WORKING PAPER NO. 37

‘Children with a good life *have* to have school bags’: Diverse understandings of well-being among older children in three Ethiopian communities

January 2009

Laura Camfield
Yisak Tafere

Young Lives
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

WORKING PAPER NO. 37

‘Children with a good life *have* to have school bags’: Diverse understandings of well-being among older children in three Ethiopian communities

January 2009

Laura Camfield
Yisak Tafere

Young Lives, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK

‘Children with a good life have to have school bags’: Diverse understandings of well-being among older children in three Ethiopian communities

Laura Camfield, Yisak Tafere

First published by Young Lives in January 2009
© Young Lives 2009
ISBN: 978-1-904427-43-8

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.
All rights reserved. Reproduction, copy, transmission, or translation of any part of this publication may be made only under the following conditions:

- with the prior permission of the publisher; or
- with a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd., 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, UK, or from another national licensing agency; or
- under the terms set out below.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee for teaching or non-profit purposes, but not for resale. Formal permission is required for all such uses, but normally will be granted immediately. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher and a fee may be payable.

Available from:
Young Lives
Department of International Development
University of Oxford
3 Mansfield Road
Oxford OX1 3TB, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1865 289966
E-mail: younglives@younglives.org.uk
Web: www.younglives.org.uk

Printed on FSC-certified paper from traceable and sustainable sources.

Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements ii

The Authors ii

1. Introduction 1

2. Literature review 3

3. Methodology 5

3.1. Quantitative data 6

3.2. Qualitative data 6

3.2.1 Sites 6

3.2.2. Sample 7

3.2.3. Methods 7

3.2.4 Ethical aspects 8

4. Results 9

4.1. Child questionnaire 9

4.2. Group activities with children 11

4.2.1 Content 12

4.2.2 Ranking 14

4.2.3 Individual interviews with children 14

5. Discussion 17

References 19

Appendix 23

Abstract

This paper focuses on children's understandings of well-being and ill-being in resource-poor contexts in Ethiopia, using quantitative and qualitative data collected from individuals and groups. The quantitative data are drawn from Young Lives child questionnaire, which was administered to children aged 11 to 12 across 20 sentinel sites in Ethiopia during 2006. The qualitative data come from group activities with a sub-sample of these children in five communities and individual interviews that build on these activities (the data presented here focus on an urban, a remote rural, and a near rural community). Having established the importance of considering children's understandings of well-being and described some of the methods used, the paper addresses two questions. Firstly, how understandings of a good life and what is needed to achieve this differ between different types of community and social group. Secondly, how the relationship between well-being and education articulated in the group activities is expressed in the biographies of individual children, drawing on the examples of a twelve-year-old girl and boy from the remote rural site.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the children and families who participate in Young Lives research, as well as Workneh Abebe (Assistant Lead Qualitative Researcher), Abreham Alemu, Asham Asazenew, Ayantu Girma, Bizayehu Ayele, Kiros Berhanu, Rokia Aidahis, Tirhas Redda, and Yohannes Gezahegn who collected the data reported in this paper. Virginia Morrow, Gina Crivello and Martin Woodhead provided useful comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

The Authors

Laura Camfield is one of the Young Lives Child Research Coordinators based in Oxford, working closely on the theme of 'Risk, Protective Processes, and Wellbeing' and has particular responsibility for coordinating research with the qualitative research teams in Ethiopia and Vietnam. She has a PhD and MA in Anthropology from University of London, and her research focuses on experiences of poverty, resilience, and methodologies for exploring and measuring subjective well-being in developing countries.

Yisak Tafere is the Lead Qualitative Researcher for the Young Lives project in Ethiopia. He has an MA in Social Anthropology and a BA in Philosophy from Addis Ababa University. His research has mainly focused on demobilisation and reintegration, youth development, children and childhood poverty, intergenerational transfer of poverty, and the socio-cultural construction of child wellbeing.

Young Lives is core-funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries, with sub-studies funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ethiopia, UNICEF in India, Irish Aid in Vietnam and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The views expressed here are those of the author(s). They are not necessarily those of the Young Lives project, the University of Oxford, DFID or other funders.

1. Introduction

Monitoring, protecting and promoting 'child well-being' has become an increasingly important development goal, even though understandings of both 'well-being' and 'childhood' are highly variable (Camfield et al 2008a). In the section that follows, we briefly describe both the opportunities and the challenges presented by well-being approaches, before exploring how they have been studied in developing countries.

One common approach to well-being is to see it in experiential terms as 'psychological', 'subjective', and/or 'physical' (e.g. Bergland and Kirkevold 2001). These dimensions are assumed to be discrete, universal and therefore amenable to measurement. But while *experienced* well-being is inevitably subjective, as it is measured individually, it is created and sustained within particular communities, under particular conditions, during particular historical periods, etc. The logic of individual measurement therefore creates a false impression that well-being can be created individually, for example, through economic strategies that involve separation and even alienation from family/community. This is despite structural constraints on individual agency and opportunities, and patterned differences in the possibility of experiencing well-being. Methodological individualism can also neglect the 'foundations' of well-being, which are profoundly material, social, political, historical and geographical, and influence both the form and outcome of any intervention.

This critique notwithstanding, well-being can act as a bridging concept within childhood studies and development studies, not just as a heuristic device, but also as a way to bring together the diverse dimensions of health, social relationships, meaning and subjective experience to tackle the individual challenges posed in each area. For example, Dinham (2007:183) suggests that 'the idea of well-being is generally helpful in providing us with a glimpse of something important: the basic conditions for happiness and fulfilment as of right. In addition, it is conceptually useful in drawing into direct relationship the social, psychological, "spiritual" and physical dimensions to which many discussions refer'. Of course, one could observe that that these dimensions have always been in direct relationship and that this is obviously the case for children as it is for adults; however, this is not the impression given by many international-funded indices or interventions (Ansell et al 2007). The approach to children's well-being developed by Young Lives - an innovative long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of child poverty in India, Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam - focuses on children in the social contexts they inhabit and for this reason accessing children's views, in the context of their communities, is of central importance. While shared visions for well-being can set parameters of acceptability and underpin basic entitlements, detailed specification must be negotiable and take account of the views of the principal stakeholders, that is, children, their caregivers and others centrally concerned with their lives.

Worldwide there are many studies of adults' understandings of well-being and ill-being, namely what constitutes and contributes to a good or bad life in their context. While there are fewer qualitative studies of well-being or ill-being in developing countries and fewer still in Ethiopia (see Camfield 2006 and Camfield et al. 2008 for a review), these nonetheless represents a substantial body of data.[1] But do these 'participatory' studies offer a reliable

1 For example, the nationwide Participatory Poverty Assessments carried out in 1999 and 2004/2005 (Rahmato and Kidanu 1999; Ellis and Woldehanna 2005), which used semi-structured, task-based methods rather than questionnaire surveys to access a range of local perspectives and encourage reflection and debate.

guide to the aspects of life people value most - the sources of their well-being - and how these are developed and maintained in resource-poor contexts? And more importantly, where are children's views and experiences? One of the main criticisms of participatory work is that it is predominantly group-based, which may obscure individual differences and bias findings towards public goods such as bridges and credit schemes, especially if insufficient attention is paid to the composition of the groups and the power dynamics within them (Copestake and Camfield 2008). Participatory studies can also take a relatively narrow focus: while well-being, like poverty, is now understood to be multi-dimensional (e.g. WeD 2007), many participatory studies only address the public dimensions of 'having' and 'doing' and have little information on thinking or feeling, belonging and relating, or what all of these might mean in particular socio-cultural contexts (White and Pettit 2005). There are also concerns about how group-based activities and the researchers conducting them are perceived, especially as this is a common method of needs assessment for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Cooke and Kothari 2001); and how the data are interpreted if they are not set in their socio-historical context and triangulated with other data (Jones and Sumner 2008).

In the context of this paper, the primary shortcoming of research into understandings of well-being and ill-being is a lack of attention to children's perspectives and, where these are acknowledged, insufficient attention to diversity within the broad category of children. For example, a tendency to contrast the 'voice' of the child with the 'voice' of the adult – in each case singular - without acknowledging the many opinions within each group and the processes of power that ensure that some 'voices' are audible and others are not. This criticism has also been made of the 'consultations with the poor' study (e.g. Cornwall and Fujita 2007) which, in order to contrast the perspectives of poor people with those more commonly acknowledged in development planning, created an essential and singular category of 'the poor' who, removed from their contexts, became virtually indistinguishable. So how can these diverse perspectives and experiences be represented without losing the main advantage of group work, namely, the potential for people to collectively reflect on their lives in a supportive environment and for shared understandings to be made explicit and therefore contestable? The focus of this paper is therefore the diversity of understandings of well-being and ill-being from older boys and girls (aged 11 to 13) in three Ethiopian communities (capital, remote and near rural). We use survey and qualitative data to address how understandings of a good life and what is needed to achieve this differ between different types of community and children from different backgrounds within those communities. The paper also explores the expressed relationship between education and well-being through the contrasting accounts of a girl and a boy living in the remote rural site.

2. Literature review

Asher Ben-Arieh, founder of the Child Indicators Research Society, has argued that existing measures of child well-being are insufficient to capture the quality of children's experiences, and that children should therefore take at least a 'partial role' in measuring and monitoring their well-being (2005: 575). However, studying children's well-being involves firstly understanding what different children are doing, what they need, what they have, what they think and feel, how they contribute to their own and others' well-being, etc., and secondly, engaging with their diverse and dynamic understandings of well-being and ill-being (Ben-Arieh and Frønes, 2007; Camfield et al. 2008b). The paper draws on the theoretical and methodological proposals of the 'new sociology of childhood' or 'Childhood Studies' (Prout and James 1997; James et al. 1998; Qvortrup et al. [in press]) and emphasises that while childhood is seen as 'a meaningful metaphor for most people… it is not an entity that exists in a given format' (Frones 2007: 13). The label 'child' is therefore both a lived experience and a constructed status, which offers constraints and opportunities to individual children in diverse contexts. These include a range of understandings as to what counts as well-being and how it can best be achieved, which may be differentiated by location of residence, age, gender, ethnicity, caste/class, birth order, and many other factors. Childhood Studies also recognise that children are active agents with distinctive perspectives and experiences (and 'cultures') who play important roles within their households and societies in shaping their own lives and those of others. That children negotiate and also shape the cultures they belong to is reflected in the studies summarised below, which use qualitative or mixed method approaches to explore children's understandings of well-being and ill-being (Camfield et al. 2008b). The studies are primarily drawn from the majority world and Ethiopia in particular, although studies relating to children in other contexts are summarised in Table 1 (Appendix 1).

There are a growing number of studies addressing children's understandings of well-being and ill-being in the majority world and participatory methods have also been used to access children's perspectives and experiences on a range of related topics.[2] For example, Young Lives has explored children's understandings of well-being through group activities and subsequent individual interviews (Crivello et al. 2008), producing voluminous pilot data on the importance to well-being of family support, education, recreation, good social relationships and good behaviour. Common indicators of ill-being were also predominantly social, and respondents even described material indicators such as dirty clothes or irregular meals as reflecting a lack of care and support. Johnson (2006) generated similar data on experiences of ill-being from 8 year old children in Peru when she used participatory 'poverty trees' in a collective exploration of children's ideas about the causes ('roots') and outcomes ('fruits') of poverty. For example, she found that the quality of family relationships featured in children's definitions of poverty, and having parents who were absent or still very young was identified as one of the causes of poverty. Harpham et al.'s (2005) use of participatory methods such as drawing, mobility maps and Venn diagrams with 7 to 11 year-olds in rural Vietnam also produced evocative data on the subtle differences between the lives of children living well or badly. For example, children living well would have fish or meat everyday, while children living badly would have rice with salt and sesame; the former are loved by their teachers, while the latter are always being reminded that their parents haven't paid their tuition fees (ibid: 37).

2 These include environmental resources in Nepal (Johnson et al. 1995), child labour (Woodhead 1998, 1999, 2001) and physical punishment (Ennew and Plateau 2004).

Boyden et al.'s (2003) comparative study of children's experiences and perceptions of poverty in Belarus, Bolivia, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone suggested that 'except in situations of acute and generalized scarcity, relative poverty has a more significant impact on children's well-being than absolute poverty' (1989 in Boyden et al. 2003). This was expressed through symbolic markers such as clothing and shoes, cleanliness and having enough money to participate in recreational activities, the absence of which made children vulnerable to teasing, bullying and exclusion. De Berry et al. (2003) carried out similar participatory work with children and their families in Kabul where children's well-being was understood as 'hoped-for achievements', as a standard for the important things in children's lives, and as the qualities that children should develop (ibid: 7). These understandings revolved around the local concept of *Tarbia* which refers to children's behaviour (manners) and the quality of their relationships with others. Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2004: 44-45) asked parents and children in five villages in Eastern Sri Lanka, 'what is it about a person that tells you that they are doing well?' to elicit local understandings of the constituents of well-being and ill-being. Aspects of well-being related to socially valued behaviours (for example, 'being loving or kind', *anbu*), good interpersonal qualities, educational outcomes, health and fitness, and paying attention to manners and personal care. Bhatnagar and Gupta (2007) explored what Indian boys and girls aged 9 and 10 felt gave them happiness, led to their 'greatest well-being' or made them feel 'unpleasant'. A detailed content analysis produced ten domains of well-being, of which health, affiliation and achievement were the most important. Nonetheless, the authors noted variation in importance by gender, socio-economic status, and location. For example, urban children from the slums felt that having employment and opportunities for recreation were much more important than children from other locations. September et al. (2007) compared the findings of her participatory study with children aged up to 14 in the Western Cape with those Fattore et al. (2007) in Australia (see Table 1) to demonstrate that although there were shared meta-themes such as 'feeling valued and secure', these were specified very differently in the two settings. For example, in Capetown, threats to security were seen as coming from inside as well as outside the home and 'basic need deprivation' referred to a threat to survival rather than something of purely emotional significance. The common ground between the studies was their emphasis on the fact that understandings of well-being are not and cannot be purely individual, since children are actors with responsibilities for others who need to respond to the expectations of the broader community.

Less work has been done with children in Ethiopia on their understandings of well-being, although two recent studies by Tekola (2008b) and Tafere (2007, unpublished) produced useful insights.[3] Tafere's comparative analysis of two urban communities from Young Lives qualitative sample demonstrated the perceived importance of social relationships, personal characteristics, engagement with environment, and spirituality; while Tekola's use of community maps with 26 poor children in Addis Ababa generated interesting information about well-being and ill-being in relation to education. For example, many children liked the school flag (incorporating the Ethiopian national colours of red, green and gold), which they described as a symbol of belonging, and the school compound with its trees and flowers. Boys also liked the school football field. Girls and boys disliked violent teachers and disruptive children (for example, older boys who truanted by climbing the fence during lessons), and girls in particular disliked the school toilets. A nation-wide UNICEF study in 2005 on Ethiopian children's understandings of well-being combined written and visual responses to four

3 For adults, see the work of the Well-being in Developing Countries ESRC research group (www.wed-ethiopia.org), e.g. Bevan and Pankhurst 2004; Pankhurst 2005; Lavers 2006.

questions addressing 'dreams in life for yourself, your community and your country' (n= >700) with task-based focus groups on the same theme led by youth facilitators (Continici et al. 2005). Education was the most important 'dream' as it was seen as 'key to having a better life, getting out of poverty, "becoming someone", and being able to help other vulnerable children' (ibid:11), although respect, representation and rights were also important themes.

In summary, by far the most important aspect of children's well-being in the studies reviewed is the quality of their relationships with others - in particular, whether they feel 'valued and secure', if they can depend on 'good quality family relationships', whether they 'enjoy comfort and openness' in their relationships, and finally, if they feel included and respected. Related to this are aspects of the self such as choice, agency, and 'being a "moral actor"' (usually expressed in relation to their behaviour towards others, for example, 'being a good daughter') and having 'respect, representation and rights' within a particular community. Education was also extremely important, and to a lesser extent, so were the fulfilment of other basic needs, having a secure physical environment, and opportunities for recreation. After a brief description of the methodology, we will see to what extent these themes are reflected in Young Lives data.

3. Methodology

This section introduces Young Lives and describes the two main data collection methods for the data analysed in this paper: the quantitative child questionnaire (subsection 3.1) and the qualitative group activities and interviews (subsection 3.2), which were both used with children aged 11 to 13. The sub-section on the qualitative research provides additional information on *sites* (3.2.1), *sampling* (3.2.2), *methods*, specifically the well-being exercise used in the group activities (3.2.3), and *ethics* (3.2.4), for example, building a rapport with the participants.

Young Lives is a major international project on child poverty (2000-2015) funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It follows the lives of 12,000 children growing up in contexts of poverty in Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh (India), Peru and Vietnam. It seeks to improve understanding of the causes, dynamics and consequences of child poverty, and how specific policies affect children's well-being. Young Lives was initiated as a 'millennium study' and recruited 8,000 children born at the turn of the millennium (2000/1), along with 4,000 children who were eight years old at the time (born 1994). Together they comprise the two study 'cohorts' who, along with their caregivers, are participating every few years in a data-gathering survey that collects information on diverse aspects of their lives and livelihoods. The first survey round took place in 2002 and provided baseline information about Young Lives children, their households and communities. Separate survey instruments are administered to older cohort children, their caregivers and community members. The completion of the second round of data collection in 2006-7 and subsequent rounds scheduled every few years through to 2015 will track changes in children's circumstances and enable longitudinal analyses. The qualitative component has only recently been introduced (2007) and was designed as an integrated sub-study, using qualitative research methods to explore in greater depth the lives of 204 Young Lives children across the four study countries over the remainder of the project. The coexistence of longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data for the same children provides great potential for integrated analyses. These will be juxtaposed with data on the political and economic context collected by the policy team, and supplemented with sub-studies of specific issues such as the quality of education for children from ethnic minorities.

3.1. Quantitative data

Child questionnaire

The child questionnaire complements the household and community questionnaires by focusing on children's perceptions, aspirations and relationships, and the impact of illness and work from the child's perspective. While it was first administered in 2002 to 1,000 8-year-old children across 20 sentinel sites in the five largest regions of Ethiopia,[4] only the 2006 data are analysed below as they are more informative and were collected one year before the qualitative research.[5] The six sections of the questionnaire relate questions about i) school and activities, ii) health, iii) social networks, iv) feelings and attitudes, v) relationships with parents, and vi) perceptions of the household's economic status, the local environment and future aspirations. The majority of the data analysed in section 4.1 comes from iv) and vi), supplemented by data on children's perceptions of school and work from i).

3.2. Qualitative data

While in the other three countries, the qualitative research is focused in four sites, in Ethiopia five sites are studied to capture ethnically-based regional difference. The process of selecting five sites and sampling equal numbers of boys and girls from the younger and older cohort (*n*=60) is described below.

3.2.1 Sites

Site selection process

Five sites were selected from the five regions sampled by the survey following consultation with the Young Lives quantitative team and analysis of survey data from Round 1 covering i) subjective poverty (percentage describing themselves as worse off than others in their community), ii) access to basic utilities at home and health services in the community, iii) educational participation, iv) percentage of working children, v) percentage of households from a minority ethnic or caste group, and vi) percentage of caregivers with no or only primary education. The sites comprised two urban communities (Addis Ababa and a regional capital) and three rural, two of which were relatively remote. The data analysed in this paper comes from *Debre* (urban, Addis Ababa region), *Bale* (near-rural, Oromia), and *Angar* (remote-rural, Tigray), which are described below (pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect the identities of children and their communities).

Sites

Debre is a densely populated community in the national capital (14,066 inhabitants) which is ethnically and religiously diverse, albeit with a predominance of the *Amhara* ethnic group and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. While indicators of absolute poverty were low, respondents nonetheless perceived themselves as poor relative to others in the community, suggesting the presence of material inequalities. *Debre* is located next to the city's fruit and vegetable market, which provides economic opportunities for adults and children (e.g. street vending, renting buildings for storage, or carrying goods for cash), but is dirty due to rotting fruit and vegetables. Young girls also reported harassment in the public spaces, and caregivers were

4 Amhara, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region [SNNPR], Tigray, Addis Ababa and Oromia.

5 The sample in 2006 comprised 484 girls and 495 boys, 583 of whom came from rural areas and 396 from urban.

concerned that their children were exposed to prostitution, gambling, and the consumption of home-brewed alcohol and drugs.

Bale is a comparatively small (2,835) and ethnically homogenous community (predominately *Oromiffa*-speaking Orthodox Christians, with a few Muslim families). It has good natural resources (for example, irrigated fields for vegetable growing, lake for fishing) and a temperate climate, but is nonetheless materially poor. The community has poor access to formal healthcare and there is also low educational participation, partly because there are no kindergartens (younger children go to religious schools) and education only goes up to grade 6 of primary school, although some children stay with relatives in a nearby town in order to study further.

Angar is a similar size to *Bale* and also ethnically homogenous (exclusively Tigrinya-speaking Orthodox Christians). However, it is more remote as the nearest town is two to three hours on foot, and the road is only usable in the 'dry season' and has been damaged by vehicles from a local private quarry. Respondents were materially poor, participated in government 'safety net programmes' such as the Food for Work scheme, and had limited access to electricity and piped water. Male educational participation was low, as boys were needed to herd cattle. While almost every neighbourhood has a primary school covering grades one to four, there is only one 'second cycle' primary school (grades five to eight) and depending on location children can travel up to 1.5 hours to attend it, often across difficult and isolated terrain. The nearest secondary school is in the town.

3.2.2. Sample

After the sites had been selected, sampling of case study children took place using survey data from Rounds 1 and 2. Age and gender were the main criteria (equal numbers of children from the older and younger cohorts, and within each cohort of boys and girls), but membership of minority ethnic groups, access to schooling, and other indicators of vulnerability such as orphanhood were also used. The sampled children were compared with the general population of older children in the five sites to see if there were any systematic differences that needed to be taken into account in analysis. The comparison showed that case study children were less likely to have their mother as their primary caregiver, often due to the death of one or more parent (76.5 per cent vs. 89.1 per cent for the whole sample). They were slightly more likely to have engaged in paid work (17.6 per cent vs. 13.9 per cent for the whole sample) and to report a work-related injury in the last 4 years (8 per cent vs. 2.5 per cent for the whole sample). The sample was also more likely to consider their household poorer than others (37.4 per cent vs. 29.9 per cent for the whole sample) and less likely to aim for university (57.1 per cent vs. 70.2 per cent).

3.2.3. Methods

The methodology used in the qualitative research aims to be child-focused and participatory, multi-actor, flexible and reflexive, mixed- and multi-method, and responsive to ethical issues. It comprises a toolkit of methods that have been developed for application in diverse cultural contexts, including methods based on conversation, drawing (e.g. the well-being exercise described in section 4.2), writing (e.g. a daily activity diary), and other activity-based techniques (e.g. creating a timeline of significant events in the child's life). The individual methods form part of a broader methodology that was inspired by several recent strands of research developing child-focused participatory techniques (see Crivello et al. 2008). The data analysed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 come from a group activity conducted separately with five boys and five girls in each site (the well-being exercise) and subsequent individual interviews.

3.2.4 Ethical aspects

Building a rapport

The qualitative research team comprised equal numbers of men and women who spoke a mix of languages (Amharic [the language of official communication], Oromiffa, Tigrinya), enabling respondents to speak in the language with which they felt most comfortable. The researchers were able to build on the long relationship developed by the survey teams who have been visiting the communities since 2000, and the lead researcher ensured that one researcher who had previously done fieldwork in that community accompanied the team on the initial visit to facilitate introductions. The visits involved brief meetings with key local figures, including local officials, and Young Lives households. Researchers took pictures of children with their families, which were distributed during fieldwork to remind respondents of the earlier visit. During the fieldwork, group activities were scheduled before individual interviews so that children and caregivers would feel more familiar with the researchers, and researchers tried to participate in children's daily lives as much as the limited time in the field allowed - for example, playing games with them, visiting their houses and in some instances eating together.

Obtaining informed consent

Although the survey team had obtained formal consent from participants and the project had received approval from University ethics committees and equivalent bodies in the UK and Ethiopia, the researchers needed to establish the willingness of local authorities and participants to enter into a new level of engagement.[6] Instead of the common practice of obtaining a signed consent form before the interview, the team opted for a longer but less bureaucratic process of obtaining consent through regularly checking participants' willingness to participate and reminding them of their right to disengage whenever they wanted to. This right was exercised on several occasions. For example, in the urban site some adults and children declined to participate in the interviews, and in the remote rural site two children asked to leave in the middle of the group activities and were taken home by their caregivers. In fact, problems relating to participation mainly involved caregivers' feeling that their children had been excluded, a result of the small size of the qualitative sample. Some refused to return home, despite being assured that their participation wasn't required. Similarly, one or two sampled children had health problems that made it difficult for them to participate. However, their parents were determined that they should 'benefit' from the qualitative research (there was an economic dimension to this as participants were compensated financially for their time), even to the extent of employing an older son to transport the injured child to the meeting on a horse.[7]

6 See also *Young Lives* 'Ethical Guidelines' and 'MoU for Fieldworkers', both Morrow et al. 2008.

7 See Morrow 2008 for a discussion of these and similar examples from the other countries.

4. Results

4.1. Child questionnaire

The analysis of the child questionnaire was carried out using the whole sample (*n*=979) and then repeated using just the qualitative sample to confirm that there were no significant differences, which suggests that the findings reported in 4.1 are applicable to both. Further analyses were done for subgroups of gender, location (rural versus urban) and perceived socio-economic status ('poorer than other households in the community', 'average', 'richer than other households in the community'). The sections analysed covered current perceptions of school and work, including the value of education, future aspirations relating to school and work, and two indicators of subjective well-being. Where possible the significance of differences was tested statistically using independent sample t-tests or ANOVA with a post-hoc Scheffe test, as appropriate.

In relation to education, there were significant differences between rural and urban communities and within communities by socio-economic status for both objective and subjective indicators. For example, in urban areas over 80 per cent of children anticipate that they will go to university, while the equivalent figure in rural areas is 63 per cent. Clearly these figures do not reflect the reality of how many will go to university - the tertiary gross enrolment rate (GER) was 2.4 per cent in 2006, less than 10 percent of those who were enrolled in secondary education (*Ed-stats*, World Bank 2008). The low tertiary enrolment figures reflect the small number of Ethiopian institutes of higher education, although this is now expanding (for example, the recent establishment of public universities in Jimma and Mekele). It also reflects the even smaller number of fully funded places provided by the Ethiopian government, especially outside priority areas such as engineering or business, and the difficulty of getting visas to study abroad. The enthusiasm for further education in Ethiopia reflects both a love of learning and recognition that it is an important route to social mobility (Mains 2007; Abebe 2008), for example, prior to the IMF prompted cut-backs in the Ethiopian public sector in the 1990s it was a virtual guarantee of public sector employment. The lower figures for children in rural areas therefore indicate how they might lower their future aspirations to match their present reality, either through 'adaptation' or a realistic assessment of the quality of local education and employment opportunities, and is important information for policymakers aiming to disrupt the transfer of poverty across generations.

When children were asked what the best things about school were the most common response was 'learning useful skills' (34.1 per cent, range 29.5 per cent to 36.6 per cent), followed by 'teachers are good' (20.8 per cent, range 17.9 per cent to 24.1 per cent). When asked about the worst things, the overwhelming response was 'nothing' (27.7 per cent, 20.6 per cent to 34.8 per cent) and this response was particularly common among girls (34.8 per cent). Since the quality of schooling in many sites is poor, this reluctance to be critical suggests that girls in particular are aware of the fragility of their access to schooling and therefore unlikely to take it for granted.[8] The second most common 'worst thing' was 'students fighting' (18.4 per cent, 15.8 per cent to 22.4 per cent). Conversely, in the group activities children, particularly girls, talked at length about shortcomings in the school

8 The Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (CSA 2001) reported that 62.1 per cent of girls who are old enough to have completed primary school have never been to school (in EFA 2007: 49).

infrastructure (for example, dirt, the absence of drinking water and toilets), and also about teacher absenteeism and violence. Although these show low frequencies in the survey data on the worst things about school (<5 per cent), the discrepancy may be artefactual as the existence of over 30 survey response categories splits the sample. There are also some interesting differences between groups, for example, 'lack of toilets' is more of a concern for girls (7.4 per cent) than boys (2.8 per cent), which reflect the fears about sexual violence in mixed or isolated toilets articulated by girls during the community mapping activity. 'Lack of [drinking] water' is similarly a greater concern in rural (10.4 per cent) than urban areas (5.4 per cent), partly because urban schools are in better repair, but also because in some rural areas children travel up to an hour and a half to attend school so cannot return home if they need water or food during the day.

There was great variation in the number of children who reported working for income in the last 12 months (mean 6.8 per cent, range 4.1 per cent to 13.5 per cent), with the highest figures reported by poor children (13.5 per cent) and those in rural areas (8.2 per cent). This may, however, be an underestimate, as a rough calculation based on the qualitative sample produces higher figures, especially in the near rural and urban sites where children are involved respectively in vegetable planting and harvesting, and catching fish for sale, or petty trade, shoe-shining and running errands. It also ignores children's involvement in unpaid productive and reproductive work, which for girls in particular takes a substantial amount of time (up to 8 hours per day, according to the daily diaries from the near rural site). There are some differences in the expressed motivation for paid work. For example, 55 per cent of girls work to support their families (mean 37.3 per cent, range 29.8 per cent to 55.6 per cent), compared to 29.8 per cent of boys, although this may reflect the fact that paid work for girls is less common than boys (4.1 per cent of girls versus 9.5 per cent of boys) so may be more closely connected to family hardship. The main reason for boys to work is to earn money for themselves (61.7 per cent) to purchase school materials, additional food, or spend on recreation. There are also variations in what respondents dislike about work – overall 'poor working environment' is the most common response (mean 17.9 per cent, 12.5 per cent to 31.6 per cent), but this is partly due to its predominance in the rural areas (31.6 per cent) where the majority of the sample live. Long hours were a greater concern for girls (25 per cent) and poor children (33.3 per cent), presumably as this reduces their ability to combine paid work with work in the house, school and study.

As another way of exploring children's attitude towards work and school, they were presented with two hypothetical scenarios where a family in their community has a 12 year old son/daughter who is attending school full-time: 'the family badly needs to increase the household income, one option is to send the son/daughter to work but the son/daughter wants to stay in school. What should the family do?' 93 per cent felt the son/daughter should stay in school and there was relatively little variation in responses according to the gender of the hypothetical child or the background of respondent. Similarly, 98.8 per cent of children described formal schooling as 'essential' in their future life, and the range was again very small. These results suggest a normative consensus about the value of education, which is evident in survey responses to (educated) enumerators, but not necessarily reflected in practice. Nonetheless, there are variations in the level of education that children would like to attain. For example, although 70.1 per cent overall would like to complete university, the figure falls to 62.5 per cent for children in rural areas, compared to 80.5 per cent in urban; and 59.4 per cent of poorer children versus 75.6 per cent of richer. There is little variation in what children think they will be doing aged 20 as the main choices are doctor (27.7 per cent) or teacher (22.2 per cent), with teacher, which requires slightly less education, being more

popular for children in rural areas (31.7 per cent) than urban (7.9 per cent). Despite the assertions of older boys in individual semi-structured interviews, footballer (or 'sportsman') averages only 1.3 per cent.

The most striking differences between groups are in the variables that measure subjective well-being (Table 1), namely i) the child's perception of their current position on the 'ladder of life' (an adaptation of Cantril's self-anchoring ladder [1965] where the top rung - 9 - represents the 'best possible life' and the bottom rung - 1 - the worst), and ii) where they think they will be in four years time, which reflects their sense of optimism and control over their future. The mean scores for these variables are 4.26 for their current position (i.e. less than half way up the ladder) and 6.12 for their future. However, children who characterise their households as 'average' or richer than others score progressively higher than those who see their households as poor. In fact, the mean score children from poor households currently give themselves is 3.08 (only a third of the way up the ladder), which they anticipate will increase to 5.11 in four years time. This contrasts with the assessment of children from rich households who are already reporting a higher position on the ladder than the poor children expect to reach in four years time, and anticipate that in four years they'll have nearly reached the top (7.30). There were no significant differences between boys and girls, but perhaps unexpectedly, the scores for rural children are significantly higher than urban, which suggests that relative rather than absolute poverty may be a more important influence. Table 1 also shows that less than a quarter of children were reporting scores above the conventional scale midpoint of 6 (e.g. see WHO HSBC 2001/2).

Table 1: *Mean scores for current and future position on the 'ladder of life'*

	Urban	Rural	Poor	Average	Rich	Male	Female
Current position on ladder	3.84**	4.55**	3.08**	4.40**	5.62**	4.23	4.29
Mean (sd)	(1.70)	(1.92)	(1.67)	(1.58)	(1.88)	(1.91)	(1.83)
Position in 4 yrs	5.96	6.24	5.11**	6.25**	7.30**	6.01	6.24
	(1.91)	(2.01)	(1.91)	(1.85)	(1.66)	(1.93)	(2.01)

Significance level **p=<0.001 *p=<0.0

The main reasons given for moving up the ladder of life are 'education' (19.7 per cent) and 'work harder' (21.8 per cent), with some differences in priority between groups (for example, children in urban areas see education as more influential than those in rural areas: 25.2 per cent versus 15.8 per cent). 'Making less money' or having a 'poor' or 'irregular' job are the three main reasons for moving down the ladder in urban areas (total 51.3 per cent, compared to 29.5 per cent in rural areas), and poor harvest in rural areas (29.9 per cent versus 1.4 per cent in urban areas). Poor education (composite of 'being poorly educated', 'can't improve skills' and 'have to leave education early') is also a more important reason for moving down the ladder in urban areas (21.7 per cent) than rural (12.7 per cent), although there are only minor differences by gender and socioeconomic status. 'Poor health status' is important for children from poor households (22.2 per cent), reflecting the devastating impact of household illness on income and educational opportunities, although much less so for those from rich (6.4 per cent) or average households (10.9 per cent).

4.2. Group activities with children

This section analyses data from the well-being exercise, which was carried out separately with older boys and girls in the three sites as described below. It reports both the content of the

discussions around good and bad lives or living well or badly (subsection 4.2.1), and the ranking of indicators that took place at the end of the activity (4.2.2). Due to the small size of the sample, we have focused on differences between the responses of groups of girls and boys, and groups taking place in rural and urban areas. We have also used further information from the individual interviews with participating children to enrich the analysis (4.2.3).

The well-being exercise

The well-being exercise explores what children consider a 'good' or 'bad' life for children of the same age and gender living in their community, and what they identify as sources of risk and protection. Children drew pictures individually of children experiencing good or bad lives and explained their meaning to the group, often eliciting critical or challenging responses (for example, debates over whether a 12 year old child was too young to chew *chat*, a mild narcotic). This was followed by a collective discussion with children's suggestions written on a flip chart divided into columns for 'good life' and 'bad life' so the suggestions could be more easily turned into 'indicators' which the participants ranked. For example, among boys in *Debre* 'getting a balanced diet' was considered as important as education because 'if a boy does not get a balanced diet he would not understand what he learns', which demonstrates a holistic and subtle understanding of the different dimensions of well-being and ill-being and how these are related. Individual children's ideas and rankings were recorded and these were usually followed up in the individual interviews. This partly overcame the difficulty of securing consensus, as described in the following extract from the researcher's notes on the process: 'for Bekele losing parents is the first important indicator of ill-being, for Berhanu it is lack of proper follow up from family, for Beniam it is lack of proper education - a child who does not learn will finally be a thief… for Afework, all are equally important'.

4.2.1 Content

While the well-being exercises raised common themes, such as education, these were specified differently in different sites and by different groups of respondents. In the two rural sites, the main concern was access to education, especially for girls (or boys with no younger siblings to herd cattle) and to a lesser extent educational materials. In the urban site, however, the focus was on educational quality in many different dimensions (teaching, sanitation, class sizes, etc) and there was a lively debate in the girls' group about the relative merits of private and state-funded schooling. For example, the private school has 'adequate services like tap water and clean toilets and classrooms', and while the government school provides lessons in the evenings as well (enabling working children to attend), children are sent home during the frequent power cuts. In the boy's group, Bekele described how 'a child that is doing well… goes to a school that has a field and equipment for kids to play on such as a *shertete* (slide), *jiwajiwe* (swing) and merry-go-round. The school is not far [from his home], it has good classrooms and clean toilets for boys and girls separately, and it also has a library'. Both boys and girls in the urban site ranked educational materials second only to education. According to one boy, any child with a good life had to have a school bag, although for another this was clearly beyond the bounds of possibility: 'Does living well means being rich? No, living well does not mean being rich'. Educational materials were seen as symbolising parents' care for their children, in the same way as clean clothes and oiled hair in the rural sites (having hair that wasn't 'big', 'dry', or 'dreadlocked') was important to both male and female respondents as it demonstrates that parents have either cattle for butter which is traditionally used to condition hair or cash income to purchase hair oil.

Children's behaviour was also a common theme (for example, being obedient, not fighting) and their comments were highly moral in tone, for example, in describing a destitute child who has a bad life because he 'lives by wandering from house to house to steal' and after a period of imprisonment '[becomes] rich because of theft' (Afework, *Angar*). In *Debre*, comments related mainly to how a child's behaviour might affect their interactions with others. For example, Addisu described a child who had no one to buy him polish to shine shoes, or vouch for his poverty status to the Kebele (local administrative unit) as 'he is not liked by his neighbours; he has no relatives, [and] he cannot keep his personal hygiene well so that people ostracise him'. Berhanu also described how if he fought with his parents a boy would not be supported in continuing his education, or even if he became sick: 'His parents do not pay school fees for him because they don't like him; it is not because they don't have the money but because of lack of good family relations'. Relationships outside the family were also valued and, in the urban site, deemed important for social mobility. For example, many children emphasised the importance of having friends from school, rather than the local area: 'His friends are from his surroundings and have bad behaviour. His friends are not clever so he is not clever too… He and his friends are lazy in their education' (Bekele, *Debre*).

Other common indicators of well-being were having a good appearance ('[having] no clothes means, it becomes difficult to go out of home and [you] cannot go anywhere for work', well-being ranking by boys from *Debre*), work and its relation to education, food, shelter and access to healthcare. Having a biological relationship with your caregivers was also mentioned as this was seen as giving a child '[the] right to get what she wants from her guardians' (Abebe, *Debre*). Children's material ambitions seemed to be higher in the urban site, for example, 'a table full of a variety of food like a buffet' rather than simply 'sufficient food'. Goods such as cars and DVDs, which were not part of the aspirations of rural children or visible in the rural sites, were also mentioned. Interestingly, the aspirations of respondents in rural areas related more to productive assets such as irrigated land or cattle, and in the near rural site, a boat for fishing. While all respondents were aware of status differentiations, the urban children seemed to feel this more keenly and described situations with great insight:

> [The well-being girl] has pen, exercise book, good living condition, uniform, can get adequate food, and can attend in private school. Her parents can afford the school fee and can fulfil what she wants to have. However, the ill-being girl cannot get pen, pencil, bag, cloth and food. She is attending classes in government school… A girl who is not doing well may join the private school but she can not get what she needs like her well-being friends since her family is poor economically but they can only afford her school fee. But the well-being girl can get what she wants to have [the same] as her friends.
>
> Abebe, *Debre*

The exercise generated lively debate, which can also be seen in section 4.2.2 on the well-being ranking. The debate described in the first section (p.2-3) continued in the questions to subsequent children and showed a similar critical sensibility and attention to detail. For example, on hearing that access to a football field was part of a good life, one child asserted

> 'The football field is dusty which will also make his clothes dirty.'
>
> Berhanu answered that 'the field has been made of cement now' besides if his clothes gets dirty it will be washed for him.
>
> Addisu supports the presenter and said that a boy who is doing well can always wear clean clothes because his clothes are washed every time by a house maid.

The extract also showed clear ideas about what was appropriate to children of different ages and statuses, for example, 'the child of rich family should learn in private school where everything is fulfilled', while 'even a child of 12 years should not play with small play materials like *jiwajiwe* (swings); he should play with football and bigger children'.

4.2.2 Ranking

Once children had generated indicators of well-being or ill-being from the discussions described above, they were asked to rank these in order of importance (see Tables 2 and 3 in the appendix). The ranking was recorded by the note-taker, who also noted any differences in opinion (for example, in the urban site where respondents could agree on the five most important indicators, but not the order in which they should be placed). Unlike the other two communities, in *Bale* education is only mentioned once as an indicator of well-being (by girls) and is ranked sixth after land, livestock, donkey, corrugated iron house, etc. There are few differences between girls' and boys' indicators, although girls also mention having a separate kitchen, which would reduce eye irritation caused by cooking over wood in a poorly ventilated room, sufficient clothes, and access to means of communication such as television, radio and telephone.

Although girls and boys in *Angar* agree on the importance of good clothing, attending school and cleanliness as indicators of well-being and ill-being, there is a greater divergence in their views of a good life than in other communities. This suggests differentiated trajectories for girls and boys with associated differences in concerns. For example, girls mention getting sufficient food (such as not having to go to school without breakfast), being encouraged to study, having time to play, being asked their opinion and shown respect as signs of a good life, which may indicate that these things are absent. Boys are more concerned about good behaviour (for example, not stealing, fighting, being 'foolish' or disobedient), health, and having a loving and peaceful family.

Education appears to be a more important component of a good life in *Debre* than in the other areas as both boys and girls rank it as the main indicator of well-being or ill-being. Girls also mention access to educational materials and one girl ranked 'having to attend a government school' as the second most important indicator of ill-being (she had been removed from the private school she was attending after her mother lost her job, a poignant example of the influence of individual biographies on understandings of well-being). Boys and girls mention being an orphan, which seems to be a particular concern for boys, and having sufficient food; girls also mention shelter. As in *Angar*, boys mention not getting advice or 'follow up' from their families, which is implicitly linked to having good or bad behaviour.

4.2.3 Individual interviews with children

Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 confirm the centrality of education to children's understandings of a good life, something that is supported, albeit to a slightly lesser extent by group and individual interviews with their caregivers. But how do these general understandings play out for specific children in specific communities? In the next section, we address this issue by contrasting the accounts of a 12 year old boy and girl from *Angar* who are reporting different educational outcomes. The accounts are drawn from interviews with caregivers and interviews, group activities, diaries and timelines with children, and set in context by an initial section describing interviews with three primary school teachers and observation of the local school.

In *Angar* children are rarely sent to school before age 8 and in the absence of birth registration this can provoke acrimonious debate, with parents maintaining that their children are ready while teachers use traditional yardsticks such as whether the child can reach across their head to touch their ear with the opposite arm or has a full set of teeth. Some children are sent as late as 12 or 13, which affects the age at which they enter particular grades. A female primary school teacher described how 'the little[est] one who is learning in grade eight is fifteen or sixteen years old'. This accounts for the mean age of 21 given by parents in response to a survey question about when they expect their children to leave school. This response does not necessarily reflect expectations of high educational attainment but is rather a realistic assessment of how long it will take them to attain a basic education given a late start, irregular attendance and grade retention after the first four years of primary school. Parents describe wanting their sons to work as herders, work on the farm, dig ditches, or participate in daily labour such as carrying stones for construction from the local quarry. While girls are usually sent to school earlier (last year 460 girls were in school in February compared to 307 boys), they are also withdrawn earlier, usually to marry or because parents are worried about their safety. Girls are often less regular in attendance due to the burden of household chores. One male primary school teacher described two children in his class who were having difficulties, the first because he had an intellectual disability and the second because '[her parents] used to load her with a great deal of work… she wants to sleep in the class, she is not ready to follow up her education attentively'. A female primary school teacher concluded that 'parents are not well aware about the uses of education for female children' and a male teacher recalled a belief that girls cannot and should not learn on their own as 'they say she must not get far from her place; if so she would face some troubles'.

The teachers described how, because there is no preschool in this community, children often find it difficult to adapt to first grade. They have a similar problem in moving from the first to the second cycle of primary school (grades 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 respectively) as there are no evaluations during the first cycle, and so children are unprepared for the standard required. The second cycle can also seem academic or irrelevant as it doesn't provide technical or vocational training. Children, parents and teachers all described how difficult and expensive it is to progress beyond this, as secondary schools are in urban areas, requiring families to have money to rent their children a room and/or relatives for them to stay with. Material inequalities are also expressed in access to school materials (poorer children often need to do paid work to buy books), lack of concentration in class due to hunger and the amount of work children have to do at home, which reduces their time for study. There are also differences according to whether children are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and express their ideas at home (not part of traditional child rearing practices, Chuta in Poluha 2007), and whether parents prefer their children to be a source of labour or income rather than expenditure. Attitudes are changing, however: one teacher described how while 'previously [parents] considered modern education as "devil's education" but later as they understood the benefits modern education provides, some of them began to send their children to school'. In the school observation notes the researcher describes the school building as 'nice' with trees and flowers in the compound, but notes there weren't any school books or materials to play with, and despite school having started three weeks before, there were only seven children in the classroom.

A close reading of data from two children and their parents reveals both the material structures and social norms that influence children's schooling and the extent to which it can enhance both their future 'well-becoming' and current well-being.[9] The first account is from Gabra, a 12 year old girl, who is only in grade two, having started late and missed the last year of schooling. Her family experienced hardship after the death of her father and the medical expenses incurred during the illness of two younger siblings, both of whom died. Her mother describes how 'I used to trade at Dessie, Mekele day and night to cover it… I took two thousand [credit] and I carry the debt. So I pay by selling my property and land'. Since birth Gabra has had what is described as a heart problem, but says that this hasn't affected her life, although she gets dizzy and nauseous at school. Like other girls, she is responsible for household chores such as collecting wood and water, boiling coffee and baking *injera* (a pancake-like bread made out of teff flour), digging and weeding the family land, and caring for older and younger family members (her blind grandmother and an infant nephew). Gabra doesn't do paid work, although her mother described how she worked as a petty trader in the market place in addition to her household chores when she was her daughter's age. According to her mother, Gabra enjoys school and describes her teachers as 'good' and 'like her parents'. Her mother sees education as 'the best way to reach her goals' and describes her as 'good in her study' and slowly improving; Gabra says her plan over the next five years is 'just to follow my education… to be a teacher'. Her mother seems unsure about what will be needed when she reaches secondary school: 'pen, book, soap, good food, and encouragement... I didn't study, I don't understand'. However, she is strongly supportive: 'I wish her not to be ignorant like us by following her study diligently; I wish [her] to be good'.

The second account is from Afework, a 12 year old boy who is in grade five, having attended school uninterruptedly since age four (his first three years were in a religious school attached to the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church, an option only available to boys). His father is strongly supportive of his continuing in school because he sees the 'main solution' as education. 'It brings a change from year to year…if he does reach [grade] ten we say "thanks".' His father's enthusiasm may be partly because he was not allowed to attend school as a child and his older son, who has hearing problems, was 'dismissed' from school because '[his teachers] never care about him'. Conversely, Afework says he enjoys going to school as '[the teachers] are very kind', even to the extent of spending 10 Ethiopian Birr he found on the road on an exercise book. He wants to be an employee of the agricultural office after he has done a degree. In the group activities, he is characterised by the note-taker as the group 'clown' because 'he was just making others laugh and… hiding himself under the bench and talking loudly' but nonetheless makes many serious contributions. For example, in the body mapping exercise, he describes how he often gets severe headaches walking to and from school in the sun, which make 'his friends call him handicap[ped] as he can't play with them'. However, he doesn't mention education in his characterisation of good and bad lives during the well-being exercise; the note-taker describes how 'he drew a child who wears good clothes, having shoes, and a car around him. For him this is a child who lives well because he gets balanced diet (meat, eggs, etc). A child… whose parents have livestock (cattle, chicken, goats) is considered [to be] living a good life'. When he is not at school or studying, Afework collects water or herds cattle, often with his friends, and plays games such as 'hide and seek'. He considers himself fortunate because he doesn't have to do 'heavy labour' such as road construction, which is a common part of local 'food for work' schemes (Woldehanna 2008), and describes tasks such as 'digging two holes per day' as 'difficult'.

[9] See Uprichard 2007 for an account of this debate with childhood studies.

Both in comparison with Gabra and with other boys in the community, Afework has been relatively fortunate. His family have livestock, which is a sign of a good life as far as he is concerned, but he does not have to spend all his time herding them as he shares the task with three brothers. His parents are also committed to his education, despite not having received any themselves. Gabra on the other hand was not able to start school on time, possibly due to her father's death, then missed a year after the death of her two brothers. She has also experienced physical hardship over the last three years due to a shortage of food while her mother was paying for her siblings' medical expenses. Her mother described how while Gabra lost weight during this period, the main effect was 'in her psychology', as when her friends were eating and she had nothing 'she simply felt as if she want to cry, her eye moistens, then [she] controls [it]… she never spoke [about] what happened, rather moistened her eyes'. These brief accounts give a sense of the very real barriers that children face in attaining what they and their communities understand as a good life. As these accounts are cross-sectional – snapshots from a single moment in time – they are 'broad' rather than 'deep'. For example, there are many perspectives on Gabra and Afework's lives, including their own, but little sense of how their lives are changing and how they are changing in turn. However, the advantage of a longitudinal study is that it can track these children across time and see if by the age of 23 Gabra has become a teacher as she describes, or survives through daily labour and selling 'tella' (local beer) like her mother.[10]

5. Discussion

The paper explores firstly how understandings of a good life and what is needed to achieve this differ between different types of community and between children from different backgrounds within those communities. Secondly, it looks at how the relationship between well-being and education articulated in the group activities is expressed in the biographies of individual children through a comparison of a twelve year old girl and boy from *Angar*. It aims to show what data on understandings of well-being can add to what we already know about poor children's lives, and also suggest some policy questions arising from the data presented.

So why is it useful to explore what children living in poverty see as well-being or a good life for themselves and their households, and to understand the sacrifices they make to preserve this? Why is it helpful to understand transitions such as joining or leaving school in terms of their effect on the well-being of children and their households, and their place in individual and collective visions of good lives? We saw from the literature review and the group exercises that children characterise bad lives as having no-one rather than nothing, and family *and* school bags are believed to be important 'resources' for achieving well-being. Information on what children aspire to, in the context of local and international norms, and on their daily activities, which may not relate to or even conflict with these aspirations, seems to be self-evidently important in setting policy and planning interventions. The reason for this is that it highlights where children see themselves in the future and the potential barriers to realising their ambitions. Perhaps a better question, therefore, is how can this information be collected? This has been explored at length in Camfield et al 2008b, so we will confine our closing remarks to beginning to look at education through a well-being lens.

10 Teaching is the most common aspiration of rural children, according to the survey. This may be due to the paucity of other role models, especially for girls.

Analysis of scores on the 'ladder of life' used in the Young Lives survey to represent children and caregivers' subjective experiences and aspirations suggests that both within Ethiopia and in comparison with other countries, children are on 'different rungs'. For example, while the mean scores indicate that almost all children believe their lives will be better in the future, even children from rich households are currently reporting scores that are below the conventional mid-point of the scale. In urban areas, a quarter of the sample reported 'education' as the main reason for 'moving up' the ladder, but this was less common in rural areas (16 per cent), reflecting the barriers to education beyond grade 6 of primary school and the lack of employment opportunities for children who overcome these. A common saying in the remote rural site in relation to education is that 'a girl never finishes her journey', which may mean that she never completes her schooling, or even that having completed it she is unable to go any further (Tafere and Camfield 2008). The reasons for this become clear when data from different sources are read in conjunction.

Inequalities in access to schooling and the resources to make good use of it mirror existing inequalities, as do disparities in educational quality (for example, class sizes, materials, basic infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, etc.). Compare for example the urban school described in the well-being exercise in the first part of the paper – 'he goes to a school that has a field and equipment for kids to play on…, it has good classrooms…and it also has a library' - with the reality of the primary school in the remote rural community. Other illustrations of the gap between image and reality are the introduction of compulsory English-medium tuition in grade 6 or 7 with minimal preparation, which has greatly increased retention and dropout. A final question is whether education, which is seen by all respondents as symbolising a better future, can fulfil its promise as the 'means for accessing social mobility' which 'virtually guarantee[s] one a position as an administrator or a teacher' (Mains 2007:663) in a context where neo-liberal economic policies have resulted in reduced public sector employment. The implications of this will be explored in a subsequent paper. Addressing this question involves setting particular case studies in a broader context and continuing to explore children's experiences and their understandings of these over time. For the older children participating in Young Lives, the next eight years may provide some answers.

References

Abebe, Tatek (2008) 'Ethiopian Childhoods: A Case Study of the Lives of Orphans and Working Children', unpublished PhD thesis

Armstrong, M., Boyden, J., Galappatti, A. & Hart, J. (2004) *Piloting Methods for the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programme Impact in Eastern Sri Lanka,* final report for USAID, Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre

Bamba, Sachiko (2007) 'Consideration of the Child's Point of View: Introduction of the Japanese Concept of Ibasho' paper presented at the International Society for Child Indicators Conference, June 2007

Ben-Arieh, A. (2005) 'Where are the Children? Children's Role in Measuring and Monitoring their Well-being', *Social Indicators Research* 74: 573–96

Ben-Arieh, A. and Frones, I. (2007) 'Indicators of Children's Well being: What should be Measured and Why?', *Social Indicators Research* 84: 249-50

Bergland, A. and Kirkevold, M. (2001) 'Thriving – A Useful Theoretical Perspective to Capture the Experience of Well-being among Frail Elderly in Nursing Homes?', *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 36(3): 426–32

Bevan, P. and Pankhurst, A. (2004) 'Human Needs and Human Harms: Some Evidence from Rural Ethiopia', paper presented at Hanse Conference, Frankfurt, Summer 2004

Bhatnagar, T. and Gupta, M. (2007) 'Exploring the Determinants of Subjective Well-Being: A Study of Children in India', paper presented at the International Society for Child Indicators Conference, June 2007

Boyden, J., Eyber, C., Feeny, T. and Scoot, C. (2003) *Children and Poverty: Experiences and Perceptions from Belarus, Bolivia, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone*, Virginia: Christian Children's Fund

Camfield, L. (2006) 'Why and How of Understanding "Subjective" Wellbeing: Exploratory Work by the WeD Group in Four Developing Countries', WeD Working Paper 26, Bath: Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Research Group

Camfield, L., Crivello, G. and Woodhead, M. (2008) 'Well-being Research in Developing Countries: Reviewing the Role of Qualitative Methods', *Social Indicators Research* (in press)

Camfield, L., Streuli, N. and Woodhead, M. (2008) *What's the Use of 'Well-Being' in Contexts of Child Poverty? Approaches to Research, Monitoring and Children's Participation*, Young Lives Technical Note No: 12, Oxford: Young Lives

Cantril, H. (1965) *The Pattern of Human Concerns*, New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press

Chambers, R. (2008) *Poverty Research: Methodologies, Mindsets and Multidimensionality*, IDS Working Paper 293, Brighton: IDS

Children's Society (2007) 'The Good Childhood: National Inquiry Launch Report', http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/resources/documents/good per cent20childhood/Good_Childhood_Inquiry_launch_report_5830_full.pdf (accessed 12 Nov 2008)

Conticini, A., Kui, W.L. and Tsadik, W. (2005) *We Have a Dream: Children's Visions, Vulnerabilities and Rights in Ethiopia*, UNICEF: Addis Ababa

Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (eds.) (2001) *Participation: the New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books

Copestake, J.G., and Camfield, L. (2009) 'Quality of Life, Meaning and Subjective Wellbeing' in McGregor, J.A. and Gough, I. *Development as the Pursuit of Human Wellbeing*, Cambridge University Press

Cornwall, A. and Fujita, M. (2007) 'The Politics of Representing "The Poor"', in Moncrieffe, J. and Eyben, R. (eds.) *The Power of Labelling. How People are Categorised and Why it Matters,* London: Earthscan/ IDS

Crivello, G., Camfield, L. and Woodhead, M. (2008) 'How Can Children Tell Us About Their Wellbeing? Exploring the Potential of Participatory Approaches within the Young Lives Project', *Social Indicators Research* (in press)

CSA (Central Statistical Agency) (2001) *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey, 2000*

Currie, C., Roberts, C., Morgan, A., Smith, R., Settertobulte, W., Samdal, O. and V. Barnekow Rasmussen (2004) *Young People's Health in Context - Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study: International Report from the 2001/2002 Survey*, Denmark: World Health Organization

De Berry, J., Nasiry, J., Fazili, A., Hashemi, S., Farhad, S. and Hakimi, M. (2003) *The Children of Kabul. Discussions with Afghan Families*, USA: Save the Children Federation, Inc.

Dinham, A. (2007) 'Raising Expectations or Dashing Hopes?: Well-being and Participation in Disadvantaged Areas', *Community Development Journal* 42: 181-93

Education for All (2007) 'Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education', UNESCO, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001477/147794E.pdf (accessed 12 Nov 2008)

Ellis, F. and Woldehanna, T. (2005) *Ethiopia Participatory Poverty Assessment 2004-05*, Addis Ababa: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED)

Ennew, J. and Plateau, D.P. (2004) *How to Research the Physical and Emotional Punishment of Children*, Sweden: Save the Children

Fattore, T., Mason, J. and Watson, E. (2007) 'Children's Conceptualisation(s) of their Well-being', *Social Indicators Research* 80: 5-29

Frones, I. (2007) 'Theorising Indicators: On Indicators, Signs and Trends', *Social Indicators Research* 83: 5-23

Harpham, T., Huong, N.T., Long, T.T. and Tuan, T. (2005) 'Participatory Child Poverty Assessment in Rural Vietnam', *Children and Society* 19: 27-41

Hill, M., Laybourn, A. and Borland, M. (1996) 'Engaging with Primary Aged Children about their Emotions and Well-being: Methodological Considerations', *Children and Society* 10: 129-144

James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. (1998) *Theorising Childhood*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995) *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change*, London: Actionaid

Johnston, J. (2006) 'Children's Perspectives on their Young Lives: Report on Methods for Sub-Studies', Young Lives internal document, Peru Pilot, April 2006

Jones, N. and Sumner, A. (2008) 'Does Mixed Methods Research Matter to Understanding Childhood Well-being?', *Social Indicators Research* (in press)

Lavers, T. (2008) 'Asking People What They Want or Telling Them What They "Need"? Contrasting a Theory of Human Need with Local Expressions of Goals', *Social Indicators Research* 86: 129-47

Mains, D. (2007) 'Neoliberal Times: Progress, Boredom and Shame among Young Men in Urban Ethiopia', *American Ethnologist* 34: 659-73

Pankhurst, A. (2006) 'Wealth, Poverty and Life Quality Dynamics: Objective and Subjective Measurement and Interpretation based on a Case Study Approach from Dinki', paper presented at the 4th International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy, Addis Ababa

Percy, Melanie S. (2003) 'Feeling Loved, Having Friends to Count on, and Taking Care of Myself: Minority Children Living in Poverty Describe What is "Special" to Them', *Journal of Children and Poverty* 9(1): 55-70

Prout, A. and James, A. (1997) 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood' in Prout, A. and James, A. (eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (2nd edition), London: Falmer Press

Qvortrup, J., William, A., et al. (eds.) (in press) *A Handbook of Childhood Studies*, London: Palgrave

Rahmato, D. and Kidanu, A. (1999) *Consultations with the Poor: A Study to Inform the World Development Report /2000/01 On Poverty and Development*, Addis Ababa

Ridge, T. (2002) *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion. From a Child's Perspective*, Bristol: Policy Press

September, R., Fattore, T., Mason, J. and Watson, E. (2007) 'Exploring Children's Understandings of Well-Being Cross-Culturally: Toward More Inclusive Child Well-Being Indicators', paper presented at the International Society for Child Indicators Conference, June 2007

Tafere, Y. (2007) 'Children's Understanding of their Wellbeing: Evidence from Young Lives Qualitative research in Two Urban Communities in Ethiopia' paper presented at the 6th Conference Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Worker and Anthropologists (ESSSWA), Addis Ababa, December 2007

Tafere, Y. and Camfield, L. (forthcoming) *Community Understandings of Children's Transitions in Ethiopia: Possible implications for Life Course Poverty*, Young Lives Working Paper, Oxford: Young Lives

Tekola, B. (2008a) 'Making Sense of Childhood Poverty: Perceptions and Daily Experiences of Poor Children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia', unpublished dissertation, University of Bath

Tekola, B. (2008b) 'Eliciting the Hidden Variables: Issues in a Child-centred Qualitative Approach to the Study of Poor Children's Risk and Wellbeing in Urban Ethiopia', *Social Indicators Research* (in press)

Van der Hoek, Tamara (2005) *Through Children's Eyes: An Initial Study of Children's Personal Experiences and Coping Strategies Growing up Poor in an Affluent Netherlands*, Innocenti Working Paper 6, Florence: UNICEF

WeD (2007) 'Well-being according to WeD', unpublished research statement

White, S. and Pettit, J. (2005) 'Participatory Approaches and the Measurement of Human Wellbeing' in McGillivray, M. (ed.) *Measuring Human Wellbeing*, Oxford: WIDER/Oxford University Press

Woodhead, M. (1998) *Children's Perspectives on their Working Lives: A Participatory Study in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua* Stockholm: Raedda Barnen

Woodhead, M. (1999) 'Combating Child Labour: Listen to what the Children Say', *Childhood* 6: 27-49

Woodhead, M. (2001) 'The Value of Work and School: A Study of Working Children's Perspectives' in Lieten, K. and White, B. (eds.) *Child Labour: Policy Options*, Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers

World Bank (2008) 'Ed-stats', http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/EXTDATASTATISTICS/EXTEDSTATS/0,,menuPK:3232818~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3232764,00.html (accessed 12 Nov 2008)

Appendix

Table 1: *Summary of aspects of well-being identified by studies cited in the literature review*

Study	Context	Aspects of wellbeing
Fattore et al. (2007)	Australia	*feeling valued and secure in relationships*, *being a 'moral actor' in relation to oneself and others*, and *being able to make choices and exert influence in everyday situations*
Bamba (2007)	Western Japan	*feeling relaxed*, *calm* and *enjoying comfort and openness within relationships*.
Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2006)	Eire	*'people I love the most (friends)'*, *'activities'*, *'food and drink'* and *'animals/pets'*
Children's Society (2007)	UK	*quality of young people's relationships* - love, support, fair treatment and respect; *safety* - at home, at school and in the community, and *freedom* - in what they think, say and do
Hill et al. (1996)	UK	*emotional impact of arguments with friends and peers* or *between parents*, and *threats from the environment*
Van der Hoek (2005) and Ridge (2002)	Netherlands and UK, respectively	*social exclusion associated with lack of money for clothing, celebrations, or excursions*, *emotional pressure of protecting parents*
Johnson (2006)	Peru	*presence and quality of family relationships*
Harpham et al. (2005)	Vietnam	Basic needs (*fish or meat everyday), access to education, good relationships*
Percy (2003)	USA	'*feeling loved*', '*having friends to count on'*, and '*taking care of myself*'
Crivello et al. 2008	Peru, India, Ethiopia, Vietnam	*family support*, *education*, *recreation*, *good social relationships*, and *good behaviour*
Boyden et al. (2003)	Belarus, Bolivia, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone	*clothing and shoes*, *cleanliness*, and *having enough money to participate in recreational activities (*absence of which made children vulnerable to *teasing, bullying and exclusion*)
de Berry et al. (2003)	Kabul, Afghanistan	*children's behaviour* (manners), *quality of their relationships with others*
Armstrong et al. (2004:44-45)	Sri Lanka	*socially valued behaviours* (for example, 'being loving or kind', anbu), *good interpersonal qualities*, *educational outcomes*, *health and fitness*, and paying attention to *manners and personal care*
Bhatnagar and Gupta (2007)	India	*health*, *affiliation* and *achievement*
September et al. (2007)	Western Cape, South Africa	'*feeling valued and secure*', '*basic need deprivation'*
Tafere (2007)	Urban Ethiopia	*social relationships*, *personal characteristics*, *engagement with environment* and *spirituality*
Continicini et al. (2005)	Ethiopia	*Education*, *respect*, *representation* and *rights*

Table 2a: *Summary of indicators of well-being identified and ranked by girls in three of the qualitative sites*

	Indicator	Notes
***Debre* – urban**	1. Access to education	
	2. Educational materials	
	3. Good house	
	4. Clothes	
	5. Adequate food	
***Bale* – near rural**	1. Corrugated iron house	Protects from cold-related diseases and malaria
	2. Livestock	Source of income and food
	3. Donkey	Multi-purpose transport
	4. Television	Educates and brings new ideas
	5. Telephone	Communication
	6. Education	Can learn many things
	7. Food	
	8. Clothing, shoes	
***Angar* – remote rural**	1. Sufficient food, strong, pretty	Eats a balanced diet, can eat what/as much as she wants, when she wants
	2. Well-dressed hair	Parents can afford oil or have cattle; someone to dress her hair
	3. Neat, new clothes	Gets presents from family on holidays; has more than one set of clothes and can afford to wash them
	4. Shoes	
	5. Clean body	
	6. Goes to school, encouraged to study by parents	
	7. Time to play	
	8. Respected and consulted	

Table 2b: *Summary of indicators of ill-being identified and ranked by girls in three of the qualitative sites*

	Indicator	Notes
***Debre* – urban**	*First*	All
	Inadequate food	
	No educational materials	
	No shelter	
	No access to education	
	Second	1 of 5 respondents
	Attending govt. school	
	Being an orphan	
***Bale* – near rural**	1. Shortage of food	No survival without food
	2. Thatched, grass house	Leaks and causes disease
	3. Few, old clothes	
	4. No livestock	
	5. No separate kitchen	
***Angar* – remote rural**	1. Insufficient food, thin	
	2. Dirty, dry, neglected hair	
	3. Torn, old clothes	Parents can't afford more so she can't wash them
	4. Dirty body	Can't afford soap
	5. Goes to school without breakfast	

Table 3a: *Summary of indicators of well-being identified and ranked by boys in three of the qualitative sites*

	Indicator	**Notes**
***Debre* – urban**	*First*	(All)
	Good education	Key to achieving well-being
	Good family that loves & advises children	Leads to good behaviour
	Balanced diet	
	Good behaviour	Without this can't understand what they learn
	Second	
	Going to entertaining places	(3 out of 5 respondents)
***Bale* – near rural**	1. Farm land	Can produce own food
	2. Livestock	Can use to farm, or sell/use to guarantee a loan if someone needs medicine
	3. Grows vegetables for sale	Most lucrative crop
***Angar* – remote rural**	NOT RANKED	
	Strong, fat	
	Shoes, good clothes	
	Good food	
	Rich, loving, peaceful parents	
	Agrees with and helps parents; doesn't fight	
	Gets what he wants	
	Attends school (younger brother herds cattle)	

Table 3b: *Summary of indicators of well-being identified and ranked by boys in three of the qualitative sites*

	Indicator	Notes
***Debre* – urban**	*First*	All
	Being an orphan/losing parents	
	No proper follow up from family	
	No proper education	Disturbs other school children, can't continue learning, may behave badly or become a thief
	Bad behaviour	
***Bale* – near rural**	1. No land	'Land means everything, without it there is no life'
	2. No livestock	Can't get money in an emergency, even by borrowing
	3. No house or clothing	Can't live without a house or work without clothes
***Angar* – remote rural**	NOT RANKED	
	No school	
	No family	
	Fights with others, foolish	
	Begs, steals	
	No shoes, only sandals	
	Worn-out clothes	
	No livestock, herds others cattle	
	Dirty, untidy hair	
	Hungry	
	Unhealthy	

Young Lives is an innovative long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty.

The project seeks to:

- improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and to examine how policies affect children's well-being
- inform the development and implementation of future policies and practices that will reduce childhood poverty.

Young Lives is tracking the development of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam through quantitative and qualitative research over a 15-year period.

Young Lives Partners

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

Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia

Centre for Economic and Social Sciences, Andhra Pradesh, India

Save the Children – Bal Raksha Bharat, India

Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), Andhra Pradesh, India

Grupo de Análisis para el Desarollo (Group for the Analysis of Development), Peru

Instituto de Investigación Nutricional (Institute for Nutritional Research), Peru

Centre for Analysis and Forecast, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam

General Statistics Office, Vietnam

The Institute of Education, University of London, UK

Child and Youth Studies Group (CREET), The Open University, UK

Department of International Development University of Oxford, UK

Statistical Services Centre, University of Reading, UK

Save the Children UK (staff from the Rights and Economic Justice team in London as well as staff in India, Ethiopia and Vietnam).

Young Lives

An International Study of Childhood Poverty

Department of International Development
University of Oxford,
3 Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1865 289966
Email: younglives@younglives.org.uk

www.younglives.org.uk