



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

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

# The ethics of social research with children and families in Young Lives, a longitudinal study in Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh (India), Peru and Vietnam

Virginia Morrow  
Senior Research Officer  
[virginia.morrow@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:virginia.morrow@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

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# Background to Young Lives

- Longitudinal study of childhood poverty - Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh, India, Peru and Vietnam
- 12,000 children 2002-2017 (MDG context)
- Household survey every 3 years
- Qualitative research (2007, 2008, 2010/11, 2014) with 'nested' sample
- Improve the understanding of causes and consequences of childhood poverty
- Examine how policies affect children

# Sample and methods

- Two cohorts of children- 2000 who were born in 2001-02, 1000 born in 1994-5
- Survey: household, child and community questionnaires
- Qualitative research - multi-method approach, including interviews, group activities, child-led tours, group discussions, with children, caregivers and other community members
- 3 themes – dynamics of child poverty, children's experiences, and learning, work and transitions
- Additional studies

# Ethics

- ‘moral principles guiding research, from its inception *through to completion and publication of results and beyond*’ (ESRC Research Ethics Framework 2005) (cf. medical model)
- Developing the ethics guidelines for Qual 1, refinement following fieldwork - eg consent for archiving Survey Rounds 1, 2, 3
- Revisiting ethics questions needs to be continuous
- Across qualitative, survey and policy teams, i.e. across countries and disciplines
- Dilemmas documented - shared enquiry

# Informed consent

- Community consent, parents' and children's consent
- Consent audio-recorded
- Raised expectations (Ethiopia and Peru)
- Fear of abduction (eg Peru – linked to local myths that have a long history)
- Some confusion with NGOs – people ask for, and expect, help
- Previous experiences of 'projects' matter

# Positive accounts

- Parents' concerns can be allayed with careful explanations
- Locally relevant: in India:  
*'when cooking rice, you will take some grains and test whether it's cooked or not, you will not check the whole rice. In the same way, we select some children...'*

# Explaining to children

- Asking children to recount what they remember of the last visit from YL (India)
- ‘Sirs visited, they have spoken to us, recorded the discussion... asked me to read and speak’
- Eg Ethiopia refusal of one child despite parents’ willingness

# Other questions

- Anonymity – people, locations
- Use of images
- Child protection matters – training, sensitivity to family matters
- Continuity of fieldwork staff
- Building and maintaining trust
- What happens to the information?



# Effects on children and families

- Wish to maintain contact:
- ‘All the best, don’t leave us behind, come visit us always’
- Questions encourage reflection
- Need to follow this over time
- Some will welcome continued involvement, others may resent it

# Giving something back?

- Rewards, compensation, incentives?
- Reporting back preliminary findings – how to do this to different audiences?
- Returning relevant information from YL research to communities to maintain trust and respect
- But realistic awareness about likelihood of change.

# Discussion

- Understanding context – dynamic
- Imposition of ‘Western’ standards on non-western situations?
- 3-way learning process - fieldworkers, country teams, Oxford – ethics committees?

# THANK YOU!

For further information, please see:

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