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Introduction: Child Poverty and the Centrality of Schooling

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Eliminating poverty

In the year 2000, the United Nations agreed on time-bound Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. Children are strongly affected by the development agenda, both directly and indirectly. Two of these goals, namely achieving universal primary education and reducing infant mortality, target children directly. Most of the other goals – on maternal health, combating disease, gender equality, and environmental sustainability – have a strong impact on children's well-being. Goal 1, 'eradicating extreme poverty and hunger', is especially significant for children, for two main reasons. First, childhood is the most significant period in shaping long-term outcomes, in terms

of physical, mental, social, and emotional development, when poverty, malnutrition, and limited opportunities for learning can have strong adverse consequences. Inequalities are typically established even before children reach school age and permanently influence their opportunities later in life – something that affects the children as individuals, their families, and society as a whole. Second, children comprise a large proportion of the population in low- and middle-income countries, and are disproportionately represented among the very poor; numerically, children deserve serious attention when considering poverty.

Young Lives, a 15-year study, was designed partly to inform implementation of the Millennium Development Goals by examining the ways in which poverty impacts on the lives of a large sample of children. The research shows how children, their households and communities are faring as countries and international agencies strive to implement the Goals; it can also inform the next stage of development policy, after 2015. Now, as 2015 approaches and Young Lives is over halfway through its programme, it is appropriate to publish key messages arising from the research. The first volume of this series, *Childhood Poverty: Multidisciplinary approaches* (Boyden and Bourdillon 2012), presented general and related background studies by a number of established scholars in the field, together with early results from the first two rounds of Young Lives research. The chapters in this volume were commissioned to present key findings from the third round of survey research and the growing body of qualitative data: in particular, the volume reflects the growing importance of schooling in the lives of the children. It contains much material on the Younger Cohort in middle childhood and some on the Older Cohort's transition to adolescence. A third volume is planned for 2015, which will bring together key overall findings of the study, taking account of a further round of research, when the Younger Cohort will be entering adolescence and the Older Cohort will be making the transition to adulthood. It will show how and to what extent aspects of poverty early in the lives of children influence their later life trajectories.

The first part of this volume highlights four important trends that have affected children in the study countries since Young Lives began, trends which apply also to many other countries in the developing world. First, amid the economic growth of all countries in the study, there have been striking changes

at the community level, as well as striking differences between communities, that have significant outcomes for the children. Second, factors in home background remain key to acquiring competencies and skills, affecting even what children learn at school. Third, poverty has many overlapping dimensions, with cumulative effects on children. Fourth, the data provide an insight into the decisions of poor children and their families, sometimes made amid severe constraints, about their life trajectories and how to spend their time.

The second part of this volume focuses on schooling, which has grown in dominance in the children's lives, reflecting a wider trend in the developing world. The ascendancy of school is one key theme. Another is the pressure felt by some children to work alongside school to improve their life chances. A third theme is the persistent inequality in outcomes from schooling. While the numbers of Young Lives children in school have grown, some children are still severely disadvantaged in the school system. Outcomes in terms of the skills that children acquire at school reflect unequal opportunities for the children.

Young Lives

Young Lives[1] is a long-term study that aims to improve understanding of causes and consequences of childhood poverty, and of factors that contribute to breaking cycles of poverty and reducing the inequality that underpins it. It provides credible evidence to inform the development and implementation of future policies and practices that affect children.

The study is taking place in four countries: Ethiopia, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), Peru, and Vietnam. In each country, 20 sites were selected to reflect diversity, including urban and rural areas, communities with different livelihoods, and sites with different ethnic, religious, and language groups. Although the study sites include a range of wealth levels, the focus is on relatively poor communities and therefore the sample is not representative of the four countries. In each site, roughly equal numbers of randomly selected boys and girls participate. In each country, the study incorporates two cohorts of children: 2,000 children born in 2001–02, and 1,000 children born in 1994–95. Five major survey rounds follow the children at three-year intervals. Survey questionnaires were designed to provide material that can easily be compared both between the four countries and over time. They collect a wide variety of

indicators relating to these children's well-being, as well as information on their caregivers, households and communities, and the circumstances they face. The first survey round took place in 2002, Round 2 in 2006, Round 3 in 2009, and Round 4 is taking place in 2013 as this book is being compiled. A further round is planned for 2016.

The study started with quantitative survey data, which were to be complemented by intensive qualitative research. Starting in 2007, detailed qualitative research has taken place in selected sites, sometimes prompted by questions raised in the survey data. Research thus incorporates methods from different disciplines, including both numerical analysis of survey data (dominant in economics and some branches of psychology) and qualitative studies of children and communities (more commonly associated with anthropology and sociology) using data collected through focus group discussions, interviews, and other means. Brock and Knowles (2012), in the previous volume of this series, outline the methodology of Young Lives.

The chapters in this volume take into account the third round of survey data, collected in 2009 when the sample spanned the middle years of childhood: the larger, Younger Cohort was around 8 years old and the smaller, Older Cohort around 15 years old. Much research on child development focuses on early childhood, or less often on outcomes in middle to late childhood of shocks in early childhood. There is little on the specific experiences and developments in middle childhood, a dearth that makes the data from Young Lives in this area important and timely.

Contexts of Poverty

Economic growth in the four countries

There has been some success in the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty: estimates suggest that numbers in extreme poverty have fallen to less than half the 1990 levels (United Nations 2012: 4). Young Lives communities reflect this general trend: all four countries in the study have experienced substantial growth since 2002, when the study gathered the first round of data. This growth is echoed in the overall reduction of poverty and improved lives revealed by the survey data. Nevertheless, there are families and

communities that have been left behind and remain in poverty, or even in some cases families that fall into poverty in spite of the increasing resources around them. In the first volume of this series (Boyden and Bourdillon 2012), we pointed to the difficulty of reaching the poorest segments of the population; this volume confirms the problem. We find that even within the pro-poor sample of Young Lives, inequalities are entrenched and may even be increasing. Some children and households remain disadvantaged across multiple dimensions (Woodhead et al. 2013). Overall economic development does not necessarily result in better life chances for all children (for a review of relationships between child development and economic development, see Boyden and Dercon 2012.)

Peru is a middle-income country and has one of the best-performing economies in Latin America (World Bank 2013a). Its economy has grown steadily over the past decade, with steadily increasing public social expenditure and steadily declining rates of poverty (although poverty rates had increased in the previous decade, and they have not yet come down to the low of 1990 – Dornan and Pells 2013: 4). Nevertheless, the gap in wealth between rural and urban areas remains substantial, exacerbated by the many disadvantages suffered by children from ethnic minorities, including in the educational system (Cueto et al. 2011; Chapter 11 in this volume by Santiago Cueto, Juan Leon and Ismael Muñoz). Although poverty alleviation programmes have produced positive results, poor people, and particularly children from ethnic minorities, frequently remain disadvantaged (see, for example, Streuli 2012).

Over the past decade, Vietnam has had one of the best-performing economies in the world: in spite of a dip in 2009, the economy returned to a growth rate of 6.8 per cent in 2010. The country has used its economic growth to attend to the needs of disadvantaged children and has achieved the majority of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (Le et al. 2011; World Bank 2013b). Nevertheless, there remain clear gaps between children from rich families and those from poor ones, between boys and girls, and particularly between the dominant ethnic group and the many minority populations: in particular, children of ethnic minorities experience severe disadvantages in the school system (Huong Vu, Chapter 10). Growth has slowed in the first quarter of 2013; and it is not clear how sustainable the country's recent progress is in the face of global recession and stiff competition in the export market from countries

like China. High inflation, and especially high food prices, is making life difficult for poor households.

India's growth rate for the first decade of the millennium averaged around 8 per cent per annum. This growth was shared by the state of Andhra Pradesh, which is particularly well known for its many reform programmes to provide support for disadvantaged communities and individuals, from the provision of employment in community projects, through the delivery of health and educational services, to the encouragement of micro-credit and self-help projects. Moreover, rural areas and the poorest have benefitted most from growth (Dornan and Pells 2013: 4). India has accordingly experienced dramatic decreases in levels of poverty (Galab et al. 2011). Nevertheless, geographical remoteness or political alliances can make services more available to some communities or individuals than to others. Social exclusion and humiliation can hinder access of very poor people to essential support (see Vennam and Andharia 2012).

Ethiopia, the poorest of the four countries in the study, has reported double-digit economic growth for the six years following 2004, and has invested substantially in educational and other services for the poor (Woldehanna et al. 2011). Yet many households have been unable to improve their situation, and some have even moved downward into poverty – usually as a result of economic shocks. Although healthcare, education, and communications infrastructure have spread, many rural areas remain without such services or with services of inferior quality.

Changes at the community level

Apart from changes in the children as they grow up, there are changes in their families, and changes in the communities in which they live. The Young Lives study shows how improved infrastructure and communications impact on the material conditions in which children live as well as on the values and aspirations around childhood.

Pankhurst and Tiemelessan (2012) show in some detail the variety of changes in the Ethiopian sites, and how communities are differentially affected. In this volume, Paul Dornan and María José Ogando Portela (Chapter 1) show the importance of paying attention to the situation of different localities. They

analyse survey data to indicate dramatic changes to communities in Ethiopia and Vietnam: household and child indicators show general improvement, with the largest improvements in the poorest areas. However, disparities between communities remain large, especially between rural and urban areas. Dornan and Ogando Portela show that where people live and the state of their communities affect outcomes in children's lives. Although between families within communities there are large variations in indicators like stunting and subjective well-being, there is significant clustering of these factors in particular communities. Much of the variation in the development of cognitive skills relates to communities: community levels of education, community cohesion, and community levels of wealth appear to be relevant. The authors conclude that area-based interventions alongside household programmes have clear potential to reach disadvantaged children.

Family background and the development of skills

Although where children live can have significant impact on their lives, much of the variation in outcomes is related to family context and background. Andreas Georgiadis and Priscila Hermida (Chapter 2) investigate the association of certain dimensions of parental background against indices of cognitive development among children in all four countries, something that is under-researched in the developing world. Across all countries, parental socio-economic status is a strong predictor of cognitive and psychosocial development. Cognitive achievement is further related to parental education, and in three of the countries to maternal psychosocial 'skills'. In the case of children's psychosocial well-being, however, the effect of the family's socio-economic status is weak or insignificant, whereas the mother's psychosocial well-being comprises a strong predictor in all four countries. Moreover, the details of the authors' analysis revealed that the general correlation between psychosocial well-being and cognitive skills (Dercon and Krishnan 2009) does not apply in the particular contexts of Vietnam and Ethiopia. The authors conclude that policies promoting socio-economic status and parental education hold promise for children, but programmes to improve the psychosocial competencies of mothers may also be important.

Studies of schooling considered below point to the further importance of family background to learning and achievement in formal education.

The many dimensions of poverty

Detailed studies reveal the complexity of poverty as it is differentially experienced by children in a wide variety of situations. Early in the Young Lives study, it appeared that a measure of poverty based on a wealth index alone did not satisfactorily reflect the quality of life of individuals; instead, levels of consumption and expenditure were also used to measure the poverty levels of families in the sample. In the previous volume in this series, Stefan Dercon (2012) argued that no one measure, not even a multivariate index, can encompass all factors that contribute to the experience of poverty and reliably direct policies towards its alleviation.

At the basic material level, childhood poverty comprises a lack of resources necessary for growth and development. In this volume, María José Ogando Portela and Kirrily Pells (Chapter 3) show that material poverty is associated with numerous risks in Ethiopia and Vietnam, often resulting in multiple and recurrent shocks, which in turn have adverse consequences for children's development. In particular, they provide case studies from Ethiopia that show how children are often active participants in a household's response to shocks, and that this can have adverse consequences for the children, such as missing out on schooling or early marriage for girls. In addressing the well-being of the children concerned, therefore, it is not adequate to try to apply single 'protective' measures such as prohibiting work or early marriage. Nor is it adequate to focus only on material resources. We need to attend to the interplay between a lack of material resources and other factors that affect children's well-being in the present and their chances in the future.

Poverty is not only about what people may or may not have: poverty also arises out of how individuals are treated within structures and systems. Forms of exclusion are evident in several of the chapters of this volume, and in Young Lives data more generally. Children can be deprived by direct exclusion, exclusion by stigmatization, or exclusion by the loss of opportunities. Virginia Morrow, Yisak Tafere and Uma Vennam (Chapter 6) point to the importance of personal connections for accessing services intended to help poor people. Dornan and Ogando Portela (Chapter 1) show how place can impinge on the opportunities available to children. Uma Vennam and Janki Andharia (2012) show how political allegiance can affect access of communities to services

provided by government; and how humiliating treatment can discourage poor families from getting help for their children, who are consequently deprived. The previous volume of this series presented ways in which Indian children saw poverty: one of their key concerns was the way they were ridiculed for being poor (Crivello et al. 2012). In this volume, Alexandra Cussianovich and Vanessa Rojas (Chapter 7) show how poor Peruvian children are excluded from the formal educational system; and Huong Vu (Chapter 10) describes how in Vietnam children from ethnic minorities can be severely disadvantaged in the school system, sometimes resulting in their leaving early.

Such exclusion emphasizes that poverty is not simply a matter of inequality of resources, but also of a subordinate position in relations of power, limiting access to resources. Poverty is associated with a lack of equity in society. In India and Peru, the severe poverty of some stands in contrast to the growing wealth of others; the experience of such poverty contrasts with the pattern in Ethiopia, where resources are lacking for the country as a whole. In all the chapters in this volume, inequalities in children's opportunities to develop appear as a feature of poverty, which is often becoming more entrenched in the context of economic growth.

A further dimension of poverty is constraints on choices, due to a lack of material resources or of skills, or to relations of power and social exclusion. Choices about use of time and life trajectories, especially in response to adversity, arise in several of the chapters in this volume and are the topic of the next section.

Making decisions

Focusing on what choices are open to children and young people brings to light what they can do for themselves, in contrast to a conception of the children simply as victims of poverty and its associated hazards. Young Lives data reveal how children respond to the difficulties that face them and their families in ways that allow them to take some control over their lives, and to contribute to improving the situation of their families. Notwithstanding the disadvantages they may face, young people still exercise some agency, which can contribute to their well-being and development. Jo Boyden has argued from Ethiopian data (2009)

that when children receive appropriate support in dealing with adversity, the experience can provide important protective learning.

In Chapter 4, Gina Crivello, Huong Vu, and Uma Vennam, using both survey data and case studies, consider choices made by teenagers, and particularly by girls. The agency of children is shaped by their evolving maturity, by their changing material circumstances, and by the different ways they are encouraged to develop their morality. Poverty reduces available choices, especially when aggravated by the death or illness of a breadwinner or other shocks to the household economy. Such circumstances restrict what families can offer children, and increase the demands that must be made on children to help sustain the family. Poverty therefore limits the choices of both adults and children, both boys and girls. Relations of power, however, can further restrict the agency of those in a subordinate position and can affect the way constraints of poverty are experienced. While girls are not always at a disadvantage with respect to boys, they experience poverty differently and gender can further reduce available possibilities, by for example restricting the movement of girls and limiting the possibilities of earning income. This observation reinforces a more general finding that while female gender is not necessarily in itself a disadvantage, it can compound other disadvantages (Dercon and Singh 2011).

Chapter 3 by Ogando Portela and Pells, and Chapter 7 by Cussianovich and Rojas both point to ways in which children can develop agency in response to adversity. Many young people in the sample populations must make choices relating to the time and effort given to schooling on the one hand, and to supporting their families and acquiring appropriate experience outside school on the other. Both these are perceived as important to well-being in family contexts where all contribute to the family livelihood and children relate with their parents in a mutually interdependent way (see Heissler and Porter 2012 on Ethiopian children). Both school and experience outside school are perceived as contributing to children developing their future lives. Choices are made in childhood between work and school, or more frequently the weight given to each in a combination of work and school. The cases in Chapter 6 (Morrow et al.) show children influencing decisions by parents about how much emphasis to give to work or school when resources are scarce. Future rounds of Young Lives research will show whether and how these choices make a difference to

adjustment in early adulthood, in terms of employment, marriage, parenthood, and other transitions into adult life.

Learning and growing up

In recent years, there has been a remarkable expansion of schooling across the developing world. This has been perceived as among the most powerful development investments, potentially affording extensive economic, social and health benefits, and in turn protecting against poverty and reducing inequality. Ideally, formal education should be relevant and of high quality and should offer opportunities to all, but in practice it often fails the most disadvantaged children on all of these fronts.

School systems in the four countries

Virtually all children in all four countries receive some primary schooling. The system of schooling in each of the four countries is presented in Table 1: the figures presented by Rolleston and James (in Chapter 5) show divergences from the ideal.

[insert Table 1 around here]

Most children attend government schools; particularly in India, and to a lesser extent in Peru and Ethiopia, there has been a growth in private schools. In India, many families believe, with some justification (see Singh and Sarkar 2012), that their children receive more effective teaching in private rather than government schools. Although inexpensive by international standards, private education may pose a severe financial burden on families who have to weigh expected outcomes against expenses in an attempt to improve the chances for their children: switching schools is common even at the primary level, and it is not evident that adequate information is available to ensure that the choices they make always benefit their children (James and Woodhead forthcoming). In Vietnam, many parents make up for what they see as shortcomings of public education through extra tuition, in the hope, apparently forlorn (see Le and Baulch 2012), that the time and expense will lead to greater school achievement. The expense and trouble families undergo to try to obtain the best

schooling for their children is an indication of the growing dominance of schooling in their lives.

The growing dominance of school

Young Lives data reflect the world-wide trend that the vast majority of children receive some primary schooling, and the balance of boys and girls has evened out in most countries, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals. Nearly all children in Young Lives communities, including girls, now receive some primary schooling. Rapid economic and social change, combined with increased policy emphasis on improved and more accessible schooling as the passport to a better future, has not only affected how children spend their time; it has also impacted dramatically on the aspirations and values of children and their families (Boyden 2013; Dornan and Pells 2013: 14–18), with poor families now sacrificing much to provide their children with formal education. The transformative effect of expanding educational opportunities was not anticipated when Young Lives started over a decade ago, and the design of the study has been adjusted to encompass school quality and effectiveness. School-based surveys have been added to monitor school access and quality over time and to relate these to educational outcomes and to children's and parents' views and experiences of schooling.

Caine Rolleston and Zoe James (Chapter 5) analyse statistics on maths and reading skills over time across all four countries. They show that, notwithstanding differences within and between countries, skills do indeed improve with the number of years of schooling. Ethiopian children were initially at a disadvantage compared to those in the other countries, consistent with a later start to formal education in Ethiopia. But the gap had narrowed by the age of 12, offering evidence in favour of recent efforts to expand primary education to all. The gap between the higher skill levels of children in Vietnam and those in other countries widened after that age.

Within countries, home background – especially the wealth and literacy of the caregiver – remains the strongest predictor of achievement at school, especially at the early ages when significant numbers are not yet enrolled and later when decisions are being made about leaving school. Children from poorer families generally perform less well at school and tend to leave earlier.

Nevertheless, where access to schooling is almost universal, it may serve to mitigate the effects of advantages at the household level, supporting efforts to expand formal education.

School has become the major activity of middle childhood across the country sites. In Chapter 6, Morrow, Tafere and Vennam show that the Younger Cohort of the Young Lives sample in India and Ethiopia spent more time in school, and less time working, than the Older Cohort had done at a similar stage in their lives. In Ethiopia, as educational opportunities and enrolment rose, paid work decreased, but other work remained the same. In the early rounds, children spoke of liking their work and being proud of achievements in it; in 2010 children were adamant that school was important to their lives, although some, and particularly boys, still accepted economic responsibility in their families. In both countries, children became prepared to put pressure on their parents to allow them adequate time for school. In India, enrolment was already very high in the early rounds, but there was a decrease in paid work between rounds. Here even very young children had heavy loads of schoolwork – long hours at school with more work to do at home. In India, the change was supported by punitive action against parents whose children failed to attend school, raising questions of how genuine and justified were the positive values expressed on the merits of schooling.

Cussianovich and Rojas, in Chapter 7, discuss changes in values and aspirations among the Older Cohort in Peru, which in turn affect the way they perceive their well-being. In Peru, school was widely accessible and valued at the beginning of the study, and was considered by children central to their well-being: as they grew older, they emphasized the value of support in their schooling from parents and peers. Post-secondary education was appreciated for improving life chances. Nevertheless, responsibility and work were a component in the transition into adulthood, and when further formal education appeared no longer possible for some of the young people, they adapted their values and aspirations to what seemed possible: they noticed that some people achieved well-being and a successful life in other ways than formal schooling, and perceived a value in work experience.

Work and learning

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that education should be directed to the 'development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential' and the development of various social responsibilities (Article 29, 1), taking education beyond the simple acquisition of classroom skills. Although well-resourced schools may provide for further learning through extra-curricular activities, most of the children in the Young Lives study find such learning in social life and activities outside school, and in some cases in the experience of productive work. While school is the most important component in the education of the vast majority of children and youth, the process of learning for life is broader.

Cussianovich and Rojas (Chapter 7) show how some Peruvian teenagers prize work experience, which they believe will provide skills necessary for adult life. Productive work can give status to a young person in a community that values industriousness. A similar perception appeared among young Indian children who regarded work as a way of developing skills for one's future (Morrow and Vennam 2012). Some Ethiopian boys were keen to honour their responsibilities to their families, and so gave productive work priority over school (Morrow et al., Chapter 6). To understand how work and school affect the well-being of particular children, these have to be considered against the hopes, aspirations, and relationships arising from the children's particular contexts.

Responsibilities of poor children to their families can result in work that disrupts schooling, sometimes to the extent of pushing young people to leave school early and follow a different trajectory of growing up. Moreover, children and their families are aware that schooling does not guarantee jobs on leaving, and there is need to develop other skills (Dornan and Pells 2013: 22). Morrow et al. (Chapter 6) show how a more flexible system of schooling in Ethiopia allows children to combine school with responsibilities of work for their families; or in extreme cases, children can drop out of school for a while to re-enter later. In Andhra Pradesh, by contrast, the demands of school, and of authorities supporting schooling, make it difficult to combine school with work.

Some young people decide to start work and defer or abandon further formal learning, looking for alternative ways of growing into adulthood. Although such

decisions may result from duress and from lack of available alternatives, they illustrate ways in which disadvantaged children can acquire a degree of self-esteem through taking control of their lives. Further rounds of Young Lives research will examine how these decisions affect their later life chances.

Alternatives to school for acquiring life skills are particularly important to those who receive limited benefits from their available system of formal education.

Unequal outcomes from school

We pointed out that growing levels of wealth in the countries studied can mask cases of extreme poverty; in a similar way, apparent improvement in availability and quality of formal education at the macro level can conceal serious deficiencies for certain children.

Growing school attendance does not necessarily mean proportionately greater learning for all. We have mentioned that home background affects the acquisition of cognitive skills. Although school enrolment increased among the poorest quintile in Ethiopia between 2002 and 2009, Young Lives data indicate that literacy decreased in this group (Dornan and Pells 2013: 12). Urban areas still have advantages over rural areas in the accessibility of educational institutions and their range and quality. Some families do not have resources to enable all their children to access secondary and post-secondary schooling.

When disadvantaged children are enabled to enter school, apart from costs in school requirements and time, there may be other costs to their well-being. When schools are insufficiently resourced and poor in quality, children may learn and benefit little (see, for example, Hallack and Poisson 2007; Glewwe and Kremer 2006). Disadvantaged children in high-quality schools may be humiliated by their inability to keep up with other children, whether in terms of dress and life-style or of academic achievement. Emphasis on school achievement can be humiliating for those whose interests and skills lie elsewhere. Children with disabilities may suffer for not being able to conform (for example, Streuli 2012: 594–5). Emphasis on strict standards of attendance can exacerbate stress in children who worry about their families and feel a need contribute to their households.

While school is prized for its proffered hope of leading to a better life, this hope is not always realized. The fact that at the macro level, years of schooling correlate with increased income later in life does not mean that specific children will benefit in this way from further years in school: such benefit depends on the quality of teaching, the relevance of what they learn, and the local job market (see Glewwe 1996).

Moreover, the aspiration to improve one's life through school can be in tension with other values. We have mentioned that responsibilities of work can hinder schooling: the interdependent relationships between children and their families mean that as children grow so do their responsibilities towards families, which many of the children acknowledge as important to them. These responsibilities, together with the family values behind them, can become strained under the pressure of schoolwork. Elsewhere, questions have been asked about the way schooling can replace family values with an emphasis on individual achievement, and present traditional skills (such as those necessary for agriculture) as appropriate only for people who fail at school (see, for example, White 2011: 6–7).

In Chapter 8 of this volume, Helen Murray, examines quantitative and qualitative data from all four countries on factors that shape inequalities in education, including early educational experience, location, and household resources. She raises questions of whether the aspirations of the young people going through the school system are realistic, given their restricted opportunities later in the educational system, and the restricted labour markets they will face – often with little access to networks that might provide well-paid employment. Activities outside school, and work in particular, can be beneficial to children, including by helping to cover school expenses. Murray questions inflexible systems of schooling, already in operation in some countries and a growing tendency in others, that do not allow time for other activities. She concludes that access to schooling alone is unlikely to fulfil the potential of formal education to provide a way out of poverty: policies need also to attend to quality and a system that can accommodate children with other needs.

Murray's conclusion coincides with more general demands to focus on learning rather than enrolment. Higher rates of enrolment are meaningless for

children's lives unless they are accompanied by higher rates of cognitive achievement (Rolleston and James 2011).

The three following chapters consider inequalities in outcomes for children from schooling in Peru and Vietnam. In Chapter 9, Sofya Krutikova, Caine Rolleston and Elisabetta Aurino analyse survey data from Peru and Vietnam to estimate the effects of school (as opposed to home background) on cognitive achievement. In both countries, enrolment is pretty well universal, and the question is the extent to which schooling helps to narrow the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and others. In Peru, not only do poorer children go to schools of poorer quality, but even when they attend the same schools, these are less effective with children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Vietnam, in contrast, schools are effective at mitigating initial disadvantage when teaching maths to poorer children, but do not succeed in doing this with respect to language. In both countries the gap between the more and the less disadvantaged children at the age of 5 persists to the age of 11.

In Vietnam, Huong Vu (Chapter 10) uses qualitative data to show the reasons why children from ethnic minorities generally achieve less well in school and drop out sooner. Even in these disadvantaged groups, parents and children generally place high value on schooling, partly due to the role model set by the majority Kinh people, who have high status, and partly due to a belief that school will help with future employment, although a few still see a life in local agriculture as satisfactory. Against this general pattern, the chapter presents cases in which difficulties that children from ethnic minorities face in school, together with observations about the job market and difficulties of finding employment, reverse the value that some children and their families place on formal education. As circumstances change, so do the aspirations of parents and children, similar to the changing perspectives of the young Peruvians described in Chapter 7. If an aim of education is social equalizing, attention is needed to reducing difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in schools, and to improving their achievement.

In Chapter 11, Santiago Cueto, Juan Leon and Ismael Muñoz are also concerned with inequalities in the Peruvian system of schooling. They relate performance in language and maths tests over time to a variety of background features in children's lives, which indicate some of the factors that reduce the

benefits of school for disadvantaged children in Peru mentioned in Chapter 9. Children whose mothers have received little formal education are clearly disadvantaged, as are children whose mothers speak an indigenous language rather than Spanish. The authors endorse the observations that the gap between the highest and the lowest performers do not close over time: cognitive abilities at the age of 5 predict abilities at the age of 8. Apart from access to school, therefore, there is a need to make schooling fairer for all.

Inequality and context

The countries in the study have all witnessed economic growth and improved to services poorer people. Most of the chapters, however, show how important it is to look beyond the averages and attend to the differences between individuals and communities – to consider those who are left behind (United Nations 2013). The chapters in this volume show ways of using statistics and qualitative data to unmask the extreme disadvantages and social exclusion of very poor children that can be hidden within aggregates and averages when reporting on education, wealth, and social mobility.

Endnote

¹ Young Lives is located within the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. It is a consortium of research partners in the four study countries, supported by an international advisory board of experts.

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Schooling levels, duration and age

Ethiopia		India		Peru		Vietnam	
Compulsory schooling: Age 7 to end Grade 4		Compulsory schooling: Age 6 to 14 (RTE Act, 2010)		Compulsory schooling: Age 6 to 17		Compulsory schooling: Age 6 to 14	
Pre-school	Not compulsory		Not compulsory		Ages 4 and 5		Not compulsory
Primary	Start age 7 Grades 1 to 8 divided into 2 cycles Grades 1-4 and Grades 5-8	Primary	Start age 5 Grades 1 to 5	Primary	Start age 6 Grades 1 to 6	Primary	Start age 6 Grades 1 to 5
	Exam end Grade 8 to progress (primary school certificate)	Upper primary (sometimes called middle school)	Grades 6 and 7 in Andhra Pradesh (Grades 6 to 8 in other states)				
General secondary	Start age 15 Grades 9 and 10 Exam at end Grade 10 to progress	Secondary	Grade 8/9 to Grade 10 Exam at end Grade 10 to progress (sometimes called matriculation)	Secondary	Grades 7 to 11 (called Grades 1 to 5) No formal state exams (schools issue graded certificates and technical colleges/universities have entrance exams)	Lower secondary	Grades 6 to 9 Exam at end Grade 9 to progress
Preparatory secondary	Grade 11 and 12 (if Grade 10 exams marks high enough)	Senior secondary (sometimes called junior college in AP)	Grades 11 and 12			Upper secondary	Grades 10 to 12

