



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

**Young Lives**   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

# Poverty, Inequality and Social Change in Children's Lives

*Advancing Equity for Children  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN CRC  
New School, NY*

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# 25 YEARS OF THE CRC

- Huge progress achieved through holistic approach to child development
- Child survival and enrolment in school
- BUT widespread inequities affecting the poorest and most vulnerable children = a global issue
- An 'unfinished agenda'
- Emphasis on child protection
- 47% of all people living in extreme poverty are aged 18 or younger (Olinto et al 2013)

# THE STUDY

- **Multi-disciplinary study that aims to:**
  - improve understanding of childhood poverty
  - provide evidence to improve policies & practice
- **Following nearly 12,000 children in 4 countries:** Ethiopia; India (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana); Peru and Vietnam, over 15 years
- **Now covers 11 year period:** first data collected in 2002, with 5 survey rounds and 4 waves of qualitative research with nested sample 50 children plus school survey of children in school
- **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, reflecting country diversity (rural-urban, diverse livelihoods, ethnicity)
- **Collaboration:**
  - partners in each study country
  - core funded by DFID, DGIS, IrishAid
  - collaboration with UNICEF Office of Research

# VISUALISING THIS

Qualitative nested sample

Linked school surveys

OLDER COHORT

AGES: 8 12 15 19 22



Following 1,000 children

YOUNGER COHORT

AGES: 1 5 8 12 15



Same age children at different time points

Round 1  
2002

Round 2  
2006

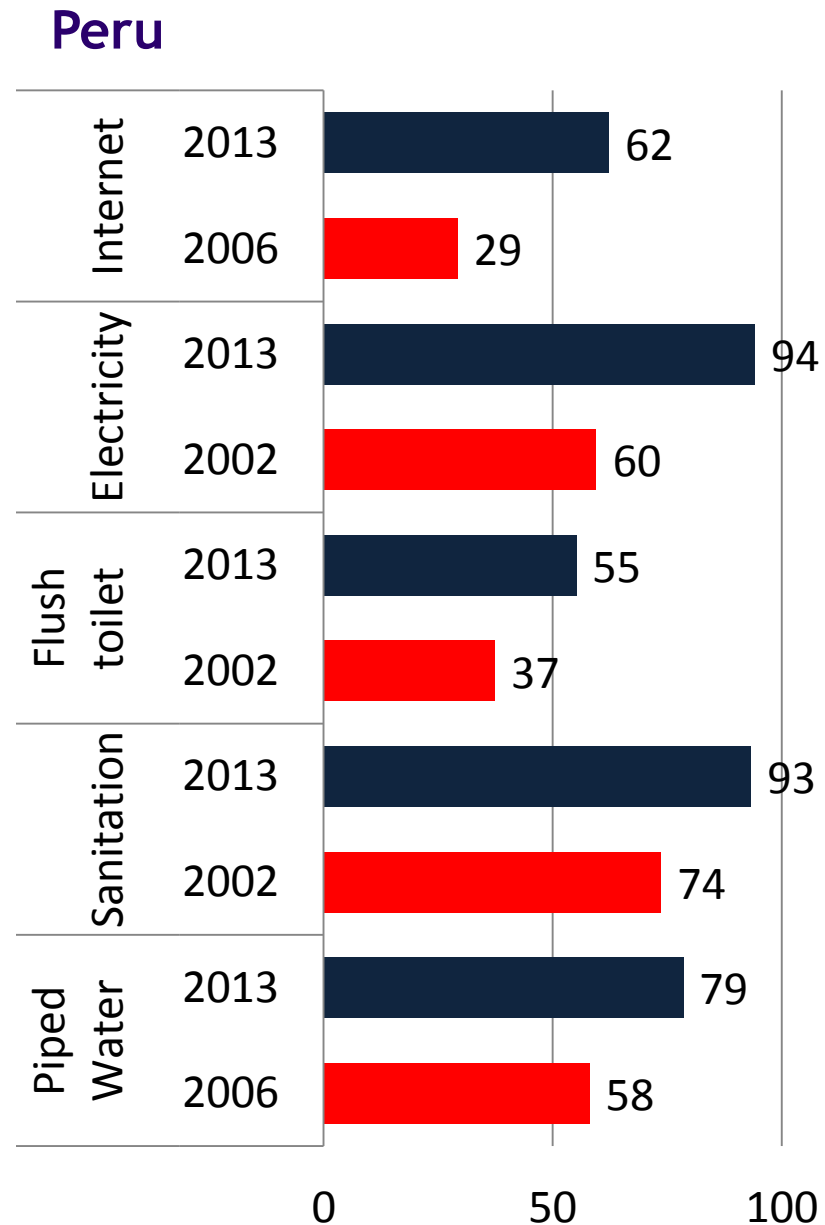
Round 3  
2009

Round 4  
2013

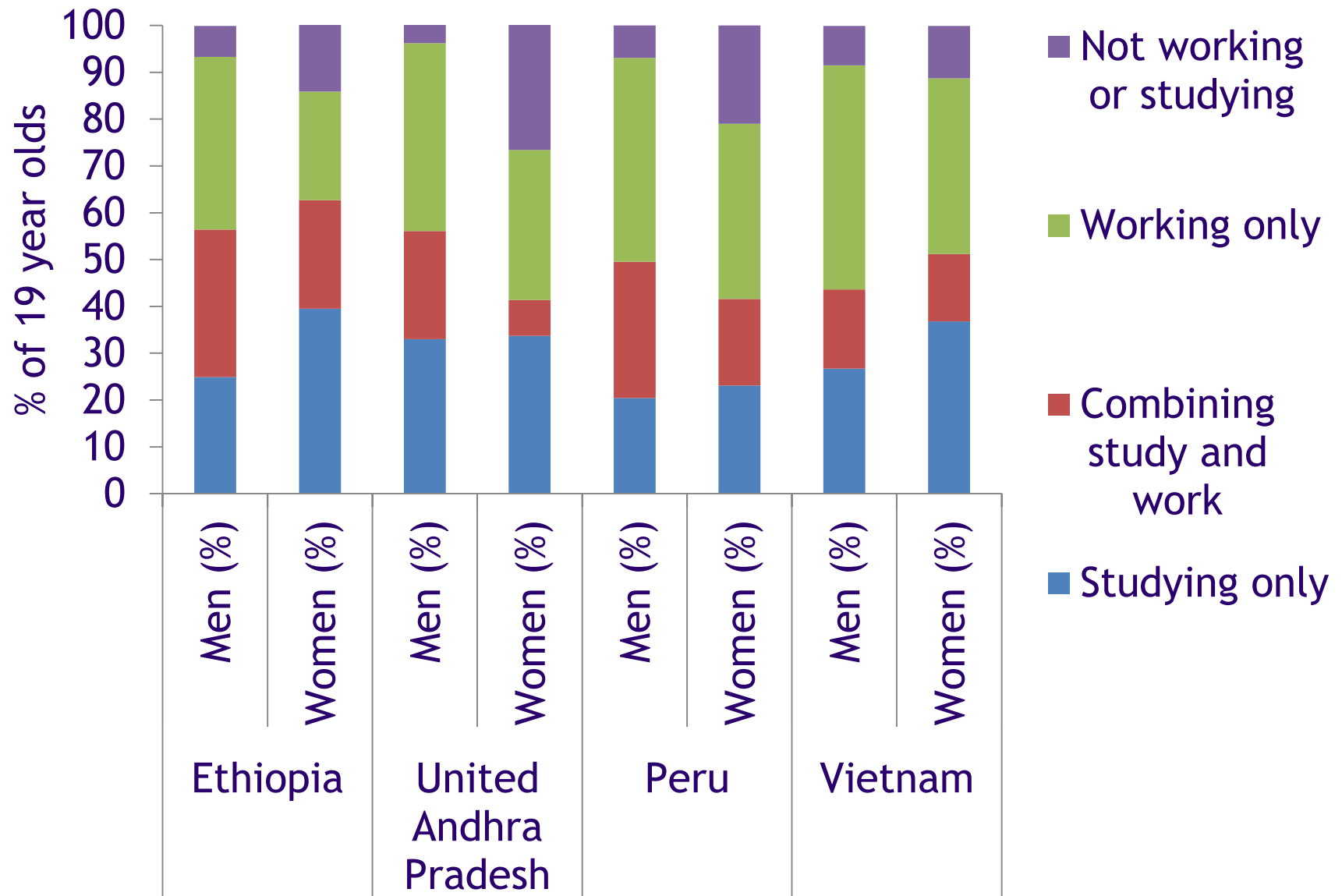
Round 5  
2016

# TEN YEARS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

- The economies of all four Young Lives countries grew rapidly in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- This growth was accompanied by broad infrastructural improvements and increased service access (associated with the MDGs) e.g.
  - increased external investment, road and communications infrastructure
  - primary school enrolment = near universal across the sample in 3 of our countries and rapidly increasing in Ethiopia
  - Social protection: MGNREGA, India; *Juntos*, Peru; PSNP, Ethiopia
  - Health insurance in Vietnam, Peru and in India. Health Extension Workers in Ethiopia



# WHAT HAPPENS?



# WHAT HAPPENS BY 19 YEARS?

- Substantial numbers are still studying at 19 years -> huge policy opportunity. But the least poor young people, those whose parents had higher levels of education and those growing up in urban areas stay longer in education
- Gender differences in 3 out of 4 countries by 19 in who studies. Young men much more likely to remain studying in AP, India; Young women in Ethiopia and Vietnam.
- Poorer young women and those living in rural areas are more likely to be married and given birth.
- Young women Married
  - 37% - AP India
  - 25% - Peru
  - 19% - Vietnam
  - 13% - Ethiopia

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37% - AP India  
25% - Peru  
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13% - Ethiopia  
Given birth  
24% - Peru  
21% - AP India  
12% - Vietnam  
9% - Ethiopia



# KEY QUESTIONS FOR POLICY

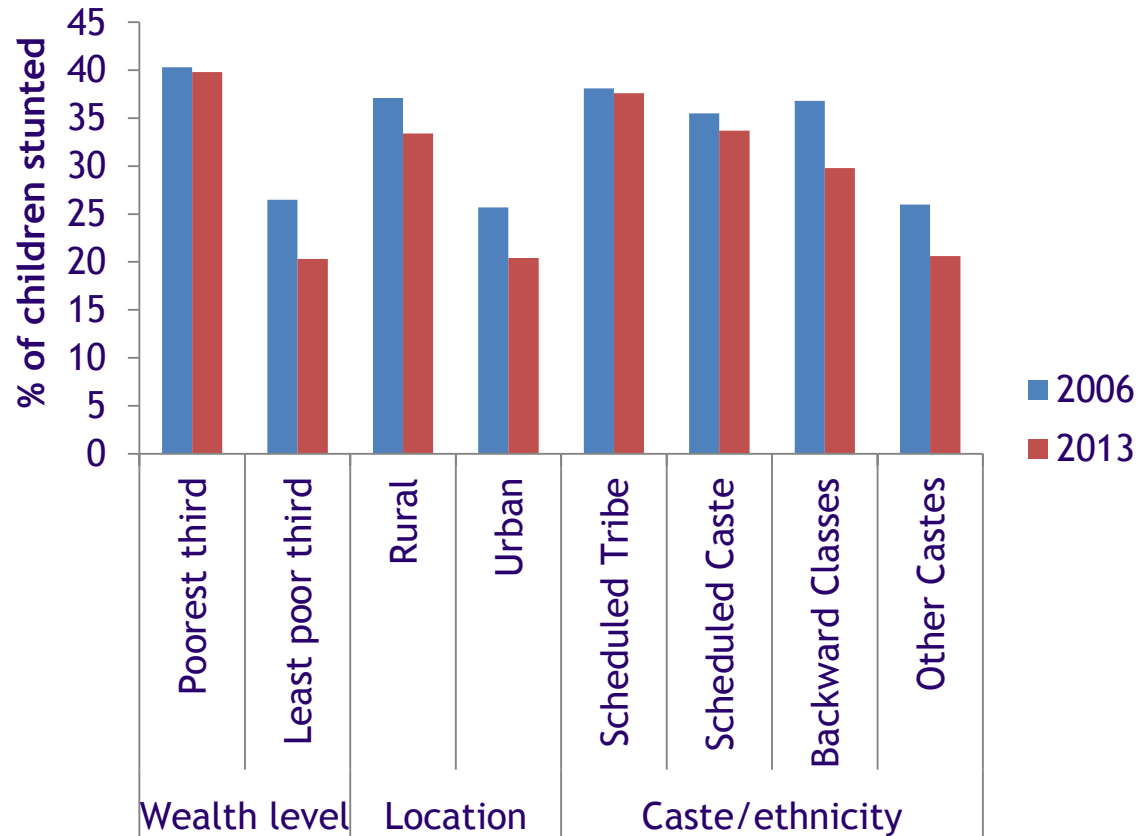
- Why such large differences by 19 years?
- What sorts of approaches might improve equality of opportunity and stop young people being left behind.

Addressing the earlier roots of later differences in opportunities faced

- Central importance of tackling under-nutrition
- Crisis in learning, and potential of the school

# TACKLING UNDER-NUTRITION

Andhra Pradesh, 12 year old children



Early under-nutrition associated with a range of negative outcomes

The poorest 1/3 of children are around twice as likely to be stunted as the least poor third

Implication -> central importance of early years policy to SDGS but importance to invest in middle childhood also

# A CRISIS IN LEARNING?

- Assumption made both by policy makers and by children and parents that education will lead to social mobility

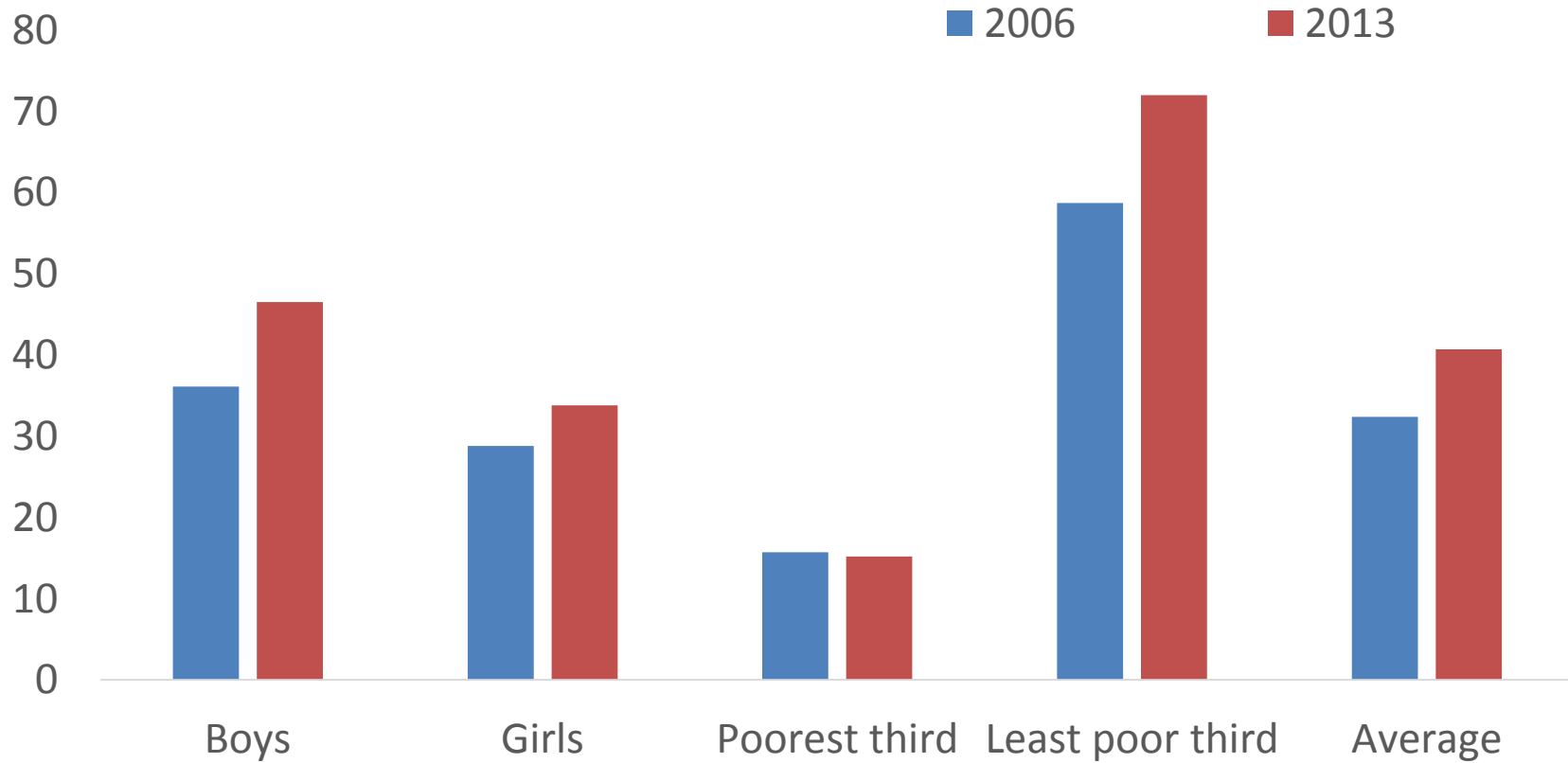
-> But will it?

- Improved enrolment rates are a great success - but don't always lead to good learning
- Learning influenced by household factors, not just the school
- Unequal opportunities to learn

Need to look at schooling in new light for SDGs

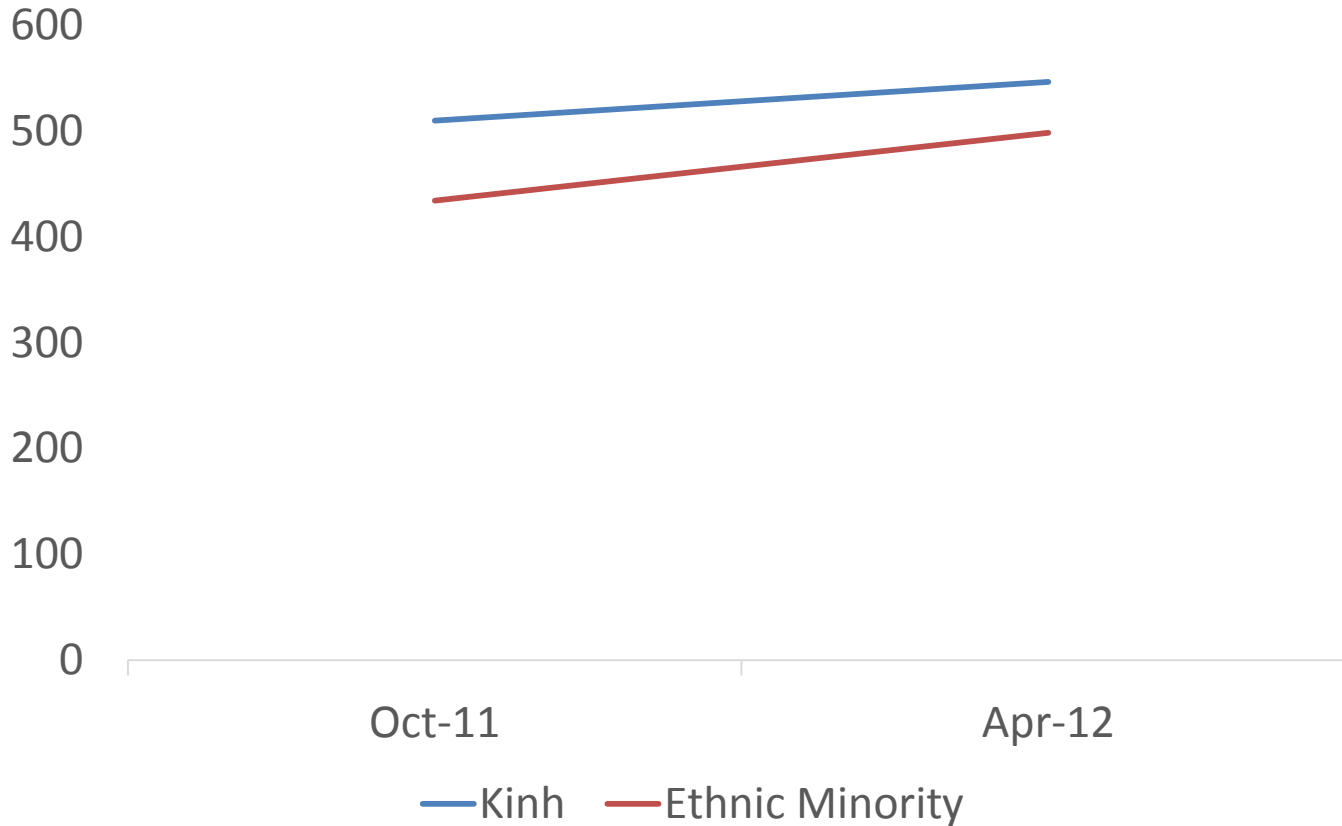
# POLICY SOMETIMES WIDENS GAPS

Andhra Pradesh, enrolment in private schools (% of 12 year olds)



# BUT POLICY CAN NARROW GAPS

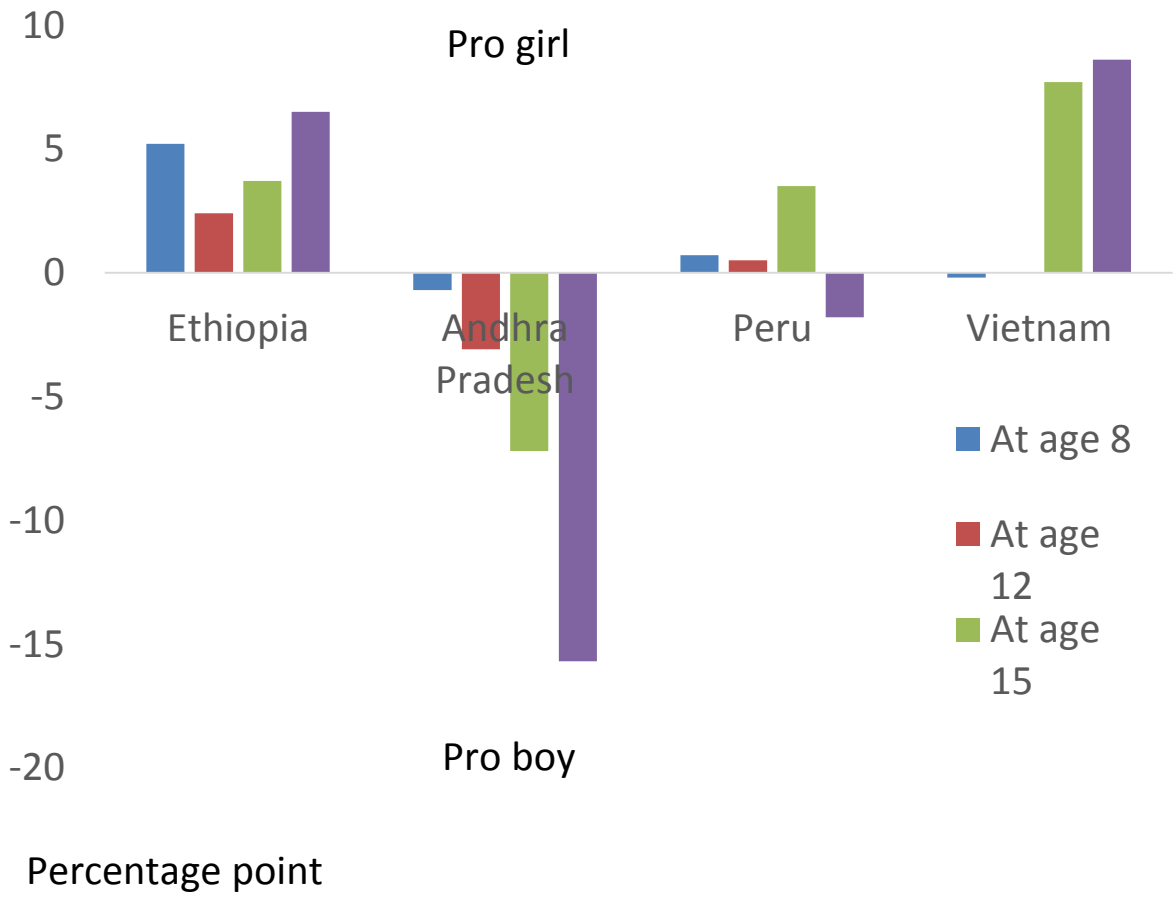
Vietnam, Maths tests results (standardised so average initial performance=500) (10 year olds)



Narrowing learning gaps against tests based on the curricula

# HOW, WHEN AND WHY GENDER INEQUITIES FORM

Gender gaps in enrolment by age



## Why?

Decision making over who stays in school shaped by

- > economic pressures
- > institutional structural
- > socio-cultural context

# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

- Cognitive gaps between social groups well in place before children enter school, but ways these widen after varies with the impact of school system:

-> *Vietnam, high performer and more equalising*

-> *Andhra Pradesh, low performer and widening gaps*

(a) Early phase of life central foundation for later learning

(b) Tackling household poverty supports education

(b) Greater focus on school effectiveness for learning

(c) Programming potential to capitalise on school for other purposes -  
eg. school feeding programmes

(d) Addressing gender disadvantages requires *both* policy targeted at children directly and engaging with wider societal structures which shape household decision making

# FINAL REFLECTIONS

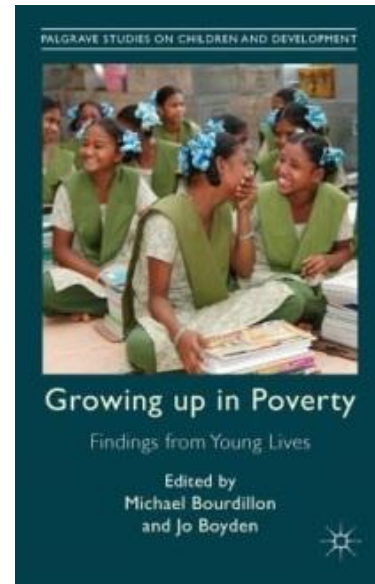
- UN GA 2014
  - “Need to reduce implementation gap between principles and rights enshrined in UN CRC and actual living conditions of the most marginalised and excluded girls and boys who are left behind”
  - “Many children find themselves living with multiple risks and multiple hazards ... action must be on the basis of mappings of vulnerability that reflects these complexities”
- SDGs and data revolution = potential to increase the profile of children, key messages include:
  - > increase social protection coverage for households with children
  - > identify and improve effectiveness of school for poorer and marginalised children



# FINDING OUT MORE

[www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)

- methods and research papers
- datasets (UK Data Archive)
- publications
- child profiles and photos
- e-newsletter



Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

**We need to end child poverty in order to break the cycle of poverty.**

**What we do**  
Discover more about the unique multidisciplinary nature of the Young Lives project and its work.  
Research methods  
Access our data  
Children's voices

**Where we work**  
Find out more about our 4 diverse cultural, geographic, economic and political study contexts.  
Ethiopia  
India (Andhra Pradesh)  
Peru  
Vietnam

**Our themes**  
Explore our work by themes that are central to children and young people's lives in the modern world.  
Dynamics of childhood poverty  
Children's experiences of poverty  
Schooling, time-use and life transitions

**What's new**  
What Shapes the Influence Evidence Has on Policy? 18 February 2011  
Young Lives/México del Milenio: Peru-based field qualitative researcher 04 February 2011  
The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People 02 January 2011  
PIHD Studentship in International

ESDS International  
Economic and Social Data Service

**ESDS International study guide**

**Guide to Young Lives**

The Young Lives survey is an innovative long-term project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four developing countries. The purpose of the project is to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and examine how policies affect children's well-being, in order to inform the development of future policy and to target child welfare interventions more effectively.

The study is being conducted in Ethiopia, India (in the Andhra Pradesh state), Peru and Vietnam. These countries were selected because they reflect a range of cultural, geographical and social contexts, and experience differing issues facing the developing world: high debt burden, emergence from conflict, and vulnerability to environmental conditions such as drought and flood.

The Young Lives study uses a range of data collection methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The study aims to follow 2,000 children (aged approximately 1 year in 2002) and their households, from both urban and rural communities, in each of the four countries (8,000 children in total) for a period of 15 years. It is envisaged that subsequent survey waves will take place once every three to four years. Data were also collected for the baseline survey from 1,000 children aged 8 years in each country, in order to provide a basis for comparison with the younger children when they reach that age.

**Accessing data and documentation**

Users registered with the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) have access to the Young Lives data in SPSS, Data and tab-delimited formats, via the instant download service or on CD (CD orders are free of charge for users outside the UK who may have difficulty downloading the study material).

The data are available to all registered users for not-for-profit purposes.

To register with ESDS: [www.esds.ac.uk/wendp/access/regist.asp](http://www.esds.ac.uk/wendp/access/regist.asp)

Once registered, access to the Young Lives data is via [www.esds.ac.uk/findingdata/inDescription.asp?n=5307](http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingdata/inDescription.asp?n=5307)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Oxford team