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About Young Lives

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Abstract

Drawing on three rounds of survey and qualitative data, this paper examines household poverty dynamics and child well-being in Ethiopian communities. The survey data indicate that many of the households remained in poverty, whereas a few others moved up or down over the years.

The area-wide and idiosyncratic shocks made the economic situations of households decline or remain in poverty. Good harvests and diversified income sources in rural areas, and in urban communities, a better income earned mainly through paid work and remittances, played significant roles in raising the income of households.

Poor families find it hard to deal with shocks. They have to seek the help of their children. The qualitative data show that most of the children in our sample worked to maintain or improve the economic situations of their families.

The evidence also illustrates an obvious mismatch between what the children do for the family and to what extent they, as individuals, benefit from it. For some, the changes they themselves largely brought about have hardly trickled down to them. It suggests that there is no guarantee that positive changes in family economic status bring about improvements in the well-being of children. Thus, there is a tension between household wealth and child well-being.

Such tension also suggests a parallel methodological challenge in household poverty dynamics research, where the place of children is usually undermined. Traditionally, data for the analysis of household poverty dynamics are obtained from adults mainly through surveys. Children's contributions to households and their role in providing data on consumption are usually overlooked.

The paper argues that the application of mixed methods to household and child poverty research and the use of longitudinal data that captured children's economic contributions to the household would help us to understand children's role in the economic circumstances of their households better. In the longitudinal data, children's contributions to the household economy and the movement of households into and out of poverty as they grow older could become more visible. In the mixed methods, while the survey captures data usually reported by adults, the qualitative method offers children the opportunity to provide data on their lived experiences of poverty.

To understand child poverty, we need to penetrate deeper into household poverty dynamics to discover the place of children. Children's agency as demonstrated in their essential contribution to the family economy and their ability to provide data for understanding poverty needs to be recognised.

1. Introduction

The term 'poverty dynamics' refers to changes in welfare that cause individuals or households to cross a fixed poverty line between one period and the next (Baulch 2013), and poverty analysis has predominantly been based on household survey data tracked over time (Yaqub 2000). However, the impact of household poverty dynamics on individual family members over the course of their life has been given a limited focus. In particular, children's place in household poverty dynamics and their role in the family economy have been largely overlooked.

This paper focuses on understanding household poverty dynamics and children's well-being by considering some of the methods that can take account of the role of children. It begins by introducing the use of mixed methods and longitudinal data in the study of household poverty dynamics and child poverty. It also reviews some available evidence on poverty dynamics in Ethiopia.

1.1. The use of mixed methods and longitudinal data in the study of household poverty dynamics

Addressing persistent poverty requires understanding why some households move into or out of poverty, or remain poor for years. This entails the use of both longitudinal data and mixed methods, where qualitative research plays an essential role. Some studies have already used both methods in understanding household poverty dynamics in the developing world (for example, Baulch 2013; Davis and Baulch 2011; Baulch and Davis 2007; Davis 2007). Others have studied poverty dynamics over time mainly through qualitative methods, using life history narratives (Kothari and Hulme 2004), or focus group discussions and life history interviews (Davis 2007 and 2006, respectively).

While survey-based analyses help to reveal patterns and economic mobility, they offer little help in showing why these happen. Researchers have often opted to use rather qualitative methods to overcome such limitations. For example, using the life histories methodology, Kothari and Hulme (2004), examined household poverty dynamics using a single household in Bangladesh. Their analysis demonstrates the detailed processes of poverty patterns and why they happened the way they did. Unlike the aggregated classifications and categories of poverty resulting from quantitative analysis, the focus was on people and their experiences.

Another notable contribution of qualitative methods to poverty analysis is evident in the work of Peter Davis (2007), who examined poverty dynamics using extensive focus group discussions in Bangladesh. These longitudinal data drawn from poor families showed the reasons for the decline or improvement in their well-being and that of their communities. Davis established that dowry, illness, family size, lack of land, debt and flooding were the major causes of economic decline or reasons for remaining poor. On the other hand, businesses, loans, education, and improved agriculture contributed to an improvement of the well-being of the families.

The evidence generally indicates that qualitative methods help to generate substantial data on the lived experiences of poor people themselves. However, their descriptions may not show systematic chronology and general trends of events. Quantitative data would fill the gap by providing patterns of movements of households into and out of poverty. This calls for the combined use of both methods.

Sharp (2007) has reflected on 'squaring the Q'¹ in analysing destitution in Ethiopia. While her study recognises the benefit of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in explaining household destitution, it also shows the trade-offs and tensions, which relate to whether the quantitative or qualitative data take precedence in the final stage of the analysis. A quantitative survey demonstrates strength in breadth, while that of qualitative research lies in its depth. Mixing both means capitalising on the strength of each method.

Another study on household poverty dynamics based on a mixed method in rural Bangladesh provided some interesting insights. Using household surveys and life history interviews, Davis and Baulch (2011) concluded that the methods complemented each other to provide a profound analysis. However, the study also showed that analysis using quantitative and qualitative methods brought some differences in conclusions. For example, while the quantitative analysis suggested that households were moving out of poverty, the qualitative data showed that the same households perceived little change and experienced no improvement in their well-being. The key methodological difference the authors found was that while the surveys show households' consumption expenditure patterns, the life histories provide the experiences of individuals within the households. While the unit of analysis of the former was the household, it was the individual for the latter. They argue that by adopting a mixed method, the differences could be narrowed and this could improve the reliability of poverty dynamics research.

There is limited evidence on the application of such longitudinal data and mixed methods to household and child poverty. Using Young Lives data, some studies have tried to examine household poverty dynamics and their impacts on the lives of Ethiopian children (for example, Camfield and Roelen 2011); children's experiences of poverty (for example, Tafere 2012; Vennam and Andharia 2012; Chuta and Crivello 2013); and children's contributions to poor households (Heissler and Porter 2013). Focusing on low-caste households in Andhra Pradesh, India, Vennam and Andharia (2012) explored factors which contributed to the downward mobility of certain households. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, they found that the downward mobility was associated with the location of households (whether urban or rural), the point in the family life cycle (households were more affected at an early stage), the age of household members (those with younger members being more affected), debts and shocks.

Using three rounds of survey data and two rounds of qualitative data, Camfield and Roelen (2011) also analysed the movement of households into and out of poverty in Ethiopian communities. They used the survey-based classifications of households into the categories of ultra-poor, poor, near-poor and non-poor. Their study builds on 'context-specific taxonomy that operates at the child and the household levels' (ibid.: 12). Based on case studies of eight children, it explains their levels of poverty and outlines the movements they had gone through for a number of years. The authors concluded that the combined methods explained diverse features of poverty. While the quantitative methods helped to measure the monetary aspect of household poverty, the qualitative methods assisted in documenting non-monetary impacts of poverty on the life trajectories of individuals.

Heissler and Porter (2013) also provided certain insights into the contributions of children living in poor households in Ethiopia. Instead of attending school properly, children were spending a considerable amount of time supporting their poor parents. Using some case

1 'Q' signifies the concepts quantitative and qualitative.

studies from the qualitative research and building on the wider contexts of survey data, Chuta and Crivello (2013) showed that poverty exacerbates the problems of children who go through protracted environmental and social shocks. They also demonstrated how poor living conditions expose young people to various shocks.

Drawing on a Young Lives dataset that includes 2011 qualitative data, this paper examines household poverty dynamics, looks at children's contributions to households and assesses the impact of both on children's well-being. It captures the processes over some nine years, until the older children reached the age of 17. The paper documents how shocks affect the poverty dynamics of households, as well as bringing to light the tension existing between household wealth and child well-being. It also aims to contribute to the methodological debate by discussing the importance of longitudinal data and mixed methods in understanding household and childhood poverty. The rest of the paper is organised in the following way: the next section describes the data and methods used; in Section 3, I present the results; and in Section 4, I discuss the findings and provide some conclusions.

2. Data and methods

This paper draws on Young Lives data collected through both a longitudinal quantitative survey and qualitative research. The quantitative surveys were carried out in 2002 (Round 1), 2006 (Round 2) and 2009 (Round 3) and the qualitative data were collected in 2007 (Qual1), 2008 (Qual2) and 2011 (Qual3). Young Lives is a study of childhood poverty carried out in four developing countries, including Ethiopia. The study follows two cohorts of children over 15 years. The Older Cohort (1,000 children) were born in 1994/5 and the Younger Cohort (2,000 children) were born in 2001/2.

There are two ways of integrating data generated through mixed methods. The first is through a 'methodological integration', which requires conducting qualitative and quantitative fieldwork simultaneously with the aim of having an integrated analysis and write-up (Baulch and Davis 2007). The other relates to 'putting together' (Baulch and Davis 2007), which involves the collection of both datasets at different times but having a combined analysis. Both datasets are collected 'in sequence' (Camfield and Roelen 2012). The data used in this paper were gathered 'in sequence' and the analysis was carried out by 'putting them together'.

The survey data were collected from households drawn from 20 sites (12 rural and 8 urban) in Ethiopia. Between the rounds, there was a small amount of attrition caused by death, migration or the refusal of children to continue taking part in the study. Gender composition was fairly equal across the rounds..

Although some reference is made to Round 1 data, the poverty dynamics analysis is based on data from Rounds 2 and 3. This was because data on consumption expenditure were gathered only after Round 1. In Rounds 2 and 3, households were asked about their consumption expenditure, their perceptions of their economic situation, and some changes and shocks that affected their households.

The qualitative study was carried out in five of the twenty Young Lives study sites. Sixty children and their households were selected from all five communities (two urban and three rural). Half of them were from the Older Cohort and the other half were Younger Cohort children, with equal gender composition.

The characteristics and changes in the communities were documented during the qualitative fieldwork. One of the urban sites is located in the capital, Addis Ababa, and the other in Hawassa, a city in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. Both are very poor neighbourhoods, whose establishment dates back to the founding of the cities. They are characterised by poor housing and inadequate services. Both now face imminent demolition by their respective city administrations. People in the communities earn their living mainly through trade (including daily market selling, street vending, transport, selling drinks and handicrafts), wage labour (mainly in construction) and carpentry (Pankhurst and Tiemelessan 2012). Such activities usually draw the labour of children.

The rural communities, Tach-Meret, Leki and Zeytuni, are located in the regions of Amhara, Oromia and Tigray, respectively.² Tach-Meret and Leki are both close to towns but Zeytuni is rather a remote community. Farmers in the communities produce predominantly cereals, but there are other economic activities such as irrigated farming, fishing, flower cultivation and handicrafts in Leki; potato growing and haricot picking in Tach-Meret; and small irrigated farms and stone-crusher plants in Zeytuni. Children are hugely involved in both the main and the subsidiary economic activities.

Households in these rural communities are prone to shocks and there is a high prevalence of poverty. They largely depend on the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) for food and income.³ Families also rely on the income their children earn by doing paid work.

For this paper, the qualitative data I drew on were from the 30 Older Cohort children and their households participating in the qualitative study. I focused on the Older Cohort because I wanted to analyse the poverty dynamics of households, as well as children's experiences and their contribution to the processes. The older children have been experiencing poverty for longer than the Younger Cohort.

For detailed case-based discussions, I selected six households and their children (three girls and three boys). At least one household relates to each poverty mobility category. The households of Defar (Tach-Meret), Ayu (Leki) and Haymanot (Zeytuni) represent households who 'remained poor'. The family of Tagesech (Leku) is one of those who have 'moved into poverty'. According to the survey, Hadush (Zeytuni) is from a household which 'remained non-poor', whereas Bereket (Bertukan) is from a family which 'remained poor'. Nevertheless, the qualitative data from Round 3 show an improvement in the households' economic well-being. Thus, I have categorised these last two households as having 'moved out of poverty'.

2 All the names of sites and children are pseudonyms, in order to preserve the anonymity of respondents.

3 The Productive Safety Net Programme is a government social protection programme that helps food-deficit rural households with grain and cash transfers. It began in 2005 and covers about 8 million people (for details, see Tafere and Woldehanna 2012).

Table 1. *Case study children*

	Name of site and location (rural or urban)	Poverty movement of household, 2006–9
Boys		
Bereket	Bertukan (urban)	Moved out of poverty
Defar	Tach-Meret (rural)	Remained poor
Hadush	Zeytuni (rural)	Moved out of poverty
Girls		
Ayu	Leki (rural)	Remained poor
Haymanot	Zeytuni (rural)	Remained poor
Tagesech	Leku (urban)	Moved into poverty

The data were mainly generated through interviews and life-course draw-and-tell exercises carried out with both children and caregivers. Children were asked to draw a timeline by marking years and their ages. They were then requested to indicate, as far as they could remember, the major events in the course of their lives. This helped to elicit their memories of the events that had impacted their lives. Most children were able to draw the timeline, but a few of them were not willing to do so because they felt they were not good at drawing. No pressure was put on them. This is in accordance with the Young Lives ethical guidelines, which, among other things, ensure the consent and willingness of the children in any session.⁴ Then, each child was asked to explain the events he/she had drawn. The contents of the biographies and discussions were comprehensive. However, in this paper only the family shocks that affected their economic lives and other developmental aspects are discussed.

In Qual3 (2011), the timelines of the major life events of the parents/caregivers were depicted. Unlike the children, the parents were not able to draw a timeline. They had to seek some support from the researchers. The caregivers explained the major events (both positive events and negative shocks), when they happened, how they affect the family and their children. The researchers had to fill the timeline with what the respondents told them. Although an individual timeline running from birth to the present was depicted, in this paper more emphasis is given to events that happened after the birth of the study children. I have also used some data from caregivers' earlier life experiences whenever they have a substantial impact on the life of the child. After sketching the timeline, in-depth interviews were conducted to document the details of the events.

3. Results

3.1. Trends in household poverty dynamics

Before discussing household poverty dynamics, it is necessary to establish how poverty is defined. The Young Lives study in Ethiopia has adopted the national poverty line as defined by consumption expenditure. This is defined by a smoothed household consumption expenditure, as reported by the head of the household. It takes into account the fact that households can consume more by using their savings or borrowing, or by deferring consumption by saving for the future. It is argued that consumption is a better measure than

⁴ For the details of Young Lives ethical guidelines, please see Morrow (2009).

income because it is less affected by variation in time and it can be calculated more accurately than the latter (Woldehanna et al. 2008). Furthermore, such a measure is considered appropriate in determining household welfare over the longer period of time.

The consumption expenditure poverty line is established using the costs of food that meet a minimum of caloric requirement (2,200 kcal), plus non-food essentials (Woldehanna et al. 2008). The measurement requires the scaling up of different household levels of consumption to adult consumption. After adjusting for inflation, by deflating the 2009 consumption expenditure per capita to 2006 levels, the real consumption per capita was Birr 142 in 2006, and Birr 150 for 2009 (Woldehanna et al. 2011). There was higher consumption expenditure for urban households (Birr 187 in 2006; Birr 192 in 2009) than for rural households (Birr 112 in 2006; Birr 122 in 2009).

Table 2. *Patterns of absolute consumption poverty (%)*

	Absolute poverty		
	Round 2 (2006)	Round 3 (2009)	Change (%)
Urban	66	64	-2.5
Rural	76	71	-7.5
Younger Cohort	72	68	-5.2
Older Cohort	72	67	-6.7
Average	72	68	-5.7

(N=2,853)

Young Lives data from both Round 2 and Round 3 show some changes over time, although a large proportion of the households still live below the poverty line. The level of absolute poverty derived from consumption expenditure was 72 per cent in Round 2 and it declined to 68 per cent in 2009 in Round 3 (Table 2). Although the majority of the rural households still remained poorer, they seem to have experienced more favourable economic change than their urban counterparts.

Between the two rounds, most of the households (73.7 per cent) remained in similar economic situations. The rest either moved into or out of poverty (Table 3).

Table 3. *Movement into and out of consumption poverty, 2006–9 (%)*

	Urban	Rural	Total
Moved out of poverty	11.2	15.2	15.2
Stayed constant	78.7	71.3	73.7
Moved into poverty	10.1	11.5	11.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

(N=2,853)

Shocks force households move into poverty or stay poor for a long period of time. Wider shocks such as drought or outbreaks of disease or infestations of pests, affected the whole community. Individual households may also face idiosyncratic shocks such as sickness/injury or the death of family members, divorce or abandonment by a partner, death of livestock, etc.

The Young Lives data show that a great number of households faced different shocks over the years. On average, three out of five households faced economic shocks in Round 1;

nevertheless, the figure increased in Round 3, with about nine out of ten households being affected by the same shocks. This was mainly due to high increases in the price of foodstuffs, which was not applicable in the previous rounds (Table 4).

Table 4. *Households affected by economic, environmental and family events/shocks (%)*

	Economic shocks			Environmental shocks			Family events		
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2006)	Round 3 (2009)	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2006)	Round 3 (2009)	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2006)	Round 3 (2009)
Urban	43.8	39.6	97.1	8.4	10.4	16.1	43.4	53.4	55.8
Rural	66.5	60.1	94.2	66.0	71.4	76.8	31.5	60.8	60.1
Non-poor	-	52.0	94.3	-	41.7	45.5	-	57.9	56.9
Poor	-	51.9	95.9	-	49.2	55.6	-	57.9	59.1
Average	58.3	51.9	95.4	45.1	47.1	52.4	35.8	57.9	58.4

N=2,853

The 2009 drought seems to have been behind the high economic shocks in rural areas, whereas the food price inflation that has occurred since 2006 tends to have affected urban households. Apparently, environmental shocks are more prevalent among the rural households than among their urban counterparts. While both poor and non-poor households experience the economic shocks, poorer households are more affected by the environmental shocks. This suggests that poor families are more vulnerable to natural calamities. They also lack the capacity to cope with the impacts. However, this is a cautious conclusion because the Young Lives sample is pro-poor, focusing more on poor households, the majority of which live in rural communities. As many as 65.2 per cent and 54.3 per cent of the rural households of Older Cohort children reported that they relied on the government-run PSNP to ensure their food needs in 2006 and 2009, respectively (Tafere and Woldehanna 2012).

Over the years, households were more likely to face large-scale shocks related to family events. About a third of the households faced family shocks in Round 1, but the figure increased significantly in Round 3 (Table 4).

Overall, families have been increasingly vulnerable to environmental, economic and family shocks. The majority of the households remained poor. Only a few of them managed to move out of poverty. This shows that poverty may be perpetuated by successive and multiple shocks. What does this mean for the lives of children? I have drawn on some cases from the qualitative data to show what poverty mobility really means in the life experiences of selected children and their households.

3.2. The qualitative evidence

3.2.1. Shocks and economic changes

In this section, I present the poverty trends of selected households and then explain both the shocks and the positive events that these households have gone through and how they impacted their economic situations. Then, I discuss the experiences of children living within the households, focusing on their roles in the families and perceived impact on their well-being of the events they experienced.

Based on the consumption expenditure, as analysed in the survey (see Table 3), I extracted the individual household poverty levels of the 30 Older Cohort qualitative study households (Table 5).

Table 5. *Summary of the movement of into and out of poverty of qualitative study households*

Change (Round 2–Round 3)	Bertukan	Tach-Meret	Leki	Leku	Zeytuni	Rural	Urban
Remained constant	5	6	5	3	5	16	8
Moved into poverty	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Moved out of poverty	1	-	1	2	1	2	3
Total	6	6	6	6	6	18	12

(N=30)

From the survey data, I identified which poverty categories the households fell into: 'remained constant', 'moved into poverty' and 'moved out of poverty'. The category 'remained constant' contains households who both 'remained poor' and 'remained non-poor'. However, as stated above, I have retained the sub-category 'remained poor' when discussing three of the six case study children (Defar, Ayu and Haymanot). The two who had been classified as having remained non-poor in 2009 (Bereket and Hadush) had experienced sufficient improvement in their well-being by 2011 to be regarded as having moved out of poverty (see Table 1). The purpose was to show how some households and their children worked hard to maintain their 'non-poor' status as compared to those who fail to move out of poverty for years.

Most of the qualitative study households, like those of the wider survey, remained poor across the sites. However, between 2006 and 2009, some households were able to move out of poverty (Table 5). The improvements in the economic situations of rural households were mainly due to the weather conditions. Good rainfall, linked with the use of modern agricultural inputs (including irrigation, for those who can afford it), has helped some farmers to improve their economic situations. Other reasons for improvements include diversification of sources of livelihoods, to include, for example, off-farming activities such as small trade, paid work, remittances from relatives living abroad, and children earning money and subsidising their families. Hadush's father, from Zeytuni, stated how the economic situation of his family had changed from poor into middle-income:

"Three years ago, we had a drought. We had to sell three cattle to survive. Now, we are living well. We have enough food and livestock. We have now our house roofed with corrugated iron. ... This is because our farming practice is based on knowledge. We use fertilizers and animal manure to increase the productivity of our land. We obtained loans from the saving and credit scheme and we sold our oxen to pay back the loan. Then we purchased other oxen. I also do masonry and earn some money. We are now middle in wealth."

(Hadush's father, Zeytuni, 2011)

For years, the household had been relying on food aid and support from the PSNP. In 2011, they graduated from the programme because the family had achieved food security.

Bereket, from Bertukan, and his grandmother stated that their life had improved over recent years. When she was the only breadwinner, her family struggled. She was feeding her three

orphaned grandchildren by preparing and selling food. In the last few years, the income of the household has improved because Bereket and his two older brothers have begun earning some income by working in garages and by washing cars. She said, “Thanks to God, our income has improved because my children bring income by working here and there” (2011).

Other households remained in poverty (see Table 5). They were unable to recover from the successive and multiple shocks they faced over the years. For instance, Ayu’s family, from Leki, has gone through both environmental and idiosyncratic shocks, which exposed them to a prolonged period of poverty. Her community was hit by flooding for consecutive years and the family’s harvest was washed away. As a result, in 2008, there was a low supply of food grain, which led to a high increase in prices. Ayu reported a rise in the price of a quintal of maize from Birr 150 (£5) to Birr 600 (£20) in one year and that had affected the family. Furthermore, Ayu was ill for two years with a swelling on her neck. The family had to spend a lot of money on medication in the same year. Her mother said, “We had to travel to a hospital in town four times and we spent 600 birr on her treatment. The cost affected us, but I am happy because my daughter got healed.” In 2011, the family faced another shock. Ayu’s brother borrowed some money and bought two horses for pulling carts to make money for the family. However, it was soon found that one of the horses was stolen before he bought it. The former owner had won the case proving that it belonged to him and reclaimed the horse. As the seller had no money to pay, Ayu’s brother lost his money. The second horse was found dead after it was given fodder bought from town. The family lost both horses and remained in debt.

Another event in the family was Ayu’s marriage through ‘voluntary abduction’.⁵ Her family felt ambivalent about the marriage. They were happy that their daughter had got married, but they gained only a small amount of bride wealth, in the form of clothing, food and drink. If it had been a formal marriage, they would have received a bigger amount of bride wealth in terms of cash, livestock and clothing. They also lost the support Ayu was providing for them. She stopped doing paid work after her marriage and she moved to a nearby town to live with her husband.

Defar’s family, from Tach-Meret, lived in extreme poverty perpetuated by family shocks. The father and his wife had been ill for about eight years. As the older sons ran away to town and the others were too young to plough, they had to give their land for sharecropping. For the last six years (2005–11), the family had relied mainly on the PSNP for food.

In urban areas, lack of a steady income, increases in food prices, and the high cost of living have affected families. Poor households remained vulnerable to numerous and lengthy shocks. The mother of Tagesech, from Leku, narrated her life routes and trajectories of shocks as follows:

“I was born in a rural area. At 9, I migrated to Leku town and lived with my uncle. I attended school, but I had to quit at Grade 6 and I returned to the rural area at age 15. After one year, I got married. I soon gave birth to Tagesech. ... But when I gave birth to my second child, I was not able to stay at home. I got exposed to cold, which led me to serious illness of uterus [sic]. ... My husband shortly abandoned me and ran away to his

5 Voluntary abduction happens when the couple agrees to marry but elope clandestinely and then ask their parents to formalise the marriage. For details of this, see Boyden et al. (2012).

parents' house. I suffered a lot and I had to move to my mother's house, which is in another rural area ...

"As I could not cope with the rural life, I returned back to Leku town with my son, leaving Tagesech with my mother in rural area. ... I brought [her] after some years and sent her to school. I started selling foodstuff in the street. ...

"I usually get sick and spend a lot of money on medication. The uterus problem still persists and affects my work ...

"We always struggle in life. We could not afford to have enough food, although we may have something to eat. We still live with my uncle, who is a driver. He gives us some money, but we share it with many of his relatives who live with us. "

(Tagesech's mother, Leku, 2011)

Tagesech's mother faced diverse shocks from early age, which persistently continued to affect her family. That led to the persistence of poverty in the family. She had experienced a double migration, early marriage, divorce, leaving school early and, above all, protracted illness that still persists. For more than a decade, she and her two children have lived in a single-room house shared with other poor relatives.

The cases presented above show that households were exposed to both wider community-level shocks and family-level shocks. The diversity and protracted nature of the shocks make it hard for families to bounce back. They remain trapped in poverty for a long period of time. The poor families resort to different coping mechanisms. Their children are often the main source of family support.

3.2.2. *Children's contributions*

The survey data show that at the age of 15, nearly all children in the Older Cohort (98.8 per cent) did different activities for the family (Round 3, 2009). This included child care, domestic chores, and both paid and unpaid work. Children from poor families did more paid work (9.8 per cent) than the non-poor (6.3 per cent). Those who did paid work spent nearly five hours at work, which had an impact on their schooling and their study time at home.

The qualitative data also offer empirical evidence on children's contributions to their respective households. In Qual3 (2011), the children were asked the following questions: (1) Looking at your family's living conditions, do you think that you are poor, medium or rich? (2) How is your living condition going? Is it improving? (3) What are the causes of changes? (4) If improved, what were your contributions to the changes?

Half of the children reported that they had been involved in income-generating activities. In 2011, out of the 30 children, 15 (10 rural and 5 urban) reported that they performed some sort of income-generating activities to subsidise their families. They became involved in paid work like sorting haricot beans, working at stone-crusher plants or in private irrigated fields, or doing small business activities such as street vending, washing cars, stone selling, shop keeping, and serving as taxi attendants. Girls also helped their mothers in baking *injera* for sale or washing clothes for cash. In addition to family work and paid work, nine of the boys and girls from the rural communities did public work⁶ as part of the PSNP.

6 In the PSNP, households are required to do community work in for a certain number of hours in a month to get support in the form of grain or cash. Our data show that parents usually send their young children to do this public work. For more details, see Tafere and Woldehanna (2012).

Children contributed to the survival or improvement of their respective households. As they grew older, their contributions increased and consequently the changes in the households were more apparent. Some cases illustrate how children helped their families move out of poverty. For instance, Hadush, in Zeytuni, talked about his contribution to his family, which increased over the years.

"I usually herd the cattle. When there is someone to herd them, I work in a private irrigation field for a wage. I also work in the safety net programme. My father orders me to do these things. ... I earned about 300 to 400 birr from the work I do in two months. I give the money to my father. We purchased goats and sheep with the money. We also bought coffee, sugar and other consumer items."

(2008)

"Since last year, we have cultivated different kinds of vegetables and we earned a good amount of money by selling them. I bought new shoes, goats and sheep. I fattened the sheep and sold them for some profit. ... I sometimes offload truck and get about 50 birr per day. I used the money to buy goats for breeding and slaughtered them for my family. I also used to work in the safety net programme and earned 10 kg of cereals monthly."

"Last year, we built a corrugated-iron-roofed house. We bought a radio and a bed. We purchased oxen, cultivated our farmland and harvested a good amount of yield. We purchased a milk cow. As a result, I am happy. I like my job. ... In festivals/holidays, I buy liquor and meat for my family. I also buy clothes and shoes for myself."

(2011)

Hadush began helping his family at an early age. He was engaged in multiple activities that contributed to the betterment of the family economic status. He not only helped his family but also bought clothing for himself that was, arguably, should have been provided by his family. When asked his views about his contributions and the family's improvements, he said, "Our life has improved ... I have contributed a lot but my father has also made big contributions. We work hard."

In 2007, Bereket, from Bertukan, reported that since an early age, he had been generating income by polishing shoes and later washing cars to help himself and his poor grandmother. His grandmother brought him up with his two brothers after the death of their parents. His brothers began washing cars for money and Bereket had to follow suit. Over the years, their income increased significantly. The ageing grandmother still prepares food for sale but nowadays there is less pressure on her as her grandchildren already earn enough income. They have improved the family economic situation and they are aiming at setting up a better business through their savings. Bereket felt that he was becoming economically self-supporting and he said he would soon begin to work as a car sale broker.

The contributions of other children have also been apparent, although most of them were only able to maintain the survival of the family. Among them, Ayu and Haymanot had been helping their poor families since they were young children. Ayu began doing paid work in irrigated fields at the age of 10 and continued to do so until she was 16, when she got married. Her mother confirmed that Ayu provided her with some money, and bought her clothes and coffee from the money she was earning.

Likewise, Haymanot worked in a private stone-crusher plant for some years and earned money for the family. She saved her family from starvation. In 2011, she stated that she spent the money she earned from the stone-crusher plant on buying food and clothing for the

family. However, the only change was that the household built a new kitchen and her younger brother was able to go to school, having the necessary school materials and food. She was happy to help her family get some food, and her brother attends school regularly.

Despite Haymanot's endeavours, the family was too poor to overcome the overwhelming shocks they faced. After her second divorce, Haymanot's mother had to give the land to sharecroppers. She was too ill to work. Haymanot's earnings were doing nothing more than meeting the basic needs of the family. While valuing what her daughter did for the family, Haymanot's mother remained very much concerned about her own future after her daughter got married. In 2011, she had the following conversation with the researcher:

Interviewer: Can you tell me if your household's economy has improved?

Haymanot's mother: Nothing has improved! You know, improvement is if you can buy some property or if you change your clothes! But my life is still from hand to mouth. It is not more than getting daily food.

Interviewer: Has the livelihood of your family improved after Haymanot started working?

Haymanot's mother: Yes, it was better and we were able to pass the bad days. Her earning helped us to survive to the next day. If she hadn't worked, what could have we eaten, how could she go to school without having food, without dressing, wearing shoes, or having a pen? The income she gets from the daily work, together with the Safety Net [PSNP], supports me to lead a better life now. Otherwise, we would have been in trouble because no one helps us.

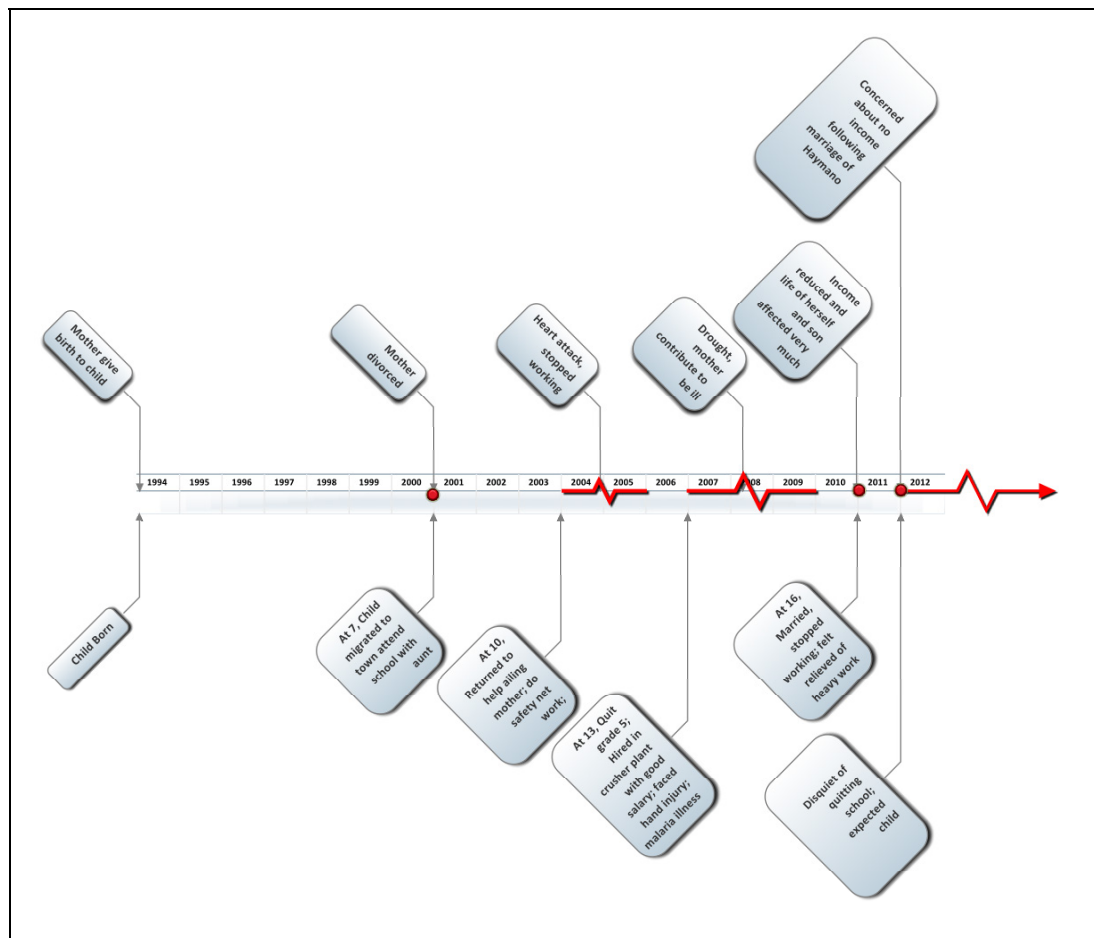
Interviewer: I mean Haymanot has been working at a private stone crusher; did it bring a change in the way you dress, etc.?

Haymanot's mother: Yes, but I am going to miss that support now.

Interviewer: Do you think that her marriage will affect your livelihood?

Haymanot's mother: Of course, yes, but you know it is also very risky to reject a marriage proposal from a good family. It might not be that much a problem in towns because people may fear the law. But here, if a girl is asked for marriage and she or her family reject it, she will be in trouble. It becomes worse for girls like Haymanot, who spend the day outside their house and work with men. Some people may create a problem that destroys her remaining lifetime. ... You know, I always used to worry about what might happen if my daughter was raped and brought me a child from an unknown person, or that she might be beaten by a man whose marriage proposal was rejected.

In early 2011, Haymanot married and had to stop working, which affected the family economic situation again. She said, "I gave all the money I saved to my mother. ... My husband will help her in farming her land." But she could not assure us that she would continue to support her because it all depended on the decision of her husband. Both the mother and the daughter feared that the household economy would further decline because the income Haymanot used to earn had completely stopped.

Figure 1. *Timeline of Haymanot's family events and her experiences*

The association between family events and Haymanot's life trajectory are presented in Figure 1. It depicts how each family event affected the economic situation of the family. It also illustrates how Haymanot responded to each event and how this impacted on her life trajectory. This example shows how growing up, poor children support their families, but once they set up their own lives, their households may have to revert to poverty.

Defar, from Tach-Meret, has done all types of family work and income-generating activities since early childhood. He has been involved in herding cattle, ploughing, weeding and performing other family work. When his parents became ill, he also had to earn some money. He did public work as part of the PSNP, carried stones to town, and carried things for people to get some money. Despite these efforts, he was not able to bring any change to his family. The family, with eight members, remained very poor and had to rely on a small income from sharecropping and support from the PSNP.

Similarly, Tagesech, from Leku, tried hard to help her ailing mother. She said, "When I was 13, I worked as a shop assistant, with a monthly wage of 50 birr. I worked for two months in the summer, but I had to stop it to go to school. ... My mother prepares and sells *qolo* [roasted beans] in the street. When she gets ill, I sell *qolo*." Tagesech did all the household work when her mother went out to sell *qolo*. Despite Tagesech's efforts, both the mother and the daughter confirm that their family did not change for better. The earning could not help more than by just meeting their need for a small amount of food each day.

The evidence set out above shows examples of children's enormous contributions to their families. Some managed to help their households to move out of poverty; others just worked hard to ensure the survival of their family members. Their involvement in family economic activities had some consequences for them, which are presented in the next section.

3.2.3. *The well-being of children*

While we can understand the household economic dynamics using survey data, it is necessary to draw on qualitative data to see how children actually experience the situation and what impact it has on their well-being. Well-being in children can be defined as having basic needs (food, clothing, housing) met, developmental needs (health and education) addressed and investment made for their future. Indicators of ill-being (Camfield and Tafere 2009) include lack of fulfilment of basic needs (or having these only partially met), exposure to physical injury, working for cash in difficult or dangerous situations, inability to attend school regularly or dropping out of it, making life transitions too early (e.g. early marriage) and negative psychosocial effects.

In 2011, children were asked: 'What change did you get in your personal life as a result of improvement in the economic situation of your family?' In most cases, the changes in the economic situations of their households were reflected in an improved supply of basic necessities, mainly food and clothing. Bereket stated that he was able to wear better clothes. He said, "I worked hard so that I do not wear worse clothes than my friends." Hadush also stated that he bought good clothes and shoes with his earnings. He lives with his family in new and better-equipped housing, which has improved as a result of a change in their economic situation. Within their old compound, they built a new house with a corrugated iron roof. Ayu and Haymanot were also able to benefit from the income they earned from work. Generally, children stated that whenever the economic situations of their families improved or when they at least maintained their standard of living, they themselves gained some benefits.

There is, however, only a limited investment in their future. Only Bereket and Hadush said that they had some savings for their future lives. Bereket is fully independent and he is saving to start his own business. Although Hadush lives with his parents, he rears livestock for himself. Both seem to be able to keep some of their own earnings. They have also gained some skills that will be useful for their future lives.

Nevertheless, their achievements were not without challenges. In 2009, when he was 15, Bereket had a serious work-related injury. When he was inflating a tyre in a garage where he was working, it blew up and his hand was injured. He was admitted to hospital and had to receive medical and orthopaedic treatment for three months. His employer helped him with some money, but most of the cost was covered by his savings. He had to miss school for one year. The incident affected his health, schooling and earnings. After he had recovered, he continued to work and attend school.

The bulk of the data suggests that children were negatively affected by the poor family economic situations and few of the positive changes trickled down to them. Despite his big contribution to the family income, Hadush has gone through multiple negative experiences in his life and thus set out some pessimism about the future. He narrated his experiences as follows:

“When I do all the activities, especially working in the irrigation field, I get tired. When I was digging, I got my finger hurt and remained with scars.”

...

“I went to school when I was very young, but soon quit because my parents ordered me to herd the cattle. I did not insist on asking them to send me to school because if they were willing they would have sent me.”

...

“Being illiterate may have a negative impact on my future because I cannot write or read.”

(Extracts from three rounds of qualitative fieldwork, Zeytuni, 2007, 2008 and 2011)

Hadush had contributed to the improvement in the family's financial situation but it was largely at the expense of his present and future life. The hardships, the physical injury and, above all, his inability to attend school had a psychological impact that was noticeable throughout the study. In 2007, Hadush did not fully participate in the group activities of the research because he was not able to write or draw. In 2011, he was reluctant even to take part in the research, claiming that he was very busy. The author of this paper later found out that he was afraid of participating in group exercises with others who were able to write or draw. In accordance with the ethical guidelines of Young Lives, field researchers did not pressurise him to participate in the group sessions. He was only involved in individual interviews as far as he was willing.

When he was asked about his education, Hadush stated that he was very disappointed. He felt bad when he saw his friends going to school. He hoped he would go to school in the future. This shows how not attending school has had a psychological impact on the boy. In the same fieldwork, his father mentioned that his son was reluctant to continue participating in the research because he was not happy to just sit down while his friends were fully participating. He regretted that he did not send him to school.

Defar, another boy who quit school because of poverty, has a similar story. He has experienced all the miseries of life, including hunger, illness, poor clothing, living in a crowded house, and eventually giving up schooling. His story is narrated as follows:

“My father and I were collecting and selling stones for construction in the nearby town. I had to carry stones from the nearby place and sell them at 200 birr for a cubic metre. At midday, I used to feel the heat a lot. Later, I got sick. I usually became unconscious and fell down due to the devil [sic].⁷ I was ill for three months. My parents took me to holy water repeatedly. Priests came to our home with holy water and tried for 12 days, but it did not help me.”

(Tach-Meret, 2007)

⁷ His symptoms were similar to epilepsy.

"I discontinued my education because my poor parents could not provide me with enough food and school materials. ... I asked my parents to send me to school, but they said they could not afford to. I feel sad when I see myself inferior to my former classmates who are attending school. ... I usually get hungry due to lack of food. When I feel hungry, I go to the nearby town and carry things for others for cash and buy something to eat. I sometimes sleep on the veranda in town and now I caught up with a cold. Now I am getting very thin. I could rear goats or trade chicken, but I do not have any money to start with."

(Tach-Meret, 2011)

Defar did everything in his power to help his family. The heavy work, particularly carrying stones, affected his health. When he worked in the sun his condition was aggravated and he continued to suffer. His parents did not have enough money to take him to formal health care facilities. Moreover, his parents, who were ill, were too poor to keep him in school. He had to drop out. With no education or money to start another livelihood, the ailing Defar felt humiliated and remained very pessimistic about his future.

The two girls had similar stories. They faced different life challenges because of poverty and successive shocks. After helping their families for years by doing both domestic and paid work, they found themselves making an early transition to the next life stage, which forced them to leave school. Heavy workloads and illness affected their schooling adversely. At the age of 16, Haymanot and Ayu were able to reach only Grades 5 and 2, respectively. As noted earlier, both left school and stopped paid work when they got married. Haymanot had to work in a stone-crusher plant for some years and sustained an injury that affected her work for some time. It was such heavy work and she admitted, "I was happy to marry because it relieved me of the heavy work." But she also regretted abandoning her schooling: "I stopped going to school because my family is poor." Her mother admitted that she was responsible for her daughter's dropping out of school by saying:

"It was me who forced her to quit school and do paid work. I really regret that, but I had no choice ... She also understood my problem and preferred to save her mother's life instead of continuing her education. ... She supported me and [kept] my life [free from] debt. ... She was a clever student. She is not lucky, because God did not allow her to continue her education."

(Haymanot's mother, Zeytuni, 2011)

Haymanot contributed little to the marriage costs because she was poor. This may have a negative impact on her marriage in the future. As the couple did not make equal contributions to the marriage settlement, she may feel inferior. But her mother is confident that her daughter's hard work and with good behaviour will compensate for her poverty. While the mother still hopes to receive support from her son-in-law, who is sharecropping her farm, she feels insecure after losing the income that had been brought in by her daughter.

As stated earlier, Ayu suffered for a long time from a swollen neck. The illness did not stop her from doing paid work, but she could not combine it with school and had to stop in Grade 2. She was 'abducted' and started living with her husband. She had worked for her poor family for years and had no savings. Her future livelihood depends largely on the income of her husband. Her childhood aspiration to have a good job after completing her education seems to have been thwarted.

However, not all children have become victims of family poverty and shocks. There are children who managed to prevail over the impact of family life spent in poverty. Despite living in poverty, they seemed to succeed in their schooling, albeit having faced some negative experiences. Tagesech, although she has no good clothing and lives in an overcrowded house, seems determined to pursue her schooling and remains optimistic about her future. She recounts her difficult life experiences and looks to a better future. At the age of 13, she said,

“My mother has been ill for many years. Though she spends a lot of money on medication, she did not get healed. When she gets ill and moans in pain, I go to bed and cry. I wish I had been ill myself instead of her! ... We live with her uncle. When we quarrel, he usually chases us out. I remember when I was young, he expelled us from his house and we spent the night outside. Neighbours begged him and he allowed us to live with him again. ... I feel sad because we do not have a house to live in freedom. I can't study at home except in the library or in a classroom. ... I wear a pair of shoes worth 20 birr and clothes worth 40 birr. I have never had shoes worth even 50 birr ... My mother used to tell me that if it wasn't for her sickness, she would have taken care of me better, bought me clothes and shoes. ... I eat what is available at home.”

(Tagesech, Leku, 2007)

As she grew older, Tagesech seemed to withstand the economic challenges. She reached Grade 8 at the age of 17 and she looks determined to move on. In 2011, when she was asked about the economic situation of her family she replied as follows:

Interviewer: How do you rate your family's livelihood?

Tagesech: The main thing is that I am healthy. I don't want to classify myself as poor or rich. There are people who are rich but health-wise poor. So, if I am healthy, even if I may be poor financially, I consider myself as rich. If you ask me financially, I am a medium.

Interviewer: What does poverty mean to you?

Tagesech: It is lack of mental peace. There are poor people who are very happy, but there are also rich ones who lead an unhappy life.

Interviewer: What does rich mean to you?

Tagesech: Mental peace is what I call wealth. If I have this, I can do everything.

Interviewer: What does rich mean in economic terms?

Tagesech: Rich is one who has everything and can do whatsoever he/she wants. Poor means one who leads a destitute life

Interviewer: Is there anything new at home that your family bought?

Tagesech: It is not only in terms of new furniture or goods; a human being can also change mentally and physically. I have undergone through that so far.

Interviewer: How do you describe yourself?

Tagesech: I am a kind of person who doesn't worry at all. I have also a good attitude towards myself. I believe that there is high position awaiting me out there. I am a good girl. I don't wish bad things to happen to others. I have self-confidence. I also wish others to reach better positions.

Tagesech had similar challenging life pathways to her mother. Nevertheless, she seemed determined to overcome her misfortunes. Despite wearing poor clothing, living in an old and very crowded house, having little to eat and having to care for her sick mother, Tagesech was still attending school in 2011 and hoped to improve her family's poor standard of living. This suggests that some children develop the capacity to confront the impacts of poverty.

The qualitative study shows that children make a significant contribution to the economic situation of their families, but largely at the expense of their own well-being. What are the implications of these findings? This is discussed below.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this section, I discuss the substantive and methodological implications of the study. The substantive issues relate to the household poverty dynamics as generated by multiple shocks and children's contributions to household economy, as well as the mismatch between household wealth and children's well-being. The second point refers to the methodological lessons and challenges in using mixed methods and longitudinal data to understand poverty dynamics and children's well-being.

Both the survey and qualitative data show the dynamics of household poverty over the years. The area-wide and idiosyncratic shocks made the economic situations of households decline or remain constant. Only a few of the households in our qualitative sample were able to maintain their non-poor status or move up. Good harvests and diversified income sources played significant roles in increasing wealth in rural areas, whereas remittances and a better income earned mainly through paid work helped raise the standard of living of urban households. While the shocks pushed households downwards, the positive events helped them to maintain their economic status or move up. Some shocks could persist as long as the life course of the child, while others could be short but severe. Poor families find it hard to deal with such unpredictable and erratic shocks. They had to seek the services of their children.

The qualitative data show that most children worked to buffer or improve the economic situations of their families. They demonstrated their agency and value to the family by providing necessary services. Children living in poverty work to ease the economic poverty of their families and they relate closely to the social unit in which they live (Lieten 2008). They showed their self-worth, social responsibility and filial duty. However, the data also reveal that children's capacity to change their own lives and those of their families remained limited. The enactment of their agency was constrained by the structure of family poverty as perpetuated by multiple, protracted and continual shocks.

The evidence also illustrates an obvious mismatch between what the children do for the family and to what extent they, as individuals, benefit from it. For some, the changes they themselves had largely brought about hardly trickled down to them. For instance, Hadush's household has improved over the years and it has achieved upward mobility. But little is invested in Hadush's future. Despite his contributions to the improvements in the household economy, Hadush could not attend school. He is increasingly feeling 'ashamed' of being illiterate. This is also partially true for Defar, Ayu and Haymanot. They did their best, sometimes facing critical physical injuries, to maintain their family economic situation by doing paid work, but they eventually gave up schooling.

The findings suggest that there is no guarantee that positive changes in family economic status bring about changes in the well-being of children. Beyond the basic needs that they share with adults, children have developmental needs such as nutrition, special health care and education. By working for the family, children have either delayed or missed their time of development. Many of them, particularly girls, had to leap to the next life phase without having the necessary resources for a better future life. Ayu and Haymanot had to spend years doing paid work to bring in income for their poor families, but they ended up marrying at an early age without having any resources (either material or educational) for the next phase of life. Both have become housewives and are dependent on their respective husbands. This goes against their childhood aspirations, which were to get educated and have a job before they got married. They have started a new life that is probably no better than that of their economically deprived families. While they seem to escape the poverty of the parental home, they are in danger of beginning a new life in poverty. The economic disadvantage they inherited from their birth families manifests itself as intergenerational poverty transmission.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that household poverty dynamics do not necessarily correspond to child poverty dynamics. The evidence in this paper shows poverty does not necessarily have a homogenous impact on family members. It affects adults and children in different ways. For example, for Ayu and Haymanot poverty led them to do paid work, sometimes exposing them to physical harm, and eventually leave school and marry early. However, for their parents, the immediate challenge is mainly economic, as they have already gone through these life transitions. Then the questions would be: Is there such a thing as 'household' poverty dynamics if its movement does not encompass all members of the household? This poses a major challenge in establishing a household-level poverty taxonomy (Camfield and Roelen 2010). As children have peculiar experiences of family poverty, it requires understanding child poverty beyond how the household performs. Thus, this calls for greater focus on individual-level analysis in conjunction with household level poverty analysis.

Such tension between household wealth and child well-being also suggests a parallel methodological challenge in household poverty dynamics research, where the place of children is usually undermined. Determining household economic status has generally been based on data generated from adults. The evidence in this paper suggests some limitations to this. First, in the developing world, including in Ethiopia, children's contributions to households are significant. However, these are usually overlooked, although children may contribute more than the adults do (see also Heissler and Porter 2013). For example, until she got married, Haymanot was the family breadwinner, while her sick mother contributed very little. This was clear from the qualitative study, but it was not captured by the quantitative survey because consumption expenditure data are reported by the adults. Second, parents take children's work for granted and what the latter bring to the family is not recorded. When parents are asked, they sometimes talk about their children's work, but rarely report how much the child earned and offered to the family. Third, basing household economic status on adults' responses overlooks what children spend on themselves from their own earnings. This study has shown that almost all children worked to subsidise their schooling, clothing, and sometimes meet food needs. Others accumulated some savings. They covered expenses that should have been paid by their parents. This adds up to household consumption expenditure, but it is hardly recorded. Even in the qualitative study, parents stated that they rarely knew the amount their children earned and spent on themselves. It is only from the children that such data could be obtained. Unless these are

systematically recorded in the survey, there is no way we can confidently tell how much of the income the household earned and spent came from child earnings. This obscures not only children's contributions to the household, but could also affect the way the household is classified in terms of poverty dynamics. This calls for a better approach of integrating data from both adults and children in relation to research on childhood poverty.

This leads to the other methodological lesson, which is the application of mixed methods to and use of longitudinal data in the study of household poverty and child well-being. This is because such an approach could uncover the place of children in a household and enhance their role in child poverty research. In longitudinal data, children's contributions to the household economy and to poverty dynamics as they grow up could be captured. With mixed methods, children get the opportunity to share their lived experiences of poverty through qualitative research. The quantitative survey data determine the poverty line and illustrate the trends of household poverty movement; the qualitative data explain why households move through different poverty levels and how they experience poverty itself. Mixed methods generate datasets helpful for a comprehensive understanding of household poverty dynamics, where children's views are also taken into consideration. Thus, the use of longitudinal data and mixed methods in household poverty dynamics and child poverty research uncovers children's contributions to the household income. If survey data on children's economic contributions to the household are gathered, our understanding of the economic dynamics of these households can be enhanced.

It is important to recognise the challenges posed by analysing household poverty dynamics and children's well-being using mixed methods and longitudinal data. The Young Lives survey and qualitative fieldwork was carried out with some time intervals. This has resulted in some disparity in the level of economic situations. Some households, for example, those of Bereket and Hadush, were categorised as poor during the 2009 survey. However, there was a significant improvement in the 2011 round of qualitative study. This is to suggest that using 'sequential' longitudinal data for analysis may result in different conclusions as compared to the integrated Q² approach, which uses data generated at the same time (Baulch 2013; Baulch and Davis 2007; Sharp 2007; Baulch and Davis 2006). The design of the Young Lives study, however, does more suit the sequential than the integrated Q² approach. The sequential approach denies the opportunity to explore the same survey questions in qualitative interviews (Sharp 2007) because data are gathered at different times.

In conclusion, to understand child poverty, we need to penetrate deeper into household poverty dynamics to discover the place of children. We need to move away from the traditional approach, where children's voices are very much muted, or absent, towards an approach that acknowledges children as individuals and does not just treat them as household members. Children's contributions to child poverty research can be enhanced if we draw on more appropriate methods of research and analysis, here mixed methods and longitudinal data. If given the opportunity, children could be vital partners in helping us understand poverty and address it. Children's agency as demonstrated in their essential contribution to the family economy and their ability to provide data for understanding poverty needs to be recognised.

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Children's Experiences of Household Poverty Dynamics in Ethiopia

This paper uses both quantitative and qualitative data from Young Lives to examine household poverty dynamics and child well-being in Ethiopian communities. The survey data indicate that many households remained poor over time, while a few moved in or out of poverty over the years.

Many households are vulnerable to economic shocks and adverse events. Poor families find it hard to deal with such events and have to seek the help of their children. Data from in-depth interviews show that most of the children in our sample worked to maintain or improve the economic situations of their families. The evidence also illustrates an obvious mismatch between what the children do for the family and to what extent they, as individuals, benefit from it. For some, the changes they largely brought about have hardly trickled down to them. It suggests that there is no guarantee that positive changes in family economic status bring about improvements in the well-being of children. Thus, there is a tension between household wealth and child well-being.

Such tension also suggests a methodological challenge in research to understand household poverty dynamics, which often ignores the place and role of children. Traditionally, data on household poverty are obtained from adults mainly through surveys, and children's contributions and their potential role in providing data on consumption are usually overlooked. To understand child poverty, we need to penetrate deeper into household poverty dynamics to discover the place of children. Children's agency, as demonstrated in their essential contribution to the family economy and their ability to provide data for understanding poverty, needs to be acknowledged.



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About Young Lives

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.

Young Lives Partners

Young Lives is coordinated by a small team based at the University of Oxford, led by Professor Jo Boyden.

- *Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia*
- *Pankhurst Development Research and Consulting plc*
- *Save the Children (Ethiopia programme)*
- *Centre for Economic and Social Sciences, Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Save the Children India*
- *Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), Peru*
- *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional, Peru*
- *Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam*
- *General Statistics Office, Vietnam*
- *University of Oxford, UK*

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