



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives

Martin Woodhead, Young Lives, and the Open University



CONTEXT: INEQUALITY, MDGs AND POST 2015

United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000, para 2) :

*“... We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of **human dignity, equality and equity** at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, **the children of the world**, to whom the future belongs.”*

Draft Report on the UNICEF/UN Women Global Thematic Consultation on Inequalities, (2013, p 6):

*“... The weakness (of the MDGs) lies in how the goals and their associated indicators were articulated. The focus on reducing average national outcomes meant that **the importance of tackling entrenched inequalities** and the structural causes of prolonged deprivation **was overshadowed...**”*

TRACKING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES - YOUNG LIVES LONGITUDINAL DESIGN



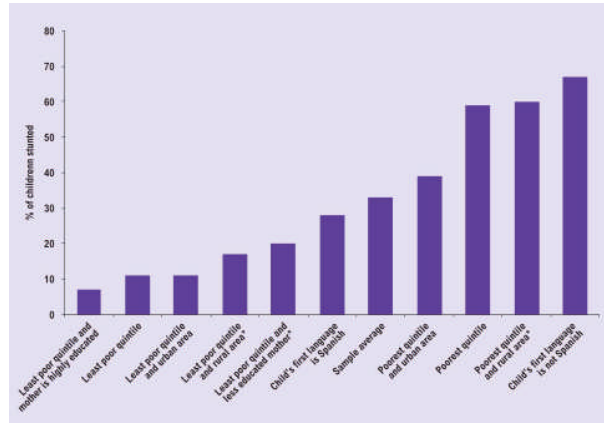
- **12,000 children** in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru, Vietnam
- **Two age cohorts** in each country:
 - 2,000 children born in 2000-01
 - 1,000 children born in 1994-95
- **Pro-poor sample:** 20 sites in each country selected to reflect country diversity, rural-urban, livelihoods, ethnicity, gender
- **3 major household survey** rounds completed so far: in 2002; 2006/7; 2009; 2 more rounds in 2013 and 2016.
- plus **school-based and qualitative** research.
- **Comprehensive focus** – nutrition, development, cognitive and psycho-social, education, social protection

EIGHT RESEARCH MESSAGES:

- Multiple disadvantages that impact children's development – and undermine human potential (Messages 1 & 2)
- Early deprivations – with a focus on stunting...and some evidence for catch up (Message 4)
- Gender inequalities during early/middle childhood – variability and context specificity (Messages 3 & 5)
- Indicators of inequality - the significance of subjective well-being (Message 6)
- Impact of policies and services - education and social protection (Messages 7 & 8)

MESSAGE 1: INEQUALITIES ORIGINATE IN MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGES

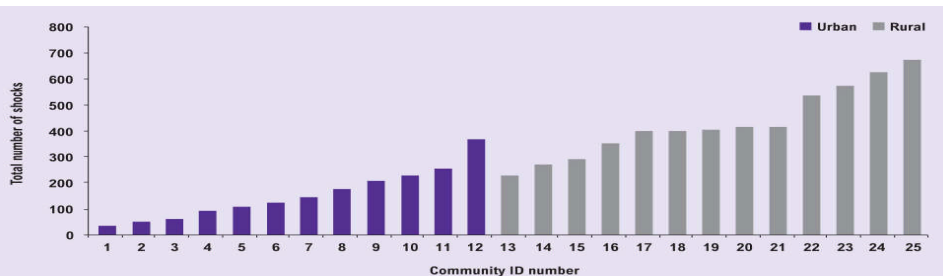
High levels of stunting are linked to multiple disadvantages (Peru, Younger Cohort, age 8 in 2009)



Note: Please refer to full paper for footnotes for all graphs (*What Inequality Means for Children* by Martin Woodhead, Paul Dornan and Helen Murray, University of Oxford Young Lives, January 2013)

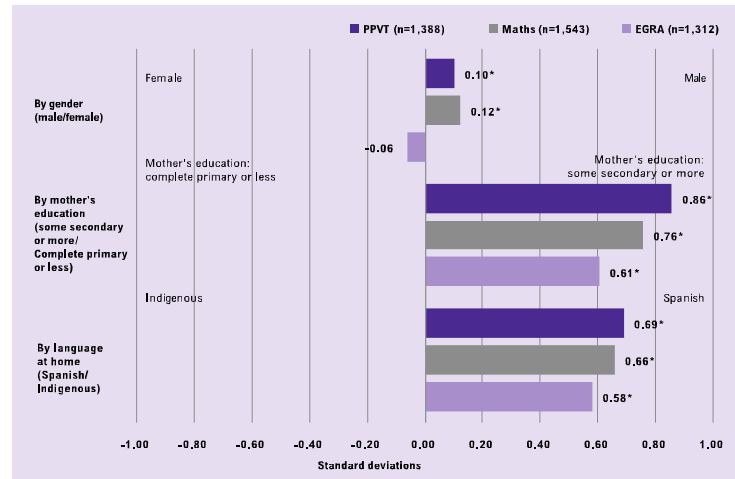
INEQUALITIES IN VULNERABILITY: ETHIOPIA

90% of the poorest households of Older Cohort children experienced at least one risk between 2002 and 2006....with an average of 4.2 types of risk per household.



Frequency of shocks and adverse events, comparing rural versus urban communities (Ethiopia, Younger Cohort, 2009)

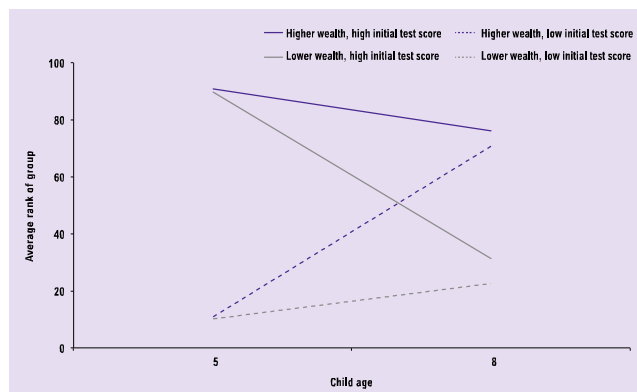
MESSAGE 2: INEQUALITIES UNDERMINE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN POTENTIAL



In Peru, mother's education and language link to achievement gap (standard deviations, Peru, Younger Cohort, age 8 in 2009)

CHILDREN FROM DISADVANTAGED HOUSEHOLDS QUICKLY FALL BEHIND

Learning trajectories (for vocabulary tests) between 5 and 8 years (Peru, Younger Cohort, 2009).



Note: Some convergence to the mean is expected in this type of analysis.

**MESSAGE 4: EFFECTS OF EARLY MALNUTRITION ...
FOUR FINDINGS:**

1. Stunting persists despite economic growth in Young Lives countries:

GDP in Andhra Pradesh doubled between 2002 and 2009, but the stunting rate within our samples at age 8 only fell by 4%...with no improvement at all among the poorest 40% of children in the sample.

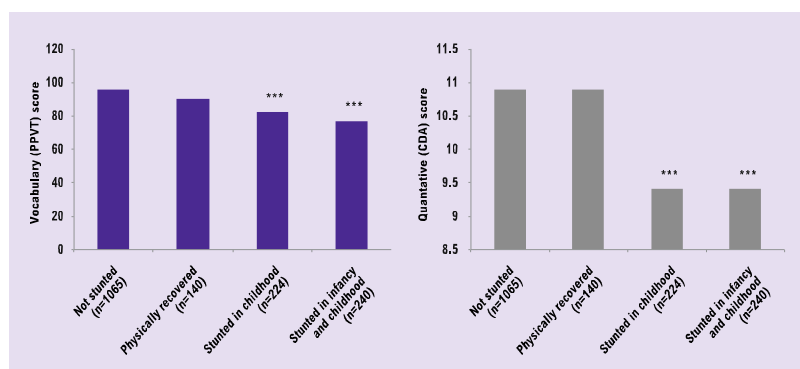
2. Negative effects are increasingly concentrated among marginalised children:

60% of ethnic minority children in Vietnam were stunted at the age of 5, compared to 19% of ethnic majority kinh children.

3. Stunting during early childhood doesn't just affect later cognition:

Lower self-efficacy, self-esteem and educational aspirations among children by 12 years old.

And... 4. EMERGING EVIDENCE THAT SOME CHILDREN MAY RECOVER?



Children who were stunted at age 1 but physically recovered by age 5 have similar test results as children who were never stunted (Peru, Younger Cohort, age 5, 2006)

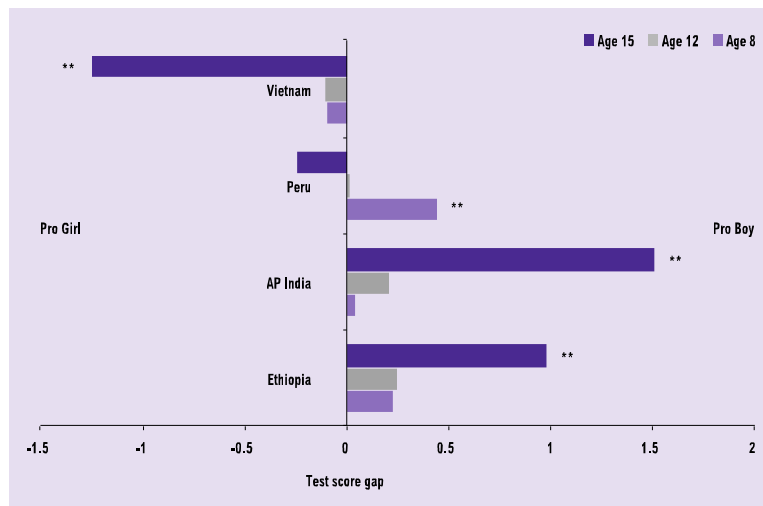
MESSAGE 3: GENDER DIFFERENCES BECOME MORE SIGNIFICANT AS CHILDREN GET OLDER



“Gender-based inequalities affect both boys and girls at different ages and in different ways according to intra-household dynamics, socio-cultural context, institutional structures and economic pressures.”

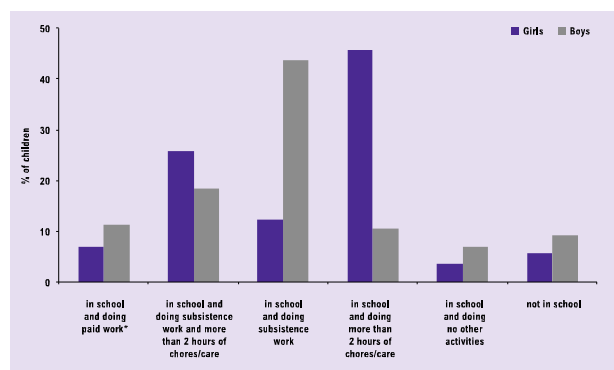


GENDER GAPS DO NOT ALWAYS FAVOUR BOYS



Gaps in Maths scores (Younger Cohort age 8 and Older Cohort age 12 and 15: ** significant)

MESSAGE 5: INEQUALITIES ALSO OPEN UP IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD



Gender differences in responsibilities
(Ethiopia, Older Cohort, age 12 in 2006)

- In Ethiopia, 20% Young Lives children had lost at least one parent by age of 12.
- Impacts vary according to a child's gender and age, whether it is their father or mother who has died...
- Losing a mother in middle childhood (between ages 8 and 12) reduced school enrolment by 21%.

MESSAGE 6: SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IS A KEY INDICATOR... AND TRANSMISSION PATHWAY




“All too often development debates have neglected to ask **how poverty is actually understood** and ...what is the significance of these perceptions for long-term outcomes. ...

Children's experience of inequality shapes their personal and social identities, their peer relationships, self-esteem and self-efficacy....

Children are sensitive to their relative social position, their relative competence, and potential to access opportunities for personal, social and economic advancement”



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON WELL-BEING

Poverty and inequality isn't just about material deprivations:

“Children often prioritised family and school over good food, shelter and material security” (Ethiopia)

“Children feel the shame of ‘not having’ or not ‘fitting in’” (Anhra Pradesh)

“Failure to meet family expectations at the forefront of of ill-being and risk, work and schooling as vital to become competent moral and social actors, able contribute to household poverty mitigation” (Peru)

The increasing importance of schooling in order to “Become Somebody” (Peru)

MESSAGE 7: EDUCATION CAN BE TRANSFORMATIVE BUT MAY REINFORCE DIFFERENCES

United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon:

“When we put Education First, we can reduce poverty and hunger, end wasted potential – and look forward to stronger and better societies for all”

(www.globaleducationfirst.org/2012)

What are the obstacles to delivering the education promise?

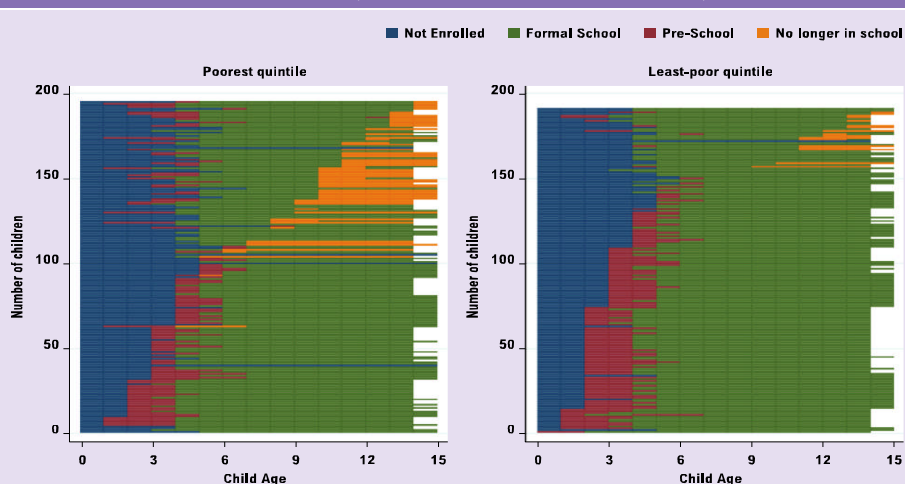
Many individual lives are improved but...

inequities of access to pre-school and primary school
infrequent attendance, early school leaving etc

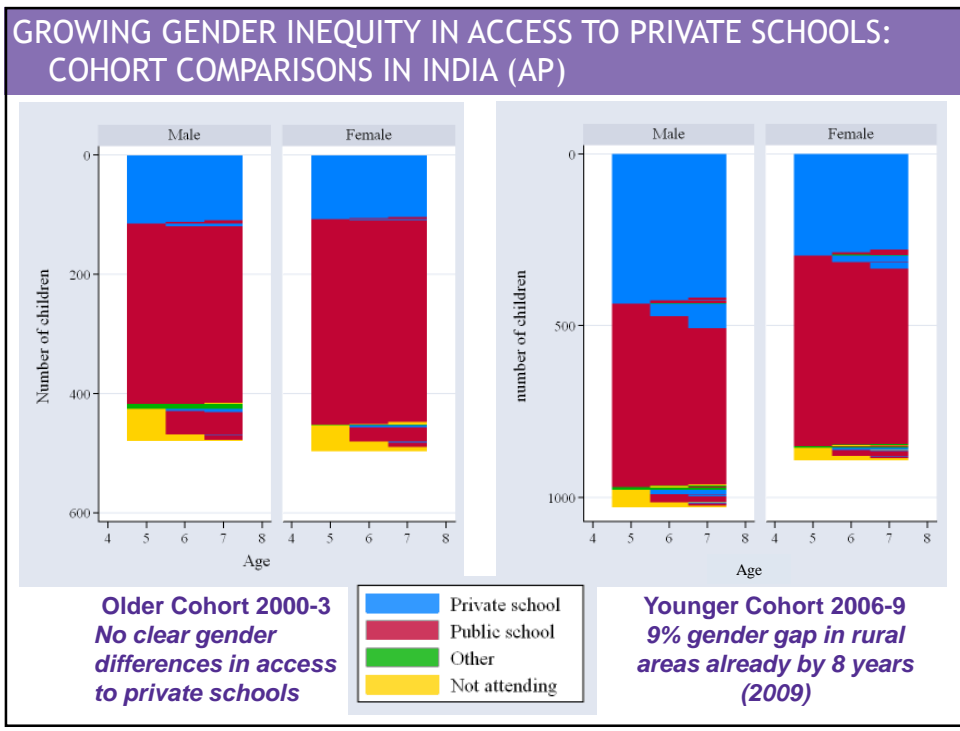
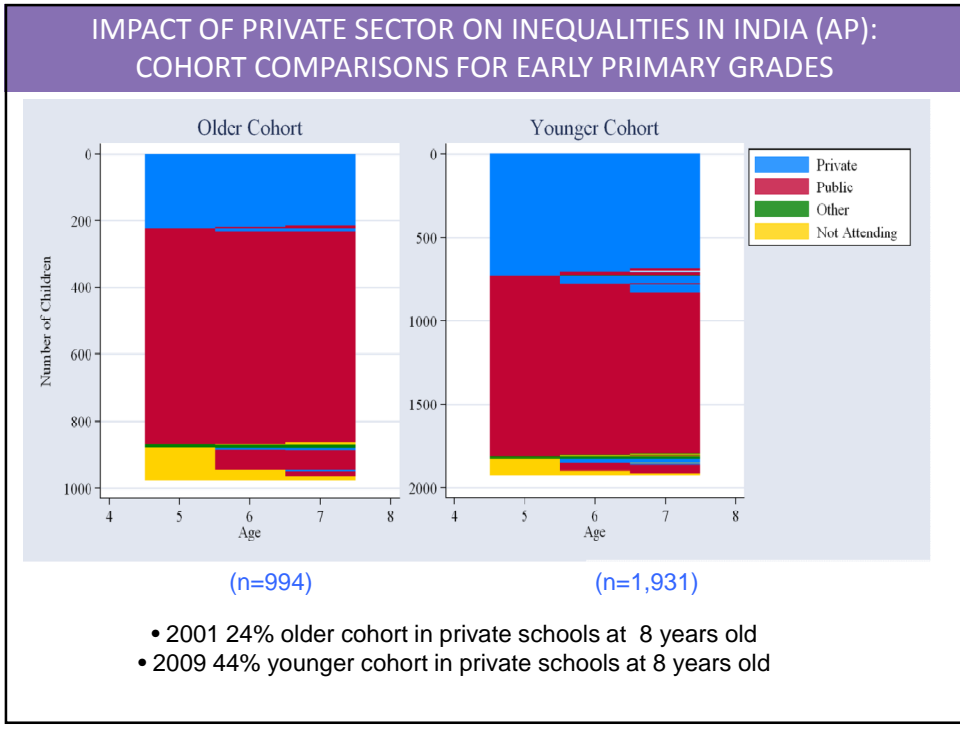
inequities in the quality of teaching etc

...risk amplifying rather than reducing inequalities.

INEQUALITIES IN SCHOOL ACCESS TO AGE 15: INDIA (ANDHRA PRADESH)



Sequence index plot for older cohort through to 15 years of age: comparing “poorest” and “least poor” quintiles



GENDER-LINKED TRAJECTORIES BEGIN AT PRE SCHOOL IN INDIA (AP)

		Percentage of total sample (n=1646)		
		Girls	Boys	Total
1	Government pre-school to government primary school	64	53	58
2	Private kindergarten to private primary school	35	46	41
3	Government pre-school to private primary school	1	2	1

“...If he goes (to private kindergarten/school) ... he will become very wise - that is why we are sending him there...”

“...We are ready to spend.... We take as debts...”

“...Two of my girls attend government school in the village... We are not paying for them ”



MESSAGE 8: SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES CAN REDUCE DISADVANTAGE ...BUT MAY NOT ALWAYS BENEFIT CHILDREN

Young Lives data show the potential for social protection in helping to mitigate broader inequalities...BUT...

“...Although policymakers often see narrow targeting as an efficient use of resources, it is often hard to identify clear differences in poor communities between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.”

...if social protection schemes increase parent's work (for example through public works), this may result in children having to do more work or substitute for parents' work.

....perceptions of mismanagement undermine trust, highlighting the importance of effective governance

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Martin Woodhead, Paul Dornan and Helen Murray (2013) *What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives*, Oxford: Young Lives

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FINDING OUT MORE...

www.younglives.org.uk

- methodology and research papers
- datasets (ESDS International)
- publications
- child profiles and photos
- e-newsletter

