

Care and children: Young Lives

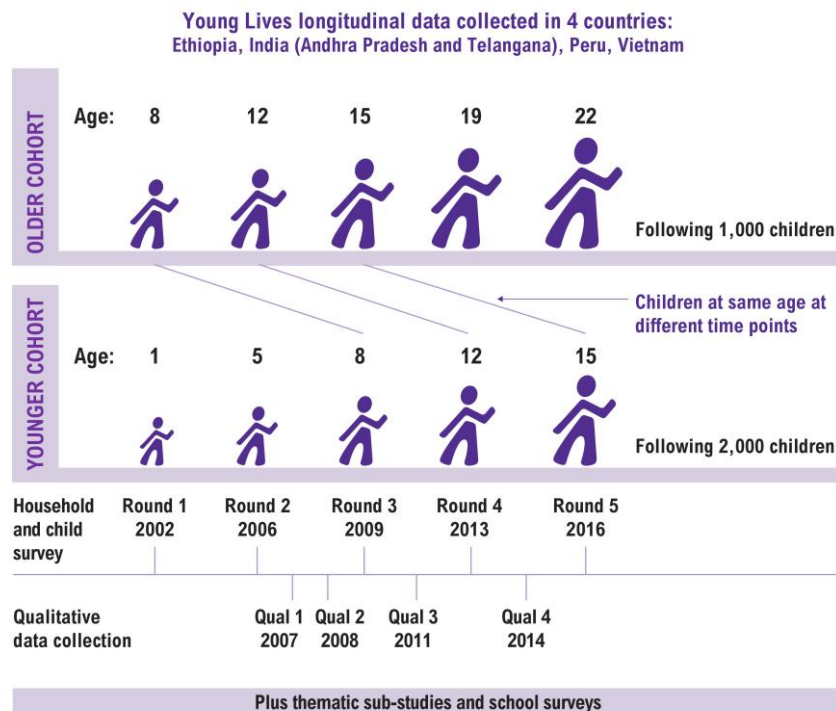
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The following notes on care and children are based on evidence and learning from *Young Lives* longitudinal study of childhood poverty.¹ The main focus is on the unpaid work and care work undertaken by children within their families. The note has four parts: a) background to Young Lives; b) research methods and reflections on data; c) selected findings; and d) data challenges.

Background to Young Lives

Young Lives is a cohort study tracing the life trajectories of 12,000 boys and girls over a fifteen-year period (2002-2017) in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Vietnam. The sample is pro-poor and spread across 20 sites in each country. We have collected information on children and young people at the ages 1, 5, 8, 12, 15 and 19. There are two cohorts: a younger group born in 2001/2, and an older group born in 1994/5. Data collection for the Round 5 survey is currently underway with 15 year olds and 22 year olds.² In addition to the household and child survey, there have been four rounds of qualitative data collection following a nested sample of 200 children and their families to investigate the effects of poverty on children’s daily lives - their time-use, relationships, transitions and aspirations - and on their outcomes later in life.³



Young Lives’ research methods and reflections on data

Young Lives is not a study specifically on time-use or care, rather it is a general study of childhood poverty. However, data on children’s time-use has been collected since 2006 (Round 2 of the survey) when the older cohort was 12 and the younger cohort 6 years old. The same questions are asked across the different survey rounds to track changes in

¹ Frances Winter and Patricia Espinoza provided valuable inputs into the note. Patricia generated Figure 1 and its explanation. See www.younglives.org.uk for more information.

² Details about Young Lives’ household and child surveys can be found on our website - <http://www.younglives.org.uk/content/household-and-child-survey>. Survey data from rounds 1 – 4 have been publicly archived and are available via the [UK Data Service](http://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk). The qualitative data are not publicly available.

³ Copies of the interview guides are available as technical notes on the Young Lives website.

time-use, and to investigate how earlier experiences affect later outcomes. Data are collected (directly) from children (above age 8) and from their caregivers (through the household survey, and reporting on younger children).

In the **child survey**, children are asked about how they spent their time during the previous day (non-holiday). Specific questions include which activities they performed (up to 8); whether they were supervised during activity; whether they were supervising others during activity; and if they were able to choose whether or not to do activity. Information is collected on time spent in a ‘typical day’ (as already mentioned above), measured in the number of minutes/hours on each category of activity. There is a separate module collecting information on time spent on paid work, and a series of questions on attitudes towards work, likes/dislikes, and any injuries incurred while working inside or outside the home.

Since Young Lives surveys children at the same age but at different points in historical time, it is also possible to compare time-use trends between the younger and older cohorts (at the same age) (see for instance Boyden and colleagues, 2016, comparing changes in time-use between the two cohorts in Ethiopia aged 12).

The **household survey** records time allocation of all adults and children in the home (matched against the household roster). It asks: “For each member of the household please record their three most important work activities (in terms of time spent) in the last 12 months beginning with the most important activity.” It also asks whether each person has a permanent disability affecting their ability to work and take care of themselves; about their most important activity; and the number of days and hours per week they spend on that activity.

In addition, it also records other time-use information for each household member between five and 17 years old. Specifically, the survey collects data on time-use in a ‘typical day’ (Monday – Friday) in the last week and the number of hours spent in the following categories of activity: Sleeping; Caring for others (younger siblings, ill household members); Domestic tasks (fetching water, firewood, cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping, etc.); Tasks on family farm, cattle herding or other family business shepherding (not just farming); Activities for pay/sale outside of household or for someone not in the household; At school (including travel time to school); Studying outside of school time (at home, extra tuition); Play time/general leisure (including time taken to eating, drinking and bathing)⁴.

Finally, additional time-use information is collected in **qualitative research** in individual and group interviews with children, and with their parents/caregivers. The qualitative research design is also longitudinal, following the same group of children over a 7 year period. The flexible nature of the interviews enables in-depth exploration of individual experiences, including children’s feelings about their care and work roles; decision-making; and the impact of poverty and of household changes on children’s time-use. Group activities with children stimulate discussions around the influence of community norms on the time-use of boys and girls of differing ages in their respective localities.

Selected findings

Most of the information in this section comes from the older group of children who were 19 during the last survey round in 2013. Available data offer a few examples and findings, some of which will be in a forthcoming mixed methods paper on children’s care and unpaid work in the four Young Lives study countries (Crivello and Espinoza 2017, see reference list).

Selected findings

1. Children’s domestic work and caring responsibilities vary a great deal at different ages, between countries and across different localities. In most communities, children start contributing to the household from a young age. However, children and families do not often describe children’s contributions as ‘work’ or as ‘care’ – rather it is seen as ‘help’, and an everyday part of childhood. Indeed, childhood is considered a time when children develop responsibility – not a time to avoid responsibility; it is about balance (between schooling, work at home, and as children grow older, working for pay outside the home). For example, in Ethiopia, children reported that by the age of six they began collecting water and firewood, and some of them were assigned to shoo birds away from crops in the fields: both boys and girls tend to carry out similar tasks at these younger ages.

Overall, there are notable differences between countries in children’s time-use. In Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam for example, the combined amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken by girls and boys is broadly similar, whereas in

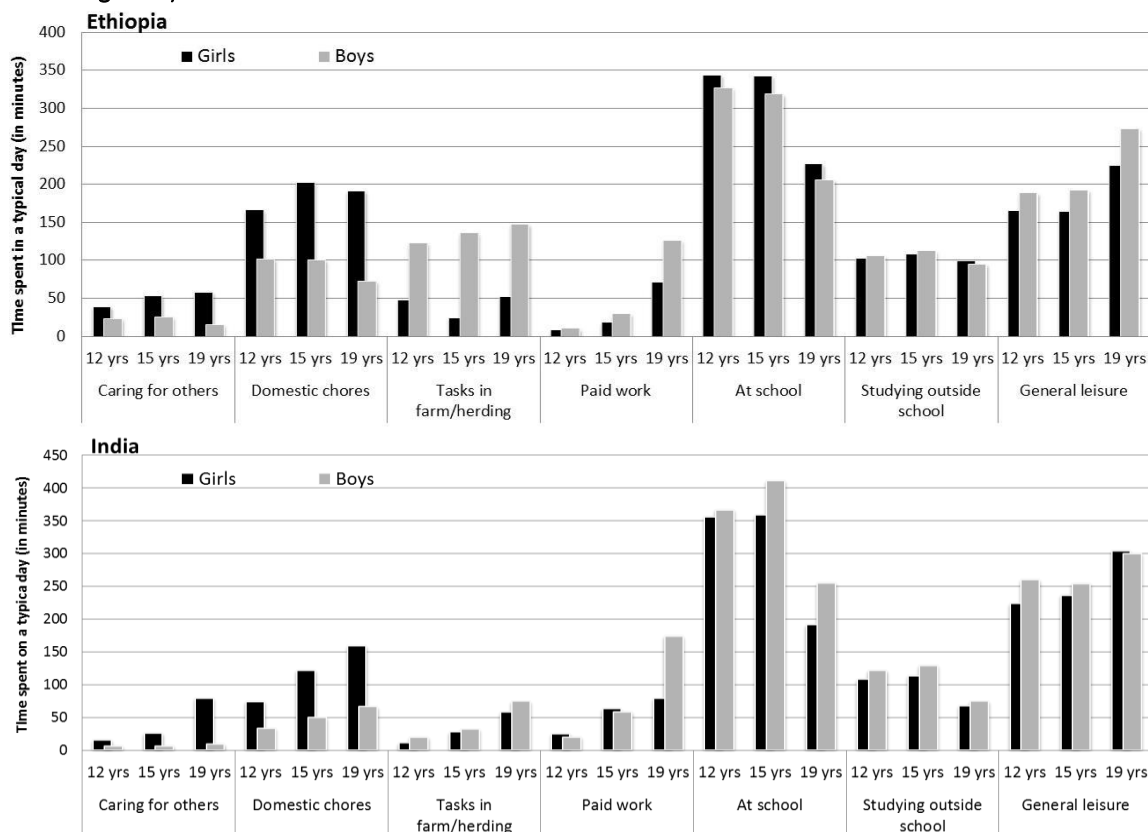
⁴ Other questions capture time-use data – for example, a module on children’s paid work.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (India) the combined amount of paid and unpaid work carried out by girls is disproportionately higher compared to boys (Pells, 2011).

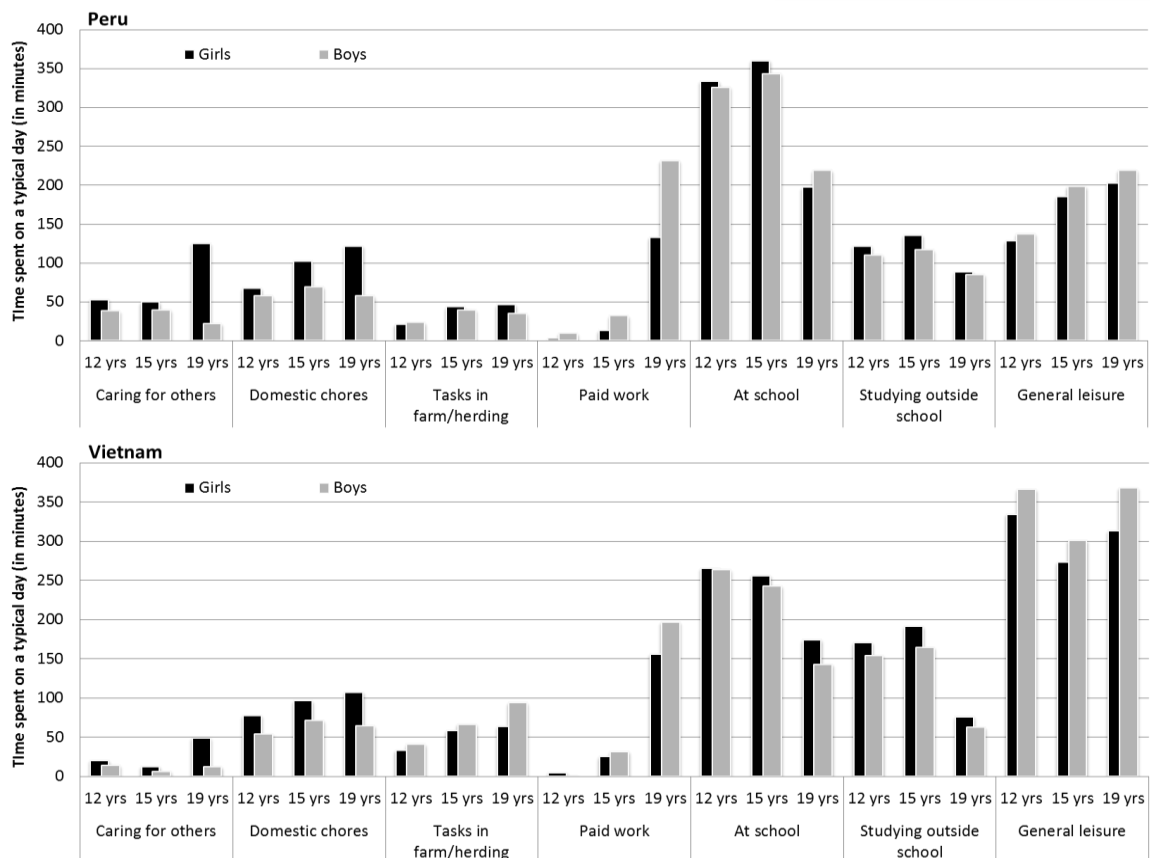
- An analysis of the interaction between gender, household composition and sibling birth order in Ethiopia found that older girls tend to take on the greatest amount of unpaid work in their families; in female-headed households with female children girls may take on boys' tasks such as herding; and boys without sisters, or whose sisters have married or moved away, are expected to take on female tasks (Heissler and Porter 2013). Such transgressions of gender and age norms can be a source of stigma and shame for children, and they may feel they have little choice to refuse such work.
- A qualitative study of children's work in Ethiopia found gender norms around domestic and caring work are enduring, such that older boys were often relieved of domestic chores when they got jobs, but older girls who did paid work outside the home were still expected to do housework (Pankhurst et al. 2016).

2. Gendered patterns of time-use change across childhood. In the first decade of life, gender differences are not as marked compared to the second decade, although girls report spending more time caring for others (such as younger siblings, the ill and elderly at home) and on domestic chores (such as fetching water or firewood, cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping, etc.) from an earlier age, compared to boys.⁵ Gender differences widen during the second decade of life. However, there is considerable variation within and between countries, with striking differences between Ethiopia and Peru, as evident in the graphs below.

Figure 1. Time allocation by girls and boys on different activities on a typical day (in minutes) (Crivello and Espinoza, forthcoming 2017)



⁵ The survey analysis adopts Esquivel's (2014) definition of *unpaid care work* that includes caring and household chores which allows us to capture *indirect* care undertaken alongside other activities.



In Ethiopia, 12 year old girls spent around three hours and 25 minutes in unpaid care work accounting for a difference of more than an hour and 20 minutes in relation to boys of the same age. In Peru, on the other hand, girls spent an average of two hours on care work which was only 25 minutes more than boys. Differences in the amount of time spent on care widen between the ages of 15 and 19 in all the countries except for Ethiopia where the greatest jump occurs earlier, between the ages of 12 and 15 (see figure 1)

- Figure 1. By the time they were 19, in Ethiopia, India and Peru, girls spent between three and four hours a day on domestic and caring work (in Ethiopia 4.1 hours), a difference of more than two hours and 40 minutes when compared to boys of the same age.
 - Although not included here, it is worth noting that there are large differences between urban and rural children’s time use, as well as differences between children in poorer and better-off households, in many countries. Household composition also proves important, such that girls living in households where there are children aged seven and younger and elderly people over the age of 65 report larger daily amounts of their time spent on caring; significantly larger than the amounts of time reported by boys living in similar households.
 - Marriage⁶ has profound effects on girls’ time-use, this signalling a pivotal juncture when girls’ and boys’ trajectories diverge and when girls’ caring responsibilities grow increasingly incompatible with education and employment opportunities, potentially affecting their economic exclusion in early adulthood and beyond.
- 3. Economic opportunities, responsibilities and shocks for the household as a whole have consequences for children’s work** and these consequences play out in gender and generational relations. For example,
- A Young Lives study in Ethiopia and United Andhra Pradesh looking at the impact of social protection schemes on adolescent girls concluded that in many cases these schemes – although important for reducing economic poverty and vulnerability - increase girls’ workloads and significantly reduce their time for study and leisure (Camfield, 2014).

⁶ Details explored in Crivello and Espinoza (forthcoming 2017)

- Similarly, when girls take on domestic chores or care work at home it often frees up mothers to pursue paid work outside the home. Girls provide childcare for elder female relatives (sisters, aunts, mothers) who wish to pursue paid work after giving birth.
- Analysis of Young Lives data from United Andhra Pradesh shows that girls' workload increases by 2.6 hours per week in response to a crop shock, this representing a 40 per cent increase in girls' work (averaging 6.5 hours work per week), whereas a crop shock had only a very small and statistically insignificant effect on boys (Krutikova, 2009). In the context of the severe drought in Andhra Pradesh in 2002/3, eldest sons in irrigation-farming households reduced the number of hours they worked and increased the time they spent in school, while the work of girls (both eldest and younger daughters) increased, presumably in work activities unaffected by the drought (Galab and Outes-Leon, 2011).
- A study of the factors affecting the completion of secondary education in United Andhra Pradesh found that girls are 45 per cent less likely to complete secondary education than boys, even after controlling for variables related to individual characteristics. It found that children who spent three or more hours on domestic chores were 70 per cent less likely to finish secondary school compared to children who did not spend any time in domestic work. Similarly, children who did paid work at the age of 12 were 54 per cent less likely to complete secondary education than children who did not do paid work. These findings raise important questions about the connections between paid work, unpaid work and schooling, and about thresholds and the specific contexts, circumstances and types of unpaid work (and paid work) that become detrimental to children's wellbeing (Singh and Mukherjee 2015).

BOX: Case Study from Peru – the complexities of family care strategies

Young Lives researchers have conducted qualitative interviews with children and families in Peru since 2007. **Elmer** was twelve years old when he was first interviewed in his village located in the northern jungle region of the country. The following account describes the way children are circulated between households as part of family strategies to secure care, education and livelihoods, across time and space. The case draws attention to the importance of considering boys' care worlds and their caring roles, since these remain marginalised within care discourses.

Age twelve, Elmer moved to Lima where his sister had migrated five years earlier. She sent for him so that he could look after her children while she and her husband worked. In exchange, she paid for Elmer's upkeep and schooling costs. The previous year, Elmer's brother (17 years old) lived there for the same reason, but he returned to Rioja to graduate with his friends. The following year, Elmer returned to Rioja, and his older brother, having graduated, returned to his sister's house for post-secondary schooling. Then, his parents relocated to a different village where they bought land. When he was fifteen years old, Elmer's mother spent several months in Lima to care for her daughter who was ill, and Elmer and his siblings moved to yet a different village to attend school. Elmer said that he found it difficult when his mother left since he confided in her most: 'I spent a year without her'. She returned home and each weekend the children walked three hours to help in their parents' fields. During the week, the children manage on their own.

Elmer's family an example of why simplistic models of care relationships defined in binary terms of 'adult caregiver/child care-recipient' do not always hold, particularly in contexts where responsibility for care is shared across the generations. This case demonstrates how 'caring' and 'working' and 'learning' are more intertwined in everyday life than they are divisible, and that family care networks and their strategies can spread across distant spaces.

(Source: Crivello, Gina (2015) 'There's no Future Here': The Time and Place of Children's Migration Aspirations in Peru, *Geoforum*, 62: 38-46.)

A few thoughts

If we are concerned with supporting children's wellbeing and development, while also respecting local cultures and diverse values and definitions of childhood, a number of important questions needs to be raised:

- 1) Recognition is an important first step. We need to ensure that children's roles in caring interdependencies are acknowledged and valued, this includes recognition of their right to *receive* care and the right to have their

giving of care recognised and legitimated (Rummery and Fine 2012:326). There is a risk if we view children’s caring roles and unpaid work through the lens of ‘burdens’ and ‘vulnerability’: the result will be an over-protectionist (rather than a balanced) approach. Interventions need to engage with the reality that the majority of the world’s children growing up in low- and middle-income countries are active co-participants in the care, welfare and constructions of family life, and childhood in many contexts is seen as a time to contribute work to the household and to develop responsibilities.

- 2) Thresholds: we should generate data and analysis that answer questions, such as what types of unpaid work and care work? In what circumstances and condition? How much is it?
- 3) Context: the need to be open to different cultural contexts of care and to diverse socio-cultural constructions of childhood and family life and the role of children’s responsibilities within these. At the same time it is important to prioritize children’s wellbeing, without forgetting that children located in high-income countries also undertake caring and unpaid work as part of their valued family roles, and they are not immune to factors of poverty, illness and lack of state support that might demand their caregiving. Indeed, when care is difficult for children to manage, this is often because the combination of poverty, illness and lack of social protection render children’s responsibilities beyond their capacity and incompatible with schooling – rather than care itself being the problem.
- 4) Life course processes: the need for better understanding around children’s care trajectories and how earlier experiences affect later outcomes in early adulthood and beyond – since this gets to the heart of breaking cycles of inequality, including gendered, intersectional and intergenerational cycles.
- 5) Addressing tensions and false divides: between women’s rights and children’s rights. Important questions include where the points of synergy are, where the impasses; and whether a life course approach can help us think relationally, including inter-generationally.

Data challenges (Young Lives examples)

The survey questions recording the amount of time spent on particular categories of activities only capture primary activities, resulting in limited information on simultaneous activities (e.g. combining work with play while caring for a younger sibling) and on sequencing of activities throughout the day. The survey in Peru was adapted to include secondary and tertiary activities, but this meant some aspects of the data were no longer (strictly) comparable with the other countries.

- Recalling precise amount of time spent on activities is a challenge, especially when activities are broken up throughout the day.
- There can be inconsistencies between accounts of children and of adults (parents) reporting children’s time-use. Some researchers may opt for relying on adult accounts as more ‘trustworthy’ but this reflects the assumption that adults have accurate knowledge of how children spend their time.
- Qualitative group exercises piloted with younger children (age 5-7) found they struggled with clock-time and with allotting ‘hours’ spent on particular activities.
- Qualitative interviews found that children’s work is often not considered ‘work’ by children and families. Children may not see themselves as ‘carers’ or ‘caregivers’.
- Qualitative interviews are semi-structured, resulting in variation in the way questions are asked and in the relative depth of exploration across cases.
- Children’s everyday realities do not necessarily reflect the binary categories used in research and policy, such as: paid/unpaid, care activity/economic activity, choice/obligation, etc. Strengthening relational approaches is crucial.

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Forthcoming Young Lives (titles TBC)

- Gina Crivello and Patricia Espinoza Revollo, *Children’s unpaid care work: A mixed methods approach across time*, Working Paper, early 2017
- Gina Crivello and Patricia Espinoza, *A feminist critique of children as actors in the care economy* (book chapter) – 2017
- Gina Crivello, *The paid work and unpaid work connection in child-adult relations in Ethiopia* (qualitative paper), mid-2017
- Patricia Espinoza Revollo and Catherine Porter, *Changes in children’s time use*, Working Paper, mid-2017
- We also plan to produce a policy brief on children’s gendered time-use, work and unpaid care in mid-late September.

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