Title	*Young Lives Project: Children's experiences of poverty, adversity and inequality*
Description	This talk looks at the work done by the Young Lives Project, a study which tracks 12,000 children across 4 developing countries over a 15 year period trying to find a scientific answer to the question of the causes of childhood poverty
Presenter(s)	Jo Boyden
Recording	http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/alumni/weekend09/audio/boyden-younglives-medium-audio.mp3
Keywords	alumni, young lives, children, poverty, india, ethiopia, vietnam, peru, L360, 2009-09-25, 1
Part of series	*Alumni Weekend 2009*

Jo Boyden Good morning everybody. I hope that you can hear me, and that you can see the screen perfectly well. I'm Jo Boyden, the director of the 'Young Lives Project', which is the largest project within the social science division here in the university. And we've been running this project since 2005, although its inception was actually 2000, at the millennium. And I'll explain a little bit about the project. I want to talk to you today about the key findings that we have emerging from our research. And it's a study specifically of childhood poverty in India, or in Andhra Pradesh in India, in Peru, Ethiopia, and Vietnam.

And so we're trying to pull out some of the key findings from research with the children in these four countries, and think about their implications for the children living in poverty throughout the developing world today. And this of course is a very important moment in the history of the whole field of poverty research because we're seeing so many transitions at the millennium, but we're also seeing some very severe problems with the current global economic crisis. So it's in that kind of a context that I will be talking to you about our research.

Okay, so I've titled my talk 'Children's Experiences of Poverty, Adversity, and Inequality'. So those are the key features that I want to be discussing today. And the basic outline of my talk is actually starting before the discussion of the project itself, to put it in the context of both policy and research in the field of childhood poverty globally and focussing on developing countries. Then I'm going to go on to talk about the basic features of the project, of the study, the design of the study, and what we're actually doing.

And then I'm going to talk about some of the key dimensions of our research and within those dimensions the key findings that we're coming up with. And then, little bit about the future and what the implications for this kind of research might be for the future. I'm very happy to be interrupted and I hope to talk for maybe less than an hour and have a chance for discussion and questions afterwards. But feel free to question me during the talk if you'd like to.

Okay, so the first question in terms of our research is why would we be focussing on childhood poverty? Why is childhood poverty an important issue at this point of time? Well first of all at this millennium, we now have the largest cohort of young people that the world will ever see. And I say that because of course we have changes in fertility patterns across of the world and declining fertility in many parts of the world. So that's why this is the largest youth cohort the world will ever

see. Which therefore means that there are more children living in poverty throughout the world than there are adults, which is absolutely key. So this is a very important global demographic.

Children are also generally more vulnerable and also the effects of poverty during childhood are very lasting. And that's one of the key arguments that I'm going to make during the course of my talk. The other thing about children in poverty is they tend to be far more exposed to other kinds of adversities such as family separation, such as environmental hazards and disasters. Poor people tend to live in the most disaster prone areas of the world. So they're not just dealing with poverty, they're dealing with many other things as well. So that's another very important reason why we should be focussing on childhood poverty.

There's also the intergenerational issues, that the children of poor children are far more likely to be poor themselves. And one of the big challenges of our research is to try and understand that particular dynamic and how do you break that cycle and what are the factors that can make for change. And it's extremely difficult, it's extremely difficult in this country. As many of you will be aware, we have very serious pockets of entrenched poverty in the UK. Similarly in the US and all industrialised countries in the world. So this is not just a developing country problem at all.

So our argument is that reducing childhood poverty isn't just about relieving the suffering of children and young people. It's also about breaking those cycles that trap whole families, indeed whole communities, over generations, over time. So that's why this is such a key area of research. I'd like to highlight – because this is the alumni weekend, when you talk about global policies for children and childhood poverty, actually there's a very important Oxford connection for all of this.

Because Eglantyne Jebb who was at Lady Margaret Hall was actually the founder of the 'Save the Children Fund, UK', which I imagine most of you know, which is now actually the 'Save the Children Fund Alliance', which actually spreads across virtually the whole world and has 'Save the Children' offices in Hong Kong, in many parts of Europe, in the US and so on. And she was the person who founded the whole alliance. But she was also the person who helped draft the first, what was then called in the early 20's – 1920's, 'Declaration of the Rights of the Child'.

And it was the first statement, if you like – global statement, about how children have specific problems, specific needs, and they ought to be addressed separately apart from and over and above those of adults. She also did a lot of work to globalise this, what I call the 'Child Saving Movement', which has become so powerful throughout the world today. She for example worked with, during the First World War she was working on both sides of the conflict. And she insisted that children were neutral, that humanitarian intervention ought to be neutral, as civilians whichever side of the conflict they were on they had a right to be supported.

And indeed she was arrested for her beliefs, for supporting children of the enemy as it was understood at the time. So Oxford has a very important part in the history of this very important field. I would just like to mention three major landmarks if you like, in the development of global policy on children and childhood. 1979 was the 'International Year of the Child'. What was important about that year was that it fostered a lot of research and a lot of dialog. And it was at that point in time that the world began to wake up to the fact that children weren't necessarily protected by their parents, they weren't necessarily protected by their communities.

Indeed children were sometimes scapegoated, sometimes they were exploited even more than adults. And they were in very precarious situations throughout the world. So it was the first time we had research on street children, children in prostitution and these kinds of issues, if you like. So it was a very keen moment. And it was a wake up call for everybody. I think so many assumptions about protective family environments had existed until that point. And then we began to see that actually children were often in very dire circumstances.

1989 was the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'. And the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' was really something that developed out of the declaration. But it had a lot more hit, a

lot more punch. It was a legally binding document for States parties. This signed governments up to the rights of children. So this was also a very important moment. And now it's the most widely ratified treaty in Human Rights Law in the world, with only Somalia and the United States as the only two countries in the world that haven't signed up to it.

We now have the most recent step forward if you like, is the 'Millennium Development Goals', which again was a consensus reached by governments on what the objectives should be around development. And the important point is these weren't focussing on children and childhood. But actually if you look at the goals, most of them do actually relate to children. Basic education for all children as a fundamental right and also important goals around reduction of infant mortality and morbidity, survival goals. So the Millennium Development Goals' really are goals about changing lives for children, and improving children's wellbeing.

I just want to pause for a minute to think about what the implications of these different developments might actually have been in terms of the policy in the world that we see today. And I want to just highlight three key areas where I think we've seen real change as a result of this increasing global consensus. We do now have a greater focus on children in development cooperation. We also have massive investment in services for children globally, particularly around health and education.

And we also have the expansion of a children's rights framework, which is a very different thing from a framework based on children's needs and their problems. It's about their rights to – it's a more assertive framework if you like. And I'm just going to review these very briefly in turn, so we can see what the backdrop is to the 'Young Lives Project' project. Okay, we have a greater focus on children in development cooperation. Actually the bulk of money that is spent by developed countries on development cooperation, is devoted to children in most instances. And it's a large amount of money.

However, there's a great deal of emphasis on policy within this framework and much less consideration of the politics and the political economy. For example, the fact that so many children in the world today are the victims of their own governments, of State perpetration if you like, of various violations. It's not about good policies. It's not enough to have good policies. It's actually about changing the way governments work with the civilians and their populations. We also know that the 'Millennium Development Goals' have been very effective in mobilising resources around development issues and in particular those that focus on children.

But actually, there are some real problems with these. So for instance, the development goal around education which has focussed very much on getting children into schools, doesn't really work very well when it comes to quality of schooling. And we're finding tremendous problems with school quality. And you'll see a little bit more about that in my talk later. And also, how do we address inequalities? That the goals are very good at marking the trends in different countries. But the trends are all based on averages.

What's happening to the poorest populations? What's happening to the children who don't have the support of their families and so on? We've not really done very much on that. There's also the fact that we have a massive reduction in aid budgets right now in this year, 2009. And that's not just because Governments in some cases have reduced their aid budgets because for political reasons they can't spend money overseas, if they haven't got enough to spend in their own countries.

It's also because if it's a proportion of GDP, it will inevitably go down anyway just because of the global economic crisis. Okay, massive investment in services for children in developing countries. That has been extremely impressive. However, we see some real gaps in those services, fantastic attention to under five child survival rates. We've seen a reduction of morbidity and mortality in children in those crucial early years of life. And we do now see enormous increases in school enrolment – very, very impressive.

But there are all kinds of other things going on in children's lives that have been completely neglected by policy. And social welfare for example, what happens to children whose families are in trouble? Those kinds of areas are very much neglected still today. We also find – and this is a challenge that faces developing countries and developed countries, we find that providing basic services and support to the majority 80% if you like, of children, is one thing. But reaching the last 20% is extraordinarily difficult. It's expensive, and it's complex.

Because often these are the kids who are not in communities, who are working, who may be migrating, they may be separated from their families. How do you provide them with access to healthcare and education? Massive challenge.

Male 1 What do you mean by last 20%?

Jo Boyden The last 20% meaning if you're trying to get overall coverage of a 100% of children with basic services, there is that little core of children, the last 20% of children who are the hard to reach children, who don't get access to services, who continue to be outside the system. And it's a problem in this country as well. You know, it's that core of entrenched problems. That we don't really know how to provide services for children who are mobile for example, who are not living in fixed locations. How do we educate them? It's that kind of problem that I'm highlighting.

Inequitable access continues to be a massive problem. We have enormous urban bias in virtually all countries. But we also have biases around ethnicity; we have biases around language, and around gender, and many other social determinants. We have major problems with service quality, which I've already mentioned. And we also have some assumptions and stereotypes that we work with. We always assume that girls are more vulnerable than boys. But actually in some situations they're not.

If we're thinking of girls as being the victims of sexual violation for example, that's already recognised as the major problem globally. But actually we have almost no evidence on boys who are sexually violated because it's socially so taboo even to talk about it. And so much of our policy is based on inadequate evidence. And that's very, very important. The children's rights framework has actually brought in a whole new paradigm to the way we think about children. And it focuses on their survival, on their development, on their protection and their participation.

It's the first time if you like, that we have a sense that children have a role to play in their own survival, in their own development, and in their own protection. They have knowledge and expertise about their lives. And we ought to be using that knowledge and expertise, and not just relying on adult expertise and adult knowledge.

However, we are very confused about what's in the best interest of children. Different cultures, different actors, have very different ideas about what serves children's wellbeing. And children often don't agree with adults, including the adults in their families.

So how do we arrive at a consensus? How do we know what's in children's best interests? There's also the fact that the whole notion of rights can clash terribly with local cultures. It isn't actually a very culture friendly concept rights. Right means that you have a claim on somebody else. And in most societies, the notion of an individual set of rights for individuals just doesn't exist. So there's a big problem in terms of the sort of cultural views around rights.

There's also the fact that rights provide us with a notion, a sort of normative framework of what we ought to be achieving for children throughout the world. But the evidence can often be very different. And the evidence can often go in very different directions. And that's one of the challenges for our project because we are evidence based, we're not normative based. And sometimes the evidence is very inconvenient. Inconvenient for governments, inconvenient for families and parents and for policy makers. And that then becomes a sort of negotiation challenge if you like, in terms of where we actually take those different ideas forward.

I just want to reflect a little bit then on the role of research in all of this. Because some of you might wonder, "Why am I taking up policy, and how does research relate to policy?" Basically I would argue that research is absolutely fundamental to policy. And you cannot have good policies unless you have good research and good evidence. Otherwise it's an act of faith. And I think policy that's an act of faith can be very, very dangerous. We do actually have some very good monitoring systems globally. We know quite a lot about changes in survival rates of children, about attendance at schools, enrolment in schools, and so on.

But we tend to use very crude indicators for these monitoring processes. And we love league tables, we love to be able to say you know, "Peru is doing better than Brazil" or "Brazil is doing better than Sri Lanka" and so on. And these are false comparisons that we're making. Because of course the realities of all these different countries are so very, very different.

We also have very, very patchy information about some of the impacts. And that's actually what really matters. It's not enough to know about inputs and outputs of services, how many children go to school. It's how many children learn at school, what do they learn at school, and how is that learning then translated into their adult lives and into the work that they do. We have almost no evidence at a systematic nationally representative level on those kinds of issues. We have loads of information on households. Household surveys have now been established in most parts of the world and to varying degrees of rigour and so on.

But within those households, the lives of children are usually hidden from view. And we don't know for example, what are the differences between the children, the boys and the girls, in the same households. We don't know what's going on in children's lives. Just because the household head reports a certain level of income, it doesn't tell us that children are actually able to access that income, which is the most important thing. We do have a growing body of cross-sectional studies which are child focussed. And they tend to be about the sort of spectacular problems if you like – that's what I tend to call them. Like street children, like children who are trafficked, like children who are in prostitution, and so on.

But actually they don't tell you anything about the dynamic process in those children's lives. How come they ended up on the street? What are the circumstances there and what's going to happen in their future? They don't really tell you about the risk and resilience processes. And they're often just a little snapshot in time, which cannot really tell you about causes and consequences and longer-term outcomes with their circumstances.

So then the challenge is, how can research evidence deliver more in terms of policy, improving the quality of our policy, and its impact? I think we need to focus on causes and consequences. It's not enough to monitor trends. We have to know why something happens. We don't need to know what's happening just, but why. Because it's the intervening in the 'why' process that's where policy can actually make a difference. And I would argue that we need to do it within a life course framework, so we can see those long-term cycles of depravation and disadvantage and how they impact down the course of the life.

We need to understand the complexity of children's lives. For example, what are the factors that make it difficult for them to go to school? Is it just about the fact that they're working, or is it because the teacher's a bully? Or is it because in class they feel because they smell, because they've been to work, or they arrive late and they're tired and they can't concentrate, they're falling behind, other children tease them and so on. What are the complexities that are actually intervening in children's lives?

We need to learn from children themselves. As I've said before, children are the experts in their lives. They don't always know everything. But I've always been absolutely amazed throughout my work, just how much children really do know and how much they do have insight. And we need to think about how we can use research evidence to develop appropriate policy responses.

Okay, young lives. What are our objectives? We are trying to understand and improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty. So that's how the research is designed. We're also looking at the factors and that includes programmes and policies that impact on children's lives to bring about changes, either for the better or for the worse. And it can contribute to breaking those cycles of poverty.

We want to provide credible evidence. And this credible is really important. The connection to Oxford is extremely important, because policy makers are very well informed, they know their realities very well. But they need to know that you are authoritative. It's not enough just to say, "This is a problem, that's a problem." It's got to be rigorous and it's got to be credible. So that's a very big issue for us.

We're also producing a basic evidence base on child focussed research. We've actually got all our data are archived publicly so that there's access for any researchers and policy makers who want to work with our data themselves. We're working very hard on capacity building issues because we want to leave a legacy. When the project finished, we want to be able to leave a legacy whereby our partners in the study countries are all able to carry on with this kind of research, or indeed initiate new studies. So it's very much about building capacity.

And we're also developing a methodology which we share, because this is a practically unique project. There's no other project in the developing world which is working longitudinally in four different countries. We have a lot of challenges, we make a lot of mistakes and we want to be able to share that with others so that they can learn from our own learning if you like, and we can share that.

So what do we do? We're researching 12,000 children in the four countries. The countries were chosen for very particular reasons. They represent a diversity of different country situations. And what's interesting actually about the choice of countries – and I wasn't involved in the initial choice. But what's interesting is that processes that have taken place since this selection which was in 2000, have actually brought a lot more unity towards those countries than the diversity that we originally started with.

Ethiopia of course remains the poorest of the four countries, and it's the one with the greatest challenges. But ironically in a way, in India and Vietnam in particular, Vietnam started out at the beginning of this study being in the least developed category. It's now becoming rapidly a middle income country, massive rates of growth.

So that's an interesting dynamic in its own right. We have a pro-poor sample. We're not researching with the richer children, richer groups of children in any of our countries. And we're trying to have – in each country we have 20 sites. And we're trying to have a diversity of populations represented for each of the countries. That's in terms of rural, urban, ethnicity, and so on. Because we're wanting to understand the differences in life trajectories of minority ethnic groups as compared to majority for example.

And we have two age cohorts. And that's also very interesting and important for us because it enables us to see changes between those two cohorts. What happened to the older cohort in terms of school experiences? It may be very different now with the changing circumstances in their countries for those younger children. So that's another dynamic within the study. We're actually studying children from infancy. So the younger cohort were picked up in the first two years of their life. And we're going right through to parenthood because actually the older cohort, some of the children are already parents themselves. They're now around the age of 13-14.

So we're picking up really the circumstances of three generations. We have information about their parents and their families; information about the children, and about the children of the analysed children. We're actually in the field right now. We're on the third survey round. And we have five rounds in total and two more to go. And we're doing around roughly every three years

or so, which is just about as much as we can manage. It takes a lot of work to come to a round of data gathering. We're doing both quantitative and qualitative research.

So we've got a sub-sample of children who are involved in our qualitative research for whom we know far, far more. We go into far greater depth than we can with the quantitative information which covers the whole sample. And as I said, all our data are being archived so that other researchers have access to them. These are the overarching themes of the project. Three key areas if you like. Wellbeing, vulnerability, risk and resilience, which is one of the key themes. What are the adversities that children face? What are the impacts on their wellbeing? What are the risks that are out there? And what are signs of resilience? How are families and children dealing with some of the challenges that they confront?

The transitions and trajectories that they go through during childhood, because we recognise that those sort of life changing if you like transitions, the transition from pre-school to school, primary school to secondary school, from school to work, from being a child to being an adolescent, from being an adolescent to becoming married. All of these transitions, they are managed very differently by different families. They're often experienced very differently by different children in different social categories.

And we want to know what happens at those transition moments. And what are the implications in the longer term for making a decision to leave school at a certain age rather than to remain in school. Or making a decision to migrate. So those are the transitions. And then as I said, we're very, very interested in policy. So we're also researching the policies and the programmes that impact on children's lives.

So I'm just going to give you some examples of the kinds of findings that we're coming up with in these different areas. And this is just really some of the key findings. We've got a lot of working papers and publications, and many other materials that will give you more information about our findings.

One of the interesting things is that this is a study of childhood poverty, but until really the current global economic crisis we have very strong evidence from the first two rounds of our data, of growth in all four of the countries. And that includes Ethiopia, which was a surprise to us, but very, very significant growth in all countries. So the story up until right now if you like, was a very positive story to tell. And this is translated into a reduction across the whole sample in poverty, and also much better access to infrastructure and services.

And we have very clear evidence of those very positive trends. What's interesting about these trends is the kind of dynamic circumstances that children are growing up at this point in history. And I just really like this little quote from a father in `[[Andawilas 0:29:26]]` in Peru. "I also walk in the field with sandals. At least he will go with shoes if he gets a good head with education." The incredible social power of education, the recognition that if you get educated this is going to change everything in your life. The aspirations and hopes around education.

I'm pretty sure that if the study had started 15-20 years ago, education would not have featured as very significant in people's hopes and aspirations. Everywhere across the board, across the whole sample, everybody talks about the importance of education. The children, the adults, the children who are in school and the children who aren't in school. Everybody sees education as the salvation for children's future and also for the families. So much aspiration around education getting families out of poverty "If I educate my son, he will be able to go to the city and he will be able to help us get out of poverty." So enormous, enormous aspirations vested in it.

But modernity is very, very tough for these kids. They're very poor in many situations. And actually getting to school, staying at school, and learning from school can be deeply difficult. And in this case from Ethiopia, this is a boy who was not at school. And the community authorities intervened and insisted that he should attend school. But his parents are very, very ill and frail and elderly. And basically he is the breadwinner for the family. And in going to school he can no

longer support the family. And he feels very bad about this. And this is a very, very big challenge that we face right now for many, many of these children. And he feels this sense of responsibility and his parents are proud of the contribution he makes and he is proud of the contribution he makes.

So the problem is, is school actually undermining the pride that children sometimes get from their traditional occupations and roles. The other thing that we are worried about, and I'm sure you'll understand this, is that there is enormous potential, that the households are doing well. It's very fine between doing well and actually collapsing back into poverty. In the case of Ethiopia, people will distinguish themselves from others if they have six oxen instead of two. If you've got six, you're pretty well off and you're getting out of poverty. But clearly it doesn't take much.

And we've got much evidence of families who are forced to sell their oxen, which is their big asset, their big resource. We see many examples of families that experience shocks that just unravel if you like, all the gains that they've been making and all the advantages. In Ethiopia in particular they are debilitated by ongoing droughts, recurring droughts. It's rain fed agriculture. They don't have access to irrigation, so they're very vulnerable to drought, a lot of animal disease and incredible rates of morbidity and mortality in both children and adults. And I'll talk a little bit more about that later on. But this brings families down over time.

There's also the global economic crisis. We're in the field now as I said and we're obviously expecting to see many changes. We already know from anecdotal evidence, from talking to some of the families, they're really struggling now with the current rise in fuel prices and food prices and so on. So we expect that the trends will probably start to take a downturn quite dramatically.

The other thing which I think is really growing as a major concern and it worries me terribly that you know, policy makers are beginning to say, "Well we've reduced poverty, we've actually got rid of the development problem in so many parts of the world. We've solved so many of these problems." And it's true that in countries like China, in countries like India, in Vietnam indeed you've seen massive growth, and you've seen a decline in poverty rates. But what's growing all over the place is inequality. And that we have very, very clear evidence of in the project.

So we have for example, consumption levels rising far faster in urban areas than in rural, with much higher levels of absolute poverty in the countryside. And in Peru, you can see this in terms of stunting – the gap in terms of stunting between rural and urban children. So that by the time they're 18 months old, half of our children are stunted. This is a middle income country. This is a country that's actually doing really quite well. But we have half of our children who are stunted.

Male 2 Sorry, can I just say, are you seeing a rise in poverty in rural areas or just divergence . . . ?

Jo Boyden A divergence, not a rise. A divergence and a rise in the entrenched nature of poverty. So this is the dynamic that I think we're dealing with for the future. It's not just about poverty anymore. And I think it's very dangerous because people think that growth is the solution for everything. It's absolutely not. And that's one of the main messages we want to take to policy makers. And you won't be surprised to learn that cast, ethnicity and language is perhaps for us the key marker of distinctions in inequalities and so on.

And interestingly, surprisingly to us, it was more important, at least in the findings we have so far, than is gender. So who you are ethnically, or in language terms, is more important than whether you're a boy or a girl. And here you have an example from Andhra Pradesh, where rates of absolute poverty and inequality in the State are 11.2%. But you can see that for scheduled tribes, it's higher. And it's particularly higher in the younger cohort of children. So this is an example of how averages sometimes disguise these massive diversities. Sorry.

Female 1 How do you define `[[how soon 0:35:58]]`?

Jo Boyden Ah, well that's a very good question. We actually just use the government's own poverty line. In each country it's slightly different. But in fact our own definitions of poverty don't really rely on absolute measures at all. We're looking at a whole series of dimensions of poverty. We're looking at consumption, we're looking at assets, we're looking at income. We're not just focussing on income, which this measure does focus on. In a sense, it's one of those rather simplistic indicators that I was mentioning before. So ...

Female 2 I don't know anything much about this field, so say in Peru what would be a definition of ... ?

Jo Boyden Well it's, no it's a dollar a day type concept. So it's really very simplistic actually, because it doesn't tell you for example whether families have got remitted incomes. It doesn't tell you, you know, the non-earned parts of their economy, and so on. I mean, one of our arguments is that poverty's got many features to it and it's not just about income. So that's a good question.

Female 2 Can I just ask of those two, which one was the more `[[?? 0:37:07]]` rural/urban rather than ethnicity?

Jo Boyden Oh, for each country it's different. Yes, I'm not sure I can actually answer. It's always worse for rural. In India particularly, you'll have a higher concentration in rural populations of ethnic minority communities that are also very disadvantaged. That's where the sort of confluence of these problems actually occurs. I need to probably find out more about that. But again it's problematic because it'll be different for each country. We don't make comparisons between the countries. We try to speak very much to the reality of each country, and the diversity within that country, which I really important for us.

One of the things that really shocked us at Round II was the prevalence of stunting in all four of our countries, including in Peru, which is basically at around a third. It's extremely high. And of course that's one of the most obvious indicators of malnutrition, nutrition shocks, and poverty more generally. It is consistently higher in rural areas. And it's also linked and this is where this inter-generational issue comes in. It's linked to maternal and paternal education. Regardless of family wealth we find that that is a significant feature, significant cause in all cases of stunting.

We've also got evidence that it impacts on children's cognitive competences, on their education, the grade. So our stunted children are consistently behind their peers at school in terms of the grades they're at. Also, we found in perhaps on their psychosocial wellbeing. So the stunted children are less likely to have a sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy, they're more likely to feel socially excluded than other children. This is actually a finding which is – it's never really been uncovered before in other research, this link between nutrition-education is well, well known.

But the step then on to the psychosocial wellbeing and what does that do for a child's ability to fulfil their lives, their adulthood, their hopes and their aspirations and so on? And I just wanted to throw in this last little piece, how in India stunting is more common among boys than girls and particularly in the younger cohort. Just to remind you that actually we are looking at stereotypes, we are looking at assumptions. And sometimes we get surprises. And don't ask me to explain that finding because I absolutely can't. But it's just an example of how this is a very complex area. We know that boys on the whole are very favourably treated in India. But this isn't a surprising finding.

Okay, so in other areas I've said of our work is looking at policies and programmes. How far are they achieving their goals? Do they protect and enable, or do they disadvantage children perhaps? Do they actually work to reduce poverty? Are they pro-poor, or do they actually have no impact on poverty at all? What does it mean for children and households? So we're asking a lot of questions about programmes and policies.

And just to give you two examples. One is from Andhra Pradesh. We're tracing the impacts of the midday meal scheme, which is a very important government initiative which was introduced

recently in Andhra Pradesh. And we're seeing that it's not surprising. You might expect and we have found, that it brings children into school because they get a meal basically whilst they're at school. But what's interesting is that it's positively linked to their cognitive skills as well. Maybe it's because they're better nourished, they're better able to concentrate and they're better able to perform in school. So there is a very clear advantage of that scheme.

On the other hand in Ethiopia, one of the big poverty reduction interventions introduced by the Ethiopian government which has been very successful in many, many ways is the rural employment guarantee scheme. And that's actually made a big difference. It guarantees the poorest families access to employment. And in many cases, this has become the most important safety net for the most poor families. But, we've actually found that it's taking children out of school, because children are also working in the employment guarantee scheme because it adds to the income the household gets. So it's having a negative effect on their schooling and that's a worry.

And these are the kinds of unintended consequences if you like, of policies that you often do find.

Male 3 Sorry, can I just ask a question about that? You said that that's native compared to their peers, is that compared to people with the same level of poverty?

Jo Boyden Yes, the same level of poverty, children who are not working in the scheme. And it's actually – this is an example of a very difficult piece of evidence because actually we want to support the scheme. We think the scheme is actually benefiting families overall. So you don't want to focus just on the negatives and say to the government, "Oh no, this is not a good scheme." Perhaps we need to look at ways in which the scheme can be adapted so that it doesn't have this unexpected and unplanned for outcome, if you like.

Okay, millennium development goals. We are monitoring those. And as I mentioned, really education is probably one of the key goals of the millennium development objectives. But it's also one of the most important features of children and childhoods in our countries today. And we're arguing that it does have – education does have the potential to transform children's lives. But, actually is it really in their best interest? Those are the kinds of questions we want to answer. Is it in their best interest? Is it actually equitable? Is it of good quality? And how do we actually ensure that it is equitable and that it is of good quality?

And this is where we're trying to get behind the big trends that are being monitored by nationally representative data sets and so on. To understand a little bit more about what really does go on in school and what really are the factors that determine whether or not children are attending and learning.

So our overall finding in the last two rounds is of me, surprising and dramatic. Levels of enrolment are extremely high, extraordinarily high. But if you look behind the enrolment statistics, you see that 89% of our 12 year olds in India had already dropped out. Sorry, 10% had already dropped out. You see in Peru that 60% are overage, which means they're repeating grades, or maybe they started late. But either way, they're not keeping up with their peers. And this is actually particularly the poorest children who are repeating and behind.

And if you like, the most disturbing of all the findings was that even though 94% of these children in Ethiopia were enrolled, 39% were unable to even put together, read a simple sentence. And this is how simple the sentence was, of course it was all in local languages and so on. And we adapted these sentences for the local cultural constructs and so on. Which means, what are they doing in school? What is school actually delivering on? It's a really serious question.

Male 4 Excuse me. What is overage?

Jo Boyden Overage means because you're – when you progress through school, you're expected to go through chronologically according to your age. And you progress on a series of grades. But if you

fail your exams at the end of the year, you may not be allowed to progress onto the next grade. So you become overage. When you finally go through the system, you could be 2-3 years … Some of these children are five years behind their expected grade for their age. And that has a very dramatic effect on their lives.

So here we just wanted to emphasise again this issue of inequity and inequality. So when your seeing these struggles with achievement and education outcomes, you're seeing that these are particularly a problem for ethnic minority children in Vietnam. And in different countries obviously it's different groups.

Another one of the findings which is really quite dramatic is in relation to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia one in five of the children have experienced the death of at least one parent. And in many cases they are full orphans, which is an extremely high number. What we found, which is really quite surprising is that there are differences as to when the parent died in terms of children's outcomes and to which parent it is that's died. And in the case of the mother, if the mother dies between ages 8 and 12, this reduces the chances that the child will be enrolled in school. It increases the chance that by age 12-13 a child will not be able to write. And it increases the chances that they cannot read, or can only read letters, not words or sentences.

And in each case I've given the percentage that these chances are increased by as compared to children whose mothers have not died. So we're beginning to trace the knock on effects in different areas of children's lives, which is why a multi-dimensional view of poverty is so important. It's important to look at the relationship between what's happening in the household in terms of adversities, or between nutrition deficits in early childhood, school outcomes, psychosocial outcomes, work experiences, across all aspects of children's lives.

But I want to really stress that this isn't a project that's just finding deficit, trauma, loss, damage and helplessness amongst children. One of the things that the qualitative research is showing is remarkable courage, remarkable sense of integrity, responsibility and resilience amongst these children. And this is also part of the story. It's not just a story of loss and decline. It's also a story about children's incredible fortitude.

[Teferi 0 48:27] is one of the orphans in Ethiopia. He's living with his grandparents. They are not able to work very much anymore. He's washing cars for money. But he also helps with household chores, he helps his grandmother. And he talks about his work in a very, very positive way. He's very, very proud of what he does. It makes him happy and he can see in which ways precisely his work, the income from his work is enabling him to make a contribution. Here you can see that he's actually paying for himself to go to school.

And that's a very important aspect of children's work. People tend to think of work as detracting from children's ability to go to school. But in our evidence in many cases these children would not be in school if they weren't working. Because it's the work that they do that enables them to buy their utensils, enables them to provide the clothing and so on. Because most of these children are required to wear uniforms, even though they're very poor. It enables them to purchase the necessary materials and so on.

I think it's also really important to see that there's enormous interdependence between generations. This is not about children who are just dependent on their families. This is about the interdependence between adults and children. And adults recognise that and they're also very proud of it. And here you see his grandmother is talking about his job and his sense of responsibility, how grown up he is. And she's comparing him with other children who you know, use their earnings to buy sweets and so on. But he is always saving his money to put it into the family and so on. So she recognises this.

So I really want to stress that poverty isn't just about loss. It's not. It is also about strength and it is about resilience. And we want to understand what is it that enables – some children, some of

these children are going to do remarkably well, we're pretty sure of that. So what are the qualities that enable some children to overcome such adversities?

And I want to round off my talk by just in that vein, referring to this quote which comes from another little boy in Ethiopia, [[Haddush. 0:50:53]] Haddush doesn't go to school even though his brothers and sisters do. Haddush works. I think he collects stones and he does a lot of work in the house as well. He works in the fields and looks after cattle with two of his friends. And when Haddush was asked, "Well, what do you like?" "I like bananas, oranges, clothing and carrots." "What are the things which you consider to be challenging or difficult for you?" "No, I don't have any difficulty. I'm all right so far." "What activities are you good at?" "I'm good at everything. Nothing is impossible for me."

So this is a kid who doesn't go to school. But he works and he's really, really proud of his work. And he has a tremendous sense of optimism. So we also want to capture that. This is, the quote is actually taken from a series of child profiles that we've produced, because we're not just talking big statistics. This is a study which has a lot of statistics in it. I'm an anthropologist, I struggle with statistics. So we've actually produced quite a few examples through these profiles of individual stories of individual children. And each of these stories speaks to a particular issue. Violence at school, violence within the home, difficulties at work, possibilities of migrating and what that might mean. So each story picks up a different issue, which is reflected in our data.

Looking ahead, I would like to make a pitch, a bid if you like, for longitudinal research. Because I think it offers something that is really quite substantially different from cross sectional studies. It has such long-term potential. It enables you to look at the developmental pathways of children, the trajectories that children follow.

And it actually can look at a whole generation. How is this generation affected by the big global trends, the things that are going on in their countries and at the individual sites and in the households where they live? So it's got this tremendous potential to really mine data around development pathways. It can answer some really big questions like: What is the outcome of the current global crisis for children? How does policy, how do programs, interventions, really make a difference? What can we do in that direction?

And it's an archive of childhoods being lived at this particular point in history, in the first decade of the 21st century. And I'm trying to encourage other countries, other scholars in other parts of the world to do more longitudinal research. There are other studies. There's the famous [['Gansu' 0:53:49]] study in China, there's one in the Philippines, the [[?? 0:53:53]] study; the 'Birth to 20' study in South Africa. But there aren't many. It's extremely expensive, it's extremely difficult to organise and run and it's extremely difficult to follow children who don't have addresses, and who actually migrate.

Increasingly our children are migrating. So for example, we have a Peruvian family that have migrated to Japan. How on earth are we going to follow children that migrate all over? We have something like 30 or 40 Peruvian children who migrated to Chile. So there are some serious, serious challenges associated with this kind of research. If you want to know more, this is our website. We have as I said, we have different dimensions of what we're reporting on. We are reporting on our methodology.

So we're sharing the methodology globally. We're reporting on how we've done things, our ethics, how do you deal with for example, when you discover that a child has been abused by the school teacher, just through doing an interview? Oops, lost that. Okay. Just through doing an interview with the child, something unexpected like that comes out, what are you doing to do about it? How do you prevent the world of the media, the press, finding about your children, and coming ... When they discover stories that they want to learn more about, how do you protect their anonymity, how do you keep it confidential? Very, very difficult.

How do you sustain relationships over time? We've had enormous difficulties with people not, people don't understand what research is. "Why are you asking all these questions? What purpose is it going to serve?" And we're saying, "We aren't an intervention project. We can't do anything for you. But we hope that the information that you are sharing with us will help other children." But how do you sustain that over 15 years of time. It's very, very difficult. And a family that may have given consent, a child that may have given consent at one point in time may actually withdraw their consent at a later stage in the research.

And we've also had cases where the family have said, "Yes of course you can interview this little boy or that boy." And the boy said, "I don't want to be interviewed. I don't want to talk about these things." There's an enormous area there of ethical issues that we have to be sharing with people. The data archived, so people can work with it themselves. We're doing training around the data sets and how do you use them. There isn't the skill in many of these contexts for doing longitudinal data analysis. So we have to be teaching how do you use these kinds of data.

We have the publications, of which the academic is only one element. As important and increasingly so, are the publications that go out to the world of policy, into the public domain more generally. Including we've been taken up for example by the BBC because stories of children are always compelling. And there is a discussion about whether or now we should make a film. But then we have a very clear rule that none of our children are represented visually in any of our communications materials so that the photographs that we have of children here, the ones that you've seen on the slideshow are not 'Young Lives' children. This is the way in which we protect their anonymity.

Male 5 Sorry, the `[[?? 0:57:22]]` is that, is that `[[cross talking 0:57:25]]`?

Jo Boyden Yes, DS is University of Sussex, Open Access Archive, which anybody in the world can sign on to basically. And so the first two rounds are already archived, the first two rounds are quantitative data. We're in the process of anonymising the qualitative data. And those will also be archived. And then Round III will probably be archived maybe in about 18 months or something like that. And we have an e-newsletter, another means of communicating with the outside world.
