delivers propane gas for a living. Lupe and her sister were looked after by their grandmother when her parents were working. She is now at secondary school and has decided she wants to be a vet...**

Lupe feels that she has grown up a lot since the last time Young Lives visited. As a child she spent a lot of time with her sister and played with soft toys. She never liked dolls. Now she is 12 she says she is not so shy, and finds it easier to relate to people and to say what she thinks. She believes this is because she is now going to high school and has made new friends. She has friends on Facebook too. She says that she spends more time with her friends and no longer has to be supervised so she has more freedom: "We are now more independent, more responsible."

Physically she has grown taller and entered puberty. She isn't worried about these changes; she knew they would happen at some point. She believes that people see her as a calm but extrovert girl: "In my little group [of friends] I am the calmest but also the craziest! I think my friends believe I am a person who, when I am knocked down, can pick myself up again."

Two very sad things that have happened are that her grandfather and her great-grandfather have both died. She was especially sad about her grandfather as he was like another father to her.

The other important thing is that her father was given a pay rise at work so the family are better off financially.

Lupe has been sent to a private high school because she felt she was not being taught properly in the government school. She had a cousin in the same school and it wasn't too expensive and the teaching was better. Her father talks about how they felt when he first took her to the new school:

*"It is another stage of education and you are more responsible, so she was a little nervous. She thought she might not understand their posh language and it was different having more than one teacher... But she was excited and so was I ... it is an achievement for every father, when his child goes to secondary school ... it is another stage in life, and they are preparing to study, to be something better in their life."*

Lupe likes her new school, though she says it is hard work, with lots of homework. She enjoys playing in the school band. She is struggling with mathematics because she was not taught well at primary school. She knows it is important because you use it in your daily life; for example, when shopping you need addition and multiplication and when you are playing volleyball you need to count the points.

On the other hand, she likes literature and is studying the Iliad and the Odyssey. In citizenship and civic education she has learned about the constitution and children's rights.

She feels that she could do with more support from the teachers when she doesn't understand something, rather than having to ask friends or use the internet. She has missed one day of school because she was suspended for being late repeatedly, but she managed to catch up straight away. She says some students miss school because they are lazy, and others because their family's financial situation means they have to work. She herself has never had to do paid work, although sometimes she helps her mother in her cleaning job.

At home she spends time chatting to her older sister. Her sister and her friend from school are her best friends. Her father says that her main responsibilities are to study, do her homework, tidy her room, help her sister to keep the house clean, and wash her clothes under her sister's supervision. Her sister still does the cooking because she is worried that Lupe might burn herself.

Lupe says many of her friends fall in love, but they do not tell their parents who would not approve. She does not talk about sex with her friends but the teachers tell them about it.

She thinks her area has changed for the better because they have repaired the football pitch and also improved the roads. But she also thinks there is more crime, which makes her afraid to leave the house alone. She would like there to be less crime, a local police station, and more green areas and also better bin collections because there is a lot of rubbish around. She thinks people should come together to do something for their community.

Her church is also important to her: she was baptised in her father's Mormon church last year. He says the church teaches you "to be at peace with yourself without hurting anyone, and forgive those who hurt you".

Lupe says that she would like to finish high school and then go to college to study veterinary medicine. She loves animals. She believes she will be able to do this, because her godmother who lives in Italy might help her. She thinks that "when you have work, you also have more independence in your life".

## Private and state education in Peru

There are a growing number of private schools and universities in Peru. Young Lives and other research has shown clearly how much parents and children value education. Like Lupe's father, many of them hope it will help their children "be something better in life". Luz's parents, too, have chosen to send her to a private university.

Although they are not well off, Lupe's family decided to move her from a government primary school, where they felt teaching and resources were poor, to a relatively inexpensive private secondary school. As we have seen, despite her initial nervousness, Lupe appears to be thriving.

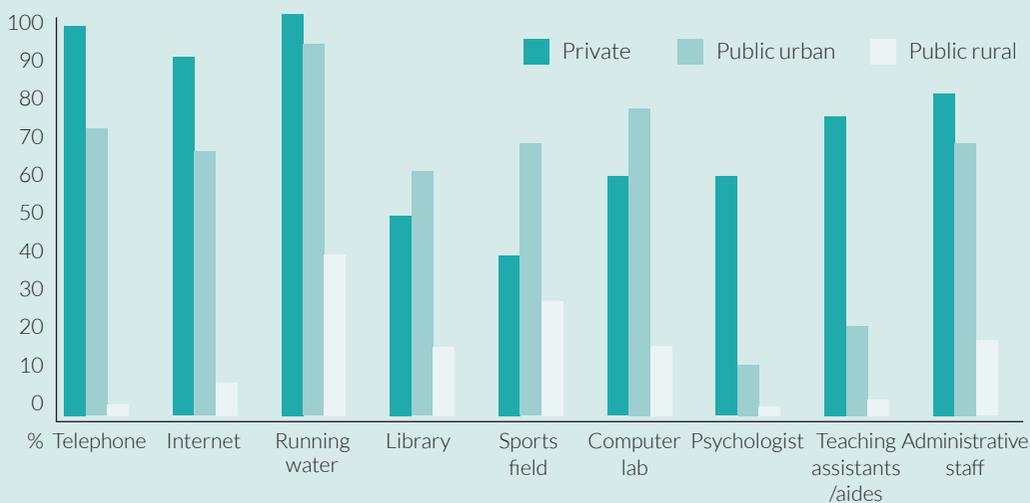
This trend is one that Young Lives has seen increasing in the eight years that separate the Older and Younger Cohorts: in 2006, only 4 per cent of children from the Older Cohort were enrolled in private schools at the age of 12, but by 2013, the figure was 12.5 per cent of the Younger Cohort.

The validity of these individual choices would seem to be backed up by Young Lives research, which has found that there were large differences in vocabulary test scores between children at private schools (who scored 79 per cent), urban government schools (70 per cent) and rural government schools (57 per cent).

Children from better-off families scored an average of 77 per cent, while those from the poorest households, or whose mothers had not completed primary school or spoke an indigenous language scored only around 60 per cent.

So does this mean that private schools are better than government schools? It is difficult to separate the nature of the school from the backgrounds of the children who attend – for example, only those children whose families can afford to send them can go to private school. But what is clear is that rural government schools, in particular, are less well-resourced than private schools (which are all in urban areas) and than urban government schools. But there are also wide variations in the quality of private schools, so the choices are not as clear cut as they might seem for parents wanting their children to ‘do better’ by going private.

### Inequalities in school infrastructure in Peru, 2013



**Source:** Santiago Cueto and Alejandra Miranda (2014) Education and Learning: *Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Peru*.



# Manuel's story

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**Manuel's family come from the Quechua people, one of the largest of the 42 indigenous groups in Peru. He is one of eight children. While he speaks Spanish, his mother does not. Like many Quechua people, his family live in the Andes mountains. Manuel started school late and repeated a year, so he was over-age for his grade. He dropped out at 13 when he went with his father to work on coffee plantations in the rainforest. His father was supposed to enrol him in school there but it never happened, so after a year Manuel went back to school of his own accord. But it proved too difficult, and at 16 he decided to join the army...**

Manuel is now 19. The Young Lives interviewer was lucky to find him at his mother's house, because he has not lived with his mother since he was 13. This time, he was there because one of his grandparents had died. In fact, he explained that he does not have a fixed place to live, but travels between his work and his girlfriend's home.

Last time the interviewer came, Manuel was not there, because he had gone with his father to harvest coffee. He had just started his first year of high school at that point but had to leave. He was already among the one-third of children in Peru who are over-age for the grade they are in. Although Manuel's mother told her husband to enrol Manuel in school, he didn't. Manuel worked for a year, and then decided to register in a non-regular school where he could do two grades in one year. But after two more years, he dropped out. He continued to live near the coffee plantation until he was 17 and then moved again twice, harvesting coffee, coca, root vegetables and potatoes. He also worked in a shop.

During that time, he met his girlfriend at a harvest festival. He visited her on his days off.

In July 2013, he thought he might have the opportunity to continue his education because a friend told him that if he joined the army they would send him to school. His mother didn't want him to go; but he felt he had no alternative. After three months he asked if he could continue with his education, but this request was denied, though there were others who were studying.

He was also the victim of harassment and theft. He says he was called names and physically abused, and that a lieutenant stole his money and his laptop while he was out. He became ill with pneumonia, but the army did not believe him until he fainted in the street. Then they gave him two days off and he ran away.

The problem now is that he is seen as a deserter. He is taking advice from a lawyer but the case is still unresolved. So now he feels that he hasn't managed to complete his education or his military service: "If I had finished my service [I could have] worked in security, I would have had something in life."

After leaving the army, with the help of his girlfriend's uncle (who is a civil engineer) he started to work in construction; for the first two months he worked as an assistant, then he "learned to do other things and became a supervisor", which is what he is now doing. He works from Monday to Friday from 8 in the morning to 8 at night, and is paid 800 soles a month (about 230 US dollars). He has health insurance and accident insurance, plus he has a month off every four or five months. He describes his working environment as "quiet, happy". He has been offered work in Lima so he and his girlfriend may go there for a few months, although he likes living where he is because it is "a beautiful landscape" and the weather is much better than where he lived in the rainforest.

But he would also still very much like to continue his secondary education and hopes to enrol in weekend classes that offer accelerated learning. These will cost 600 soles a month so he must work at the same time. He needs his secondary school certificate to get a licence to operate heavy machinery.

After returning to civilian life he started to live with his girlfriend and now she is three months pregnant. Although they had not planned to have a baby, he says he is very happy, though one is enough and he is worried about being able to earn enough money to support his child. He says that people his age have almost no information on sex or sexual and reproductive health. The couple go to the medical centre for information about the pregnancy and pre-natal testing.

He feels that he now has new responsibilities. His girlfriend is only 16 and he is paying for her computer courses. He also covers all the household expenses, including the rent for his room (40 to 50 soles per month).

He says that if his girlfriend was not pregnant he would like to be single. He is also worried about being an evangelical Christian and not being married.

He hopes that if he has a son his life will be better than his own. He wants him to have "a job, a career ... more than I, more advanced, as a mining engineer, civil engineer, not as a driver".

## Sex and becoming a parent

Manuel is unusual among the young men in the Older Cohort, both in having a steady partner and in becoming a parent.

In addition to their interviews, the young people in the Older Cohort were asked to complete a confidential self-administered questionnaire, which covered behaviour such as smoking, use of alcohol and illegal drugs, sexual behaviour, and use of contraception. A total of 96 per cent agreed to fill in the questionnaire.

By age 19, 67 per cent report having had sexual intercourse (79 per cent of boys and 53 per cent of girls). The average age at the first sexual relationship is 16.3 (close to 16 for males and 17 for females). It is concerning that almost a third (29 per cent) say they did not use any contraceptive last time they had intercourse.

Around 13 per cent of the Older Cohort already live with a partner (more are cohabiting than married) – one in five girls but only 7 per cent of boys. Some 14.5 per cent already have children – almost a quarter of girls compared with only 1 in 12 boys. The probability of having a child is higher for young women who grew up in rural areas.

### Marriage, cohabitation and parenthood at age 19 (2013)

	Young Women		Young Men	
Single	232	80.3%	307	93.3%
Married/cohabiting	57	19.7%	18	6.7%
Had a child	70	23.9%	15	5.8%

**Source:** Alan Sanchez and Guido Melendez (2015) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Peru*.



I'M NOT  
WEIRD  
YOU'RE  
SIMPLE

# Luz's story

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**Luz lives with her parents and her sister in a quiet neighbourhood of San Román, a city in the highlands of south-eastern Peru. Her family own a small tailoring business. Since she was 9, she has helped out after school and at weekends by washing clothes and sewing. Her grandparents belong to the Aymara indigenous group but Luz does not speak Aymara. Luz is now at a private university studying accountancy, and is starting to make plans for what she will do next...**

The interviewer began the conversation by asking Luz what had changed for her in the past three years. She says that now she is 20, she has grown up and is more able to speak her mind and to say no to things, for example when her parents ask her to help in the workshop. But she thinks she is neither an adult nor a child. She has yet to mature, because she is always laughing and playing.

She enjoys her studies at college, although she feels that you have to be much more self-motivated than at school. She says she is one of the quieter people, while some students seem to be only interested in going to nightclubs. She has three good girlfriends and they are always joking with each other.

If she could change one thing she would ask the college to employ more young teachers because they are enthusiastic and explain things well. Older teachers are boring, she says. They don't discuss things with the students and they avoid questions when they don't know the answer. But the students have fun as well as studying hard. For example, there are events where students compete by doing dances typical of the region. Luz has taken part in these twice.

Luz goes to college in the evenings. She does not think this is good as you are cold and tired so it makes it hard to concentrate. It takes her about an hour to get to college in a minibus. She is sometimes worried when she comes home late. Sometimes she comes back with her friend, who has a motorcycle taxi. Otherwise she walks quickly back from the bus stop and tries to avoid anyone who is drunk. She thinks women are in danger of rape and harassment.

Luz also studies English in the mornings. Her father suggested this and at first she did not want to, but then she realised it was a good idea. After that she wants to study computing. Her uncle gave her this idea, when he shouted at her that she was not doing anything in the mornings.

At the moment, her main task in the mornings is to make lunch for the family. She doesn't like cooking much. On Monday mornings she also helps her mother at the market stall selling football shirts. On Saturday, she helps her father in the workshop. She has been helping since she was little. She says most children help their parents in their business when they have one. Sunday is dedicated to washing clothes and doing homework. She thinks that she works harder than her sister.

Luz has been worried about her mother recently, as her health has not been good. But she has now had some treatment and feels better. Her aunt has the same health problem so she can talk about her worries with her aunt.

Asked about relationships, Luz says she thinks it is OK to have a serious relationship in college provided it does not affect your studies. She doesn't think people should marry or live together at this age. You need to have work first. She had a boyfriend when she first started college but chose to end the relationship because her boyfriend would not let her go out with her friends to dance. She was in a relationship with him for a year, but never told her parents for fear of being shouted at. If she has problems she goes to her aunt for advice. She understands and listens, unlike her mother, who would probably scold.

Luz thinks there is not much information available about relationships and sexual health. She thinks there should be a psychologist in colleges, with whom they could discuss sex and the diseases that this can bring.

Luz doesn't think there have been many changes in her community over the past three years, but has noticed that there are now more surveillance cameras in towns. She would like more of these to be put in rural areas. She thinks there is more crime, and local officials do nothing to solve this problem. On the one hand where she lives is good because people can make money, but on the other there is a lot of insecurity and theft. She thinks there should be investment in building sports and recreation centres so that young people do not always have to meet in bars. She thinks that people her age should go on strike to bring these changes about because, she says, all they do is talk.

She is excited about being able to vote for the first time in municipal elections. Currently she is not a member of any community group, but would like to join a group that helps poor people:

*"I see people in need. I have everything I need; I have food and shelter. However, there are some who have no shelter or clothing. Children suffer most of all. They do not even have proper shoes or clothes; they cannot study. Everyone is entitled to an education. I get sad when I see they cannot study."*

Luz says her younger sister is studying administration at the same university. They both hope they can pool their knowledge to help their parents in their business. She has started thinking about what else she might do after she finishes her accountancy course: "I no longer think like I used to. Now I think more about my future, and what I will do when I finish my studies in a year's time. I worry about what will become of me." She is concerned about not being able to find a job, because there is a lot of competition and you need experience to get a job.

She thinks that if she gets a job her parents will not worry so much about her. Luz says that having seen her parents work hard running their own business, she knows how difficult this is:

*"What I see is that people [with their own businesses] are mostly suffering. If you do not have a fixed, permanent job, some days it is hard to make money. If you have a job, your salary is safe. You don't depend on customers."*

She says that one day she would like to live in a warmer place. She says many young people move away to work and study. She might set up her own accountancy firm. She has talked about this with her three friends and they thought they could share an office between the three of them. She believes she will be able to achieve her goals because she has the support of parents and friends.

## Improvements in infrastructure and wealth

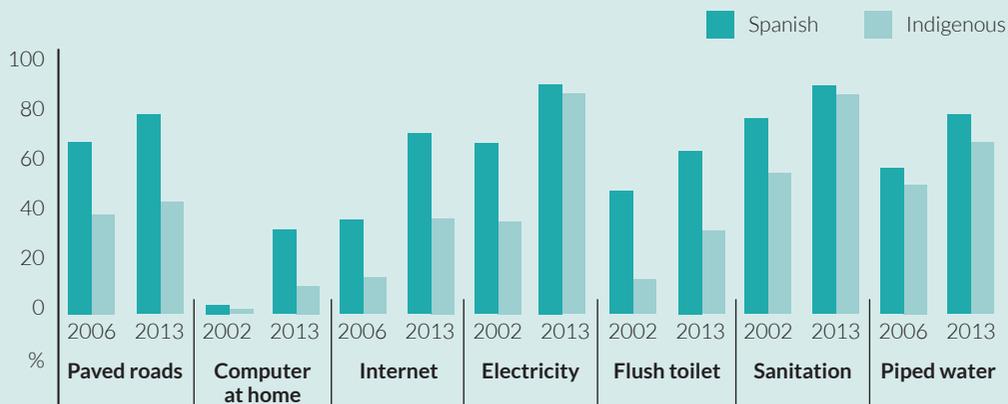
Luz lives in San Román, a small city that has seen a number of improvements in recent years, with a new paved road, schools and hospitals, the internet and cable TV. But Luz says she is worried about crime and insecurity and mentions the rise in the number of bars as a problem too.

Peru's economy grew at an average annual rate of 6 per cent between 2002 and 2012, and monetary poverty fell from 59 per cent to 24 per cent over the same period. Among Young Lives families, average real household expenditure rose by 40 per cent between 2006 and 2013, although the average wealth of the poorest families would have had to increase by 76 per cent to be equal that of better-off families.

For all the Young Lives families, there were improvements in access to basic services – by 2013, 94 per cent of families had access to electricity, 93 per cent had access to improved sanitation (a flush toilet or a pit latrine), and 79 per cent had access to piped water. In addition, 62 per cent can now access the internet and 71 per cent of communities, like San Román, have paved roads – though often this is only the main roads.

Overall, many of the Young Lives families now have better services and a better standard of living than they did a few years ago, although there is still room for improvement, particularly for communities in rural areas and for indigenous communities.

### Access to services in Peru



**Source:** Alan Sanchez and Guido Melendez (2014) *Changes in Household Welfare: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Peru.*



# Fabricio's story

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**Like Manuel, Fabricio is from a Quechua indigenous family. He is the youngest of six children. The family live in a rural area and have a farm. He splits the day between going to school, helping his parents on the farm and looking after the cows. His parents have both suffered from ill health for a number of years. This has affected the family's income, and for Fabricio, it has meant that he has had to stay with them to help, now that his older siblings have all left home. He clearly feels rather resentful of this...**

Fabricio is 12 and feels that since last time the Young Lives researchers visited, he has grown up. He says he now considers himself a teenager and has been told that his voice will change. His father has taught him to do more on the farm, for example "to plant potatoes, root vegetables, barley". But he also feels increasingly resentful of all the work he has to do. He does it because his mother is not well but sometimes he feels angry and says he can't control his anger. He talks a lot about being "bored".

Fabricio feels that he could help his parents financially by working on someone else's farm if necessary. "I can work for a week and the money that I earn, I can give to my mum ... I can earn 100 soles [about 3 US dollars]."

He talks about the death of his grandmother, which made him feel sad, and how his grandpa moved out of the family home. He says his grandpa used to go into the kitchen at night and steal cheese in order to exchange it for alcohol. At first his parents blamed Fabricio, but finally his father discovered who it really was and so his grandpa moved out. Fabricio says he would still have preferred his grandpa to stay. Now he is the only one left in the house with his parents.

His misses his sister, because they used to look after the cows together, and now he has to do it on his own. The first time, he was sad and "frightened because the cows might escape".

He says the family have financial problems because his sister, who lives in Lima, was ill. He hints at mental health problems, for which his parents sent traditional remedies. Another sister is going to college and this is also a drain on the family finances. She failed her exams and had to retake them and this cost money. And recently his father was godfather in a local marriage, which involved spending money organising the party.

Fabricio's parents call him "Papicha" which means 'son' in Quechua, their mother tongue. He says he has not been doing that well in school lately. His mother, who was interviewed in Quechua, says: "The teachers do not teach well. They come when they want and leave early." She wants her son to learn to speak Spanish well. She also says there have been incidents of violence between boys at the school. On one occasion Fabricio was pushed when he won a sports game and his mother went to complain. She thinks that if this does not improve they might send him to the school his sister attends.

Fabricio's mother says that when he first went to secondary school he "was afraid to go ... because he thought maybe the teachers would be bad". But soon he said to her: "I like studying." She says it is important for him to study because he will be able to "*make something of himself*". She herself did not go to school and cannot read, and while her husband started school, he did not finish.

She says she doesn't really know what Fabricio learns at school, because his father is the one who sees his books, but she knows that he learns mathematics. She says that all her children have finished school except Fabricio and his sister.

At break time Fabricio says he plays football with his friends, though sometimes they get into fights. He says most of the boys and girls of his age are well behaved and do their homework, although some are rude and swear a lot. Some boys tease girls: "Hello, hello ... come and sit next to me ...". He thinks these boys should not "behave like this, but behave well, and think about their studies".

He likes living where he is, and says: "To my mum I say, 'Thank you for living in this town.' " There have been improvements. For example, the road has been paved, which makes it easier for tourists to come, but also means that cars drive fast and there can be accidents. He thinks the area could be improved and "made prettier".

## Indigenous children

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Manuel and Fabricio both come from Quechua families and both are the first generation to go to school for any length of time. Their parents, particularly their mothers, speak Quechua rather than Spanish.

Over 40 per cent of Peru's population come from indigenous groups, of which the Quechua and the Aymara are the largest. They tend to live in rural areas and are the most disadvantaged portion of the population. Although the incidence of poverty among indigenous people has decreased in the last ten years, the wealth gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people has not.

Legally, bilingual primary education should be available in all schools. Manuel and Fabricio live in an area where there are lots of other indigenous people, but the schools teach in Spanish rather than Quechua, which puts them at a disadvantage because they started school speaking only Quechua. Young Lives research has found that indigenous children are not able to catch up, and so lose ground to non-indigenous children even in the first three years of school, and often obtain lower scores in academic tests. They are more likely to repeat grades than their Spanish-speaking peers and only half as likely to finish secondary school: Manuel, for example, was over-age for his grade by the age of 12 and a few years later dropped out altogether, when he travelled with his father to pick coffee.

Young Lives research has found that indigenous children who attend schools where they learn in their own language do better at maths and just as well in language than children who attend Spanish-medium schools. This has important implications for policy because bilingual education can help to ensure that indigenous children, who are often disadvantaged in a range of other ways, do not lose out educationally as well.

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**Sources:** Irma Arteaga and Paul Glewwe (2014) *Achievement Gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Children in Peru*, Young Lives Working Paper 130; Disa Hynsjö and Amy Damon (2015) *Bilingual Education in Latin America: Does Quechua-Medium Education Improve Peruvian Indigenous Children's Academic Achievement?* Young Lives Working Paper 136.



# Cecilia's story

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**Cecilia is the youngest of seven children. She is very close to her sisters. The family are not well off and her father's illness has made the situation even more difficult. But Cecilia and her parents are all determined that she will finish secondary school and, ideally, go on to college...**

Cecilia is 12. There have been a number of changes in her household recently. Four of her older siblings and her grandfather moved out, so she lives with her parents and two remaining siblings.

She says that since the last time Young Lives researchers visited, she has grown up: she no longer plays like she did when she was little. She enjoys watching soaps on television. She has started high school. She has grown, but she is not in the group who are the tallest in the class, which she is relieved about as she would be teased and "called a giraffe". She says she thinks she is not as annoying as she used to be. Her parents used to hit her with a stick when she misbehaved and now they only tell her off, for example when she forgets to do the dishes.

At first she says she thinks she is an adolescent and then says no, she is still a child. She defines puberty as the time that girls get their periods. Her mother told her not to be afraid and that this was a "normal change".

The other thing that is different is that the family have moved house. Her father used to work in the local market, repairing shoes, but he has been ill and they have had to borrow money to pay for his treatment. The debt is currently being paid off by her older brother, but they still have financial problems at home and this makes her sad. She doesn't like telling people about this. She is worried that she can't help; she would like to work but her parents want her to focus on school.

She doesn't like their current home as much as the last one, which had "more space and grass [to play on]". Now they can't play volleyball because there is no room and the owner of the house has forbidden it. It is also on a busy road and so there is lots of dust. It doesn't have running water and it has communal toilets. But they have adopted a little kitten.

She says she has had good moments in the last three years, such as a visit from her sister, who lives far away. They took photos, went for walks and had a good time. But there were bad times too, like when her parents went away and she was sick. She coughed a lot and had a sore throat. Her brothers had no money to buy medicines. Although her parents bought the medicine when they came back, she says that she is still not completely better.

Cecilia didn't feel ready to start high school. Her brother had warned her that it would be stricter and she would have more homework. Luckily she has a cousin who is also there, which has helped. She has made new friends but still misses the old ones. She says that she has one best friend and they laugh together. She says her friends see her as a good girl who laughs a lot. She doesn't think they would be able to persuade her to do something that she doesn't want to do, for example drink or neglect her school work.

In relation to boys, she says some young people her age think about people of the opposite sex but she thinks they are too young. Besides, "my dad would kill me!". In future, when she is about 25, she might think about such things and she would consult her mother.

She says she decided to go to the government high school because it was less expensive than the private school. She thinks the mathematics teacher in this school is not good but she likes the history teacher. The bathrooms are dirty and there are no plants in the school grounds, and older children drink near the school. There is a lack of security in the area and fights break out between gang members from other schools.

She says that teachers punish the students when they do not behave or when they do not do their work. The most common physical punishment is "pulling the chop", meaning pulling a student's ear. She herself has never been punished in this way. She says most students do not complain when this happens to them, but her friend threatened to tell the headteacher if it happened to her. But compared to some other schools she thinks hers is good.

She says she doesn't get much support for her studies at home, except occasionally from her brother with mathematics, but she doesn't enjoy asking him because he often loses patience and shouts at her. She usually tells her mother what has happened each day. Her mother, who is an Aymara speaker, says that she supports Cecilia's studies because she herself only went to school until Grade 2. This also means she can't help Cecilia much with her homework and doesn't really know what she is learning. But she believes that going to secondary school will mean that her daughter has a better life than she did, although she cannot say precisely how this might be. She hopes that Cecilia will "know more".

Cecilia hasn't missed any classes yet this year. She thinks some children miss school because they are poor and have to work to help their mothers; for example, for boys, shining shoes and for girls, selling eggs or jelly in disposable cups. She says that if she was in this situation she would feel bad about "knowing nothing".

Cecilia says the most important thing in secondary school is to learn more. For example, civic education has helped her to express herself better.

Sometimes she accompanies her mother, who rents out mobile phones and advises customers. Last year, she used to go with her sister to sort vegetables in the market from 9am to 7pm on Saturdays. She was paid 10 soles (about 3 US dollars) but didn't enjoy it because her sister used to get cross with her. She also used to sell prickly pears with her mother in the school holidays, which she enjoyed more. She says these experiences have helped her to learn things; for example, to use mental arithmetic.

At home she does her homework, sweeps her room, helps in the kitchen, makes her bed and her parents' bed and at weekends washes her school uniform. Sometimes she gets bored. Occasionally it is hard to fit these activities in with homework, but if her mother sees her struggling, she will tell her to give her homework priority. Cecilia says she believes that learning at home is also useful. Her mother has taught her to knit and she will be able to make clothes for her nephews. Her mother also taught her to cook, which will be useful in the future, when she has her own family.

When she was 9 she said that she wanted to be a doctor when she grew up. Now she says she would like to finish high school and study in college to be a hair stylist, like the sister of a classmate. After college she would like to work in a beauty salon. But she is not sure she will be able to realise this dream as she knows that college courses are more difficult and her parents might not be able to afford it. She wonders if she might be able to work and study at the same time, or perhaps her older brothers could help.

## Finishing school and finding work

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Cecilia is not alone in her desire to finish school and go to college. Secondary school completion rates among 17 to 19 year olds in Peru have increased from 48 per cent in 2001 to 69 per cent in 2013.

The prospect of leaving school and going to college, accessing training or finding paid work is a daunting one for all young people. The Peruvian Government has introduced support for young people from poorer families, for example through Beca 18, a scholarship programme, and Pro-Joven, for job training.

But Young Lives research has also shown the many challenges that young people face as they move into adulthood. They may need to support their families, or their families may not, for many reasons, be able to support them in their ambitions for this next stage of their lives, particularly if they are poor, rural or indigenous.

Around 70 per cent of the Young Lives Older Cohort have completed secondary education. Around 12 per cent are still in school (mainly those who are a little younger) but 16 per cent have left school with no secondary qualifications.

Children from better-off households are much more likely to go to university (35 per cent) than children from the poorest families (only 3 per cent). Overall, 39 per cent have started tertiary education.

Almost 40 per cent say they have been involved in paid work in the past 12 months and are no longer in education. This group are more likely to come from poor backgrounds. A quarter, more boys than girls, are now working as well as continuing with their education.

Among those who are involved in paid work, 21 per cent work in a family business. Only 14 per cent say they have a written contract with their employer, and very few receive formal labour benefits such as health insurance or access to social security.

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**Sources:** Santiago Cueto and Alejandra Miranda (2015) *Education and Learning: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Peru*; Alan Sanchez and Guido Melendez (2015) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Peru*.



# Country Context: Vietnam

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Over the last 30 years, Vietnam has been transformed from one of the poorest countries in the world, with per capita income of around US\$100, into a lower-middle-income country with per capita income of over US\$2,000 by the end of 2014. Its per capita GDP growth since 1990 has been among the fastest in the world.

The country has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty; the number of people living in extreme poverty dropped from over 50 per cent in the early 1990s to 3 per cent today. However, there are still serious inequalities between the ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups with the latter accounting for 15 per cent of the population but more than half of the poorest sector of society.

The people of Vietnam are better educated and have a higher life expectancy than those in most countries with a similar per capita income. The maternal mortality ratio has dropped below the upper-middle-income country average, while the under-5 mortality rate has fallen by half. Access to basic services and infrastructure has also improved considerably; while in 1993 less than half the population had electricity, it is now available to almost all households. Access to clean water and modern sanitation has risen from less than 50 per cent of all households to more than 75 per cent.

As Vietnam moves from being an agrarian society to a developed economy, this new stage of development will require government investment in a skilled labour force, improved infrastructure and new technologies.

**H'Mai** and **Y Sinh** live in Van Lam, a poor mountainous community on the south central coast with a population of around 6,000 people, predominantly from ethnic minority groups. Most people work in agriculture or animal husbandry, though households have become increasingly involved in trade and services over the past decade, so the area now boasts internet shops, barber shops, fruit sellers, and cake and sweet stalls. Some parents work in the fields in the mountains, requiring them to spend time away from home, often accompanied by their children.

**Dao** lives in Nghia Tan, an urban neighbourhood of around 20,000 that is dependent on agricultural production, fishing, commercial services, transportation, small businesses, paper production and light engineering. There are a large number of poor households in the area. **Duy, Hung** and **Lien** live in Van Tri, a prosperous rural area in the Red River Delta with around 10,000 inhabitants. Traditionally people depended on agriculture, but since 2009 a lot of agricultural land has been taken for business or road construction, and a large number of people have moved into growing bonsai tree and flowers.

The roads in Van Lam and Van Tri are poor. In Van Tri, some of the local roads are being upgraded using money contributed by the Government and the local people. Motorcycles and bicycles are the most common forms of transportation. In Van Lam, although around half of the households had installed flush toilets by 2007, others left waste and rubbish outside, leading to the pollution of public water sources. Electricity was also insufficient at this time; however, by 2010, 94 per cent of households in the commune had access to electricity. New housing has been built over the past decade. But poverty remains a problem; the number of households certified as poor actually increased between 2009 and 2011.

All three areas have primary and secondary schools reasonably close by, and since 2010 Van Lam and Van Tri also have had pre-schools. In Nghia Tan, there was already a government pre-school, and there are also some private pre-schools, led by retired teachers who have received further training on working with young children. There are also extra-curricular programmes to support weak pupils in schools. There are scholarships and programmes that subsidise school fees for children from poor households.

In all three sites, poor households are provided with medical insurance and there is a free healthcare programme for children under 6 under a 2009 government regulation. In Nghia Tan, the local government also frequently organises campaigns against violence and child abuse.

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\* <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>



# Lien's story

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Lien grew up in an economic development zone just outside Hanoi. Her parents worked long hours and she often had to help with her two younger siblings. As she grew up she also did paid work, sewing shopping bags for an international furniture store in order to supplement the family income. In Grade 2, Lien discovered that her father had had many affairs and eventually he left her mother for his mistress, which has been a great source of sorrow for Lien. But she persevered in school, and has now managed to get into university...

There have been many changes in Lien's life in the past three years. She has left home to study at university in Hanoi, her sister has got married, and her grandfather has died, which made her very sad. Her father is still living with his mistress.

*"My dad is still the same. He has still left my family.*

Do you know anything about your dad's other family?

*I am not sure.*

Are you not going to ask him?

*No. I am not going to.*

Does your brother-in-law know that your dad has another family?

*I don't know if he does. But I think so. I thought he would change when he had a son-in-law but he hasn't."*

Lien's mother tells her to tolerate the situation:

*"Just take it easy, and don't think too much. Just let him be. He is just like that. I always have to be gentle with him. If I am tense, [he] will get tense too, maybe ask for a divorce, and [then] where would I live? It is important to save face so his family, the neighbours, and my own brothers and sisters think there is no problem between me and my husband. I never say anything negative to my own family, to keep the image that he is still a good husband ..."*

She adds that she always encouraged their father to be close to his children. "[My children] still care for their father. They don't stay away from him like other children might [in the same situation]."

Lien says she was really happy when she got into university. Her mother said:

*"Everyone loved us They said: 'That family - all the children go to college.' Before my daughter left for university, I bought sweets and invited the neighbours for tea, and the whole village came. Some people gave a few hundreds, some 20-30,000 dong [just over 1 US dollar]."*

Even now that she is in university, Lien comes home most weekends because it isn't far. She is studying Social Work at the University of Labour and Social Affairs. The course will take four years and she is in her first year. She has to pay full tuition fees and achieve 132 credits at a cost of 173,000 dong per credit (about 8 US dollars). She also has to pay for health insurance, which is more than 200,000 dong a year.

She says that classes are really crowded: "In some subjects, there are 60 people. But most of my classes are over 100." This means that the teachers don't know any of the students individually. Of the 50 people in her immediate class, only four are boys. The work is hard: the students start at 6 or 6.30am and work until 5.30pm.

She sleeps in a dormitory with 11 other girls. She heard about it from her cousin's cousin. They each have a padlocked locker. They have to go out to eat unless they have something like instant noodles, which she often has for breakfast. She says they all get on well but there is sometimes competition for the bathroom. They don't have hot water so have to boil water when they need it.

"Do you have a room captain?"

*Yes.*

Who is it?

*It's me! They said that the person who was here first would be room captain. I got here first so they voted for me. Since I was doing my job pretty well, they voted for me again. I have to schedule the chores timetable, tell people to keep things clean and organise and pay the electricity bill."*

Academically, however, Lien is worried that she is not doing well: "I do Ho Chi Minh's ideology, Marxism, general Law, family studies, introduction to social work, gymnastics and running, and social policy. Mostly everything is bad."

"How do they grade this?"

*Coursework and regular attendance count for 40 per cent. The final exam is 60 per cent. Last semester, I only got one C and the rest were Ds.*

How come?

*If I am five minutes late, they won't let me in, which counts as an absence.*

Then why don't you try to get to class earlier?"

*Sometimes I get there on time. Since I live close by, I have become lazy."*

She had considered studying accountancy, but was advised by a teacher that if she studied social work there would be a lot of job opportunities when she finished:

*"He said it was a hard subject to take but it was interesting. He said something else, which was really appealing: I could take care of older people or children, work in a ward or in a company that needs social workers. He said that many white-collar workers have left their parents at home. They could hire me to take care of their parents."*

Her mother is concerned that they don't know anyone working in this field so it might be difficult for Lien to find a job. She cites the experience of Lien's sister, who went to university and then couldn't find work, until finally:

*"There was someone we know who was teaching at a high school who said that she knew someone. [They] said, with 150 million dong [about 7,000 US dollars], she could get a permanent contract.*

*First we needed to make a down-payment of 80 million dong. We put down that payment, and she was about to start, and then [they] said we needed put down another 70 million dong, and then it turned out it was not sure when she would get the permanent contract ... so [we] stopped. If we had to borrow that much we would die. They were playing tricks.*

So who helped her get the job?

*Before she graduated, a cousin who worked at an export company told her to apply. So they asked a lady working in the kitchen who knows a lot of people. Then in June two years ago, they called her.*

How much did it cost?

*It did not cost much. Just a few million, and gifts. So she got the job. Otherwise it would be very problematic, as there is nothing to do at home."*

Her mother says of Lien:

*"She is a good girl, and she is hard-working. She knows that I am working, so she takes care of the housework, or if her siblings need anything, she helps take care of them. I just want her to graduate, find a job and marry.*

The most important thing is to get married?

*The most important thing is to get a job ... parents want their children to have stable jobs, good husbands, that's it. If they are doing well, sometimes they might give us small things. For example, they might say: 'Today I got my salary, I will give you some new clothes.' That would make [me] happy. No need for any big dreams. Just dream that in my old age [the children] will bring their children home and I will look after them. That's happiness."*

## Youth employment

Vietnam has seen many years of economic growth and a reduction in poverty. It is now focused on sustaining this growth and competing as an industrialising middle-income country.

It is interesting that Lien decided to study social work because she felt it would offer her good job opportunities, but that she is also thinking about accountancy. She is among the 50 per cent of Young Lives older children in Vietnam who are still in education at the age of 19, and among the 19 per cent who are at university. Most, like Lien, are studying full time, but 16 per cent are doing paid work at the same time.

More young women are still in education (53 per cent) than young men (43 per cent), and young people from wealthier households are much more likely to be in education (62 per cent) than those from poorer families (27 per cent).

The likelihood of continuing in education is closely related to household wealth, with 62 per cent of young people from better-off households still enrolled compared with just 27 per cent from the poorest households. Of those who have left school, over two-thirds did so without completing upper secondary school. A third, mostly from the poorest families, are now in full-time paid work – 45 per cent of young men compared with just a quarter of young women.

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**Sources:** Nguyen Thang and Le Thuc Duc (2014) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Vietnam*.



# Hung's story

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**Hung grew up with his older brother, his parents and his grandparents in a small house in a village. His parents have a smallholding and Hung has been working on the farm since he was 10. Hung's brother dropped out of school in Grade 9 and their parents were therefore keen for Hung to continue. But in the years that followed the family experienced a series of disasters. Their crop of orange trees was ruined by floods, their pigs contracted foot-and-mouth disease and had to be put down and his brother fell ill. Hung dropped out of school in Grade 10 and found work. His brother is now married. But for now Hung has made a different career choice...**

Hung wasn't at home when the Young Lives researcher arrived, but she was able to travel the three hours with his family to visit him. He has joined the army.

Hung says he failed the exam for admission to Grade 10 in 2009 and decided he didn't want to do retakes: "My dad told me to retake, or to go to complementary school, but I told him I wouldn't continue studying."

His father says: "We only have two sons; we encouraged him to retake the exam. But he knew he wasn't good at studying, so he decided to start working."

Hung then went to work for a company, but it went bankrupt after six months. He found another job as a construction worker. But when he came home for the Lunar New Year holiday at the end of 2012, his enlistment documents arrived for his military service.

Although he was doing well with the construction company, he decided to do his military service, along with about five or six other young men his age. He knew it would be tough, but there was another reason he thought he should go now:

*"If I didn't go, they would keep sending the enlistment request until I was 25. By then I [might be] working far from home and [if I] received the enlistment call, I would have to come back to register and pay a fee, and it would take time. So I decided I'd rather go now."*

His parents were pleased. His father said he was "the pride of our entire family".

Now that Hung has been in the army for a year, he has got used to it, but he says it was hard at first:

*"When I first joined the army, it was very tiring. In the first three months, I had to learn everything. Studying politics and regulations, learning to shoot, throw grenades, use explosives, and so on. There was no free time to spend with friends. But now it's different. I lead other comrades. I went through that process for a year, and now I instruct others. We just eat, rest, go to the field to train, and come back to learn the rules. In the evening we rest and sleep."*

He says that he thinks life in the army is easier on the whole than life at home:

*“At home, even when it is a day off, anyone who is a farmer will have to go to the farm. For soldiers, during days off, we just eat, clean the house and do some household chores. There is a clear timetable here, even for sleeping – we go to bed at exactly 9.30pm. We have to wake up at 5am. At home, if it is Sunday and I have a day off, I can sleep until 7am. But here I can’t.”*

One thing that is difficult, he says, is that it is “hard to express my feelings [here]. It is not like when I was at home. Talking and behaving is also different, I can’t use swear words, or my superior will reprimand me.”

While he has been in the army, his brother has married, and his parents’ financial situation has improved. The family has not had any more crop failures or animals that died and they have built a new house, which Hung says is “more spacious” than the last one. His parents were able to pay two-thirds of the cost and relatives helped with the building and with a loan. Hung says:

*“The loan wasn’t a lot or a little. During the first few months, we were a bit worried, but later we felt normal. Our uncles said that we could repay the loan when we had money, but we still needed to take care of it just in case the uncles’ families needed money in an emergency; if we hadn’t had enough to repay the loan at that time, it would have been tough.”*

When he is finally demobilised, which won’t be for at least another year, Hung says he will try to find a stable job, get married and become independent:

*“I will try to build a family with a wife and have children, and have a separate house without relying on my parents. When I was small, I always had to rely on my parents, but at 18, 20 years old, I should live independently. I should only ask for my parents’ help sometimes. For example, when I have children, I can ask my parents to look after my children on days off. That’s all.”*

Hung’s father says: “He will probably get married in the next five years. Raising a family is certainly possible. But regarding career changes, we need to wait until he demobilises to decide. It’s hard to tell right now.”

## Improvements in infrastructure

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Thanks to government programmes and targets in Vietnam, such as the National Target Programme for access to clean water and sanitation by 2015, there have been improvements in infrastructure in many of the Young Lives communities in the past few years, which has meant that the Younger Cohort have grown up with better access to basic services such as clean water and sanitation. This has important implications for children's health, nutrition and well-being.

Government investment has meant that access to improved sanitation is steadily improving, increasing from under 50 per cent in 2002 to over 75 per cent in 2013. Almost all children in urban areas now have access to sanitation and the progress made in rural areas is up from under 40 per cent in 2002 to 70 per cent in 2013. The gap in access to sanitation between better-off and poorer households is large but narrowing over time.

Similarly, much progress has been made in access to safe drinking water since 2002, particularly for the disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minority and poorer households. In 2002, few Young Lives ethnic minority households had access to safe drinking water, but this increased to 64 per cent by 2013. As a result, the gap between urban and rural children, as well as between better-off and poorer households, decreased steadily. However, despite significant overall progress, by 2013, 36 per cent of ethnic minority children and 27 per cent of the poorest households still had no access to safe drinking water.

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**Sources:** Nguyen Thang and Le Thuc Duc (2014) *Nutrition and Health: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Vietnam*, Round 4 Fact sheet.



# Duy's story

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**Duy's family are farmers. He lives with his parents and his younger sister, but he doesn't get on with her at all ... He has started going to secondary school, which he enjoys much more than primary school, even though he has had a number of violent incidents. He also has some money-making activities on the side. And he has a secret: he has decided that he wants to be a singer when he grows up...**

Duy is now 13. The most important thing that has happened to his family is that his parents have bought a new farm. They breed chickens, pigs and dogs. His parents stay there overnight so he and his younger sister sleep at their grandfather's house. Duy says that his parents' involvement in the farm has meant that he has extra responsibilities at home:

*"Before, I didn't have to cook the rice and boil the vegetables, but now that I am older my mum says I have to."*

His mother says:

*"When he was in Grade 4, he couldn't really help much; since he moved to Grades 6 and 7, he helps a bit more. Daughters help parents a lot, but sons are always wanting to play. He always makes excuses: sometimes he says there aren't any vegetables, sometimes he says he forgot."*

Duy says he has grown taller and put on three kilograms in the past three years. But he still has a difficult relationship with his younger sister: "Sometimes we get along, sometimes we don't."

Duy says that he prefers secondary school to primary school: "[Secondary school] is 'cooler'. The primary school had fewer good teachers. My class has 44 students, mostly boys."

His mother is mostly satisfied with the school:

*"In general, compared with other places, the current school is good. However, I feel that the school cares more about quantity than quality. When he first started secondary school, he was excited. He told me: 'Mum, moving to secondary school is very good. I like it. The school is beautiful.'"*

But the work was hard for him at first: "In the beginning he told me: 'Mum, the assignments are difficult.' I told him: 'So you have to study harder.' Later on I didn't hear him complaining about anything."

She is also worried because the school is further away and he goes on his bike:

*"I told him to ride slowly; sometimes he even rides the bike without any hands. Once I saw him ride on the road like that and I said to him: 'Do you want to go to hospital?' I told him to pay attention on the road; otherwise, he will not be able to brake in time when someone speeds out from the village."*

Both Duy and his mother talk about the violence in school:

*"In secondary school my son has been beaten up by other students, several times. He often fights with his friends too. Just over a month ago, a student and his uncle beat him up. One of them held*

*him, while the other punched him. So my son was scared and didn't dare to go straight from the village to school but used another route. He was beaten up twice more: the next day and day after that. So I went straight to the house of the child who had hit him and confronted him. His parents told him off, so he no longer beats my son."*

Duy tells of another incident, when a boy three grades above him attacked him: "There were two students in my class who smoked cigarettes; I planned to tell their parents. Another classmate knew about my plan and told [a] Grade 9 student, who hit me. My eyes were bruised."

The boy was expelled for this and for other things he had done, but it made Duy nervous of going to school for a time.

He says that one of the other things he likes about secondary school is that teachers hit the children less than they did in primary school: "When we made mistakes, the teachers used to ask us to stand in the corner. The teachers there were cruel."

At home, his parents too used to hit him, but this happens less now he is older. His mother says: "Now I am more lenient, I don't beat them as often. Only when I am extremely angry. Before, I often spanked them, so they were really scared of me. Now they have got used to it." She is still prepared to hit him if he doesn't study or if he misbehaves by playing video games instead of doing his homework.

She thinks he is not working as hard as he did in primary school, and suspects it is not only because he plays games with his friends, but also because he has some money-making activities on the side – activities that Duy himself has not mentioned:

*"He has a jungle fowl and a rooster. He sells his rooster to get money to buy a new one, or he gives the rooster to his uncle, and then takes the money. My son also bought a second-hand phone, a broken one at 20,000 dong [about 1 US dollar] and he fixed it, and then sold it to other children his age for around 50,000 to 70,000 dong, or 100,000 dong, so he got some profit. Recently he has acquired a piggy bank, so he puts the money into it."*

Reminded by the interviewer of his wish to be a doctor, Duy says that this has changed.

So what is your dream right now?

*I think that I am good at singing, and I like that.*

I see. So now you want to become a singer, right?

*Yes, I do.*

Duy says he hasn't told his parents about this, but his mother says she knows. She says:

*"I want him to study as much as possible so that in the future he will be able to get a stable career. I've told him that if he doesn't pass the exam to get into Grade 10, he should [leave school]. I am not sure if I will let him go to complementary school, because I think going to complementary school isn't useful for anything."*

She says she has the same ambitions for her son and her daughter:

*"Regardless of gender, they are my children. If they can study, I will let them study. I never think that one should be treated better than the other. We always tell them: 'You have the opportunity to study, yet you don't try your best. Look at your parents. We have to work very hard to earn money. Educated people can earn money much more easily. Some people just sit at their desk, sign some papers and get a lot of money.'"*

Complementary school (lớp bổ túc), or continuing education, offers vocational training for those who cannot attend formal schooling, for example if they failed the Grade 10 entry exams. In these programmes, they follow the official curriculum but study fewer subjects. They can continue until Grade 12, and can take university entrance exams.

## Corporal punishment

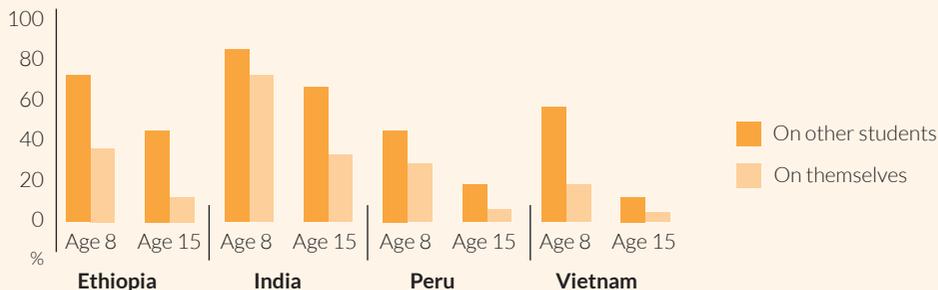
There seems to have been a lot of violence in Duy's life, at home and at school, from his mother, his teachers and other students.

Young Lives has found that corporal punishment of children, which is outlawed in many countries, is still common in all four study countries. The percentage of 8-year-old children who said they had been hit ranged from 78 in India to 38 in Ethiopia, 30 in Peru and 20 in Vietnam. Boys may suffer more than girls: one study found that two-thirds of boys said they had experienced physical violence from teachers, compared to just over 50 per cent of girls.

The overwhelming majority of 8-year-old children said they had witnessed a teacher hitting another child. This ranged from 90 per cent in India to 75 per cent in Ethiopia and more than 50 per cent in both Peru and Vietnam.

In India, Young Lives has found that experiences of violence at school are intertwined with poverty. Violence may occur if a child misses school, does not complete homework or does not understand lessons, or is tired because they have had to balance school and work, or is unable to pay fees on time or buy the proper uniform.

### Children's reports of teachers' use of physical punishment in the past week, at ages 8 and 15, 2009



Young Lives has found that younger children are more at risk than older ones, and that boys are significantly more likely than girls to say they have experienced corporal punishment, although girls say they are at greater risk of other forms of humiliating treatment and sexual violence. In India, Peru and Vietnam, the violence is also more likely to be directed at children from disadvantaged households

Violence and verbal abuse in schools, by teachers and peers, are the main reasons children say they dislike school, ranging from more than 25 per cent in India to more than 50 per cent in Vietnam. Some give these as reasons for leaving school altogether.

Significantly, Young Lives has also found that corporal punishment experienced by 8-year-old children is linked with lower mathematics scores when they reach the age of 12, compared with peers who said they had not been hit. So it also has negative effects on learning.

**Sources:** Virginia Morrow and Renu Singh (2016, forthcoming) *Understanding Children's Experiences of Violence in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India*; Maria-Jose Ogando Portela and Kirielly Pells (2015) *Corporal Punishment in Schools: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*, UNICEF Innocenti Discussion Paper 2015-02.



# H'Mai's story

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**H'Mai is from the H'Roi ethnic minority group, like Y Sinh. She is the oldest of five children. The family live in a rural area where many of the other families are also poor. H'Mai had to leave school in Grade 6 because her family couldn't afford to pay the fees and there was no-one else to look after her younger siblings while her parents were at work. At 13, she was also helping on the family farm and going to night school in the evenings. By 16, she was married and had just had a baby boy, which meant that the last time Young Lives researchers visited they were not able to see her. But life in the past three years has been very hard for H'Mai...**

H'Mai explains that she knew her husband's family a little because they lived nearby. Her husband is a few years older than her and courted her for six months. Asked whether she had any criteria for a good husband, she said:

*"Someone who loves his wife, and who will be a good worker after he gets married.*

And is your husband someone like the person you imagined, someone you hoped for?  
He is a good worker.

What else?

*[Laugh and silence]"*

After six months of courtship, his parents came to ask her parents for her hand in marriage in a traditional ceremony called the giap. H'Mai explains: "Giap means the parents on both sides, and the elders in the village, and some sisters and relatives, meet one another, and if both sides agree, you can get married."

She says she was the first of her friends to get married, and was too young even to get a licence, which allows young men to marry at 20 and young women at 18. Most of her friends advised her that it was fine to get married at 17 or 18, but that 20 would be too late. She would be considered "not saleable", they said. Nobody would love her ... At the time, she says: "I was happy and sad. Happy because I had found a life partner. And sad because I had to leave my parents."

Now she says that it was only when she went to live with her in-laws that she realised how hard married life actually was. She would advise other young girls that before getting married, one should get to know his family, not just the boyfriend.

She speaks here from bitter experience. She had a small wedding, which her parents had to borrow money to pay for. After she was married she moved in with her husband's family. She was nervous, but her mother had taught her how to behave as a daughter-in-law; for example, by speaking softly and politely.

In the beginning, her mother-in-law was very loving, caring for her and often giving her money. But after H'Mai became pregnant, she changed completely. Every time H'Mai's husband came home drunk, she advised him to leave his wife. After that, the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship got steadily worse:

*"My mother-in-law, she is very weird. She did the same thing [with all her sons]. After they got married, she wanted their wives to work for her. She did not let them go out to work or back to their parents' houses. Maybe she is jealous or something."*

The situation became so bad in the end that H'Mai moved back to her parents' house. She gave birth in hospital with her mother helping her. She had a difficult birth, because the baby was in the breech position. She almost had a caesarian and it was very painful. She says she thought she might die.

H'Mai talks a lot about the tensions between her family and her husband's family. After she had moved out, her mother-in-law came to her parents' home to return the silver necklace given to the groom's family at the wedding, and to bring a cow and a calf as compensation. She would not let her son visit her, says H'Mai:

*"His mother did not let him to come over here. If he wanted to, he had to go down on his knees and beg his mother, saying: 'I miss my baby so much. Can I go over there to see him? I will come home.' But she would not let him go."*

He could not even come to see you secretly?

*"She guarded her son like guarding her husband. Since the day they returned the cow and the necklace to us, since that day, that month, until now, when we have our own place, they never looked at our faces again."*

If her mother-in-law happened to see her grandson "she saw him from afar, and she would spit and curse him and say that he was a ghost, and he was not her grandson."

H'Mai and her husband lived apart for a year. H'Mai's mother says that this was very hard on her daughter.

*"When they were separated, it affected her a lot. She did not eat anything for almost a month. I was afraid she would get sick. I shouted at her: 'You have to eat. He has left you, so let him go. You have to try to eat and be healthy. You have to take care of your son. If you are lucky, you will find another husband. If you are not, you just raise this boy. This boy – when he grows up, he will take care of you.'*

*She had to take care of her son all on her own. Her friends were all married, with children, and they had happy families. She gave birth to her child, and his father left them when the child did not even know his father's face. She cried all the time. I was worried, so I asked some aunts to come and comfort her, to tell her to eat, to take care of her son. Otherwise, if she kept thinking silly thoughts, she would be sick, and we are too poor – we would not have any money to take her to the hospital."*

After a year, H'Mai's mother moved away from the village, and her husband came to ask her to come back to him.

He must love you, right?

*Yes. Because he loves me, that's why his family hate me. He wanted to come back to me, so he disobeyed his parents and left them.*

It was obviously not easy. H'Mai's son did not even recognise his father at first. Her parents invited the elders of the village and other people to come to witness the reunion.

In June 2012, she and her husband asked their parents to let them move out and they moved into a temporary house in the same courtyard. H'Mai says she dreams of being allocated a piece of land. Her mother says:

*"I hope one day she has a house to live in, rice, clothes and a piece of land, and that she is not too poor. Her husband is now back, thank God. I was poor but I just hope that my children are not poor. I feel sorry for them. I hope that my grandson will be healthy and a good student when he grows up."*

What do you imagine H'Mai's life will be like in the next five years?

*I wish the two of them could find a piece of gold to build a house!"*

## Early marriage

H'Mai says that she doesn't think girls should get married as early as she did, because she has had such a hard time. She was too young, and only knew that when you are in love you should get married.

She is not the only one of the Young Lives young women in Vietnam to be married. She says many of her friends are now married too. By the age of 19, 19 per cent of the Young Lives girls and 5 per cent of the boys were married or cohabiting. A total of 74 girls and 12 boys had already had a child of their own. The young people who have married young mostly come from the poorest households in rural areas, and from ethnic minority backgrounds.

### Marriage and parenthood at age 19, Vietnam, 2013



**Source:** Nguyen Thang and Le Thuc Duc (2014) *Youth and Development: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Vietnam*.



# Dao's story

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**Dao has four older brothers, two of whom dropped out of school and all of whom are now working. He is a shy boy, and his father says he doesn't eat enough. His father is a barber, but is struggling to find enough customers. His mother works in the fish market. But the family struggle to make ends meet...**

Many members of the family were asleep when the Young Lives interviewer arrived so it was a good time to talk to Dao:

*"It was about 2.30pm. Dao's older brothers were sleeping on the floor of the living room. His father was sleeping on the chair that he used for his customers. His mother was cleaning up in the kitchen. His sister-in-law was singing lullabies to get her baby to sleep. And Dao was studying. Because everyone was still sleeping, it was a good time for me to interview him. I told Dao: 'Let's go upstairs to talk for a little while.' He agreed straight away."*

But Dao is quite shy and was not very forthcoming. However, he seems happy with his life.

*"I love my family and my family also loves me very much."*

Yes, and what about your friends?

*"My friends love me."*

Dao recently started secondary school. He says he was nervous when he first went: "In the beginning, when I just got to secondary school, I was a little scared, but then I got used to it ... My friends encouraged me. They said: 'Keep trying. There won't be a problem.'"

He says he likes his school, except for the toilets, which are "very smelly. The water tap is not working."

He feels he has grown a little taller in the past three years, and his father agrees:

*"He is growing up. Each year he is getting older, he is different, and he is getting taller. The more he grows up, the more he understands things. His thinking is also different. He is getting more and more active."*

However, Dao's father is also clearly worried about him:

*"He has been malnourished since he was small. At that time we were really poor. He is still a very picky eater. At each meal, he only eats one bowl of rice. If we force him, he will eat one more bite. He eats very sparingly."*

Dao's father says that the family income has fallen in recent years: their main earnings are from his barber shop and the money his wife makes grinding fish in the market, but customer demand has declined, which has forced him to get another job binding documents. "My main income was from my barber shop. In the past, I would do five to ten haircuts a day. Now, I only do a few."

In addition, as all his sons except Dao have grown up and have some work, the family are no longer on the poverty list, which would have meant they received support from the Government. "My children have grown up, and they are working. Each of them takes care of himself. I cannot help them much."

Dao says because they are poor he gets some help from the Government for the extra classes that he takes: "The fee is 100,000 dong [about 5 US dollars] for each subject each month. But because my family is poor, we get a 30 per cent subsidy."

He says after school he sometimes helps his parents with the document binding.

Do you think that children of your age need to do these things to make money?

*We do.*

What are the reasons?

*Everyone in a family has the responsibility to do what they can to increase the family income.*

Dao still thinks that his life is better than that of his parents: "My parents had very difficult lives. My life is much better ... when my parents were small ... they had to work."

His main worry is that his mother has not been well. He is close to her, and says he tries to take care of her, for example by massaging her arms and legs.

The fact that your mum is sick, how does it affect your family?

*It makes our family sad, and it costs money.*

Asked about the future, Dao's father says:

*"I remind him to try and study well. I don't know about his future. He is still too small. He does not know much about anything yet, he is just studying ... I would like him to finish university. But I don't know if I will still be alive to get him through school [laughs]. We will have to see what subjects he is doing well at, and then we can think about it, and he also has to take the exams. Our future depends on our children. If our children are doing better economically, then our family will improve."*

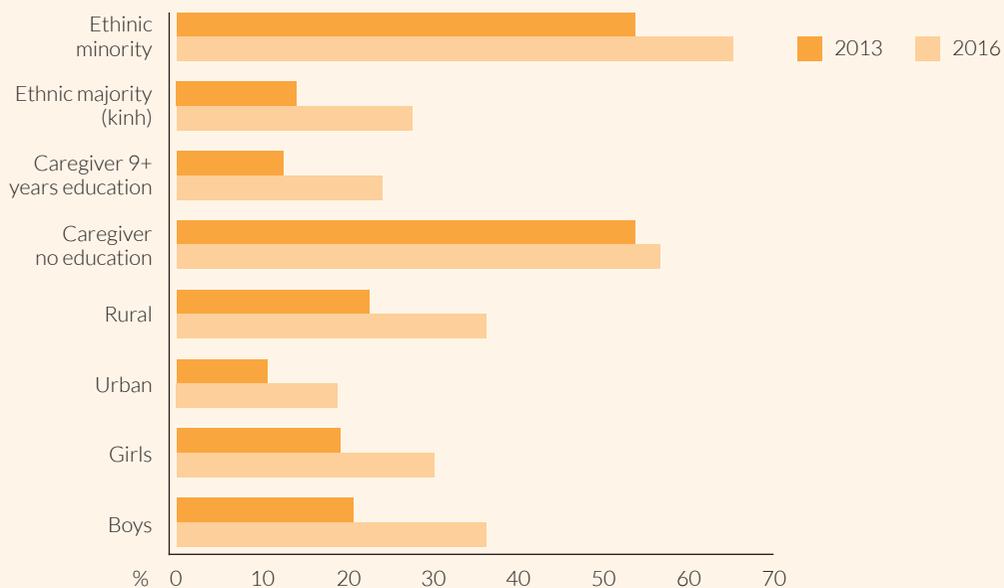
Asked about his future and what he would like to change about himself, Dao says simply that he would like to be "more handsome".

## Nutrition and stunting

Dao's father is clearly worried about how little his son eats. However, levels of malnutrition are falling in Vietnam. Young Lives has seen an improvement by a third in what are known as levels of 'stunting' (low height-for-age) among 12-year-olds like Dao between 2006 and 2013. But children from poor and less educated households and ethnic minorities continue to be most vulnerable.

The Young Lives research design allows a comparison of the two cohorts at the same age and stage, and we find that while in 2006, 36.1 per cent of 12-year-old boys were stunted compared with 30.3 per cent of girls, this figure has now gone down to around 20 per cent for both genders. Stunting in both rural and urban areas has come down, but remains at 22.6 per cent in rural areas. It is also connected with the level of caregivers' education, with more than 50 per cent of children whose parents had no education continuing to be stunted. By contrast only 9 per cent of children whose caregivers had had more than nine years of schooling (and who are likely to have better jobs) were stunted. Finally, there are still large gaps between ethnic minority and majority children, with more than 50 per cent of 12-year-olds from ethnic minorities being stunted in 2013, compared to only 14 per cent of ethnic majority children.

### Percentage of Young Lives 12-year-old children stunted, Vietnam, 2006 and 2013



Stunting at a young age can have considerable physical and cognitive consequences for children as they grow up. Young Lives has found that it is very common, particularly among the poorest groups.

**Sources:** Nguyen Thang and Le Thuc Duc (2014) *Nutrition and Health: Preliminary Findings from the 2013 Young Lives Survey in Vietnam*, Paul Dornan and Kirrily Pells (2014) *From Infancy to Adolescence: Growing Up in Poverty*, Preliminary Findings from Round 4 of Young Lives.



# Y Sinh's story

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**Y Sinh's family comes from the H'Roi ethnic minority group. He speaks his own language, but doesn't speak much Vietnamese. He lives with his mother, sister and stepfather. The family work in the fields for other better-off families. They are very poor and have had to move house many times. Y Sinh has never been to school and has worked from a young age. His mother says she can't see how things are going to improve...**

Y Sinh is about 12 or 13, he is not sure. He was reluctant to be interviewed alone, but when the Young Lives researcher came to speak to his mother and stepfather in the paddy fields, she found that he had been up a tree since early morning, watching out for her. He also took part in a group exercise, but said very little. He was the only child in the group of eight boys who had not been to school, though one other had dropped out.

Y Sinh says that he is living temporarily with his paternal grandparents as his mother and stepfather are out in the fields all day, working in the rice paddy or in cassava. He says he loves his grandparents and his mother and little sister very much. Recently he went to look after the cows of a family from the Kinh ethnic majority.

Why did you go work at Ma Thuy's family?

*My mum and stepfather told me to stay at their house and work for them.*

Did you like the things you did at Ma Thuy's house?

*[I was] forced to like it. Even if I didn't like it, Mum said I must like it.*

His younger sister went with him. But his mother says that he was "miserable" there:

*"When he stayed with them, I felt very sorry for him. He is my son. He had to take the cows out to care for them all the time, in the rain, or in the sun ... he did not eat very well. For example, he only ate one bowl of rice, no fish sauce or anything."*

Now he has left that place and sometimes works cutting sugar cane. Whatever money he earns he gives to his mother and sometimes he has enough to buy shoes and clothes and even a mobile phone. Or he buys sweets for his mother and his little sister. During the New Year holiday he says he went to the beach with some older children from the neighbourhood.

His mother talks a lot about the difficult economic situation faced by the family:

*"Things are still very hard. We go to work in the fields. There is nothing to eat, so we have to go there and work for other people, to cut sugar cane. Then there are days when there is nothing to do. There is no rice in the house. So I have to tell my son to go and work for other people, to care for the cows, in order to find something to eat. Because ... we are so poor."*

Their poverty also means that they have had to move three times in three years:

*"We lived temporarily at other people's houses, on other people's land, until they turned us away, and we had to move out. For example, if they needed that space to make a pigsty or a cattle pen, they would turn us out. If we had our own home, we would stay there and would not have to move."*

This leaves them very vulnerable, not only to being turned out of their home, but also to the weather:

*"When the storms swept through the village, in huts like ours, sometimes everything was blown away ... Clothes, possessions, everything. The rain got inside, we all got wet ... That time, fortunately, the Government supported us with 12 million dong (about 500 US dollars) ... We bought a new roof, and a cow, but that cow died recently, poor cow. We didn't even have clothes to wear. There were only a few things left. The cow pooped on our clothes, and there was nothing to wear. We had to ask someone for a bag to wear."*

She worries about her son: "His clothes are all worn out. The other day he wanted to have a bath, so I mended his worn-out trousers. When he stayed at Ma Thuy's house, for one entire year, he only had one set of clothes."

But she also says that though he is thin, he has grown up in the past three years: "He is more confident. When he was small he did not talk very much, [now] he talks more, and smiles more."

Y Sinh says that most children his age are in school. He would like to go to school too, but he needs to work and besides "it is very complicated to do the paperwork. I don't have a birth certificate."

His mother says they tried to send him to school, but they did not have enough to eat, so he had to work: "Many people asked him to go to school, and a few children also came to get him to go, but we were too poor."

Y Sinh talks about the conflict in the past between his mother and stepfather, who, the interviewer notices, is much younger than his wife:

*"He often left her at home and went out. He beat Mum because he drank alcohol. I was scared. I ran out."*

Did you find anyone to talk to?

*[I] went to my paternal grandparents to ask them to come and help my mum get away from my stepfather.*

Did they come?

*No. My grandparents did not come. It made me sad.*

What would take your sadness away?

*Escape to somewhere.*

His mother says she knows this made him sad:

*"At home, when his stepfather got drunk, he was very sad. He said I should leave him [his stepfather], but how could I leave my children and my husband? When his father was drunk, he hated him, but it did not happen again. That was when he was small."*

Asked about his future, his mother says:

*"We try to raise him well – what else can we do? Nothing will change. We have a miserable fate. We need a house, a cow, some land, like others, then we will be happy. We think a lot about this. We eat, we talk, we discuss this with each other. Why is our life so difficult? People without land have a lot of disadvantages. The Government said they would build us a house, but they did not do it. We are still wandering. We have asked for a well, but we still have to carry water all the way from our mother's place. I told my little daughter to carry water too, but she cried all the way. Poor little girl. I am saying this and there are tears in my eyes."*

What about Y Sinh's life? Are you worried or hopeful about his life?

*"I care for his future a lot, but we don't have any assets for him, poor boy ... we are too miserable, there is no way we can give him anything. His future is ahead of him, but there is nothing in the house to help him with it. I gave birth to him, from the flesh of my body. I am so sorry for him."*

The one thing he can be sure of, she says, is this: "When he grows up he will know we love him. He knows that already."

## Inequalities and ethnic minority families

In Vietnam, as in other Young Lives countries, children from ethnic minority groups are more likely to be poor, and more likely to drop out of school and to be stunted. Y Sinh faces multiple disadvantages – not only being poor, from an ethnic minority, living in a rural area and having parents who were not educated, but also, perhaps surprisingly, being a boy.

First, being poor: at 19, only half of the young people from the poorest households were still in education, compared with almost three-quarters of those from wealthier households.

Second, coming from an ethnic minority: when the Older Cohort in Vietnam were 15, four out of five Kinh (ethnic majority) children were still in school, but only half of ethnic minority children like Y Sinh. By the age of 19, there was still a substantial gap in school leaving – Kinh children had on average reached at least the end of Grade 9 (i.e. completed lower secondary school), while ethnic minority children were unlikely to have gone beyond Grade 8.

Third, coming from a rural area: at 19, two-thirds of young people in urban areas were still in education, compared with just over a half in rural communities.

Fourth, Y Sinh faces a disadvantage because his parents are not educated, which also lowers a child's chances of staying in school beyond Grade 9, thereby reducing their chances of finding paid work outside the agricultural sector.

And finally, in terms of his education, because he is a boy: at the age of 15, 80 per cent of girls were still in school compared with 72 per cent of boys.

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The profiles were written by Nikki van der Gaag with Caroline Knowles, based on extensive research interviews with the children and their families.

## Confidentiality

The children and their families who are participating in the Young Lives study willingly share with us a great deal of detailed personal information about their daily lives, and we have a responsibility to protect their confidentiality and by ensuring they remain anonymous. For this reason, the children's names have been changed in these profiles, as have the names of the villages, towns and neighbourhoods where they live, if they contain fewer than 40,000 inhabitants. The accompanying photos are of children in similar situations to the children within our study sample.

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## About Young Lives

Young Lives is a longitudinal study of childhood poverty following the lives of 12,000 children over 15 years in 4 developing countries: Ethiopia, India (in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Vietnam. Young Lives is a collaborative partnership between research and government institutes in the four study countries, led by a team at the University of Oxford.

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## **Towards a Better Future? Hopes and Fears from Young Lives**

Young Lives has been following 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam since 2002. This is the third book about the lives of 24 of those children. We have watched them as they started primary and then secondary school, and we have seen many of them grow into young adults. They have shared their hopes and their fears with us, their ideas about themselves, their families and their communities.

Growing up has meant more independence – and more responsibility. There is pressure to conform to wider social norms and expectations. Gender has become more significant as the children move into adolescence and beyond, and decisions about school, work, marriage and fertility are made within families and communities.

We believe that the views and experiences of the children in our study are key to understanding childhood poverty and in helping to identify effective policies and practices to tackle it. As the mother of Teje, who is 13 and from Ethiopia, said: “I want development for all human beings and I want everyone to have a comfortable life. I want this research to contribute to that.”

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