



Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Girls and Young Women:

Evidence from Young Lives

Drawing on the Young Lives study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India (United Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam, this brief explores different dimensions of rural girls' growth, learning and development over childhood and adolescence. Despite gains in recent years, many rural girls are growing up in challenging circumstances with lasting consequences for their nutrition, learning, and well-being. Social protection, investment in rural schools, support for water, sanitation and nutrition, and support to address rural girls' heavy workloads and to delay marriage are priority interventions if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved and rural girls and young women are to fulfil their potential.

Policy Messages

- 1. Address gender inequalities in children's development in conjunction with poverty, rural disadvantage and social exclusion.** Being born into a poor, rural family has profound implications for girls' growth, learning and trajectories, although rural girls are not always disadvantaged relative to rural boys.
- 2. Support girls' nutrition and growth from conception to adolescence for lasting benefits to health, learning and development.** Early intervention is best, but there is evidence that growth recovery after the first 1,000 days of life is possible. Programming which aims to delay childbearing and promote catch-up growth for girls in early adolescence has promise in breaking the intergenerational cycle of stunting. Tackling poor access to water and sanitation in rural areas would support growth, reduce girls' workloads, and improve privacy and dignity for girls.
- 3. Invest in schools to ensure rural girls access safe, high-quality learning.** Urgent action is needed to improve the quality of rural children's learning from preschool onwards, and to address gender disparities in enrolment and learning which emerge from early adolescence. Corporal punishment, sexual harassment, violence, poor sanitation and transport remain major impediments to rural girls' education and learning.
- 4. Reduce rural girls' workloads.** Both rural girls and boys spend more time on work than urban children, with tasks becoming more differentiated by gender from early adolescence. Investment in infrastructure and well-designed social protection has an important role to play in helping to protect girls from excessive workloads which limit their potential.
- 5. Extend social protection programmes and design them with rural girls in mind.** Rural households remain exposed to environmental, economic and health shocks. Child and gender-sensitive social protection has an important role to play in reducing the impact of shocks on rural girls' nutrition, workloads, access to learning and trajectories to early marriage and fertility, and promoting access to economic opportunities and human development.
- 6. Address the social and economic drivers of early marriage and provide support to married girls and young women in rural areas.** Early marriage and parenthood is largely a female, rural phenomenon in the Young Lives study. Interventions to address early marriage need to reflect the diversity of marriage practices as well as address the poor learning and economic opportunities and inequitable gender norms which drive early marriage. Greater support for married girls and young women in rural areas is needed.
- 7. Invest in young rural women to support their well-being and economic empowerment.** Effective strategies are needed to reach young rural women at a point when their livelihoods and needs are complex and often precarious, and some are migrating for study, marriage and work.

Introduction: the Young Lives study

Young Lives is a major longitudinal study of childhood poverty led by the University of Oxford, which has followed 12,000 children from Ethiopia, the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India (United Andhra Pradesh, hereafter 'UAP'), Peru and Vietnam since 2002. Young Lives offers:

- A pro-poor sampling frame covering girls, boys and their families, from different backgrounds and locations. More than 3,000 rural girls are part of the study.
- Mixed-methods approaches combining a wealth of survey data with qualitative insights.
- School surveys providing evidence on children's learning and experiences at school.
- Interviews with caregivers, and with two cohorts of children – an Older Cohort born in 1994 and a Younger Cohort born in 2001 – which offer evidence of intergenerational and shorter-term change.

Because the study collects information about the same children over time, it provides important insights into the factors that influence children's growth, learning, and well-being. It is important to note that Young Lives does not collect information about every aspect of girls' and boys' lives, and findings cannot be generalised to other contexts (for example, conflict situations) in which rural girls live.

1. Address gender inequalities in children's development in conjunction with poverty, rural disadvantage and social exclusion

- Being born into a poor, rural family has profound implications for girls' growth, learning and adolescent trajectories, although rural girls are not always disadvantaged relative to rural boys.

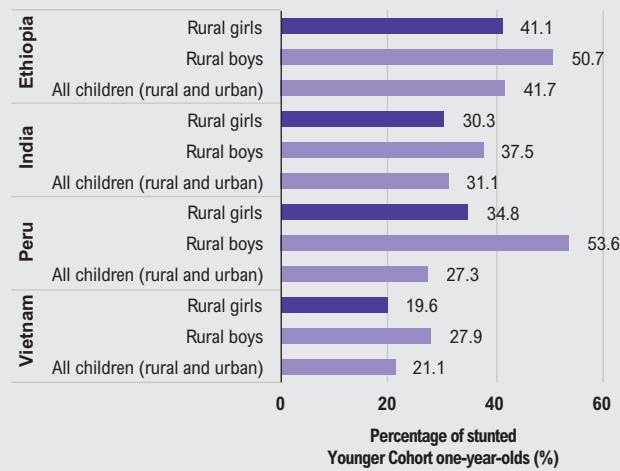
Over the course of childhood and early adulthood, girls and boys grow, learn and undergo key social transitions, with consequences for their well-being and their future lives. Across important childhood outcomes, rural children do worse than urban children, and poorer children do worse than less-poor children. Rural girls are disadvantaged relative to rural boys in some, although not all aspects of their development. In each country, other aspects of disadvantage – for example, ethnicity, caste, and language – play an important role in shaping outcomes for children.

- At age 1, stunting among rural children is very high, and highest of all for rural boys. Early deprivation and under-nutrition has lasting consequences for children's development.
- At age 15, the age when children are approaching the end of basic education, on average rural girls answer fewer questions correctly in a maths test (with comparable questions) compared to both rural boys and the cohort average, in all countries except Vietnam. Foundational skills such as maths are important if young women are to access economic opportunities, know their rights, and play a full role as citizens and parents.
- At age 19, rural girls are much more likely than any other group to be married or cohabiting. Very early marriage and pregnancy (under 16 years old) is a risk factor for maternal morbidity and mortality, while marriage during adolescence increases the risk of HIV, intimate partner violence, restricted female autonomy, and early school exit.

Figure 1. Selected important outcomes for rural girls at age 1, 15 and 19 years

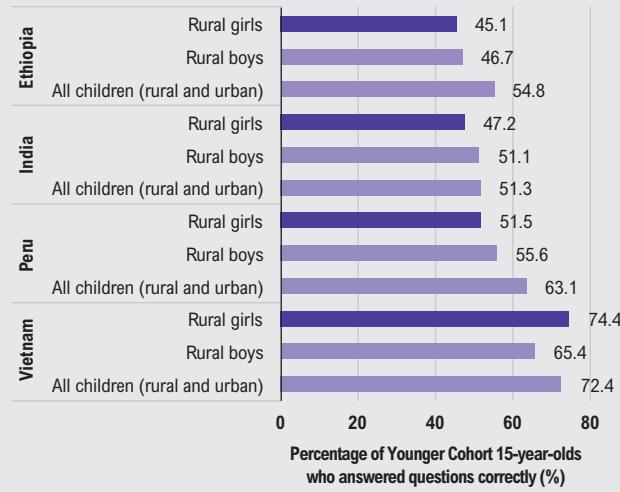
Age 1: Stunting

A large proportion of rural one-year-olds are stunted. Rural boys are more likely to be stunted than rural girls.



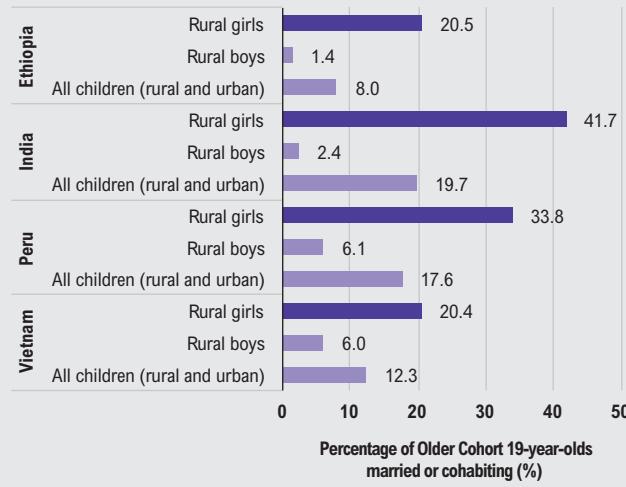
Age 15: Cognitive skills (maths)

In Ethiopia, India and Peru rural girls had lower than average scores in a maths test (from a set of common questions)



Age 19: Marriage/cohabitation

Rural girls are much more likely to be married or cohabiting at 19 years than any other group.



2. Support girls' nutrition and growth from conception to adolescence for lasting benefits

- Early intervention is best to address the lasting consequences of under-nutrition for girls' health and development, but there is evidence that growth recovery after the first 1,000 days of life is possible.
- Programming which aims to delay childbearing and promote catch-up growth in early adolescence has promise both in enhancing adolescent girls' well-being and in breaking the intergenerational cycle of stunting.
- Urgent action is required to improve access to water and sanitation in many rural areas.

Evidence on stunting

Stunting (low height-for-age) contributes to child mortality, undermines children's development, and represents a huge loss of human potential.¹ There is a high prevalence of stunting across rural areas in the Young Lives study, although levels of stunting have reduced. Children were taller than their parents by the time they reached adulthood and the Younger Cohort were taller than the Older Cohort. Economic growth alone is not sufficient to reduce stunting, but needs to be accompanied by other measures to address gender inequality and poverty, and to improve sanitation and children's diets.^{2,3}

Rural children were more likely to be stunted than urban children at every age, although in some countries these differences are explained by differences in household wealth and caregiver education, rather than living in a rural area per se.⁴

During early and middle childhood, rural boys were more likely than rural girls to be stunted. This finding is consistent with a number of other studies. However, gender differences narrowed by adolescence.

Consequences of under-nutrition

Young Lives evidence confirms that early under-nutrition is linked to poor childhood outcomes. Children who were stunted at age 1 were more likely to be over the appropriate age for their school grade at age 8, and to have lower scores in mathematics and reading and a more limited vocabulary than their peers.⁵ Stunting at age 8 is strongly predictive of self-efficacy, self-esteem and aspirations at 12 years old.⁶ Adolescent mothers and those who are stunted are more likely to have a baby who is stunted, and the link between maternal and child stunting persists through the offspring's early adolescence.⁷

Potential for recovery and the role of water and sanitation

There are powerful arguments to say that investments in children's nutrition during their earliest days are a foundation for better long-term development and the most efficient point of intervention to lessen the impacts of childhood poverty. However, Young Lives evidence indicates that growth recovery after early childhood is possible, and among Young Lives children is associated with improvements in other developmental outcomes. Children who were stunted at age 1 but recovered, performed better on cognitive tests than did children who remained stunted throughout childhood, especially when recovery occurred at a young age and was of longer duration.⁸ The Young Lives finding that girls who were stunted at age 12 recovered a percentage of their height deficit by age 19, points to the potential for interventions to support growth recovery in early adolescence.⁹

Adequate water and sanitation are important in reducing stunting¹⁰, as well as to girls' and women's dignity, privacy, and workloads. Access to water and sanitation in rural Young Lives locations increased rapidly between 2002 and 2016. However, rural coverage lagged behind urban areas. In locations in rural Andhra Pradesh, for example, 69 per cent of households did not have access to sanitation, while in rural Ethiopian sites, 31 per cent of households did not have access to clean drinking water.

Figure 2.1. Percentage of children stunted at different ages: rural children are more likely to be stunted than urban children

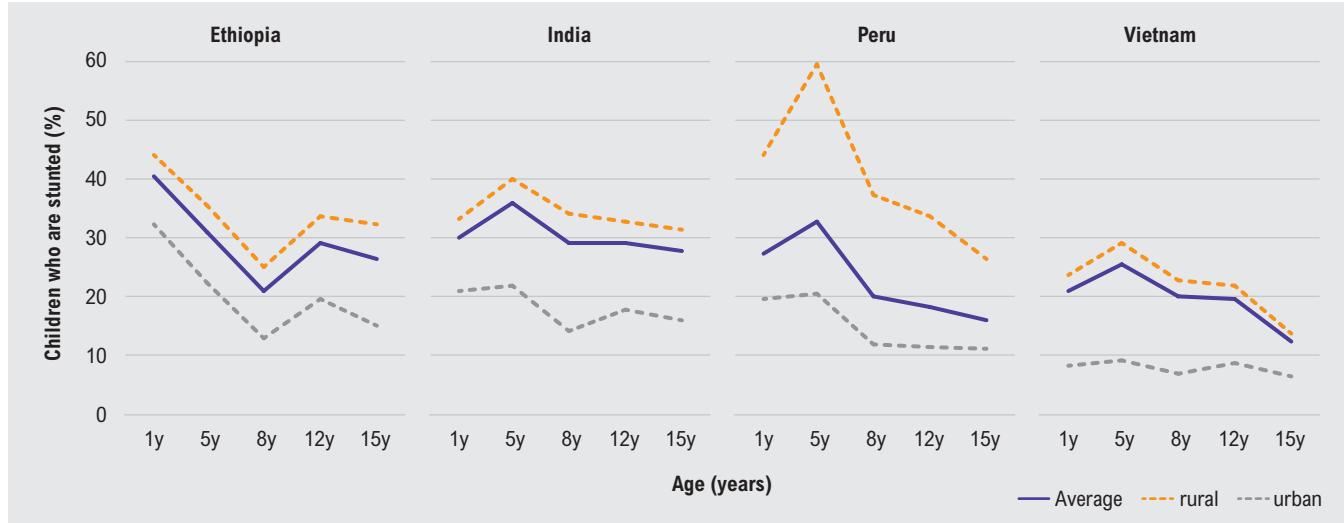
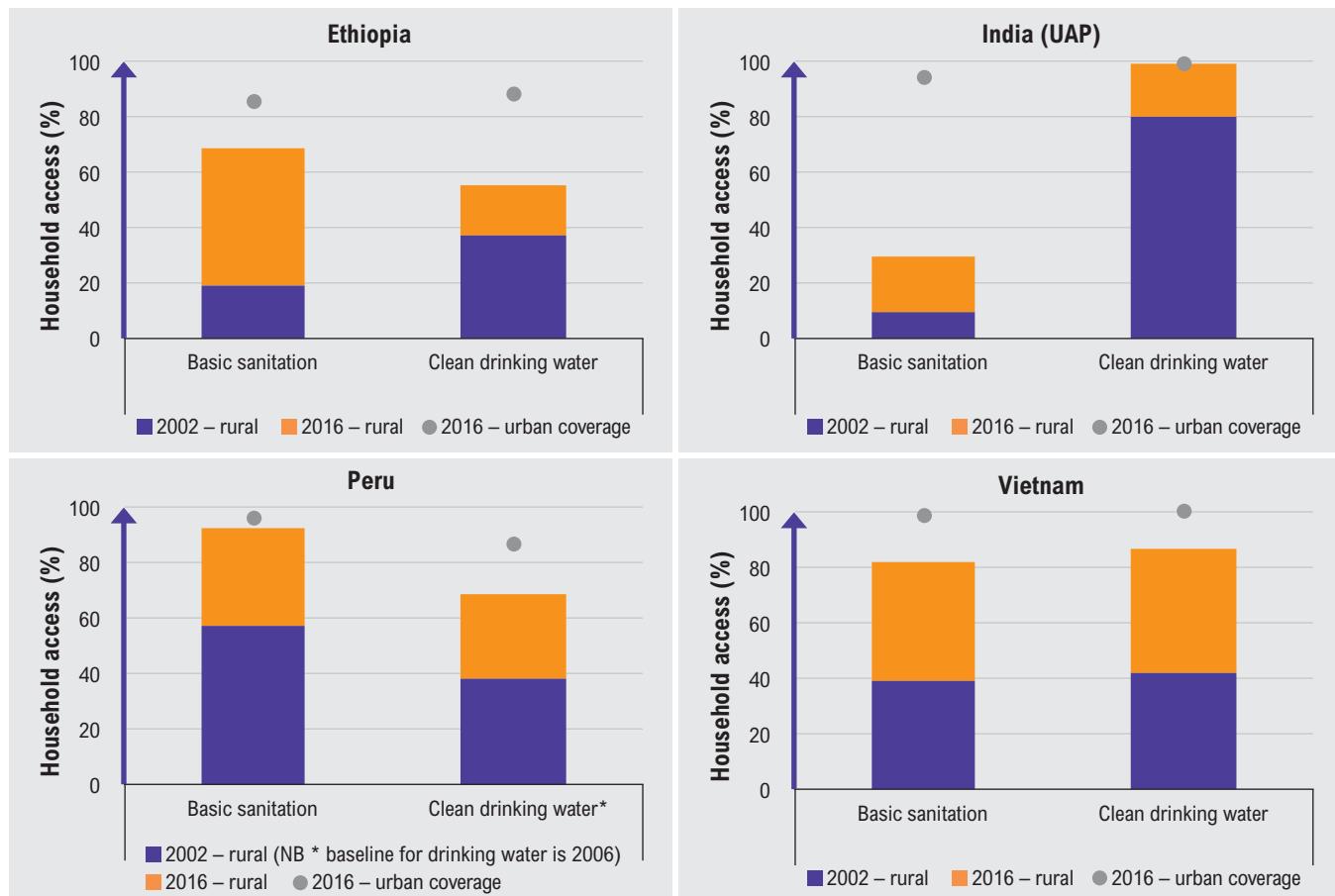


Figure 2.2. Rural households' access to water and sanitation: improving but still lagging behind urban areas

(Note: varying definitions mean it is not possible to compare access across different countries)

3. Invest in schools to ensure rural girls access safe, high-quality learning

- More girls are staying in school for longer. Action to tackle gender inequalities in enrolment and retention needs to go hand-in-hand with tackling the disadvantage experienced across all countries by rural, poorer and socially excluded children.
- Urgent action is needed to improve the quality of rural girls' learning from preschool onwards. The example of Vietnam shows that this can be done.
- Corporal punishment, sexual harassment, violence, and poor sanitation and transport remain major impediments to rural girls' education and learning.

Access to education

Increasing access to education by girls, poorer and rural children was one of the most significant achievements of the Millennium Development Goal period. This achievement is reflected in the very high percentage of children in the Young Lives study who have been enrolled in school at some point, and the high educational aspirations of girls and boys, and their caregivers. 22-year-old daughters born in a rural area were more likely to have been enrolled in

school than their mothers. For example, in UAP in India, 97 per cent of rural 22-year-old daughters had completed more than a year of primary education or above, compared to just 40 per cent of their mothers. In Ethiopia, 99 per cent of rural 22-year-old daughters had completed a year or more of primary education compared to 54 per cent of their mothers. Enrolment gaps continue to close, with enrolment at age 12 and age 15 higher among the Younger Cohort than the Older Cohort, and inequalities narrowing as enrolment reached near-universal levels over early adolescence.

Young Lives' findings are consistent with analysis carried out for the 2018 World Development Report¹¹ showing that children from richer and urban families are more likely to complete basic education in every country, but that gender gaps are context-dependent. In the Young Lives study, rural children left school earlier than urban children on average, and children from the poorest third of households left school earlier than those from the least-poor third of households. In Ethiopia, rural children joined school later and were more likely to be overage for their grade. In Ethiopia and Vietnam, rural boys tended to leave school earlier than rural girls, apparently because there were greater income-earning opportunities for poorer rural boys and an expectation they would contribute to family incomes. In UAP, rural girls left school earlier than rural boys.

Learning outcomes

Young Lives measures learning outcomes for all children in the study at different ages. There are wide gaps in the progress children make at school in different countries. For example, the average 5-year-old from the Younger Cohort in each country had similar numeracy skills, but gaps opened up by age 8, with pupils in Vietnam achieving scores more than twice as high as pupils in Ethiopia and 1.5 times higher than those in UAP.¹²

Inter-country differences are partly driven by inequalities within countries. From their earliest years, children from rural and poorer households in all four Young Lives countries were at greater risk of low levels of learning, with the effects of disadvantage accumulating as time went on.¹³

At the age of 5, there were no gender gaps in maths and receptive vocabulary. Gender gaps emerged later, widening particularly between the ages of 12 and 15, and then largely persisted until early adulthood. While boys outperformed girls in Ethiopia, UAP and Peru, girls in Vietnam outperformed boys.¹⁴

Children's learning affected whether they stayed in school. In Vietnam and India, cognitive skills at age 8 were an important predictor of whether children later completed secondary school.^{15 16}

School effectiveness

Despite the importance of children's backgrounds to later outcomes, schools and preschools can and do make a difference to children's learning. On average, Young Lives children who attended preschool in Ethiopia – although enrolment is low and largely confined to urban areas – went on to do better in numeracy tests, scored better on measures of psychosocial well-being, and had higher aspirations than children who did not attend preschool, even after taking children's background into account.¹⁷ In Peru, analysis of urban-rural disparities in 8-year-olds' cognitive skills found that disadvantage experienced by rural children was attributable in roughly equal measure to the amount and quality of school inputs received by rural children, and to differences in early learning and care environments.¹⁸

Through dedicated studies of school effectiveness, Young Lives is examining which schools help children make progress in their learning, and why. Early findings have highlighted the importance of understanding contrasting school systems in framing policy and interventions. For example:

- In UAP, learning levels were low overall and rural girls left school earlier and with lower skills than average. There are a large number of private unaided schools in the state, and these were more effective on average. Boys, urban, and more advantaged children were more likely to attend these private schools, contributing to rural girls' educational disadvantage.¹⁹

- In Vietnam, almost all children attend government schools at least until the end of lower-secondary, and on average girls stay at school longer, devote more time to study, and achieve better learning outcomes than boys. There is evidence that rural ethnic minority students make faster than average progress at primary school, but the gap between ethnic minority and majority Kinh students increased by upper-secondary level. However, rural ethnic minority students in Vietnam were still performing at a reasonable level and attending fairly effective schools by international standards.^{20 21}

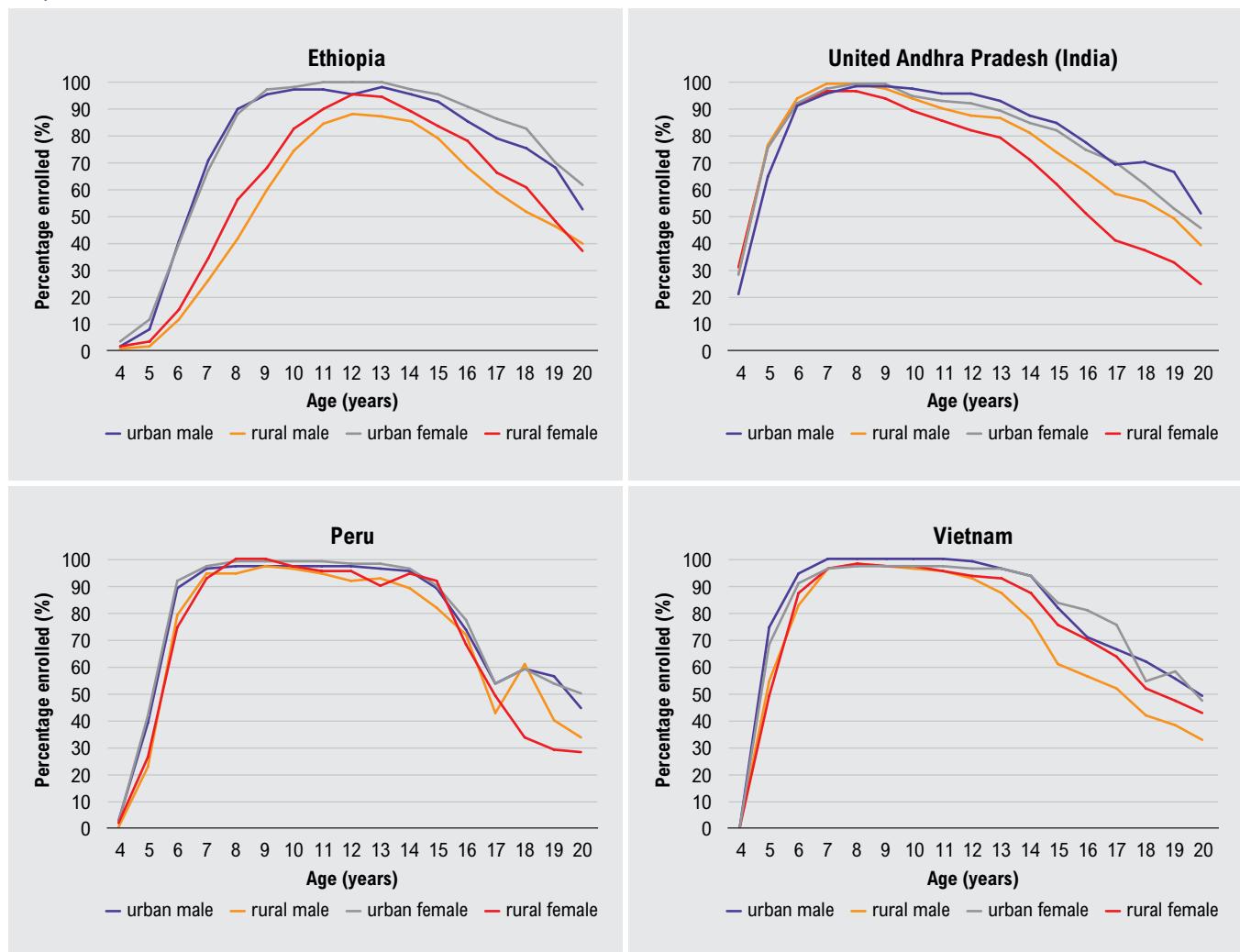
The school environment

Rising secondary school enrolment also offers unparalleled opportunities for reaching rural adolescent girls at scale with social and nutritional support. However, Young Lives evidence indicates that poor transport, infrastructure, and high levels of bullying and corporal punishment means that schools are not always welcoming places for rural children, and that girls face particular obstacles.

In rural areas in UAP and Ethiopia, children are more likely to have to travel long distances to secondary school²², and many rural schools still lack adequate electricity, toilets and water supply,^{23 24} with higher dropout rates as a consequence.²⁵ In Ethiopia and UAP, girls described a fear of using the toilets, which are often not gender-segregated; this makes them feel unsafe and concerned about bullying and harassment from boys, particularly during menstruation, and can lead to girls missing school each month.²⁶ Nearly one in five 15-year-old girls in UAP reported missing school during menstruation.²⁷

In all four countries, despite corporal punishment in school being formally prohibited, many children described being hit by teachers and parents, as well as experiencing fighting or bullying between peers. Violence is the foremost reason children gave for disliking school at age 8. Young Lives evidence links experiencing corporal punishment at age 8 to lower maths scores at age 12²⁸: this effect in different countries is equivalent to the child's caregiver having between three and six years less education. Boys are more likely to experience corporal punishment than girls. However, girls often described experiencing other forms of humiliating treatment, and many reported sexual harassment and feeling unsafe on their journey to school.²⁹ Whether rural or urban children experience more corporal punishment varies between countries. However, many rural girls and boys who work or care for their families, find that their schools take an inflexible and punitive approach if they miss school, are late or do not complete homework, and fall behind or leave school as a result.³⁰

Figure 3. School enrolment: rural children leave school earlier than urban children in all countries, but the direction of gender inequalities varies



4. Reduce rural girls' workloads, particularly from early adolescence

- Investment in infrastructure and well-designed social protection has an important role in helping to protect girls from excessive workloads which undermine their development.

Work and care in rural childhoods

Both the women's economic empowerment and child labour agendas have focused policy attention on girls' and children's workloads and their consequences for learning and development. Work and care are a common feature of rural childhoods in low and middle-income countries. In the Young Lives study, rural children of all ages worked more, and spent less time on school and study than urban children. This rural-urban disparity is greatest in Ethiopia, where children started work at an early age and contributed significantly to household livelihoods and care throughout childhood.³¹ In every country, the poorest children spent more time on work and less on school than the least poor children. The

time children spent on work (paid and unpaid work and care) increased steadily from early adolescence onwards.

In general, children are working less: the average 15-year-old in 2016 spent less time on work and more on school and study than in 2009.³² However, this downward trend in the amount of work and care children undertook is not uniform.

Children and families rarely describe children's contributions as 'work' or as 'care' – rather it is seen as 'help', an everyday part of childhood, and a route through which children develop responsibility, respect within the family and the (gendered) skills they need for adult life. There were many examples of children using the income from paid work to meet the costs of their own or siblings' school attendance.³³

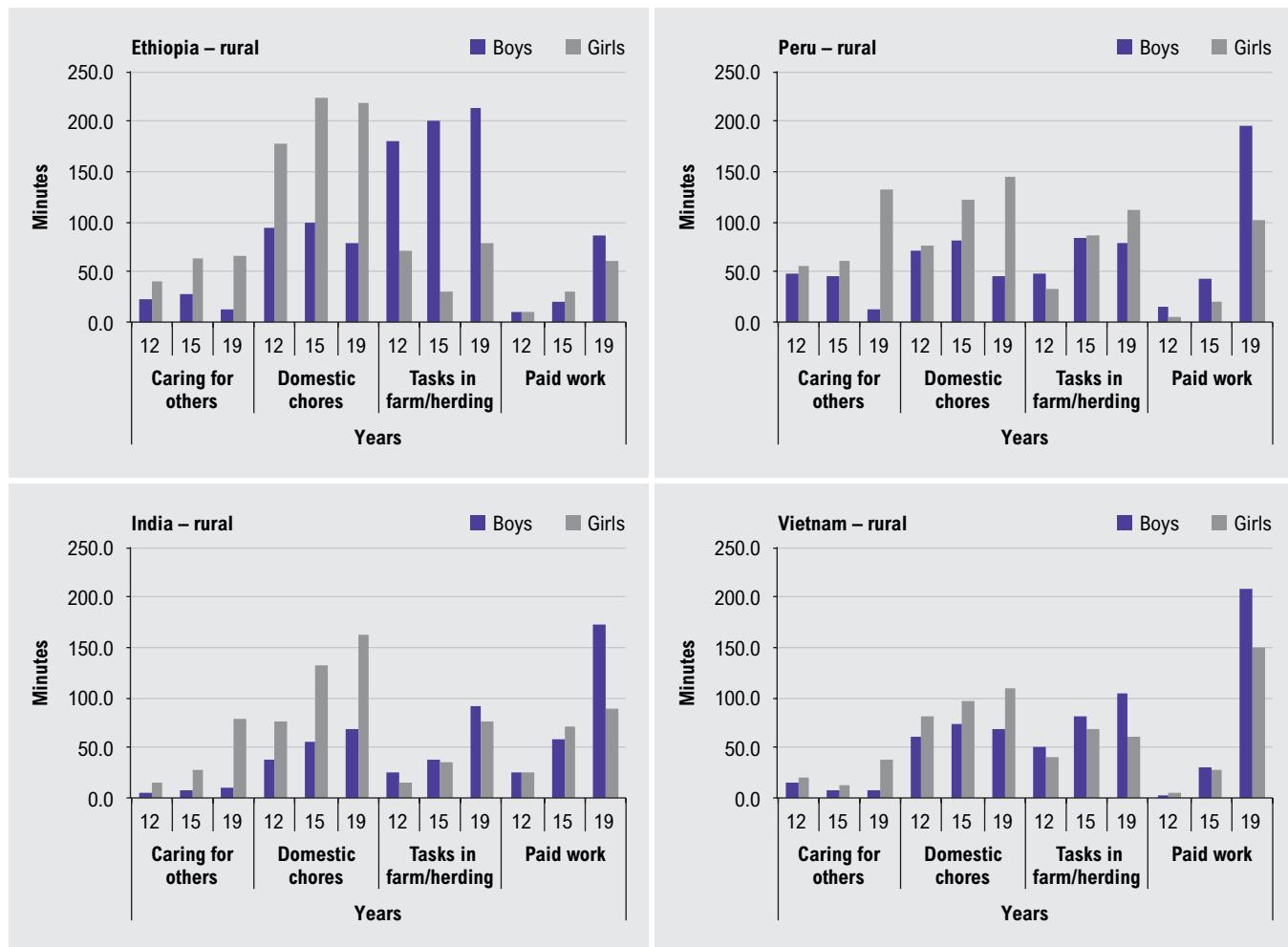
The gendered nature of work and care

During middle childhood, girls and boys undertook a range of tasks and these were relatively interchangeable. However, the kind of work children did became increasingly gendered from the age of 12 onwards, although there were no large differences in the overall amount of work girls and boys did. Girls were more likely to be engaged in care

work, domestic work and unpaid work, while boys were more likely to be engaged in agricultural activities and paid work. There was a striking increase in the time girls spent in care at around the age of 19, particularly in UAP and Peru. However, boys continued to undertake household tasks and many girls were engaged in paid and unpaid livelihood activities throughout adolescence.

Family decisions about work reflect age-based and gender-based norms, perceptions about the risks of work, and caregivers' views about children's strength and capabilities. Time spent on work is not only shaped by poverty, location and gender, but also by birth order: in Ethiopia, for example, older sisters work almost an hour a day more than their younger sisters, but older brothers do not work more than younger ones. Oldest girls also work longer hours than boys, including oldest boys.³⁴

Figure 4. Minutes spent by Older Cohort rural children on an average day on work and care at different ages. During adolescence, girls increase the time spent on care and domestic chores, whilst boys do more farm and paid work, on average



Reducing the pressures of work and care

Given the pressures on rural households, and given that much of children's work is carried out within households, regulation alone is unlikely to be effective in reducing children's workloads. A combination of labour-reducing rural infrastructure (electricity, water and sanitation and transport), increasing the returns to time spent in school (faster learning progress, access to free meals at school, access to study facilities out of school hours) together with child-sensitive social protection including access to childcare and support for schooling, will contribute to reducing the demands on girls' time and support. Interventions to address adult women's unpaid work burdens need to monitor and address their impact on adolescent girls.

5. Extend social protection programmes and design them with rural girls in mind

- Child and gender-sensitive social protection has an important role to play in protecting children from the adverse consequences of shocks, and promoting access to economic opportunities and human development.

The persistence of shocks

Livelihood insecurity and shocks – unexpected or unpredictable events – remain a feature of rural life. The percentage of Young Lives households reporting food insecurity in the previous year fell between 2009 and 2016, but poorer households continued to face moderate food insecurity, especially in Ethiopia and Vietnam.³⁵ Just over half of rural households in Young Lives study locations in Ethiopia, UAP and Peru continued to report adverse impacts from environmental shocks in the past 12 months. Exposure in Ethiopia remained high due to the vulnerability of rain-fed agriculture. Rural households in Ethiopia, UAP and Vietnam reported economic shocks in the wake of the 2008/09 global financial crisis, apparently through rising food and input prices. Many rural households also reported ‘family’ shocks such as illness and bereavement, and households which reported one kind of shock were more likely to report another.³⁶

The consequence of shocks

Evidence from the Young Lives study shows that children exposed to extreme weather events in early childhood are likely to be shorter than their peers, and that these

effects are lasting.³⁷ Shocks also tend to increase children’s workloads and reduce the amount of time they spend in school, but their impact on children’s work depends on gender, birth order and households’ access to resources. Analysis of the impact of a severe drought on 12-year-olds in Andhra Pradesh showed that rural girls increased their workloads and were more likely to leave school.³⁸ Young Lives’ qualitative research repeatedly highlights economic shocks and adult illness in a chain of events leading to girls leaving school and getting married.

The role of social protection

Social protection has an important role to play in protecting rural children from the adverse consequences of shocks. It can play a positive role in promoting access to economic opportunities and human development. For example, workfare and cash transfer programmes such as the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, and Juntos in Peru have resulted in improvements in nutritional outcomes for children.³⁹ In Andhra Pradesh, the national Midday Meal Scheme acted as a safety net for children, providing large and significant health gains for children whose families suffered from drought.⁴⁰

Child-sensitive social protection includes addressing age and gender-specific risks of boys and girls, and is a proven approach in implementing social protection interventions that help fulfil children’s rights.⁴¹ Careful design is required, in particular for public works-based schemes. Data from 2009 shows that while public works-based social protection schemes in Ethiopia and India provided important support for poor families, they were also demonstrated to have increased adolescent girls’ workloads and reduced the time they spent on study and leisure.⁴²

Figure 5. A high proportion of rural households report negative impacts from shocks



6. Address the social and economic drivers of early marriage and provide support to married girls and young women in rural areas

- Staying in school longer was the single most important predictor of not being married at age 19 across Young Lives study locations. However, local practices and drivers vary.
- Delaying early marriage is an important way to reduce early parenthood.
- More support is needed for rural married girls and young women.

The drivers of child marriage and adolescent parenthood

Child marriage emerged as primarily a female, rural phenomenon in the Young Lives study. Rural young women are at least twice as likely as urban young women to have become mothers by the time of their twentieth birthday in Ethiopia, UAP and Vietnam, and were more likely to have married as a child: in UAP, 32 per cent of girls from rural areas were married under 18 years old, compared to 14 per cent of girls from urban areas, and in Ethiopia, 12 per cent of rural girls were married under 18 years old, compared to 4 per cent of urban girls.

Economic risk and lack of job opportunities lead many families to see early marriage as a way of ensuring that girls are provided for in adulthood, and to reduce the costs of providing for children. Powerful social norms mean that in many contexts, families may seek arranged marriages for their daughters in order to shield them from the perceived dangers and stigma associated with premarital sex, with the poorest households having fewest resources to identify alternative options to early marriage.

In analysis of the predictors of early marriage (before 19 years old), girls from more advantaged backgrounds and who were enrolled in school at age 15 were less likely to marry early.^{43 44} Nevertheless, there are diverse patterns between and within countries. For example:

- In Peru, marriage was rare, but rates of cohabitation and childbirth were high. Becoming a parent by the age of 19 was linked to lower socio-economic status (particularly for girls), earlier first sexual relations, less knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, lower early aspirations, having a large number of siblings or an older brother, experiencing family breakdown, leaving school or poor school performance.⁴⁵
- In Ethiopia, almost all of the married girls in Young Lives' qualitative sample had initially left school as a result of economic difficulties – only marrying later. There were significant local variations in practices. Girls who had married before the age of 15 reported having arranged marriages, while around half of the girls who had married over the age of 16 had chosen to marry.⁴⁶ While girls

who marry very young are particularly vulnerable, self-arranged marriages carry their own risks for girls if the marriage subsequently breaks down.⁴⁷

- In UAP, the vast majority of marriages were arranged, and many girls had not met their husbands before the marriage. Girls with older brothers tended to marry earlier. Nearly three in ten married girls had married a relative – often a maternal uncle or cousin, depending on local tradition.⁴⁸

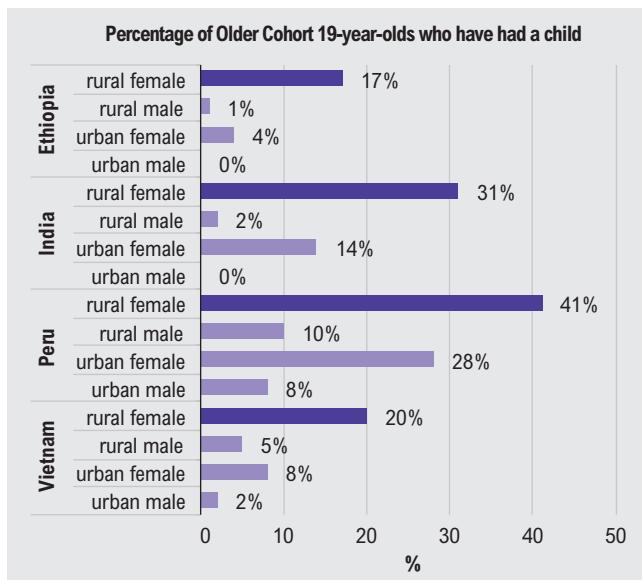
After marriage

Marriage and cohabitation was swiftly followed by childbirth in many rural contexts. In UAP, 31 per cent of rural 19-year-old women had had at least one child, compared to 2 per cent of rural men, and 14 per cent of urban women. In Ethiopia, 17 per cent of rural 19-year-old women had had at least one child, compared to 1 per cent of rural men, and 4 per cent of urban women.

Qualitative research in UAP found that strong social expectations around parenthood, lack of awareness of different contraceptive methods, and worries about the impact on fertility of using contraception led to very low levels of contraceptive use. Even couples who wanted to delay parenthood rarely used birth control methods. Despite the pressure on young women to have children, there was little support for couples who find it difficult to conceive, with women facing stigma and shame.⁴⁹

Marriage had other consequences for rural girls and young women, and there was little support for married girls evident in many rural locations. Studying after marriage was rare for girls: just 6 per cent of married 19-year-old girls in UAP and 5 per cent of married 19-year-olds in Ethiopia were studying. In UAP, married women self-report worse psychosocial outcomes compared with unmarried women; a difference that is not fully explained by measures of natal socio-economic status or past education.⁵⁰

Figure 6. Childbearing. At age 19, rural girls were more likely to have had a child than other young people (Young Lives Older Cohort)



7. Invest in young rural women to support their well-being and economic empowerment

- Effective strategies are needed to reach young rural women at a point when their livelihoods and needs are complex and often precarious, and some are migrating.

Early analysis of the 2016 study round indicates that, of those young people who were working (including the self-employed):

- In every country, at age 22 young women earned consistently less than young men: both overall, and in relation to their main earning activity. In India, the gender earnings gap widened between the ages of 19 and 22.
- Young people's work varies across countries, but in every country, young people tended to work more in agriculture at age 19, and by the age of 22, the percentage of young people working in agriculture has declined (with the only exception being for females in Ethiopia).
- A majority of 22-year-old women – 74 per cent in Ethiopia, 78 per cent in UAP, 57 per cent in Peru, 59 per cent in Vietnam – reported experiencing at least one hazard at work. One out of three also worked excessive hours. The proportion of young men reporting excessive hours and hazards in their work was even greater.
- Only a minority of young people had an employment contract in all countries, except Vietnam. In India, just 6 per cent of working 22-year-old women had an employment contract.

In early adulthood, patterns of work, care and study become very complex, with closely interlinked marriage/parenthood and work transitions for young women.

Young Lives evidence highlights complex patterns of mobility among older adolescents, with many moving more than once.⁵¹ Overall, the most common reason for moving was to study. Boys were more mobile than girls in Peru, Ethiopia, and in UAP, and girls were more mobile in Vietnam. Rural-to-rural moves predominated in Ethiopia and UAP, rural-to-urban in Vietnam, and urban-to-urban in Peru. Boys were more likely than girls to migrate for work in Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam, while girls were more likely to move for marriage than boys in UAP.

While access to digital technologies has grown rapidly in many low- and middle-income countries, many girls and young women from rural areas are very far away from being 'digital natives', with half or fewer rural 22-year-olds in Ethiopia, UAP and Peru reporting using a mobile phone with internet access at least once a week in the past year, and fewer young women than men in these countries reporting access.

After marriage, 19-year-old girls who were married or living with a partner were spending as much as eight hours on unpaid work in Peru and Ethiopia, seven hours in UAP, and almost six hours in Vietnam. Many reported that the demands of childcare and the wishes of their husband meant they no longer earned an income, and explained that this meant they had little say over how the household's money was spent.

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This brief draws on a large number of papers and articles using Young Lives evidence.



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